



DECRA Celebrates

50 Years

of Strength

by Josh Marx



As “Fletcher-owned” DECRA Roofing Systems Inc. commemorates its 50th anniversary in 2007, the company has plenty to celebrate. Sales of DECRA’s stone coated steel roofing products are on the upswing, keeping folks busy at the company’s 104,000-square-foot UL registered ISO 9001:2000 manufacturing facility in Corona, Calif. The company recently opened a brand-new Indianapolis warehouse and moved its Arlington, Texas, warehouse to expanded facilities last October.

“Within the next three years we will have to build another, more centrally located manufacturing facility,” predicts Bo Hudson, the company’s CEO. “Even when you remove sales attributed to the hurricane rebuilding construction, our volume has doubled in the last six years alone.”

The factors contribute

ing to DECRA’s recent growth surge include the release of a shingle profile product that is easier to install, distribution of the profiles through roofing wholesale suppliers, the enactment of more stringent building codes requiring stronger roofing materials, and contractor support and training provided by the company’s staff.

“Our employees’ positive attitude and strong desire for our company’s success is responsible for the products’ tremendous growth over the years,” says Hudson. “Part of that attitude stems from having a product you can stand behind.”

Durability of Stone and Steel

Multiple protective layers are fused together to give DECRA panels their resiliency and strength. Their base is comprised of 26-gauge structural grade steel, with a minimum tensile strength of 37 ksi. The steel is bathed in a molten aluminum-zinc alloy, which



■ The new barrel-shaped Villa tile profile will join DECRA's line of weather-tight, interlocking panels in spring 2007.



■ DECRA's Shake profile in Teak gives this 4,500-square-foot roof an "old-world" appearance. (Photo by Kulp's of Stratford.)

helps protect exposed cut edges, drilled holes and scratches. An acrylic priming system is then used to create a uniform substrate that enhances the adhesion of subsequent coatings. A custom-designed acrylic resin binder is then applied in a basecoat that blends with the stone granule colors. The resin bonds the stone to the steel and protects underlying material from water and UV light. The final layer consists of ceramic-coated stone granules sealed with an acrylic glaze for a protective, aesthetically appealing finish.

Four profiles — tile, shake, shingle and shingle plus — currently com-

prise DECRA's line of stone coated steel roofing products. A new Villa tile will be available this spring, while two more new profiles, one shake and one shingle, are scheduled for release sometime this summer. The company offers a variety of different color schemes for each profile, including a new Mist Grey finish that meets Energy Star reflectivity requirements and the guidelines detailed in LEED Site Selection Credit 7.2-Heat Island Effect. All DECRA products feature a Class A fire rating, have a transferable 50-year limited warranty, a 120 mph wind-uplift



■ Terracotta Tile profile on a hotel in New York. (Photo courtesy of DECRA.)

warranty and a Class 4 UL 2218 impact resistance rating. They also comply with Florida Building Codes, Miami Dade requirements and Texas Department of Insurance impact resistance guidelines. The company even lists loss of appearance and/or excess stone granules as a manufacturer defect covered under warranty.



■ The profiles of the Vintage Slate Shingle (above) and Granite Shake (right) provide a heavy, multi-dimensional appearance at only 125 and 150 pounds per square, respectively.



A History of Superior Performance

“Because our tiles have performed on roofs since 1957, DECRA panels have the longevity to back up our performance and appearance claims,” says Natalie Tanner, the company’s Marketing Manager.

The company points out that the product has its roots in the inventions necessitated by events in World War II. During the war, the British used corrugated metal to hastily reconstruct buildings damaged by the German Luftwaffe. With oil-based paint unavailable, new substances were needed to camouflage the shiny buildings. One solution was to sprinkle stone chips over a coating of tar. Another was a coal emulsion coating designed by the Decraspray Co. of Kent, England, to be “acid-proof and chemical-fume-proof, with a very high resistance to water vapour.” Acquiring the rights to Decramastic spray, New Zealand entrepreneur Louis J. Fisher combined the ideas. He used the mastic coating to bond crushed stone with metal panels, creating the first version of DECRA’s roofing product. Today, the company is owned by Fletcher Building in New Zealand, and it produces its roofing systems for global distribution.

The products were first introduced to Honolulu in 1968, but the company asserts DECRA’s sales in the continental United States really took hold in California during the 1980s. “Because of all the wildfires in California, many communities enacted building codes banning wood shake,” explains Tanner.

“DECRA was a noncombustible alternative to wood shake, and when permitted, could be installed directly over existing wood shake.”

