

Bird Proof Gel: Commercial Construction

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How many ways can common birds degrade construction? Too many—and Barry Schader has experienced most of them. Barry runs Tischler Brothers, a general construction firm specializing in roofing and waterproofing for commercial and residential buildings, including private homes, schools and apartment buildings. Over the years, Barry has seen—up close and in person—the destruction caused by birds.

"Bird droppings tend to seriously degrade roofing materials," says Barry. "The most common roofing materials are organically based, like asphalt or pressed wood fiber, and they can rot or mildew when subjected to acidic droppings."

Furthermore, he adds, "pigeons eat gravel, which gets deposited on the roof in their droppings. The gravel can then clog drain lines." He explains how the high nitrogen content of droppings encourages seeds to germinate and grow at an accelerated rate in a drainage system. "Then, without sunlight, the plants die and clog the drain," he says.

As if that weren't enough, Barry cites bird droppings as a major health hazard to his crew and to the occupants of buildings. "Besides being unpleasant, the bird dirt harbors bacteria and germs that can cause disease," he notes. It is true that bird droppings often serve as home to fungi that can cause serious—even fatal—lung disease (namely, histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis) when the spores are transmitted to humans who may breathe in the harmful fecal dust.

In addition, if the droppings are allowed to build up, Barry says that a roof can become slippery, making it hazardous to workers. It's bad for business.

Barry had been fighting the battle of bird droppings for ten years. First running Tischler Brothers for its previous owners, and then as owner of the company himself for the last six years. Whether new construction or renovation, both residential and commercial projects need to be protected from the damage and risks associated with excessive droppings, he says. Barry tried all kinds of methods for deterring birds.

Birds Bad For Business

"Pigeons are our prime concern," Barry says. "Because of their large size and the way they band together in flocks, they create a huge mess. To protect our business, it was imperative to solve the problem."

Barry tried tar first. "It tended to kill the birds, creating another problem, since it's illegal to kill pigeons." Next he tried snakes and owls. "They work if moved continuously," he says, "but if they sit still, they're useless." He also says they are expensive relative to the outcome.

"Spikes can be an eyesore, and they're expensive and even dangerous if someone should be impaled," he says, with an eye on potential insurance liability.

The problem that Barry faced with birds came to a head, he recalls, on one particular job. "We cleaned a location and did the repairs." But soon afterwards, the customer asked the company to return. "We had to go back to the job at our own expense and clean up the bird mess again," he says. "I was fed up with the pigeon problem, when I received a mailer about a product called Bird-Proof Gel."

Bird-Proof Gel is a highly effective bird deterrent made by Bird-X, Inc. in Chicago. It is a transparent gel that repels pest birds from their normal roosting areas. When Bird-Proof Gel is applied on ledges, beams, rafters, cornices, ornamental copings and similar favorite "landing sites," the gel compound discourages birds from alighting and nesting for a year or more, even under most extreme weather conditions. Bird-Proof Gel has a tacky feeling that birds shun; yet it's harmless, odorless, nonpoisonous and environmentally friendly. It's easy to apply with any standard caulking gun. Bird-Proof Gel is also available in liquid form for easy spraying on trees and other large surfaces or less accessible areas.

Since customer satisfaction is very important in a service business, as every general contractor and roofer knows, Barry decided to try Bird-Proof Gel. He hoped to help owners protect their investment—while helping Tischler Brothers protect its investment in the completed work product.

Bird-Proof Outwits Birds

"Immediately upon application of Bird-Proof Gel, the birds went away. They won't inhabit or roost where the gel is applied," Barry reports. "It discourages them completely by making them uncomfortable."

Barry says he concentrates his application of Bird-Proof Gel to areas that are protected from the weather, where birds like to congregate and roost. In Union City, New Jersey, where Tischler Brothers is located, Barry finds that Southwestern exposures are the most appealing and accessible to birds. Since discovering Bird-Proof Gel, he has applied it to all kinds of structures that Tischler Brothers works on: public buildings, private homes, schools, apartment buildings, etc. "It's useful in any area," he emphasizes. "I've recommended it to purchasing agents in other towns, too."

Not long ago, he recommended Bird-Proof Gel to a worried purchasing agent for application in the Lincoln Tunnel. Birds were roosting in the girders, creating a health hazard, he explains.

Once Barry was called in to bail out a town hall. The building had been cited by the state for health code violations because dead bird carcasses in the attic were attracting mice and rats. The birds had flown in through ventilation in the roof. Barry solved that problem by restoring and repairing the building and applying Bird-Proof Gel.

"Birds like to roost along dormers, under the eaves or soffits, and on ledges," he says. "For homeowners, this means they're continually washing their sidewalks and cleaning the gutters." Bird-Proof Gel virtually ends such repetitive hassles instantly.

Barry knows some worst-case scenarios, too. For example, when bird droppings have destroyed a roof, the cost for the cure is very high. "If the roof has deteriorated, you must remove it and replace it entirely rather than just re-roofing over it.

This doubles the cost for customers," he says—not to mention adding the expense of dumping the old roof.

Barry's Thrifty Bird-Proofing Technique

"Bird-Proof Gel repellent will work against any bird," he says. "You just use common sense and knowledge of birds. We don't run a continuous bead of gel; we space it out—run for three inches, skip three inches, like a dotted line," he explains.

"By metering it out in lighter coverage, we save money," Barry says. He especially likes how easy it is to control Bird-Proof in the caulking gun. "We can put it just where we want it, and it remains where we put it." And the birds stay away.

"It's a physical deterrent, not a poison," Barry says. The birds are simply discomforted by the tackiness of Bird-Proof. "It's a psychological deterrent, too, if birds have a memory. It reinforces their learning not to roost. Wherever we've applied it on residential customers' roofs, we've had not one callback," Barry says—this is the ultimate proof of Bird-Proof Gel's effectiveness.