

# Tapered Insulation Systems

## About Polyiso Insulation

Polyiso is a rigid foam insulation used in over 70% of commercial roof construction, in commercial sidewall construction and in residential construction.

The Benefits of using Polyiso include:

- Low environmental impact
- Virtually no global warming potential
- Zero ozone depletion potential
- Cost effective, optimized energy performance
- Long service life
- Recyclable through reuse
- Recycled content (amount varies by product)
- Regional materials (nationwide production network)
- Meets new continuous insulation (ci) standards
- Quality Mark™ certified LTRR-values
- High R-value per inch of thickness
- Thinner walls and roofs with shorter fasteners
- Excellent fire test performance
- Extensive building code approvals
- Preferred insurance ratings
- Compatible with most roof and wall systems
- Moisture resistance
- Dimensional stability
- Compressive strength

PIMA and polyiso products have received many environmental awards. These include an honorable mention in the Sustainable Buildings Industry Council's (SBIC) - "Best Practice" Sustainability Awards Program and the U.S. EPA's Climate Protection Award for the association's leadership in promoting energy efficiency and climate protection. The EPA also awarded PIMA and its members the Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award for "leadership in CFC phase-out in polyiso insulation and in recognition of exceptional contributions to global environmental protection."



## Why Choose Tapered Roof Insulation?

The goal of tapered roof insulation systems is to reduce or eliminate the amount of ponding/standing water on the membrane when the roof deck does not provide adequate slope. Draining water in a timely and efficient manner minimizes the adverse effects that ponding/standing water can have on completed roof membranes. A properly designed tapered roof insulation system not only provides the positive drainage needed but also helps extend the life of the roof membrane. As more designers and roofing professionals understand the importance of positive drainage in good roofing practice for both new construction and re-roofing, the popularity of tapered insulation has increased dramatically.

Ponding water can be the greatest threat to a roofing membrane. It not only shortens the expected life of the membrane, potentially voiding the membrane warranty, but can also lead to more serious problems such as structural deflections of the roof deck and bacterial or unwanted vegetative growth on the roof.

Many professional agencies and code groups recommend or require a minimum roof slope in both new construction and re-roofing projects. When reviewing the choices available, designers can satisfy slope requirements by using either tapered roof insulation or by sloping the structural deck. Often tapered roof insulation is used in conjunction with structural slope and in many cases tapered roof insulation replaces structural slopes altogether. Designers, architects and building owners should consider the options available that best ensure the long-term performance of the entire roof assembly.

## Tapered Polyiso Insulation - The Product of Choice

After the decision has been made to use a tapered roof insulation system, designers, architects and specifiers must determine which tapered roof insulation system is best. Tapered polyiso is frequently the tapered system of choice.

The advantages provided by tapered polyiso make the decision a simple one. Tapered polyiso is the only foam plastic roof insulation product to have passed both UL 1256 (US) (CAN/ULC-S126 for Canada) and the FM 4450 Calorimeter test in direct to steel deck applications. Tapered polyiso products also provide:

- Outstanding physical properties (see chart on next page);
- Superior R-values;
- Compatibility with virtually every roof membrane;
- Wide variety of tapered products; and
- A variety of composite products (perlite, woodfiber, or Dens-Deck®) for applications when a separation layer is specified.

### Physical Property Chart

Property	Method	Value (typical)
Compressive Strength	ASTM D1621	16 to 25 psi
Dimensional Stability	ASTM D 2126	<2% linear change (length & width), 7 days
Moisture Vapor Transmission	ASTM E96	<1 perm
Water Absorption	ASTM C209	<1% volume
Flame Spread (Foam core only)	ASTM E84	25
Service Temperature		-100° to 250° F (-73°C to 122°C) (ASTM C1289) -76° to 200° F(-60°C to 93°C) (CAN/ULC-S704)

It is easy to specify polyiso insulation by referring to product standard ASTM C1289 (US) or CAN/ULC-S704 (Canada). Many polyiso manufacturers provide experienced personnel to consult and educate the contractor, architect, and the design and specifying communities on the design of a tapered system and the importance of positive drainage. With all these benefits and tools available it is easy to see why specifiers consider tapered polyiso the product of choice.

### Design Considerations

While tapered insulation systems have an important role in the successful performance of the roof assembly, proper design and installation are even more important.

#### PANEL SIZES:

Polyiso insulation panels are manufactured in standard 4'x4' sizes. 4'x8' sizes can be manufactured as a special product for large areas free of valleys or ridgelines. The minimum manufactured thickness of tapered polyiso board at its low edge is 1/2" and the maximum thickness of a single layer of board is 4". A flat polyiso underlayment board (flat fill) is used beneath continuing, repeating tapered panels.

