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Spring is season for roof inspections

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According to David Hawn, president of RCI Inc., Raleigh, N.C., roof maintenance is the key to realizing the full life cycle of a roofing system – and that's good for the environment. By detecting minor defects and repairing them early, it is possible to avert major problems in the long run.

"A roof inspection is the single most important activity that an environmentally-conscious building manager can do," explained Hawn. A premature roof failure places a heavy burden on the environment, considering the energy costs for manufacturing new roof materials and the waste associated with the removal and disposal of spent ones, Hawn said.

Many facilities managers are qualified to perform roof inspections. A basic survey for obvious damage is better than no examination at all. Damage often occurs near flashings, wherever the roof meets a wall, or a drain or other penetration.

"If you don't get the full life out of a roof then you are doing damage to the environment," said Hawn. A certified roof consultant will not recommend replacing a roof that hasn't reached the end of its service life. "That's where experience comes in," he added. "A roof consultant can tell when a roof is still good and when it should be replaced. He will help the building owner eke out a few more years of service life whenever possible, which is especially appreciated in difficult economic times."

Nearly all roof consultants agree that a roof should be inspected twice a year: just after winter and just before winter. The advantage of inspecting a roof in the spring is that maintenance and repair work can be conveniently scheduled over the summer. "It is better not to wait too long or else it may be too late to complete the repair work before winter returns," said Hawn.

RCI members typically specialize in the entire building envelope. They have deep knowledge of roofing, waterproofing and exteriors. By their code of ethics, RCI members are objective in their project and product recommendations. RCI members know how to cooperate with manufacturers to obtain accurate technical information about the reliability and performance of building products and their suitability for a particular application. Additionally, many of the association's members hold the professional designation of Registered Roof Consultant. These consultants have demonstrated skills through written exam, character reference and documented experience.
