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### AVOIDING BLUE TARP SYNDROME

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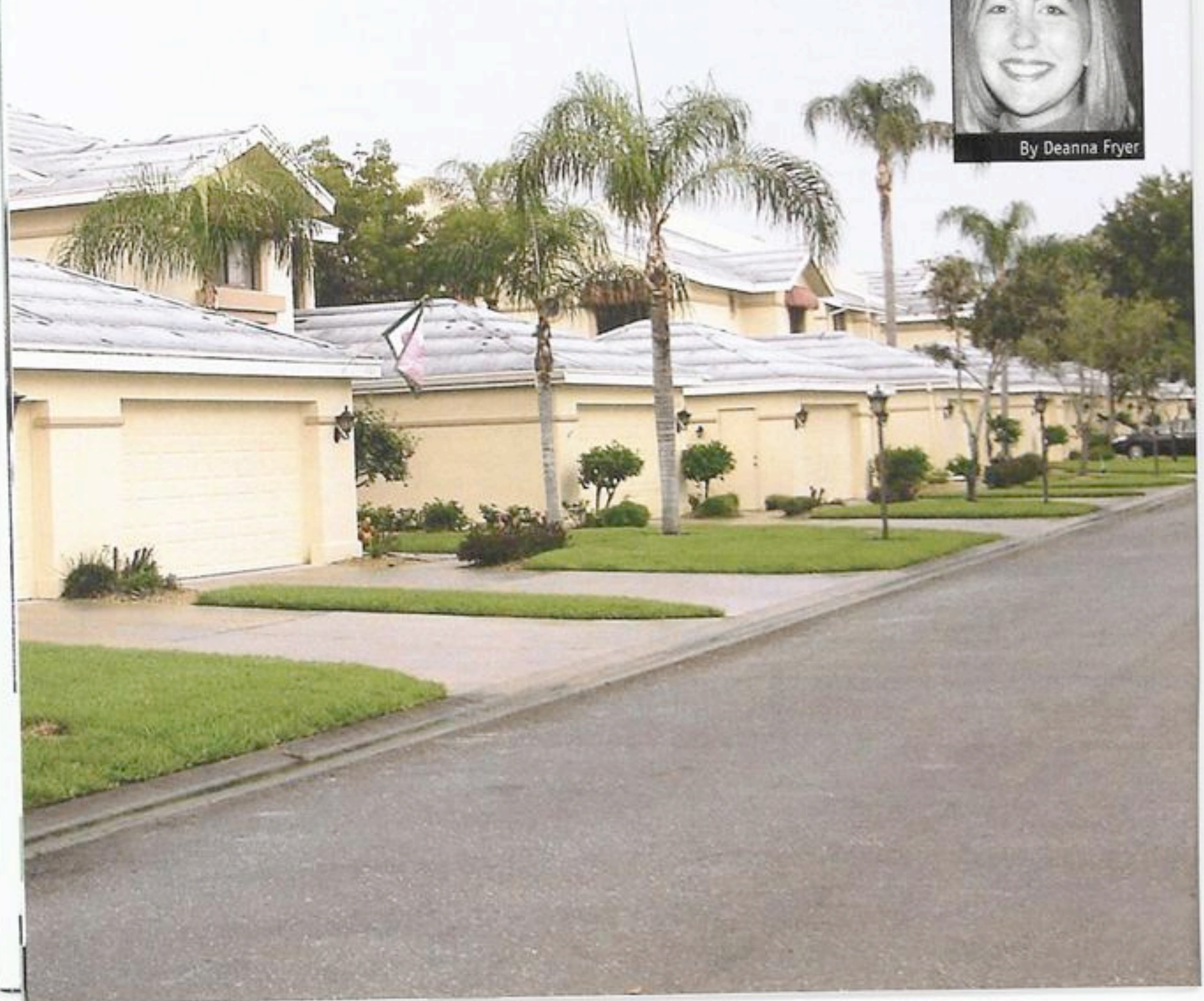
# CONDO MANAGEMENT

Condominiums  
Homeowner Associations  
Property Management

# AVOIDING BLUE TARP SYNDROME



By Deanna Fryer





**Ft. Myers, Florida is one of the** fastest growing cities in the nation. Close to 10 million people – or three-quarters of Florida's population – reside within a 150-mile radius of Ft. Myers and the numbers continue to grow each year.

Among the effects of that growth are delays in roof renovations. Heavy rainfall and the low availability of roofing supplies also accounts for many delayed projects. Although many buildings are in need of a new roof, they are enduring "blue tarp syndrome" while they wait months to have a new roof installed. Though some contractors are biting their nails, others are turning to self-adhesive underlayments to protect roof decks and to give themselves some flexibility when things don't go as planned.

