Cool Roofing: Cooling Down South Florida without Impeding Urban Development

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Article published on June 8th 2012 | Home Improvement

Cities are rapidly growing both in terms of population and urban development. While this may be a good thing for a number of reasons like improving lives, it also has its negative effects such as environmental concerns. For starters, one particular spot in the city may be hotter than the rest; experts call it the heat island effect.

British meteorologist Luke Howard first studied the effects of the heat island effect in London in the late 1810s. The heat island effect happens when some parts of a particular area, notably the urban regions, grow warmer than the surrounding countryside. In fact, studies show that sunny days heat roofs and pavement to the point that theyâ€™re hotter than the air. Rural zones like small ponds and farms, on the other hand, have temperatures close to the air temperature.

Experts say there are a number of reasons behind the heat island effect, one of them being lack of vegetation. Highly-urbanized areas like the downtown areas tend to get warmer because the lack of trees and plants affects levels of surface moisture. The less moisture there is on the area, the less heat that can be transpired.

Another reason for the heat island effect is the properties of urban materials, namely low albedo or reflectivity. Dark colors of roofs have low albedo, absorbing more of the light than reflecting it back into the atmosphere. On the other hand, lightly-colored roofs are the polar opposite, having high albedo, diffusing the heat.

Lightly-colored roofs are part of a collective solution, called cool roofs, to mitigate the adverse effects of an urban heat island. By using materials (or, in this case, colors) with high reflectivity, much of the heat can be sent back to the atmosphere. South Florida roofers endorse cool roofs, knowing that the state is known for its heat. Another example of cool roofs is the creation of a roof garden to supply the heat island with enough moisture for transpiration.

In the end, it boils down to sustainable roofing practices to reduce the effects of the heat island. With much of the world bound to grow into bustling urban areas soon, urban development must come with ways to be environment friendly. South Florida roofers may provide the starting point for this lifelong endeavor.

For more information on the heat island effect, visit the site of the Environmental Protection Agency at EPA.gov. Ask South Florida general contractors for more details on how you can turn your traditional roof into a cool roof.

Article Source:
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Article Keywords:
south florida general contractors, south florida roofers

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