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POSTED BY: ELLEN THORP MAY 27, 2025

Sustainability was a pervasive theme in 2024, leading to significant progress in research dissemination, advocacy, media engagement, and sustainability initiatives—all of which continue to point EPDM as the gold standard for roofing.

“While new technologies emerge in the roofing industry, EPDM remains the top performing and most sustainable roofing solution in the global marketplace,” says EPDM Roofing Association (ERA) Chair Mike DuCharme, vice president – product marketing at Carlisle Construction Materials. “Our goal is to continue building upon the successes of the past year, leading with data-driven research and demonstrating the durability and energy efficiency of EPDM.”

Research-Based Conversations and Decisions

This year marked a proliferation of new information from ERA’s inaugural sustainability report, which provided a transparent overview of the environmental impact and performance of EPDM roofing, to increased interest in roof albedo—e.g. a roof’s reflectivity.

ERA partnered with ICF, an independent consulting firm with experience in climate change, data analysis, and building science, on two roof albedo studies. In the first study, ICF undertook an analysis of existing data and previous studies on urban heat islands (UHI), with specific focus on the measurable impacts of the roof albedo of low-slope roofing. ICF’s analysis of temperature data for cities with cool roof mandates found no discernable correlation between the imposition of cool roof mandates and a reduction in UHI. A second [study](#) looked at the impact of roof albedo and insulation on the energy efficiency of a building. In most cases, it is the insulation not the reflective roof that provides the greatest energy benefits.

“Both studies exposed inconsistencies in measuring the impact of reflective roofing on the severity of UHI, as well as on the amount of energy being used,” says Jason Wilen, a forensic architect with Klein & Hoffman and technical consultant for ERA. “Our focus, as we consider policies that are designed to lead us to a future where the UHI effect can be managed and even diminished, must

be based on science, not supposition.”

United Front and Expanded Industry Collaboration

In 2024, a number of roofing-related trade associations came together to improve the presence of the roofing industry in the broader construction industry. By sharing resources and expertise, the group leveraged its collective voice to maximize efficiencies in advancing the roofing industry’s interests in the wider fields of architecture, engineering, construction, and manufacturing.

Nowhere was this impact more evident than in the collective advocating for sustainable building practices. A coalition led by the International Code Council (ICC) and supported by ERA sent a [letter](#) to the House Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security. Signed by nearly 40 organizations representing state/local, housing, manufacturing, contractor, sustainability, engineering, design, and resilience interests, the letter emphasized the significant return on investment from adopting and effectively implementing building energy codes. The coalition urged the Subcommittee to recognize the value of sustainable building policies and to support the continued bipartisan development, adoption, and enforcement of these energy codes and standards.

In addition, ERA represented the roofing industry as a member of the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) Consultative Council, which assembles high-level building community representatives to make recommendations directly to the executive and legislative branches of government to improve our nation’s buildings and infrastructure. Each year, the Consultative Council publishes the Moving Forward Report to investigate key issues, offering solutions to overcoming these challenges. In 2024, ERA served as the voice of the roofing industry and contributed

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information related to retrofitting for resilience.

These efforts garnered widespread media coverage and helped new audiences learn about sustainability, durability, longevity and solar-ready opportunities for EPDM.

Continuing Momentum into 2025

With so much forward momentum for research, collaboration and sustainability, there are four emerging trends impacting EPDM roofing systems that architects, engineers, and construction professionals should pay attention to in 2025:

Emphasis on Life-Cycle Costs: There is a growing focus on life-cycle costs rather than initial installation expenses. With sustainability at the forefront of construction practices, decision-makers are beginning to recognize the long-term benefits of investing in durable roofing systems like EPDM. The extended service life and reduced need for replacements make EPDM a cost-effective and environmentally friendly choice over time.

Shift Towards Research-Driven Decisions: Evidence-based research is taking center stage in the roofing industry. Moving away from outdated perceptions and beliefs, stakeholders are beginning to embrace data-driven insights that highlight the proven performance of EPDM. This shift underscores the need for roofing professionals to stay informed about the latest research and advocate for solutions that have demonstrated long-term success.

Navigating Regulatory Changes: The rise in state and local regulations impacting roofing codes presents both challenges and opportunities for the industry. As state and local regulatory bodies introduce new policies beyond national model codes and standards, there is a growing need for industry experts to engage in advocacy

and policy discussions. ERA's ongoing involvement in these efforts will be crucial in ensuring that roofing contractors' expertise is considered in the decision-making process, helping to shape practical and effective building codes.

Exploring the Impact of Embodied Carbon: As the construction industry intensifies its focus on reducing carbon footprints, there is a need for new studies on the role of embodied carbon in roofing materials and how EPDM can contribute to broader sustainability goals.

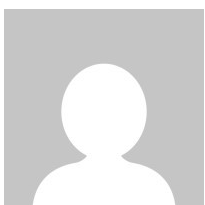
“Throughout the construction community, sustainability is increasingly recognized as an essential component of a building's value,” adds DuCharme. “As extreme weather becomes more prevalent, owners and tenants alike are willing to pay more for properties that are energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, and designed with sustainability in mind. In fact, many businesses are adopting sustainability as a core value and are seeking office spaces and facilities that align with their environmental commitments.”

As the industry continues to prioritize eco-friendly building practices, there is an increased opportunity to tout the longstanding sustainability attributes of EPDM roofing materials and ensure building practices are grounded in evidence-based research.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ellen Thorp is executive director of the EPDM Roofing Association (ERA). For more information, visit epdmroofs.org.

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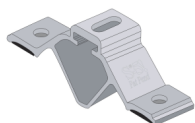
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As associate executive director of the Bethesda, Md.-based EPDM Roofing Association, Ellen Thorp does advocacy work for ERA related to codes, standards and state regulations.

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