

Daniel Robbins: Here we are again for another episode of Above It All, a podcast dedicated to the roofing industry by Johns Manville. Today, I have the privilege of being with two gentlemen who have been with Johns Manville for quite some time, they both have extensive backgrounds in the roofing industry, Rob Hughes and Rick Gustin, and gentlemen, how are you both doing?

Rob: Great.

Rick: Hey Daniel. Good morning. What's up?

Daniel: So, I'd love to get some background from each of you guys, because I know it'll be very telling about kind of how it supports the key presentation that you guys came up with for IIBEC. Rob, you're holding the mic, can give us background about how long you've been with JM and kind of what your expertise has been?

Rob: You bet, Daniel. I'm coming up on five years with Johns Manville. My background is in roofing and in general construction. Since about 2010, I've been in roofing. I've done everything from running a large estimating department to project management, to operations management, to running a large service department for a very accomplished roofing company. Prior to that, I built a lot of buildings, both commercial and residential.

Daniel: It sounds like you saw it from the management side, a lot. The project management side of things. Very cool.

Rob: You bet, I actually started out as a carpenter, but yeah, morphed into more of the management side over a very long career.

Daniel: Very cool. Rick, can you enlighten us a little bit about your background?

Rick: Yeah, absolutely, I'll be celebrating my 25th year with JM this year, so I'm pretty pumped about that. And most of my career with JM has been in technical side of the business, so technical roles. I started off as a technical representative in New York City and then worked in our guarantee services group, eventually manage that group, so really familiar with the front-end process and the deviations that we allow and the types of custom guarantees that we might write. And then more recently, I've been with our owner Services Group as a technical manager, and I've been working with Rob on managing our large claims, there's kind of the unique things that can happen over the life cycle of the roof on the back side of issuing that guarantee. [I] started my career in New York City is kind of a roofing mechanic and did a lot of forensic work and investigations, which was really valuable in building a base, given that New York City just has such a broad portfolio of buildings from new construction, cutting edge stuff to turn-of-the-century-style construction, so kind of gave me a broad background on, how the roof and building envelope behaves.

Daniel: Very cool. So now, let's get into the presentation a little bit... I guess for our listeners, Rob, can you give a little background on IIBEC; why it exists, what the value of it is for people?

Rob: You bet. IIBEC is, that acronym stands for International Institute of Building Envelope Consultants, formerly RCI Roof Consultants Institute. It's an organization of engineers, architects, contractors, consultants, and other individuals who have, essentially, a technical point of view on our industry, roofing in particular, but building envelope in general, and it contributes to the overall understanding of how systems work; it's a systems perspective on buildings taken all together.

Daniel: Interesting, so you go there, and you can learn about any aspect of a building envelope kind of a thing, or...

Rob: You bet, everything from facade systems to roofing systems, cladding systems, interior air environments, you name it, there are people who are experts in those fields, and it's confined to North America, it's Canada and the United States.

Daniel: Very cool. Let's get into a little bit of the presentation that you both came up with. I heard it got much acclaim from everyone, and I guess we don't want to talk about it too much here, but what are some things that you can tell us to kind of get us interested and excited about checking it out?

Rob: So, we did some research, and we wrote a paper. The title's a little long, but it's "A Not So Perfect Storm: The Convergence of Large Buildings, Wood Decks and Mechanically Attached Low-Slope Single Ply Roofing Systems." And that led to acceptance by IIBEC of our research and our paper, and then the great opportunity to present it in front of IIBEC down at their spring convention in Phoenix last March.

Rick: And really, I think it was well received in that it just came from real world experiences, [as Rob said,] we've been working with the owner services group, and we've been looking at the performance of buildings over time, you know, once the guarantee is issued. And we've just seen a trend predominantly on the West Coast: California, Arizona and Nevada, where we were experiencing some claims and losses on relatively new roof systems that had been installed for only a few years under kind of what we would consider low or moderate wind loads, and it just got us curious and we started seeing some commonalities amongst all those projects and kind of put that into the title, just consistently saw some issues with mechanically fastened TPO over wood decks on just these large warehouses that are being built in that region.

Daniel: Was it just TPO or is there other stuff too?

Rick: That's a popular construction type out there, so yeah, a lot of what we saw was definitely right around the TPO or thermal plastic roof systems that are popular in that region.

Daniel: Very cool. So, you're going to go into what the key issue is that really was creating this problem across the board for everybody. And it was, it was a common thing or was there a bunch of different variables as well?

Rick: Well, we went and looked at a bunch of the variables and like I said, we just saw some consistency around that, so the paper does talk about some real world, what we saw, you know, physically on the rooftop, but obviously that led to questions and Rob, he took the lead on doing the research of the actual construction stuff to see what might be driving some of the losses we saw on the roof top, I'll let him share that.

Daniel: Wait, so it was a marriage between, I guess we'll go figure... You said the convergence between the building and the roofing system?

Rob: And the environment frankly. The different materials that went into creating these roof systems and particularly the decking. So, we're looking at wood decking for these types of buildings. And so we had a couple of different ideas of what might be going on, so we got with PRI, which is a testing organization out of Tampa, Florida, and we put together a couple of test protocols to look at some of the things, some of the thoughts that Rick and I had about what might be going on here to kind of put it to the test. Let's see, does this really bear out? And we bore out some of the information as we saw it, instinct, instinctually, and then some of it, we got a couple of surprises in our testing.

Daniel: Very cool. Is this issue that you guys found affecting a large range of roofs?

Rob: Well, it's confined regionally to the West Coast, as Rick said, primarily areas where they use wood decks, which typically we're looking at the Phoenix market in Arizona, Las Vegas in Nevada, and southern California is also commonly known as the Inland Empire.

Daniel: That's a pretty big market, I would say.

Rob: Oh yeah, you bet.

Daniel: Well, I know a lot of people will probably be excited to hear it, where can people access the presentation?

Rick: It's on IIBEC's online education site, along with other presentations that were at the convention, past presentations, and they also have just individual training modules where you can get CEUs, etc. It's actually a pretty helpful site and it has a lot of value as a resource. So, check it out there, you can see a live version of it on video of us giving him the [presentation,] along with the slides and everything else to really give you the full view and what our findings truly were.

Daniel: Nice. Very cool.

Rob: And the paper itself will be published by IIBEC their magazine, Interface, in the October 2024 issue.

Daniel: Very nice. Would that be the regional?



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Episode 44: IIBEC Features JM's Technical Sales Experts

Rob: No, IIBEC puts out a national, actually for all of their memberships, like I said, US and Canada, and that goes out to all the members. I'd be curious to see if that's on the newsstand, but it's a great magazine for roof nerds like ourselves to kind of dig into some of the different stuff that comes up across the country.

Daniel: Very cool. Well, it sounds like there's some good outlets where people can get the content. Everyone, I hope you enjoyed this podcast. Stay safe out there. We'll catch you next time. Bye.