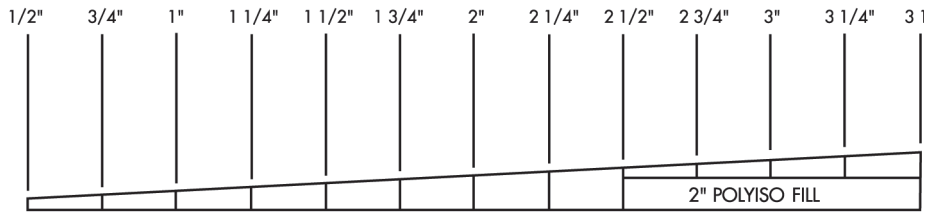
#### SLOPES:

A 1/4" per ft. minimum field slope is recommended by the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA Roofing and Waterproofing Manual) and Canadian Roofing Contractor Association (CRCA), and required by various model building codes. However, a variety of standard and special order slopes are available and acceptable based on field conditions and building parameters. Always consult local code authorities for specific code requirements.

#### PROFILES:

While polyiso manufacturers' designations for each panel may vary, the available profiles are consistent. One design variation is the issue of abbreviated panel system (Fig. P2, P4) using 2" fill boards vs. extended panel system, which uses 3" fill boards (Fig. P3, P5). Both profiles have their advantages and disadvantages. The abbreviated systems materials generally cost less; however, they require additional labor and handling. Moreover, in hot applications, additional asphalt is required for adhering multiple layers. The extended panel systems, although less labor-intensive, will have a higher material cost and do not provide for staggered joints until further up the run.

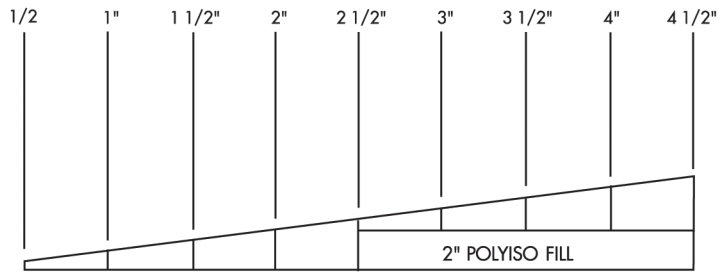
- 1/16" per ft. (special order) - Primarily used to increase insufficient structural slope or where runs are so long the high points exceed the maximum conditions. (Fig. P1)



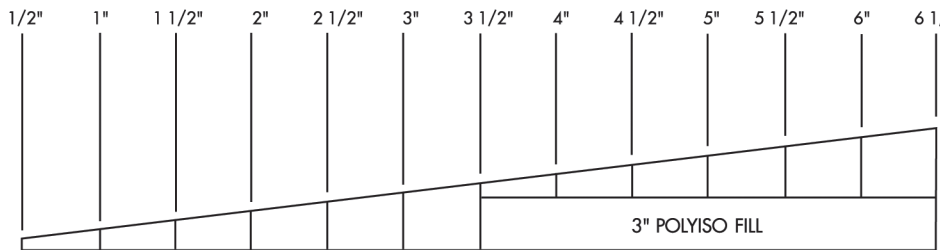
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**TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 1/16" / FT. SLOPE  
P1**

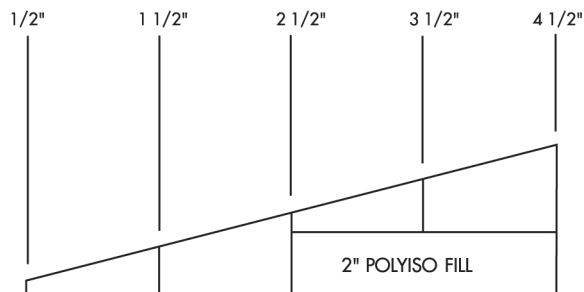
slopes



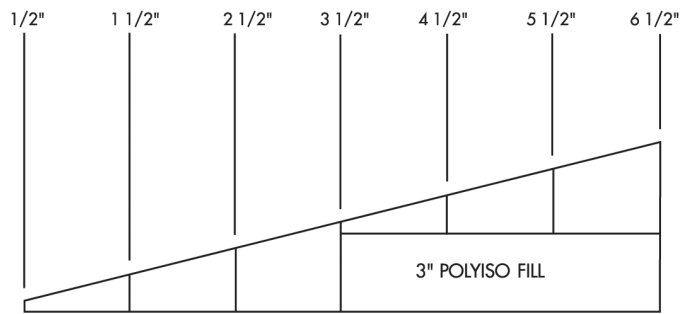
**ABBREVIATED PANEL: TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 1/8" SLOPE  
P2**



