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Up on the roof

The Walker Roofing Company has built a solid reputation for covering many St. Paul and Minneapolis property owners' most valuable assets.

BY JACK MCGEE

THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF AT WALKER Roofing Company has been serving the needs of businesses and homeowners in the Twin Cities region since it was established by Milan Walker in 1938. In 1962, Michael J. Kohler, a family friend, acquired Walker Roofing. Kohler has made it his

mission to maintain the company's tradition of quality roofing provided by experienced, on-site supervisors.

Today, Walker Roofing is still a family affair. Daughter Stacy Reese has served as the company's general manager since 1982. Her husband, Nathan Reese, has handled the sales/management department since 1983.

"We are a very established, large company, but I don't think people realize that we are also a family company," Stacy says. "When customers call they are actually talking to the owner, or the owner's daughter or son-in-law. If you have a complaint you can talk to people who are most concerned about the integrity of the company."

A full exterior residential and commercial contractor,

Walker Roofing provides complete roofing services plus window trim, seamless gutters and more. "We're experts at solving problems for people," says Mike Kohler. "And we don't necessarily always tell people they need a new roof. We can take an old roof and extend its life quite a long time if they don't have the resources to replace it."

INSPECTIONS AND EDUCATION

In order to help customers get some idea of their roof's condition, Walker also offers a free inspection program. "We go up on the roof of a commercial building and, using our expertise, look at where the potential problems are," Kohler explains. "We give you a full report of the condition of the roof, including photos. It notes where the immediate problems are and what the life expectancy of the roof is."

The company believes that the more its customers know about roofs and roofing, the better off they are. To help property managers raise awareness about roofing conditions, Walker offers an education program that includes a seminar addressing all aspects of roofing and roof replacement.

"It's like a mini course on the different kinds of roofs," explains Nathan. "Everything from shingles to flats to roofs



Walker workers strive for professional perfection with each job.



and how to deal with leak repairs,

emergency situations, and what you'll experience with the actual removal and replacement of a roof."

Most recently, the staff has aggressively sought to expand the company's commercial division. Currently, about half of Walker's commercial projects are apartment complexes and multi-family dwellings for various property management companies. The remaining 50 percent is comprised of commercial buildings. "Everything from engineering facilities to manufacturing plants," Kohler notes. "We do hospital work, retirement homes, shopping malls — it runs the gamut."

MANUFACTURERS' WARRANTIES

Over the past six decades, Walker Roofing has installed and maintained a variety of high-quality roofs. As a certified installer of GAF, Versico and Duro-Last roofing systems, Walker is able to offer more than a simple contractor guarantee. In most cases, Walker provides the manufacturer's total system warranty, which can afford protection for up to 25 years.

In the past few years the company has begun installing more of these newer roofing systems for many different structures. "The white Duro-Last roof has been around for approximately 15 years and has a really good track record, but it has not been used heavily until the last few years in this area," notes Nathan.

Nathan says the white material offers definite advantages for property owners, despite conventional wisdom about the color of roof needed in the St. Paul area. "Many people feel they need a dark roof to retain heat for the winter," he says. "But research indicates the white membrane is better than the black surface. It's been a real advantage for people for energy purposes."

Determining which type of roof is best suited for a particular customer can involve several criteria: the age of the roof, type of building and budget are all factored in. "We look at the roof, and we talk to customers to determine their budget and gauge their intentions for the building," Nathan

explains. "We educate the customer so that he understands he doesn't have just one choice, or that he has to spend a lot of money. It helps them make the right decision for their building."

"We have all the necessary equipment to accomplish a job, and to get in and out quickly so it doesn't wreck your entire summer season just because we're doing a project on your building," adds Kohler. "One of the things that we're good at is tearing off an existing roof with little or no impact to the property."

THE BEST POLICY

Over the years, Walker has built a solid reputation for quality work and honesty. Nathan says that the more his customers know, the better he feels it is for the company. "If a customer has a \$2 million building, they need to take the time to research the different companies before deciding which one to work with," he says.

For this family-owned company, honesty is a fundamental element of the business plan. "We're not here just to sell roofs. If we get on your roof and find you don't really need a new roof, we're not going to sell you a roof. We're in this for the long haul," Kohler says.

"We've been in business since 1938, so obviously our reputation is important to us," notes Stacy. "We take the time to hire roofers and train them to be salesmen, which produces a knowledgeable salesperson — not a high-pressure closer."

"We're here year round to serve customers," Kohler says. "If someone has a problem in the middle of winter, they don't call and get a message that we're in Florida. We come out and take care of their problem, even if it's just opening up a drain. We're here for them." ♦

Quick stats

COMPANY NAME

▼ Walker Roofing Co. Inc.

TYPE OF BUSINESS

▼ Residential and commercial roofing and sheet metal services

LOCATION

▼ 2274 Capp Road
St. Paul, MN 55114

EMPLOYEES

▼ 55

YEARS IN BUSINESS

▼ 66

KEYS TO SUCCESS

▼ Good employees and good management practices, plus clear communication with customers

WHAT'S AHEAD

▼ Expanding the sheet metal department aspect of the business, including standing seam sheet metal roofing

CONTACT

▼ Minneapolis (612) 729-2325
St. Paul (651) 251-0910
Emergency (651) 436-8792
www.walkerroofinginc.com

Commercial specialists

As part of its full-service offering, Walker Roofing Company provides the following commercial and industrial services:

- Hot asphalt built up roofs of all types: 10, 12, 15 & 20 year, no dollar limit warranties
- Single-ply EPDM & PVC roofing systems: 45 or 60 mil, ballasted, mechanically anchored and adhered
- Modified bitumen roof system
- Energy-efficient Duro-Last Roof Systems
- Tapered insulation for better drainage
- Snow and ice removal with steam
- Tear off/re-roof with a light-weight system
- Galvanized/pre-finished sheet metal fabrication and repair work
- Repair/recondition base flashings
- Installation/rerouting of interior roof drains
- Installation of gutters and downspouts and pre-finished metal — any color

