



# Roof Cleaning Guideline – Roofing and Balcony Membranes

## General

All exposed low slope roofing and balcony membranes get dirty over the life of the membrane system from airborne pollutants and dirt. The accumulation of dirt on a dark colored membrane surface is less noticeable than on a light colored or white membrane. The amount and type of accumulation is related to the location of the installed membrane system. Each type of “dirt” requires a slightly different approach and level of effort to remove from a membrane surface.

There are two possible issues when a light colored membrane system becomes dirty:

1. Aesthetic. If the membrane surface is visible from the road or adjacent buildings, it may be preferential to maintain a decorative appearance versus utilitarian.
2. Energy efficiency. With current design initiatives, more and more designers are looking toward environmentally friendly roof designs to reduce energy costs which save natural resources, and to reduce the effects that commercial roofs have on the natural weather patterns (heat island).

## Cleaning Procedure - Airborne Dirt

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 may cause punctures in the membrane.
2. When using a rotary buffer to clean the membrane, be sure to use a small buffer with a 30cm – 40cm base. Use only the synthetic buffing pad or polishing pad, as stripping pads are too aggressive and will damage the membrane.
3. Pressure washing can be used on larger buildings for cleaning. There are large varieties of machines available and they are all calibrated differently. Some machines do not allow you to dial in a pressure. A lower pressure is preferable. Using too high a pressure will cut right into or through the membrane causing leaks and possibly damage to other components of the roof / balcony system or structure. A wide dispersal nozzle should also be used. Narrow dispersal nozzles will create too fine a spray and can damage the membrane. The wand itself should be kept at a constant 400 – 600 mm above the membrane. Lowering the wand in an effort to concentrate the spray can damage the membrane.

**Notes:**

Seams should be washed by hand, as water could be sprayed up under a seam. On large roofing projects, this may be difficult. If using a pressure washer, wash 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 lead to the desired result.

**Warning:**

Damage to the membrane during washing operations is not covered under the warranty. If damage occurs during washing, it is the responsibility of the owner to repair. Do not abrade the surface of the membrane. Seams are typically laid shingle fashion towards the roof drain or gutter. Do not agitate, power wash or scrub against the seam. Go over the top or parallel to it.