



2003 Better Business Bureau International Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics Winner -- Category II

The Durable Slate Company

Columbus, OH

Michael Chan, President

(Specialty Roofing & Historical Restoration)

Founded 16 years ago, the Durable Slate Company's commitment to provide the highest possible quality service and workmanship has never wavered. This philosophy has helped it to grow from a small slate roof restoration contractor serving Columbus, OH to one of the largest installers and restorers of slate roofs in North America. Over the years Durable Slate has expanded to offer high-quality masonry and sheet metal work, as well as a general contracting division dedicated to the historic restoration of area landmarks.

The nature of Durable Slate's product and work demands a high level of craftsmanship. To insure that its customers receive the finest craftsmanship possible, art students have been hired to do intricate metal work, and carpenters are trained to do roofing. New employees take a battery of courses, which include hands-on application. All employees are expected and encouraged to continue to increase their knowledge and job skills by attending courses in-house.

At Durable Slate, high-quality service means "not making promises that can't be kept, not mis-invoicing, not leaving the property in worse condition than we found it, not being rude - even when faced with rudeness...." This spirit of responsibility and honesty is instilled in employees through regular meetings, a company handbook that gives clear-cut instruction as to what is expected in terms of ethics and behavior and training courses. Employees quickly learn to do things "the Durable Way", which means making sure each job is profitable and viable, the customer is satisfied, and the work is leak proof, as well as aesthetic. An overflowing volume of complimentary letters from customers, suppliers and industry representatives confirm that the company lives up to its commitment to integrity in all that it does.

Durable Slate adheres to several practices unique within the contracting industry. Completed jobs are checked by a quality control person to make sure that the work was done properly and the job-site was left meticulously clean. A director of corrections ensures that an employee who makes a technical mistake is corrected. The company is structured to avoid layoffs during the winter. And, a Customer Request Form accompanies every estimate form to enable the customer to provide information regarding special needs, expectations and preferences.

Durable Slate's position statement considers protecting the environment, preserving historic architecture and enhancing the aesthetics of the architectural landscape to be ethical issues of great importance. In 1996, the company started a division to retail salvaged slate and tile recovered from barns, homes and other buildings, throughout the country. The materials are recycled for use in a wide variety of architectural applications, keeping them out of landfills by returning them to serviceable building construction.

Durable Slate believes in "honestly explaining what can or cannot be done." When a company estimator inspects a job, he details the work that is needed immediately, and also alerts the customer to future repairs that may be needed. In its advertisements and other external communications, Durable Slate seeks to both promote its services honestly and educate potential customers. Several times a year, the company provides workshops or lectures on the benefits of having a slate roof and the proper method for repairing it.

The company supports industry associations and has been instrumental in an effort to create a national organization for the slate roofing industry. Durable Slate has been recognized with Craftmanship Awards from the Builders Exchange of Central Ohio and in 2002 was awarded the Central Ohio BBB Integrity Award.

Durable Slate is also supportive of the communities in which it does business, helping rehabilitate criminals through education, supporting literacy programs and participating in neighborhood clean-up projects.

For extending its business focus beyond survival to elevate the aesthetics of the culture; for adopting practices that exceed the industry norm; for proving that doing business with honesty is both valuable and profitable; and for dealing with customers, employees and vendors in a positive, honest and ethical manner, The Durable Slate Company was selected to receive the 2003 BBB International Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics!