

Roofing Opportunities

Coating a Commercial Metal Roof with Liquid Butyl Rubber

A step-by-step field process for a 20,000 sq. ft. standing-seam metal roof — from the Roof Protect wash-down through Seam Tight repairs to a finished, seamless one-coat membrane.

A large commercial metal roof fails in predictable places: seams, fasteners, flashing, and the rust that creeps out from under them. Tear-off is expensive and disruptive to the business underneath. Liquid Butyl Rubber solves the same problem for a fraction of the cost by turning the existing metal roof into a single seamless waterproof membrane with one coat and never primer needed, applied by a small crew, with the building fully occupied. Here is how a professional crew does it.



Figure 1. Before. Twenty thousand square feet of weathered standing-seam metal with rust bleed at the fasteners.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF EPDM COATINGS

1. Survey, Measure, and Plan the Day

Start with a walk of the entire roof. Note every seam separation, torn lap, backed-out fastener, rusted panel, and penetration, and mark them with chalk so you don't miss anything later. Then measure the true surface area. On a corrugated or ribbed metal roof, the raised profile adds real square footage — measure the ribs and add them to the flat area, or the job will come up short on material.

Liquid Butyl Rubber covers approximately 50 sq. ft. per gallon on a smooth substrate, or 250 sq. ft. per 5-gallon pail. Apply it at 50°F or higher for best results; it needs 55°F to cure, and the substrate temperature should stay below 130°F. Pick a day with no rain in the forecast — although the coating waterproofs within about three hours of application and is tack-free in six to eight hours.

2. Clean the Roof with Roof Protect

Adhesion is won or lost here. Roof Protect is an eco-friendly,

biodegradable cleaner formulated to work with Liquid Butyl Rubber; it chemically lifts oil, grease, mildew, and dirt and contains a mildewcide to kill mold spores before coating.

For a first cleaning before coating, dilute Roof Protect 1:5 with water—one cup of cleaner to every five cups of water. One gallon covers up to 500 sq. ft., so budget roughly 40 gallons of concentrate for a 20,000 sq. ft. roof. Wash the roof down with water, apply the solution, scrub with a soft-bristle brush, then rinse thoroughly and let it dry. For larger roofs, if you are power washing, stay at or below 2,000 PSI: begin at the lowest point of the roof and work upward, and once you reach the highest point, work back down with a final rinse to carry the loosened contaminants off the roof. Keep the solution off painted surfaces and vinyl siding. On subsequent annual cleanings, a 1:10 dilution is enough.



Figure 2. Applying Roof Protect. Crew scrubbing and rinsing from bottom to top before any coating goes down.

Critical: The roof must be **completely dry before applying any Liquid Butyl Rubber**. The product will not adhere to a damp surface. On a roof this size, plan the wash as its own day.

3. Repair Seams, Fasteners and Gaps with Seam Tight

With the roof clean and dry, address everything you chalked on day one. Repair or reinforce any hole, gap, seam, or tear wider than 1/16 inch. Wire-brush rusted areas to remove as much loose oxidation as possible—light corrosion that is tight to the panel can be coated over directly, but heavy rust gets a coat of Seam Tight first.

Seam Tight is a butyl seam compound with 400% elongation and 1,000 PSI tensile strength, and it is UV stable. Brush or roll it on; apply heavy, uniform coats over fasteners, seams, laps, and penetrations. Coverage runs about a 6-inch-wide band by 45 linear feet per gallon. For a torn or open seam, lay the product down roughly 8 inches wide with a roller or brush, embed a poly fabric into the wet compound, and let it dry—the following day, recoat the area with Liquid Butyl Rubber so the seam is fully encapsulated and will not come undone, and used on properly prepared surfaces. Apply between 50°F and 95°F; it waterproofs in about four hours and fully dries in 12 to 15 hours.

4. Chalk the Roof and Mix the Material

Divide the roof into measured sections with chalk lines so the crew can hit the spread rate by eye. For 5-gallon pails, lay out 25 ft. × 10 ft. (250 sq. ft.) grids. When a section is filled in, the pail should be empty — that is the built-in check that you are applying at the correct 20 mil thickness.

Mix each pail with a drill and paddle mixer until a vortex forms, for three to four minutes. Gear for the crew: long-handled rubber squeegees, long-handled 3/8-inch nap rollers, chip brushes for corners and hard-to-reach sections, a rubber spatula, a bag of rags,

and mineral spirits or xylene for cleanup while the product is still wet. The product can also be sprayed with an airless sprayer or a spreader

5. Apply the Coating — One Coat, Seamless

This is a true one-coat application; there is no second coat. Broadcast the material onto the roof in a letter “S” pattern. Follow



Figure 3. Detailing the penetrations. The crew applies the product using medium-nap rollers meant for solvent-based products.

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Figure 4. After, up close. Another significant benefit is that it waterproofs within 3 hours of application.

immediately with the 3/8-inch nap roller to release trapped air and even out the film—several strokes, moving at a speed that doesn't drag the material along. The product spreads more easily at higher temperatures and is less forgiving below 50 F.

Even thickness is everything: no thick puddles, no thin spots. Roller and brush marks that show at first will disappear within a couple of minutes as the product self-levels into a smooth, seamless membrane. Cut in corners, curbs, pipe penetrations, and edges with the chip brush. Wipe drips and splatter with rags and mineral spirits while the material is still wet. Work the chalked grid section by section, keeping a wet edge moving across the roof. On roofs approaching 10,000 sq ft and up, a spreader or commercial airless sprayer will significantly cut application time.

6. Cure, Inspect and Hand Over

Liquid Butyl Rubber stays somewhat tacky for a couple of hours and is not fully cured for up to twenty-four hours depending on nighttime temperatures. At temperatures over 75 degrees, it begins curing more quickly. Wait roughly 24

to 48 hours before walking the finished surface; once fully cured, it can handle foot traffic, inspections, and HVAC service. If the temperature drops below freezing overnight after application, no harm is done—the solvent simply goes dormant, and curing resumes when the roof warms back above 55°F, which is why crews can run these projects well into late fall. This chemical curing process has allowed many customers over the years to fix roof issues instead of waiting for spring with other roof coatings.

Walk the roof for a final inspection: confirm every seam, fastener, and penetration is encapsulated, the film is uniform, and no area was left thin. Then leave the owner with the maintenance step — an annual Roof Protect wash at 1:10 dilution to lift dirt and grease and extend the service life of the membrane.

Why It Works on Metal

A metal roof expands and contracts as temperatures change. And between a coating and the metal roof, the roof always wins. That is why you need a coating with significant elongation and tensile strength. Extend the life of your roof another 18-20 years. Liquid Butyl Rubber stays flexible, bonds directly to properly cleaned metal, and — because Seam Tight has already bridged the gaps and Liquid Butyl Rubber self-levels over the top — the finished roof has no fasteners, laps, or seams left exposed to water.

This is a true one-coat application and never needs a primer. This is because of the proprietary solvent the company developed years ago. Unlike other coatings that dry at ambient temperature, Liquid Butyl Rubber chemically cross-links and fuses to the roof substrate. If you were to look at the curing process under a microscope, you would literally see the molecular strands of the solvent cross-linking to each other; a unique curing process not seen in traditional coatings. **PB**

Greg Kazmierczak is the Sr. VP of sales for EPDM Coatings—a manufacturer of a unique Liquid BUTYL Rubber with a 30-year history of success.

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