

INSIDE: Gutter Opportunities supplement

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The power of Solar

Metal accommodates multiple systems

Top 10 Products of 2008

Product profile: Jobsite tools

Roofing Expo preview





Tax incentives should help sell solar

As a durable partner with solar products, sales of metal should increase heading through 2009

Metal roofing installers considering a venture into the installation of roofing with solar products, the advice of fellow roofer John Lastella is “Get a partner.”

John owns and operates Northstar Construction and installs a multitude of roofing products, everything from metal panels to wood shakes, flat roofing and slate roofing. With the new tax incentives becoming available again as part of the Emergency Stabilization Act of 2008 (*Metal Roofing*, December 2008-January 2009) — also known as the Wall Street Bail Out — installing solar products, commercially or residentially, will become more feasible for the customer, who will want to know the bottom line.

Northstar’s solar partner is SouthPoint, LLC, which is owned and operated by John’s brother, Mike Lastella. Both businesses are in Leominster, Mass.

“The best way to make it work is to have separate companies involved in the process,” Mike Lastella says. “The roofing company takes care of the roofing and the solar company takes care of the solar.”

Because of the initial cost involved with the installation, a financing partner is an integral part of the process for the Lastellas as well.

To make the solar component of the project the valuable enough to excite the customer, the Lastellas contend any and all rebates or incentives are the key. That’s where Mike, the solar expert, shines — in most cases, it will take the rebate to sell the solar products, so preparing all the paperwork properly to ensure approval

falls on Mike. “He can be the smart brother, that’s fine,” John says. “I’ll be the better looking brother.”

Actually, the two wouldn’t do it any other way. To get their operation off the ground, their first project was John’s home, a re-roofing job on a colonial style home he is “rehabbing to be as green as possible,” he says. While they are not planning on applying to have the home LEED accredited, they have followed the LEED guidelines. It just made sense to start with John’s home. “How can we sell it if we’re not doing it?” he says.

It also turned out to be a great learning experience for future projects. They picked up on some installation best practices that were discovered along the way. Mike says it is very important to have a plan figured out and in place before starting the project — everyone has to be on the same page and understand what everyone else is doing.

The home incorporates two solar systems, one from Dawn Solar and the other from United Solar Ovonic. (Both are annually among the top products as determined by reader responses in *Metal Roofing Magazine*. See page 28.)

Dawn Solar Systems were developed with the idea of preserving the architectural aesthetics while reducing energy costs. The system, which will use the sun’s energy to heat most of the hot water used within the house, is integrated into the building’s architecture — it can be installed under a roof or behind a wall. For John’s house, it will be only under the roof on the south



side of the home. The Uni-Solar product is a laminate PV cell best suited for installation on standing seam roofing to generate electricity.

John says the Dawn Solar System will provide all of the home's hot water in the summer months, when there is the most sunshine, and about 50 percent of the home's hot water in the winter months. He expects the Uni-Solar panels should provide 90 percent of the home's electricity annually, based on a calculated average expenditure of \$100 per month.

Both solar products were installed on the backside or south side of the home. It may be too obvious to mention, but solar systems are most productive and beneficial when they receive the most sunlight. John had to eliminate some shade trees in his yard since some of these photos were taken to get the most benefit. Some customers may be willing to make that sacrifice and some may not. Mike says he's heard of customers who wanted a solar system, even though their home was well shaded and they didn't plan to eliminate shade. "Some people install solar for the benefits and some because it's the right thing to do," Mike says. "Others install solar just so they can say they're green, even if the system is not as productive as it could be."

After SouthPoint completed the installation of the Dawn Solar System on John's home, Bob Delisle of Harvey Industries in Waltham, Mass., ran the metal roofing panels onsite with coil (medium bronze) and a roll former from Drexel Metals. The Uni-Solar panels, which are peel-and-stick application, were installed on the ground for safety and an easier installation than working on a 10:12 sloped roof. "I don't know if we'd even try to install on a roof that steep," John says. Again, this emphasizes the importance of having the solar company involved with the project from the start — installing laminates after the roofing is installed adds to the difficulty and danger of the installation.

Care must be taken when applying the Uni-Solar panels

Northstar Construction photos



to the roofing panels. Obviously, it's important to have it lined up, parallel to the seams. "It's simple, but you have to be careful," John says. "Otherwise it's just a \$700 whoops (for each metal panel with a PV laminate)."

Panels were hoisted to the roof and installed by the roofers. An electrician was at the ridge, moving along with the installation, connecting the electrical components that would eventually be concealed under the ridge cap. "It's important to find an electrician who doesn't mind being up on the roof," Mike says.

Customers may ask a lot of questions before they decide they want to install a solar system with their metal roof and it's important someone have the answers. "I've given up on having a standard sales pitch," Mike says. "Every customer wants solar for a different reason, so we try to get to learn what the customer is looking for and what they expect.

"The key is getting a chance to sell the solar when the roof is being sold, not after it's been installed. John hears about the roofing jobs and most times can determine if the customer would be a potential solar customer. It's a perfect marriage." **MR**

To learn more about the Mike Lastella's solar operation, visit www.southpoint-llc.com.

+ FOR MORE INFORMATION on Drexel Metals, circle 122; for Dawn Solar, circle 123; for United Solar Ovonic, circle 124 on our Reader Service Card between pages 10 and 11.