

The Duradek Story



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Duradek was originally conceived by a couple of general contractors in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. The homes common to this area were built on the side of a hill overlooking the lake. Sundecks were a very important part of the lifestyle of the residents – they served two purposes. The first was to extend part of the living area of the house, and it was used for barbecuing, dining outdoors and generally just enjoying the vista. The second purpose was for use as a waterproof roof over a carport. Most homes were two stories with the living area on the second floor and the deck extended out at second floor level.

As popular as decks were, they presented a tremendous problem to a general contractor. There were no reliable waterproofing materials available with which to complete this difficult task. Inevitably, a waterproof deck became a call back for a general contractor. A better answer had to be found.

These two gentlemen were boaters and were familiar with the vinyl sheet that was then being used to cover the interior floor of small boats. This marine vinyl was intended as a non-slip, attractive surface; tough enough to put up with the kind of abuse it would take in a marine application, but still look good and clean easily. If this vinyl sheet worked on a boat, surely it would work on a deck.

An industry was born!

In the early days there was little known about vinyl, compatibility of adhesives, seaming techniques and proper perimeter detailing. Many of the early installations did not perform well as a waterproofing system, but the product itself performed beautifully. Over the years, the system of application has been fine tuned to the point where it has become one of the finest walking deck, waterproofing systems in the world.

The idea caught on rapidly and within a very short period of time there were other contractors throughout the neighbouring communities who wished to apply this system to their decks. Within a few years there were over 30 companies dedicated to the sales and installation of Duradek throughout western Canada and north western United States.



Bob and John Ogilvie, owners of Duradek

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The General Tire & Rubber Company, the same company which had supplied the marine flooring had been asked to build a product specifically meant for outdoor residential use. It had to be re-designed with surface textures more suitable for the non-skid yet cleanable requirements of a home. New patterns and styles were designed to fit in with the exterior look of residential construction. The formula was enhanced to increase the life span and the durability of the product. It had to be both fire and mildew resistant and the necessary additives were included.

At this time the primary use of vinyl was for decks and balconies not over living space. There later became a need, however, for an attractive, cleanable product like Duradek to be used on flat roofs which were used as decks but also served as the roof over habitable space beneath. Since Duradek had a lot of experience (at that time about seven years) with successful waterproofing with vinyl, they approached the manufacturer to build a thicker material to be used as a roof grade covering. SurcoSeal was a solid colour, 60 mil vinyl, the first of its kind in the world (and still used extensively today, particularly in multi-residential developments). It was designed to meet the physical requirements as established by the Canadian General Standards Branch (CGSB), for PVC roofing plus another 15 mils to provide for a “wear layer”.

After a number of years of experimentation, Duradek had successfully entered the market to do something, which the roofing experts said could not be done - A fully adhered roof membrane, tough enough to be walked on without additional protection. The normal roof deck in those days was a built up tar with wooden duckboards or concrete pavers over top. They were usually not very attractive, added a lot of weight to the structure and worst of all, allowed the growth of all kinds of plant life in the cracks. Maintenance, slipperiness and rot were serious problems with the systems. By comparison, the PVC system was clean, attractive, lightweight and very easy to maintain.



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It took a number of years of successfully waterproofing roof decks to gain the trust of the architectural community. Today Duradek markets 7 differently styled patterns and 24 colours of its “Ultra” roofing product, which has the Canadian Construction Materials Centre (CCMC) approval and the International Code Council (ICC) approval in the U.S.

Duradek’s marketing philosophy had always been to keep tight reins on the quality of the work and by so doing would earn the trust of the construction community. Small contractors, many owner/operators who took ownership to the product line in their own communities were the key. They marketed the product, did home shows, and watched their businesses grow as each job they did won them 5 more through positive word of mouth advertising. The Duradek line was unique; and for many years almost entirely without competition.

Eventually the idea was taken up by other entrepreneurs in both the United States and Canada. The Pacific Northwest remains the “hot bed” of the industry with most of the competition offering products “just as good as Duradek”, “similar to Duradek” or making other equally flattering comparisons. There is no question – Duradek is the “original” and remains the industry leader.

“Since you are doing the deck, can you also supply railings?” was a common question to Duradek contractors. Selling two products with one sales call was an appealing and effective idea. Aluminium railings were the perfect maintenance free alternative to the traditional systems most commonly used – and the perfect companion product to Duradek. Durarail became part of the marketing program.



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The only remaining piece of the puzzle to be added was to create an efficient distribution system to get the product to the rest of the North American (and world) market. To be effective, Duradek needed to duplicate itself in each economic region and have strong local entrepreneurs take the product to their market in their way while maintaining the company's high ideals. Distributors now carry product, provide quick access, local training and trouble shooting and lead the marketing effort in many regions of the U.S. and Canada.

With a strong flagship product and distribution network, Duradek has since taken on solving the waterproofing problems common in exterior tile applications with the development of Ultra Tiledek. Tiledek is virtually identical to the Duradek membrane with a textured surface to allow the application of thinset mortar for the best adhesion of tiles in outdoor applications, with the same roof grade protection.

Duradek enjoys moderate, controlled growth in good economies and bad. At 40 years, over 125 million square feet of Duradek vinyl outdoor flooring has been installed. As long as people continue to want to enjoy the outdoors in their homes, and as long as wood rots and concrete cracks, Duradek will be around solving problems.



For More Information, contact Jennifer at jennifer@duradek.com or call 1-866-591-5594