

ERA: STRENGTHENING THE ROOFING INDUSTRY

The EPDM Roofing Association Gathers and Disseminates Information to Create Resilient Roofs

BY LOUISA HART



During the last decade, the construction community has become increasingly aware of the need for resilience in the built environment. Sometimes this awareness has been quickly and painfully raised in the wake of increasingly frequent devastating storms, like hurricanes Sandy and Katrina. Sometimes it has been part of a slower process, as the cumulative effects of severe weather take their relentless toll on existing structures.

However, if there is one date that marks a turning point in the sense of urgency

surrounding resilience, it is May 10, 2016. That was the date when the Obama White House hosted a conference on Resilient Building Codes to underscore the importance of "incorporating resilience and the future impacts of climate change in the codes and standards development process." In the wake of this conference, 40 leading organizations within America's design and construction industry released a report about efforts to achieve resilience in the built environment (bit.ly/2JMUFKW). The report detailed a set of guiding

PHOTO: JACOB WANG ON UNSPLASH

ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE SOME DEBATE ABOUT THE CAUSES OF INCREASINGLY DESTRUCTIVE WEATHER, THERE IS NO DEBATE THAT THE APPROACH TO BUILDING RESILIENT STRUCTURES NEEDS TO REFLECT THE “NEW NORMAL.”



principles, including “developing and advocating for codes and policies that advance resilience; developing ‘whole-systems resilient design’ approaches for the built environment; and providing guidance, beyond the baseline life-safety codes, that recognizes the importance of fortifying property for individual and community resilience.”

Jared Blum, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based EPDM Roofing Association (ERA), attended the White House conference. Inspired by the mission that was conveyed by the attendees, Blum charged ERA with intensifying its efforts to alert the roofing community to the need for resilience in both existing and replacement roofs.

ERA'S CHARGE

Responding to that mandate, ERA launched a microsite, epdmtheresilientroof.com, in May 2017, to provide specific information about resilience. The website details the need for resilience in roofing systems and the specific attributes of EPDM that make it valuable in creating a resilient structure. To add context to the information about EPDM products, the website provides a clearinghouse of sources about resilience, as well as an up-to-date roster of recent articles, blog posts, statements of professional organizations and other pertinent information related to building resilience.

Subsequent to launching the website, in November 2018, ERA produced its first annual report on resilience issues, “Building Resilience: The Roofing Perspective.” Download it at epdmtheresilientroof.org/building-resilience-roofing-perspective. The report includes a section about important events related to resilience during the preceding year. These include the release of the Washington-based National Institute

of Building Sciences’ “Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2017 Interim Report”, bit.ly/30njlh, which details the six-to-one ratio of return on investment in mitigation compared to the cost of repairs following a cataclysmic weather event. The ERA report also includes an update on legislative progress, specifically the Disaster Recovery Reform Act, which provided—for the first time—significant mitigation funds from the federal government.

Finally, the ERA report lists reference resources about the issue of resilience, as well as organizations that are supporting policies that will create a more resilient environment.

INFORMATION GATHERING

ERA also has increased its efforts to gather scientific information about resilience. The leadership and members of ERA toured the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety’s (IBHS’) Research Center in Richburg, S.C., in October 2017. The tour was the third in a series of ERA visits to facilities that are spearheading the effort to incorporate resilience into the built environment. The other visits were to the Building Envelope Systems Research Program at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tenn., and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Golden, Colo.

The visit to IBHS provided in-depth knowledge of state-of-the-art hail and wind testing research, of special interest to ERA members because of EPDM’s performance during hailstorms. Taken together, these three site visits provided ERA members with up-to-date information about resilience in roofing systems. ERA members, in turn, are offering this essential EPDM-focused information to their colleagues and customers.

In 2019, ERA is building on its record of

being the “go-to” source for information about resilience in the roofing industry. The association is in the process of updating its annual report on resilience and will publish a revised edition of the report in November. Additionally, ERA supports the efforts of allied organizations that are disseminating needed information about resilience: In January of this year, ERA sponsored the breakfast meeting during which NIBS announced the data from its “Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2018 Interim Report”,

ERA and Resilient Roofs

Learn more about the Washington, D.C.-based EPDM Roofing Association’s resilience efforts, as well as how EPDM contributes to resilient buildings, at epdmtheresilientroof.com.

www.nibs.org/page/mitigationsaves. The announcement that the NIBS project team found a national benefit of \$11 for every \$1 invested in disaster mitigation made national news and helped to inform Congress about the value of mitigation. ERA was proud to be part of this effort and will continue to use its resources to support efforts that inform builders about the importance of strengthening structures before disaster strikes.

Although there may be some debate about the causes of increasingly destructive weather, there is no debate that the approach to building resilient structures needs to reflect the “new normal.” ERA is proud to be a source of information, as well as a source of building materials, to help create resilient 21st century buildings for the people and property these buildings protect. 