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What's imagery got to do with it?

Aerial roof system measurement tools are changing the bidding landscape

BY TAMI BACON

Roof system measurements by aerial measurement providers offer roofing professionals an appealing alternative to climbing ladders, as well as convenient, online ordering and guaranteed accuracy.

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Sounds great, right? If the accuracy offered can be trusted, why wouldn't you rely on aerial measurements to avoid climbing a ladder and the hassles and costs of site visits? You could significantly grow your business with such a tool, but not all roof system measurement offerings are created equal.

Defining aerial measurement accuracy

Aerial measurement of structures and land features became possible in 1994 when a unique technology for image capture was patented. This technology, called Pictometry,[®] created a novel process for collecting high-resolution aerial oblique imagery. Oblique imagery is captured at an angle to show the fronts and sides of structures as opposed to traditional orthogonal imagery that captures limited, straight-down rooftop views.

Simply put, this imaging technology assigns geographic coordinates to each image pixel, which makes the imagery data-rich, intelligent and ripe for consumption by Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and mapping professionals, particularly those in government.

Around the same time this technology became available, GIS professionals were in the midst of a revolution in mapping that had been under way for decades. This mapping revolution now is

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responsible for the explosion of location-based technologies for consumers, including cellular phones and handheld global positioning system (GPS) devices.

GIS professionals at the federal, state, county and municipal levels were the early adopters of Pictometry imagery and analytics. These professionals began using and sharing this imagery with government departments along with patented measurement analytics and integration capabilities designed to accompany the technology. This imagery began transforming workflows—most notably within public safety, 911 and emergency response centers—where users continue to rely on the technology to locate, see, measure and plan for emergency situations from the field and office.

From airplane to computer

For the past decade, Pictometry International Corp., Rochester, N.Y., has used its fleet of more than 60 aircraft to systematically collect intelligent imagery of locations around the world. This comprehensive image library continually is updated and contains imagery for most of North America and all major markets, as well as locations in 150 countries and territories around the world. This library is a source of measurable intelligent imagery for commercial users, particularly those in construction, insurance and utilities industries.

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With access to such a library via an online or desktop application, you can locate precise imagery of the location you need. Most important, you can see structures and locations in their entirety from multiple perspectives with high-resolution, 3-D-like clarity.

Access to these images also gives you an array of analytic tools for measuring the imagery with accuracy that can rival field results. These measurement analytics include tools for measuring area, distance, height, elevation, bearing, slope and more.

Turning images into answers

When researching aerial measurement providers, look for a company with a large image database. You want to be able to receive as complete and comprehensive reports as possible.

By tapping into the data-rich information contained within each image, intricate roof system calculations can be made quickly and easily. This information then can be gathered into a complete report that is fast, affordable and easily accessible online. Simply entering an address can glean measurements from imagery that are compiled in a report in as little as a few hours.

Roof system measurement reports offer a credible, efficient third-party report that contains all the basic calculations you need to complete a thorough proposal. Information includes area; slope; direction; square

footage; and linear lengths for every plane, ridge, valley, eave, rake and stepflashing.

More than just basic measurements

Additional information contained in a report can include line drawings of roofs with overhangs, orthogonal and oblique images of structures, LiveHailMap.com data to indicate details about the most recent hail event to impact a property, 3-D renderings of a structure and more.

Some reports feature a customizable cover page for a professional proposal. Such reports can include imagery of the roof, line drawings, slope values and directions, complete roof system removal measurements and a waste factor chart.

Another option is an Xactimate® Sketch Report, which is intended for users who perform insurance work or work within Xactimate, a leading claims-estimating software. These reports provide a drawing of a roof drawn in Xactimate. This allows roofing professionals to populate roof sketches directly into Xactimate to complete estimates faster. The price per report varies, but they start at about \$20.

New technology, new opportunities

The reports mentioned are just a few of the options available for aerial roof measurements. Using aerial roof measurement technology can help save time by skipping the ladder and on-site visits while producing an

accurate report in just a few hours, which, in turn, helps to expand business opportunities.

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