

WHEN BIRDS RAZE THE ROOF

How many ways can common birds degrade construction? Too many, according to Barry Schader, owner of Tischler Brothers, a general construction firm specializing in roofing and waterproofing for commercial and residential buildings. And over the years Schader has experienced most of them up close and in person.

"Bird droppings tend to seriously degrade roofing materials," Schader said. "The most common roofing materials are organically based, like asphalt or pressed wood fiber, and they can rot or mildew when subject to acidic droppings."

Furthermore, Schader said pigeons eat gravel, which gets deposited on the roof in their droppings and can clog drain lines. "The high nitrogen content of the droppings encourages seeds to germinate and grow at an accelerated rate in the drainage system," he said.

"Then, without sunlight, the plants die and clog the drain."

As if that weren't enough, Schader cites bird droppings as a major health hazard to his crew and to the occupants of the buildings. "Besides being unpleasant, the bird droppings harbor bacteria and germs that can cause disease," he said.

It is true that bird droppings often serve as home to fungi that have the potential to cause serious, even fatal, lung disease (histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis) when the spores are transmitted to humans who may breathe in the harmful fecal dust.

BIRD REPELLENT PROVES TO BE AN EFFECTIVE DETERRENT TO PIGEONS.

Additionally, if the droppings are allowed to build up a roof can become slippery, making it hazardous to workers.

Schader has been fighting the battle against bird droppings for the last 10 years, first as a manager for Tischler Brothers and for the last six years as owner of the company. PCOs can learn from his experience in battling these bothersome pests.

BIRDS ARE BAD FOR BUSINESS. Pigeons were Schader's prime concern because of

their large size and the way they band together in flocks, which causes a huge mess. "To protect our business, it was imperative to solve the problem," he said.

The owner of Tischler Brothers tried tar first, but that created a problem by killing the pigeons, an illegal act in some states. Next he tried snakes and owls, but they weren't particularly effective. The problem Schader faced with the pigeons finally came to a head on one particular job.

"We cleaned a location and did the repairs, but soon afterwards, the customer asked us to return," said Schader. "We had to go back to the job at our own expense and clean up the bird mess again. I was fed up with the pigeon problem until I received a mailer about Bird-Proof."

Bird-Proof, from Chicago-based Bird-X, is a transparent gel that repels pest birds from their normal roosting areas.

When Bird-Proof is applied on ledges, rafters, cornices, ornamental copings and similar popular "landing sites," the gel compound discourages birds from alighting and nesting for a year or more, even under extreme weather conditions.

Bird-Proof gel has a tacky feeling that birds shun, yet is harmless, odorless, non-poisonous and environmentally safe. The product is easy to apply with any standard caulking gun, and is also available in liquid form for easy spraying on trees and other large surfaces and hard to reach areas.

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Pest birds, like pigeons, are a serious nuisance and can pose potential health problems for both customers and pest control technicians.

THE ROOF

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OUTWITTING BIRDS. Schader said he concentrated his application of Bird-Proof to areas protected from the weather, where birds like to congregate and roost. In Union City, N.J., home base to Tischler Brothers, Schader finds that southwestern exposures are the most appealing and accessible to birds.

"Immediately upon installation of Bird-

Proof, the birds went away," said Schader. "They won't inhabit or roost where the gel is applied, and it discourages them completely by making them uncomfortable."

Since discovering the product, Schader has applied Bird-Proof to all kinds of structures, including public buildings, private homes, school buildings and apartment buildings.

"Bird-Proof is useful in any area, and I've recommended it to others," said Schader. "For example, I recommended it to a worried purchasing agent for application in New York City's Lincoln Tunnel where birds were roosting in the girders, creating a health hazard."



Bird-Proof is an environmentally safe, non-poisonous alternative to pest bird control.

Schader was also called in to rescue a town hall cited for health code violations because of dead bird carcasses in the attic, which were attracting rodents. The birds had flown in to the structure through ventilation units in the roof. Schader solved the problem by restoring and repairing the building, and applying Bird-Proof.

"Birds like to roost along dormers, under eaves or soffits and on ledges," said Schader. "For homeowners, this means they're continually washing their sidewalks and cleaning the gutters. Bird-Proof virtually ends such repetitive hassles immediately."

Schader knows some worst-case scenarios as well. For example, when bird droppings have destroyed a roof, the cost for a cure is very high. "If the roof has deteriorated, you must remove it and replace it entirely rather than just re-roofing over it," said Schader. "This doubles the cost for the customer," something PCOs may want to point out to their clients.

INEXPENSIVE TECHNIQUE. Schader said Bird-Proof repellent will work against any pest bird if the user has general knowledge of birds and uses common sense. "We don't run a continuous bead of gel, we space it out about every 3 inches like a dotted line," said Schader. "By metering it out in lighter coverage, we save money."

Bird-Proof is a physical deterrent, not a poison, and birds are simply discomforted by the tackiness of the product. It is a psychological deterrent as well, since it reinforces their learning not to roost on sites treated with it.

"Wherever we've applied Bird-Proof to residential customers' roofs, we've not had one callback," said Schader. "That is the ultimate compliment of the product's effectiveness in the field."

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This article and the accompanying photographs are courtesy of the Bird-X Inc., Chicago, Ill.

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