

# TECHNICAL BULLETIN

## FOR TARGET MARKET ROOFING



BUILDING TRUST

**Subject: Sika Roof Surface Cleaning Techniques****17-03**

Roof cleaning is an important part of any roof maintenance program. Routine cleaning of the membrane is somewhat common sense. To maintain optimum reflectivity levels, roofs should be cleaned annually. The ideas outlined below are the most common methods used by building owners. Extra care should be taken to make sure that the cleaning process does not cause physical damage to the membrane. Workers performing the washing should be made aware that excessive foot traffic, the use of sharp tools, and excessive pressure can and will cause damage to the roofing membrane. In all instances, be sure to use a non-abrasive cleaner. Most work well, try a number in different areas and choose the cleaner with the best results.

1. Sponge, mop, or brush cleaning is the least aggressive method of cleaning. This works well on new material and is typically used in smaller areas. Apply water and a non-abrasive cleaner to the area and sponge, mop, or brush off. **Wire brushes should never be used as they scratch the material and cause punctures in the membrane.**
2. Some building owners have tried to use a rotary buffer to clean their roofs. Be sure to use a small buffer with a 12" to 15" base. **Again use only the synthetic buffing pad or polishing pad, as stripping pads are too aggressive and will damage the membrane.**
3. Larger buildings have used pressure washing to perform roof maintenance cleaning. There are a large variety of machines available and they are all calibrated differently. Some machines don't allow you to dial in a PSI, just remember a lower PSI is preferable. **Using too high a pressure will cut right into or through the membrane causing leaks and possibly damage other components of the roof system, and possibly the structure.** A wide dispersal nozzle should also be used. The narrow dispersal nozzles will create too fine a spray and can damage the membrane. The wand itself should be kept at a constant 16" to 24" above the membrane. Lowering the wand in an effort to concentrate the spray can damage the membrane. The spray must be directed from the field sheet over the overlap and not the other way around. Washing against the overlap could damage the edge of the material or cause problems with the weld.

As with any cleaning process using a small test area and some common sense should provide you with the desired results.

**Organic Soiling:** Roofs in certain geographic locations may be subject to greater degrees of organic soiling. Organic soiling may not wash off the roof membrane as easily as other forms of dirt and debris. A 3% concentration of bleach to water may be effective in these instances. The use of bleach will not harm the membrane, affect its longevity or negatively affect any existing warranty coverage. Extra care should be taken when using a bleach solution as "run-off" can affect grass, trees and shrubs and landscaping. As always, comply with all local regulations with regard to "run-off" for all cleaning solutions used.