

Tar & Gravel Roofing

Many roofing materials such as shingles are unsuited to low slope applications. Tar and gravel roofing was commonly used for this application in the past. This system is also referred to as “built-up-roofing” (BUR). Tar and gravel roofing consist of layers of asphalt and tar paper that are adhered to the roof surface with molten asphalt. The multiple layers are then flooded with hot asphalt and washed rock to act as a ballast and protect against UV degradation. Some of this gravel becomes embedded in the hot asphalt, and some remains loose on the roof surface floor. The typical life expectancy of tar and gravel roofs is approximately 20 to 25 years.

The Complexities of Tar and Gravel Roofing

Although tar and gravel roofs are durable, they require maintenance and repairs more frequently than most other low slope roof systems. This is because tar and gravel roofing is especially sensitive to the weather elements. BUR roofing systems have limited abilities to expand and contract due to the wide variations in temperature in Alberta’s climate. Therefore, BUR roofing has become less popular in relation to other membrane roofing when it comes to roof replacement options.

Leaks on BUR roof systems usually occur around roof obstacles; flashings, chimneys, eaves, and intersecting roof planes. Strong winds can blow away gravel to expose the surface to the sun causing premature deterioration and can lead to leaks. Older roofs will begin to experience membrane blistering which also causes leaks and usually indicates the need for roof membrane repair or replacement. Generally, BUR roof systems are replaced with newer age roof systems like torch down roofing or single ply roof systems. Cooper Roofing & Exteriors would be pleased to provide professional advice in regards to maintenance, repair and total replacement of your BUR roof system.