

New shingles pushing into area



Press-Citizen / Jason A. Cook

As Jeff Urbanek holds a rubber shingle in place, Luis Rodriguez nails it to the roof of a Middle Amana home Thursday. The shingles, made from 100 percent rubber and molded to look like slate tiles, come with a double lifetime warranty.

Rubber taking over roofs

Company offers area long-lasting shingles

By Vanessa Miller
Iowa City Press-Citizen

It started with a dream to increase safety in American homes, a drive to preserve the environment and two production plants in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Hi-Tek Rubber Inc.'s newest product is a rubber roofing material that is fire tested, aesthetically pleasing, recyclable and UV, ozone and oxidant resis-

tant.

"We manufacture shingles for residential and commercial businesses," said Cindy Van Orden, who works in promotional services for Hi-Tek Rubber Inc. "Our goal is to produce a superior roofing material in an environmentally friendly manner."

Gordon Cell began to research and develop the simulated shingles made

Details

■ For more information contact Michael Burlage, sales consultant with Hi-Tek Rubber Inc., at 321-3040.

from recycled tires in 1997.

The Minnesota-based organization was incorporated in 1999 and four years later two Vietnam entities began producing and shipping shingles made from a synthetic rubber polymer of ethylene and propylene monomers

to Minneapolis.

"EPDM has been used for 40 years as commercial roofing material," said Renetta Burlage, independent sales representative for Hi-Tek Rubber Inc. "It's used on houses or banks with flat roofs."

In 2001, the company laid its first rubber shingles on a house in St. Paul, Minn., with a \$173,600 grant from the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance.

Hi-Tek Rubber Inc. began marketing its product in May in Iowa City.

See SHINGLES, 4A

Shingles

From 1A

While officials have only made one local sale to a homeowner in the Amana Colonies, they expect its popularity to grow because it requires low maintenance and is durable, recyclable, favored by the insurance industry, lightweight, and an excellent insulator in extreme temperatures.

"There are many thermoplastic companies that are doing the same thing," Burlage said. "But we are the only company in the world selling EPDM shingles in the three-tab form."

The three-tab design links three of the rubber shingles together and is easier to install and maintain, officials said.

"You can also cover more space with the three-tab design," Burlage said.

One 10- by 10-foot square, which is about 50 shingles, costs \$340 and lasts about 100 years, officials said. That means the average cost per year is about \$3.05 per 10- by 10-foot square. In comparison, Burlage said slate roofing, which can last about 100 years, costs \$4 per year and wood shingles, which

last about 30 years, cost \$6.67 per year.

"The demand is there, and our production is driven by the rising homeowner's insurance," Van Orden said, adding that many insurance companies are opting not to cover homes with wooden roofs because they are short-lived and flammable. "Some insurance companies will not insure wooden roofs anymore because of the fire hazard. Many companies are looking at roofing alternatives."

While the product being shipped from Vietnam is not made from recycled products, Van Orden said it will not damage the environment.

"It's 100 percent recyclable and when you do tear it off, it won't go to the landfill," she said. "It is just so durable, and you don't have to replace it over time."

Burlage said asphalt shingles can be damaged by wind and

mildew, metal roofs are subject to corrosion, slate tiles are easily broken and cedar shingles are flammable and damaged by pests.

Caleb Sherman, manager of Coralville Roofing Inc., said that while he believes there is a market for rubber shingles, he is not interested in using them.

"I don't like the rubber flat roofing because it doesn't lay down nice and it has bubbles," Sherman said. "For me, an asphalt base is a nicer product."

While Ed Close, 25, of Iowa City, is not yet a homeowner, he said the rubber product would be his first choice.

"I would totally use the rubber," Close said. "I question if Iowa is one of the first places they should bring something like this, but I think it's a good idea."

Van Orden said that once the company has consistent flow of product, the organization will begin domestic production from recycled bicycle tires.

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Van Orden



Burlage



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