



LIQUID WATERPROOFING: HOW MERCHANTS CAN HELP RAISE STANDARDS

Sarah Spink, CEO of the Liquid Roofing and Waterproofing Association (LRWA), offers advice on stocking liquid waterproofing products and explains the need for more stringent checks to avoid the risks of the unknown.

As the demand for liquid waterproofing has increased, so has the number of manufacturers both in the UK and overseas, leading to a vast range of different products. Although most liquids provide contractors with very effective waterproofing solutions, there is a growing number being sold by merchants, which don't meet an acceptable standard in the UK.

The root of the problem is that some liquid products haven't been properly tested or certified, but are still making it onto the shelves. This increases the risk of contractors using waterproofing systems which aren't fit for purpose, which can lead to water ingress in a flat roofing project and ultimately, buildings which don't perform as expected.

To avoid these risks, we advise stocking products which can tick these boxes:

PERFORMANCE

An effective way to assess product performance is to look for BBA, BDA and ETA certifications. Following a rigorous assessment, these bodies provide third party approval of liquid waterproofing systems. BBA and BDA certificates also demonstrate that a liquid waterproofing system will comply with UK Building Regulations.

FIRE SAFETY

Some liquids which are manufactured abroad are being stocked without the appropriate fire certification for where they are to be used, so the products may fall short UK building regulations. It is essential that liquid systems have been tested for fire resistance by an appropriate body to ensure they meet UK Building Regulations for

External Fire Spread; these may vary depending on the different regulatory jurisdictions within the UK.

Building regulations in England, for example, make reference to EN 1187 BROOF (t4) and BS 476-3:2004 as the standard test methods, as well as the BS EN 13501-5 classification report which accompanies the EN 1187 test.

The tests assess the ability of the roof build-up, including waterproof membrane, to resist fire from outside the building. The penetration and spread of the flame are both tested to generate a rating. A tested system which achieves either EN 1187 BROOF (t4) or BS 476-3 Ext F.AA, Ext F.AB, or Ext F.AC, allows the system to be used anywhere on the roof and is therefore classified as 'unrestricted.'

QUALITY

Liquid manufacturers should have a third-party accredited quality management system such as ISO 9001, which ensures the product is manufactured to a consistent specification.

APPLICATION GUIDANCE AND TRAINING

There is a growing concern that liquid waterproofing solutions are being sold off the shelf to operatives who haven't been trained properly, increasing the risk of the product being poorly applied.

Liquid products vary considerably depending on different chemistry types, so it is vital that roofing contractors are fully trained in the application and have the required product knowledge.

Application guidelines must be readily available from the manufacturer as well clear routes for system training for the contractor.

Manufacturers should also offer guidance and support to both merchants and contractors regarding the training options available – such as the accredited courses offered by the LRWA, which are led by a specialist team.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Liquid waterproofing manufacturers should have a UK registered office, so support can be provided to operatives on the ground if a product is imported from overseas.

A technical team based in the UK is vital to ensure product and application advice can be given if required.

VIABLE GUARANTEES

Liquids are commonly sold with a guarantee but not all are viable. All guarantees should be carefully checked to establish what, exactly, they cover.

If a guarantee is made regarding the durability of the product, establish how this was tested and what independent certificates are in place to prove the claim.

AN INFORMED CHOICE

Before stocking a liquid waterproofing solution, it is therefore vital for merchants to seek advice from a trusted trade association such as the LRWA.

We can guide merchants on suitable manufacturers offering high-quality accredited products, and provide technical guidance to ensure all the right boxes are ticked before liquids reach the shelves. As well as a dedicated technical team, available to answer your queries, the LRWA is the only recognised body in liquid applied membranes to produce compliant technical guidance notes and Codes of Practice.

RAISING STANDARDS

The LRWA is committed to working with merchants to help raise standards across the industry.

As part of this aim, we are working on a project, which could provide merchants and other distributors with a tool enabling them to quickly and easily assess the suitability of liquid systems, including accreditations.

New initiatives like this combined with more awareness and training, will ensure that merchants, contractors, and manufacturers can provide and install liquid waterproofing solutions which perform as expected.

For more information or advice, please contact us at technical@lrwa.org.uk