**EXTENDED PANEL: TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 1/8" SLOPE  
P3**

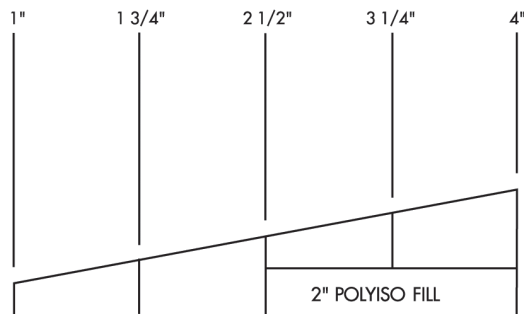


**ABBREVIATED PANEL: TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 1/4" SLOPE  
P4**

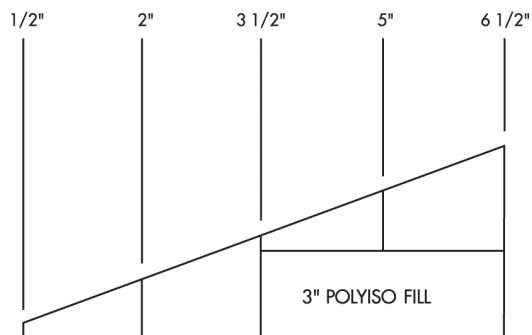


**EXTENDED PANEL: TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 1/4" SLOPE  
P5**

- 3/16" (Fig. P6) and 3/8" per ft. (Fig. P7) (special order) - Used to achieve the best gradient for restrictive thickness conditions.

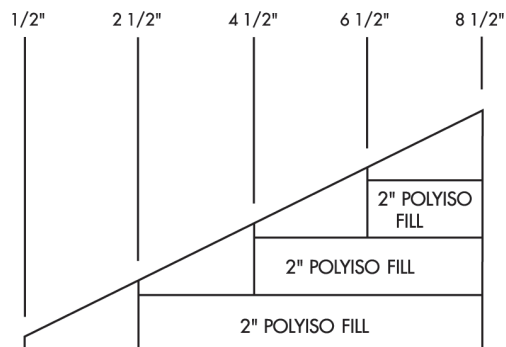


**TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 3/16" SLOPE  
P6**



**TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 3/8" SLOPE  
P7**

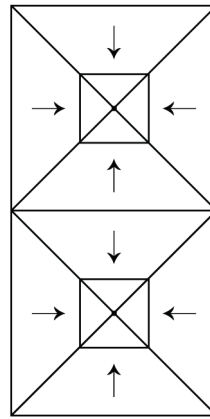
- 1/2" per ft. (Fig. P8) - Commonly used for crickets and saddles - can also be used for very efficient drainage of small roof areas.



**TYPICAL CROSS-SECTION OF 1/2" SLOPE  
P8**

*DESIGN:*

There are numerous ways to design a tapered insulation system for even the simplest of roof plans; however, moving the water most effectively to the specified drainage point is the primary goal. **A 4-way direct to the drain design is the most effective way of moving water off the roof (Fig. D1).**



**D1**

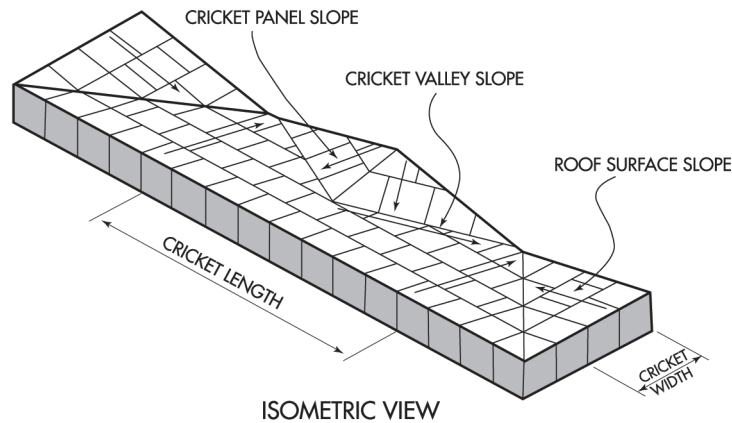
Any variation from this design will also affect the efficiency of the system in draining water. Therefore, every tapered system should start with a 4-way direct to the drain design. The next step is to identify justifiable reasons to alter the layout. Also note that precise field information and accurate drawings, which not only outline the roof areas and drain locations, but also identify mechanical units, skylights, height restrictions and expansion and control joints, are necessary information in the design process.