"There is a considerable shift in roofers using self-adhered underlayments to waterproof buildings," said Ken Kelly, owner of Kelly Roofing, a roofing company serving southwestern Florida. "The improvements that have been made to self-adhesive underlayments make them more durable and reliable, as well as more useful in delayed situations."

One of the most valuable qualities of the improved self-adhesive membranes is that they can be exposed to the elements for up to 180 days without damage to the membrane or the substructure. "That time frame gives roofers the opportunity to install the membrane on all buildings and then go back, sometimes months later, to install the roof tiles," said Kelly. "Using the membrane gives us flexibility with construction schedules and unpredictable weather."

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As an example, Kelly cites Fairway Woods II, a 12-building condominium complex in Ft. Myers. Kelly had been delayed in finishing the roof of Fairway Woods II by many consecutive days of heavy rain and the challenge of finding new concrete tiles for the project when the manufacturer discontinued the tiles he had originally ordered. But this delay did not concern Kelly, even though the underlayment had already been installed on the roof decks while waiting to be covered with tiles. Typically, this would be an issue, but Kelly knew that self-adhesive underlayments are now strong enough to remain watertight even if left uncovered for months.

After last year's storms, Floridians tend to hope for the best but expect the worst. As a result, manufacturers are taking the lead to make underlayments stronger for whatever weather lies ahead. "We have lived and learned from our experiences," said Kelly. "After the string of hurricanes last year, people want to make sure we are using a strong underlayment, and as a roofer, I want to be reassured by the manufacturers that I'm installing a dependable product."

#### PREVENTING PUNCTURES

Prior to renovation, the existing roofs at Fairway Woods II had a tile roof, two layers of 30-pound felt paper and wood battens securing it to the roof deck. Although the existing roofs did not leak when first installed, they had begun to leak in several areas, which initially prompted the renovation.

In selecting the new roof underlayment, one major consideration was its ability to resist punctures prior to installation of the roof tiles. A variety of factors at the job site can result in damaged roof materials: wind, rain, traffic, heat, carelessness or a combination of all these. "Membranes can puncture when installing them, but depending on the product, it can be even easier to puncture them at the job site prior to tile installation," said Kelly, who has been in the roofing industry since 1993. "Just having the underlayment sit on the roof can cause its surface to become soft when exposed to the heat, creating holes even before tile installation."

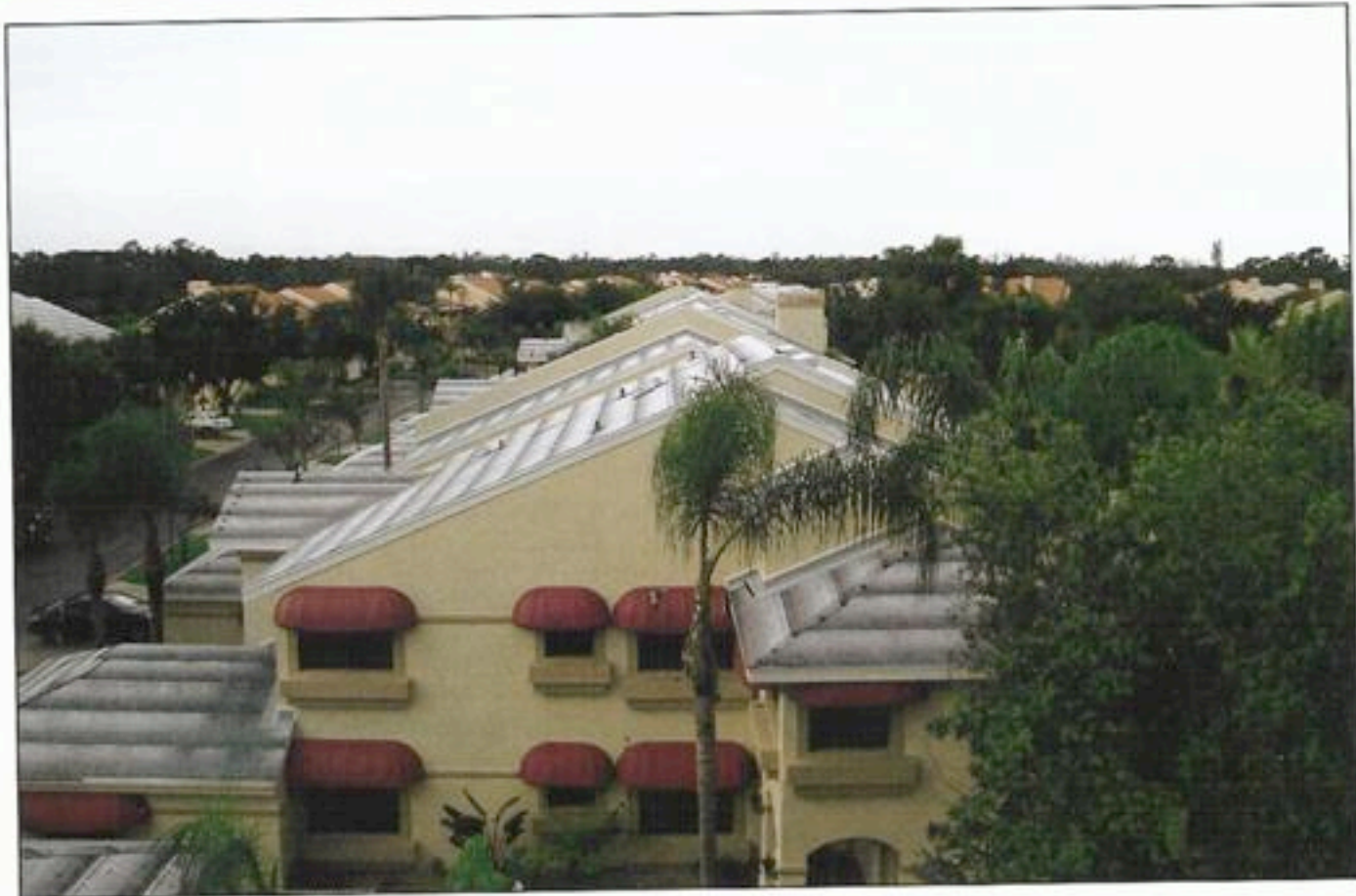
That problem becomes more of an issue with mul-

