

# Factors Impacting Low-Slope Roofing Costs

## A National Labor Study

### At-a-Glance

Finding and keeping skilled workers has impacted the construction field for decades, and roofing is no exception. With fewer people entering the roofing trades, commercial contractors specializing in low-slope roofing face the challenges of delivering quality roof systems with fewer skilled hands, all while maintaining a profit. Controlling and reducing labor costs can mean the difference between a business thriving and closing its doors for good.



With this in mind, CertainTeed commissioned an independent, five-year nationwide study to measure if self-adhered modified bitumen roofing truly delivers cost and labor savings compared to other low-slope roof covers. The study revealed that much more goes into constructing a profitable, quality low-slope roof than just product selection. **The roof covering, project parameters, tool management and crew efficiency** are all major factors impacting contractor profits.

### How we got the data:

We observed...

**45**

low-slope roofs

**18**

configurations

**6**  
different  
roof covers



< Collected data was validated by RSMeans; no observed application required an average time greater than published by RSMeans.

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Observations based on the study include:

- A two-layer, self-adhered modified asphalt (mod bit) system can be installed faster than a single layer of mechanically attached or fully adhered TPO.
- A self-adhered mod bit cap installs faster than a torch-applied or hot-mopped mod bit cap.
- Tools matter. For example, a multi-torch cart or “dragon wagon” can cut the field application time of a torch-applied project significantly when used properly.
- On bituminous roof covers, self-adhered field application can offer labor savings, even if the flashing and penetration details are completed with a torch or mop.
- Poorly managed crews, faulty tools and extreme climates will increase installation time, regardless of product selection.

The study is intended to help roofing contractors optimize their existing crews. It also serves as a reference tool contractors can use to compare their labor costs to a current and comprehensive national average.

To see the full study, visit [www.certainteed.com/laborstudy](http://www.certainteed.com/laborstudy)

*CertainTeed Corporation commissioned Colin Murphy and Darbi Sovay Krumpas of national roofing and waterproofing consulting firm Trinity | ERD to conduct this labor study. CertainTeed Commercial Roofing Product Manager Abby Feinstein co-authored the study.*

## Just the facts

Bituminous, multi-layer coverings can be installed cost-competitive with single-ply coverings.

- Trinity | ERD

Download the Labor Study at [www.certainteed.com/laborstudy](http://www.certainteed.com/laborstudy)

Between these five low-slope roof coverings, a modified asphalt system with a mechanically attached base and a self-adhered cap is the fastest to install (assuming a 500 square project with 900 lf of base flashing, 22 pipe, 6 drains and 10 equipment curbs).

