

Industry Article

Building Flashing: An Informational Guide

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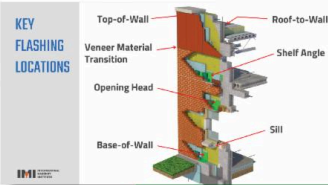
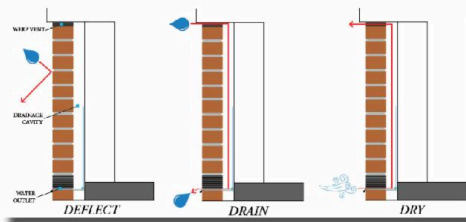
Building flashings are a small but critical components of construction that, if neglected, can lead to significant damage to a building. Keep in mind, there is no inherently “bad” flashing. Any material that directs water out of the assembly is better than none. Key considerations when selecting flashings are how long the flashing must perform and what support it needs to do so effectively. Flashings need to be viewed as part of the building enclosure system, requiring compatible accessories and proper detailing for long-term performance. Because uncontrolled water penetration accounts for up to 80% of construction-related claims in the United States, reducing moisture within the building enclosure is essential. Effective flashing follows the “3 D’s” of water management.

The 3 D’s of Water Management

- **Deflect:** The exterior veneer is the first line of defense, steering bulk water away from the exterior joints and openings.
- **Drain:** Any water that bypasses the exterior cladding and enters the wall cavity must be rapidly and efficiently evacuated. This is typically achieved through through-wall flashing that directs moisture to the exterior via weep holes.
- **Dry:** The building assembly must be able to release any remaining moisture to prevent rot and mold. Research shows that standard adhered veneers have very little outward drying potential, but using air gap membranes or drainage fabrics significantly increases drying rates. This stage also involves controlling inward vapor drives to prevent summer condensation on interior vapor barriers.

Strategic Locations in Commercial Construction

- **Through-Wall:** Spans the entire thickness of a masonry wall to direct internal moisture to the exterior via weep holes.
- **Above Windows and Doors:** Head flashing and drip caps prevent water from infiltrating the wall cavity at structural openings.
- **Chimneys:** Employs a two-part system with base flashing against the roof and counter-flashing embedded in the masonry.
- **Roof-to-Wall Conditions:** Includes step flashing for course-by-course intersections and kickout flashing to deflect water into gutters.
- **Foundation Interface:** Protects the critical juncture between the foundation and the superstructure.
- **Transitions:** Self adhering stainless steel flashings are able to be the product between air barrier materials that are not compatible, thus providing a means for the air barrier system to be continuous.



Flashing might seem like a small part of the building envelope, but it plays a critical role in protecting structures from costly water damage—especially when you consider that uncontrolled moisture is responsible for a large percentage of construction-related issues. From proper material selection to thoughtful detailing and installation, getting flashing right the first time is essential. In this article, we break down the fundamentals of effective water management, explore common failure points, and share practical insights to help ensure long-term performance.

[Read the Full Article Here](#)

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