Valid reasons for compromising 4-way slope may be:

- **COMPLEXITY OF EXISTING DRAIN LOCATIONS** - Extended sumps or valleys can be used to simplify design while eliminating complex cutbacks.
- **CONSTANT PERIMETER** - Edge conditions may dictate a constant thickness of insulation at the roof perimeter.
- **MULTIPLE DRAINS AT A LOW POINT** - With the absence of an overflow drain, valleys between drains provide a helpful water path to drain, should one of the drains fail.
- **COST** - Tapered insulation is an expensive material element of the roofing system and therefore is often the primary target for value engineering (changing the design to lower the cost)—it should be noted that value engineering while reducing the cost also compromises the drainage effectiveness of the tapered system.
- **HIGH POINT RESTRICTIONS** - When a perimeter condition limits the thickness of a material.
- **ROOFTOP PENETRATION LOCATIONS** - Extended low points and/or sumps may be needed to move valleys past or around rooftop units or skylight penetrations. In order to provide the most efficient tapered insulation drainage system, one should prioritize design intent, budget allowances and field parameters for each project.

## Crickets

Crickets are a secondary application of insulation used to divert water from rooftop curbs, valleys, and low points to drains or scuppers. There are two factors that contribute to the working effectiveness of a cricket. (1) The slope of the field (either structurally sloped or with tapered insulation) (2) The angle of the cricket up that slope, i.e., the wider the cricket, the more the slope of the deck is utilized.



### HOW TO CALCULATE CRICKET VALLEY SLOPE:

#### Cricket Valley Slope =

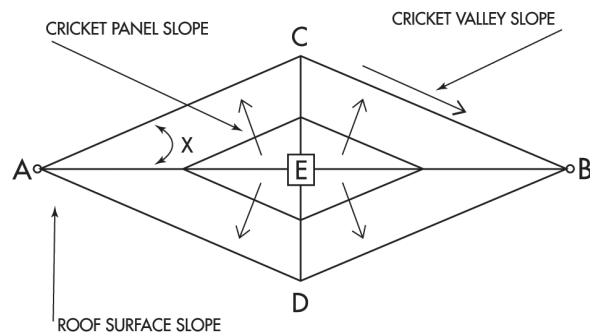
**Rise** is the roof surface slope x 1/2 the cricket width (C to E)

**Run** is the length of cricket valley (C to A)

or  $\tan(x) \times \text{Roof Surface Slope}$

$$\tan(x) = \frac{(C \text{ to } E)}{(A \text{ to } E)}$$

The general rule used to figure cricket size is that the total width of a full diamond cricket should be between 1/3 and 1/4 of its total length.



**Roof Surface Slope** The slope that is created by the structural deck, tapered insulation or a combination of the two.

**Cricket Width** (Points C to D) Generally the shorter of the 2 cross-sections.

**Cricket Length** (Points A to B) Generally the longer of the 2 cross-sections.

**Cricket Panel Slope** The slope of the cricket panel.

**Cricket Valley Slope** (Points C to B) The net slope created along the edge of the cricket.

**Cricket Angle (x)** The angle between corresponding lines AB (Cricket Length) and AC (Cricket Valley).

### AVERAGE R-VALUES:

In order to determine the average system R-values for a tapered insulation project, the average thickness for the insulation system must first be determined. This is calculated by dividing the total volume of insulation (the board footage) by the area of insulation coverage (the square foot area). The average R-value is then referenced by associating the average thickness for the project with the R-value for the corresponding thickness of a flat insulation product.

### Finally

Although design theory, job conditions and budget constraints may vary, one factor remains constant, a properly designed and installed tapered polyiso insulation system can add years of satisfactory performance to any roof.

### PIMA

For over 20 years, PIMA (Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association) has served as the unified voice of the rigid polyiso industry proactively advocating for safe, cost-effective, sustainable and energy efficient construction.

PIMA produces technical bulletins in an effort to address frequently asked questions about polyiso insulation. PIMA's technical bulletins are published to help expand the knowledge of specifiers and contractors and to build consensus on the performance characteristics of polyiso. Individual companies should be consulted for specifics about their respective products.

PIMA's membership consists of manufacturers and marketers of polyiso insulation and suppliers to the industry. Our members account for a majority of all of the polyiso produced in North America.

### SAFETY

Polyiso insulation, like wood and other organic building materials, is combustible. Therefore, it should not be exposed to an ignition source of sufficient heat and intensity (e.g., flames, fire, sparks, etc.) during transit, storage or product application. Consult the product label and/or the PIMA members' Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for specific safety instructions. In the United States, follow all regulations from OSHA, NFPA and local fire authorities; in Canada, follow all regulations from Health Canada Occupational Health and Safety Act (WHMIS) and local fire authorities.

For more information on polyisocyanurate insulation, visit [www.polyiso.org](http://www.polyiso.org)



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