Confusing Words

by Charles McGarvey
Roof Surveys and Informational Services

Many single words in the English language have more than one meaning. This can sometimes lead to misunderstandings of what a person says or the meaning of a written sentence. A word can even become more confusing when it's combined with others to create a new definition not related to the original.

At times how a word is defined may not seem very important, but it really depends on your profession. I'm sure most roofing contractors would like a word to be easily defined with one meaning, but if they only had one meaning there may not be a legal profession. Thus, various professions place different emphasis on the daily meaning of words.

Within the roofing industry there are two common words that all contractors should understand individually and then recognize that new definitions are created when words are added. They are: Commercial and Residential.

So, how do the definitions of Commercial and Residential change when either is added in front of: Roofing Products, Roofing Systems, or Building Codes?

Study their original definition and then the changes that occur:

1) ***Commercial*** – A place of business

Commercial Roofing Products – Long lasting and higher quality than standard materials. Common examples would include: commercial grade slate, commercial grade metals, commercial grade roofing membranes, etc. The materials can be installed on either commercial or residential buildings.

Commercial Roofing Systems – Low slope roofing systems (less than 2"/12" slope)
These words were originally marketed to describe the development of "long lasting" waterproof roofing materials (e.g. coal tar) installed on low slope roofing systems. Low slope roofing systems can be installed on either commercial or residential buildings.

Commercial Building Codes – The building regulations for new construction or alterations to an existing building that includes a place of business or large residential constructions as defined within the code. These codes "do not" include detached one and two family dwelling units, townhouses 3 stories or less in height, or any of several other types of residential occupancies. The roofing system may either be low slope or steep slope.

2) ***Residential*** – A place where people live; a non-business location.

Residential Roofing Products – Standard materials that can also be defined as either low or high quality. The materials can be a thinner gauge or a lighter weight than a similar commercial product and can be installed on either commercial or residential buildings.

Residential Roofing Systems - Steep slope roofing systems (greater than 2"/12" slope).
So named because most residential buildings throughout the United States are constructed with steep slopes and covered with shingles, tile, slate, metal, etc. These roofing systems are water shedding and not waterproof and installed on either commercial or residential structures

Residential Building Codes – These codes include detached one and two family dwelling units, townhouses 3 stories or less in height, or any of several other types of residential occupancies. The buildings can be constructed with either low or steep slope roof assemblies

Of course the roofing industry's definitions of Commercial and Residential words and phrases can be interchangeable, subjective, and at times arbitrary. But understand there are times when there are differences between a single word and a phrase containing that word.

Source:
Roof Surveys and Informational Services
106 Diane Dr.
Broomall, Pa. 19008
610-353-9850
Charles McGarvey