



Nick Krug/Journal-World Photo

ROGER SELCH MAKES HIS WAY TO A HELICOPTER WEDNESDAY at the Lawrence Municipal Airport. The county has hired Selch, of ICC Thermal Mapping & Surveying, to take photographs of the roofs of multiple county-owned buildings. The images will be used to determine the soundness of the roofs and specifically where they may be leaking.

Bird's-eye view of county roofs

Photos used to gauge repair needs of flat-roofed structures

By Jesse Fray

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Douglas County leaders along with Oklahoma Community College, invested several thousand dollars in a photo opportunity that's intended to save future tax dollars.

It's a mission that sent a bright red helicopter hovering above parts of Lawrence Wednesday, as ICC Thermal Mapping & Surveying, a county contractor, took pictures of the roofs of multiple county-owned buildings.

Those on the mission used special high-definition cameras to collect images of the tops of structures during the day. They were expected to return late Wednesday night to collect

infrared images, while hovering just 500 feet above the ground.

The collection of images will help county leaders identify and address

minor problems with the county's flat-roofed buildings before they become more serious and expensive to repair. It's the first time county officials have used the preventive maintenance program.

"We haven't taken measures in the past for our flat roofs, to determine whether we have moisture or we have some problem areas," said Jackie Waggoner, Douglas County purchasing agent. "The information's going to allow us to detect that a lot easier."

The imagery shows any water leaks that may be occurring in the county's roofs - leaks that can't be

seen by the naked eye. The infrared images pick up the heat absorbed by wet insulation during the day.

"By doing that we can figure out what needs to be repaired on the roof. Instead of (fixing) the whole roof, the company only needs to (fix) what we find," said Roger Selch, ICC infrared photographer.

The Orlando, Fla.-based contractor contacted the county about the preventive maintenance program, and Waggoner said county leaders said it made a lot of sense.

"A lot of times we have had problems and we don't know about them until they're bigger problems and they're more costly," she said. "It's a good approach for trying to lower our cost."

County leaders entered into a

cooperative agreement with which also had its buildings
Oklahoma Community College, surveyed.