iple crews and trades working together. The underlayment needs to be able to withstand abuse from general construction traffic, as well as the elements. While Kelly admits that it doesn't happen often, he says it's a problem that can be avoided by using a product that can resist punctures.

According to tests conducted by the National Bureau of Standards, roof temperatures in Florida can rise as high as 171 degrees. Some underlayments are not well suited for extreme temperatures, but a few manufacturers have developed specially formulated underlayments that can withstand heat up to 260 degrees Fahrenheit.

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Another hazard involved with membranes is that the tile lugs—projections on the bottom of the tiles—can dig into the membrane, also causing punctures. “Roofers need to consider the pressure that heat puts on the underlayment before they even install it,” Kelly said.

To meet the needs for heat and puncture resistance, Kelly chose Polystick TU Plus underlayment made by Polyglass. This is a rubberized asphalt waterproofing membrane, glass fiber reinforced, with a high strength polyester fabric on the upper surface to protect the membrane from pressure. “That was a major factor in our choosing Polystick TU Plus,” said Kelly. “It’s puncture resistant so it does not melt or become susceptible to degradation.”

Equally important, the Polystick TU Plus features a SealLap strip, an adhesive surface at the edge of the membrane that allows the membrane to easily adhere at the overlaps. Many adhesive membranes do not have the strip around the perimeter, so when laying the overlapped sections into place, the granular adhesive sticks to granular. The granular surfaces do not adhere as tenaciously as the adhesive strips.

At Fairway Woods II, three crews installed 3,000 squares of Polystick TU Plus on the 12 buildings. Even though the underlayment was used under tile roofing, it can also be used as a metal roofing underlayment and on chimney flashings, skylight flashings, pipe penetrations, application at ridges and eaves, valley underlayments and certain below-grade waterproofing applications.

Two other product features were beneficial on this project: skid resistance and a split release feature, which allows contractors to

pull one piece at a time, install it and then pull the next piece and install it. “When long pieces of underlayment are involved in an application, you risk buckling and leaving voids on the roof,” Kelly said.

Yet another benefit is the availability of insurance premium discounts for using certain underlayments. Though underlayment manufacturers support their products with the standard 10- and 20-year warranties, only exceptional products offer insurance premium discounts. For example, State Farm Insurance, the nation’s largest insurance provider, offers insurance premium discounts for certain underlayments including Polystick TU Plus.

According to Dick Foster, a Fairway Woods II board member responsible for maintenance of the buildings, “I liked Kelly Roofing’s recommendation because it was reliable. It was time to redo the roofs and we wanted a roofing system that would take care of the leakage problems.”

Using Polystick TU Plus underlayment for the Fairway Woods II condominiums saved the homeowners hundreds of dollars in roof renovation cost and saved the project from being compromised by a delay.

Unfortunately, many other roofs in Florida and other parts of the country continue to suffer from “blue tarp syndrome.” To protect your association from the same fate, choose a self-adhesive underlayment with strong characteristics that can meet and exceed the expectations of roofing contractors and building owners.

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Deanna Fryer is a freelance writer for the construction industry.