DECRA’s ability to solve other costly roofing issues contributed to its growing appeal. The panels have been used to safely encapsulate hazardous asbestos, eliminating the need for removal and disposal. They have also been installed directly over aging slate, saving business closure and removal expenses. The products are also widely installed for their interlocking, weather-tight design and warranty against hail penetration, cracks or splits. The Texas Department of Insurance and other states currently offer rebates for installing roofs that meet UL2218 impact guidelines.

Impressing Contractors

Ask contractors what they like about DECRA and they’ll tell you they have found a system they can rely on to meet the needs of the most stringent homeowners in some of the toughest climates in the country. “A DECRA roof is ideal for our climate,” says Llana Tuttle, the CEO of Lianro Metal Roofs Inc. in Palmer Lake, Colo. “Huge hail doesn’t even scratch it, years of snow will not cause it to crack or peel, and when it’s properly installed, even 70 mph Colorado winds won’t affect it.”

With retrofit installations comprising 90 percent of Lianro’s business, the company is one of many in weather-challenged areas of the country enjoying increasing sales of stone coated steel products.

Originally a general contracting company founded in 1959, Lianro installed its first DECRA roof in 1981. After discovering the product through a customer request, Lianro’s owner performed his second installation on his own home. The products became the catalyst for Lianro’s evolution into a metal roofing business that currently has 15 employees and generates annual revenues of \$2 million. The company receives 87 percent of its business through referrals.

“People want to protect their investment, and we get a lot of interest from engineers who’ve researched the product,” states Tuttle. “None of the DECRA roofs we have installed have ever needed to be replaced.”

Robert Kulp, the majority owner of Kulp’s of Stratford LLC in Stratford, Wis., added DECRA’s stone-coated metal systems to his repertoire and has been impressed by their performance. “We have done over 150 DECRA projects and never had any warranty issues,” he says. “As a company that also does commercial flat roofing, we are especially impressed that none of the DECRA installations has leaked, either.”

In its 21st year, the 40-employee operation first installed a DECRA roof less than ten years ago on a customer referral from a manufacturer’s representative. Today, DECRA accounts for \$1.5 million of the company’s annual \$5 million revenue. A director for the National Roofing Contractors Association, Kulp explains the roofs have the ability to increase property values. He looks for potential custom-



■ These DECRA Tile roofs in Granite and Garnet offer severe weather protection in classic style.

ers that are committed to their building and might be dissatisfied with traditional roofing options.

“Churches are by far our biggest niche market,” says Kulp. “For a church, the preservation value of a DECRA roof turns it into an investment rather than a lost expense.”

When Kulp recently bid to reroof the historic Forest County courthouse in Crandon, Wis., he was informed the project had a \$40,000 maximum budget. After Kulp discussed the EDPM roof information the committee had requested, he made a presentation on the structure’s snow and ice issues, as well as the importance of protecting its historic value. The group ended up contracting Kulp to install a \$93,000 DECRA roof.

A Bright Future

In January, FEMA director R. David Paulison stated, “An independent study released last year revealed that every dollar invested in building safer and stronger structures to better weather the next disaster saves four dollars. The concept is called ‘mitigation’ and is critical to the rebuilding effort, especially in areas of risk.”

As consumer demand and code requirements for durable roofing materials continue to increase, DECRA seeks to expand its visibility by participating as

the roofing material manufacturer for the NextGen Home Experience at 2007 International Builders Show’s in Orlando, Fla. This year’s “First to the Future” theme requires homes be constructed with the latest easy-to-use, affordable technology that can be integrated simply into the modern home. It is the third straight year the project has featured a DECRA roof.

“One of the things that continues to improve our business is that our contractor-friendly profiles allow mainstream roofing contractors to enter the metal roofing business,” explains Hudson. “Our products place contractors a step ahead of their immediate competition.”

To facilitate contractor orders and installations, the company has set up a contractor support network across the United States and Canada. Three zone managers and 16 regional managers are currently available for sales and installation training or consultation. They can meet with contractors at their place of business and often hold classes at distributor locations. DECRA’s team will give assistance and instruction at jobsites, distribute and explain the company’s free product educational CD and provide contractors with sales materials, including brochures, DVDs and TV segments. For more information, contractors can visit



■ DECRA’s Shingle profile in Vintage Slate was installed May 2006 to help preserve the 100-year old St. Peter Catholic Church in Stevens Point, Wis. (Photo by Kulp’s of Stratford.)

the company’s Web site (www.decra.com) or call 877-463-3272.

“There is plenty of opportunity and room to grow the metal roofing market,” says Hudson, “A lot of it is just getting the word out.” **R**

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