



Plaza and Pool Deck Waterproofing

by Daniel Perez

Whether underneath pavers, a garden roof, or inside planters, a high-build waterproofing system is critical to the protection of structural components and occupied building areas. As an owner or property manager, you may only be interested in the end result and not in the application type, but there are many things to consider before making the final decision.

Historically, hot-applied waterproofing membranes have been preferred due to their association with the roofing trades, and cold-applied products were used for repairs of these membranes. In recent years, cold-applied membranes have been designed that are easier to apply and significantly outperform their predecessors. In addition, they eliminate the safety hazards and their associated costs while maintaining the same high-performance properties of hot-applied systems.

The dangers associated with hot-applied products can not only endanger the installers but also the building and its occupants. The double-jacketed, 400- to 500-pound melters or kettles required for hot-applied

asphalt are typically powered by propane or diesel fuel. Throughout the day, 40- to 50-pound "cookies" are added to the melter to keep it replenished. Dropping the "cookies" into the molten material in the melter requires the operator to avoid burns from splashing material.

Since hot-applied asphalt cannot be pumped or craned, the melter must be placed on the elevated deck. However, Section 16.7 of the NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code, Florida 2005 Edition, forbids the placement of melters or kettles on any roof or top deck of any structure. It defines a melter or kettle as "any type of equipment, but not limited to, chassis-mounted equipment used for preheating or heating tar, asphalt, pitch, or similar substances for roofs, floors, pipes, or similar objects." This code is designed to protect the building and its occupants. Since the fuel source and material are flammable, an accidental ignition of these materials or

fuels could start a fire that would be very difficult for firefighters to reach in a reasonable time. This combined with limited access to foam or dry chemicals on an elevated deck or roof could lead to a widespread fire endangering the lives of the building's occupants and to a huge financial disaster for the owners.

Besides the elimination of the safety hazards related to the installation of hot-applied asphalt, the cold membranes can be applied to green (damp) concrete. In Florida, rain is common, especially during the summer months. Applying hot-applied asphalt to concrete that has not dried for a minimum of 24 hours can cause pin holes and bubbles that jeopardize the integrity of the system. Often, due to tight schedules, installers do not wait the proper amount of time before installing the hot-applied membrane.

Cold-applied, high-build waterproofing membranes have been developed to match the high-performance characteristics previously thought to only be obtained using hot-applied systems. Most hot-applied product manufacturers are now offering cold-applied options to enhance their product lines. Warranties can now be obtained that will cover labor and materials for up to 20 years. All things considered, the hazards and complications created by hot-applied products are making cold-applied systems a much more attractive option for both owners and contractors.

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