

CRCA's Winter 2011 Roof Tips Residential & Steep Slope Building Owners – What to do Now??

Well, we had some snow this week. It sure looks pretty out there...but wait, what's that on my roof? It seems the snow is overhanging the eave, and there's drifts in the valleys.

But, was there too much snow? Will my roof collapse from the snow? Will ice dams form and back water up the roof slope, causing leaks? What can I do now to prevent leaks in my roof from damaging my home, office, or any other building?

After a big snow like this week's Chicago 2011 Winter Storm, what can we do NOW to be sure the roof doesn't give us problems later? Here are a few tips from the Pro's at the Chicago Roofing Contractors Association:

1. **Safety First – Sloped roofs are slippery.** Without fall protection, it's easy to slip off the roof on a slope, that's got snow and ice on it. Plus, working at any height requires attention to prevent falls. Maybe the best answer is not to go on the roof at all. If that's the case, call a professional roofing contractor now to get the snow off your roof.
2. **Structural Support Issues** – Should I worry about the weight on the roof? Most roof systems, and the structure supporting it, are regulated by the building code in effect at the time of construction. Building codes recognize that we get snow in Chicago and engineer for a worst case. Homes built to building codes may not have a huge risk. However, it's good practice to get big snow off some of the roof to create drainage. More on that below.
3. **Ice Dams?** - If there are whole house fans in the ceiling, hatches for access, and other holes in the top floor ceiling, heat can escape into the air space, causing roof decks to warm, melting snow. When the water gets to the roof eave edge, it freezes. Once it freezes, then the melting snow continues to fuel water to the eave edge, which freezes into a thick block of ice. This block, causes water to backup under the shingles. Without a waterproofing membrane under the shingles, shakes, slate, tile, that seals around the nail holes, leaks will result. How far up the roof should this ice dam protection be? The International Building Code recommends 2' past the warm wall that supports the roof.
4. **Solution # 1 - Ventilation & Insulate** – Keep heat downstairs in the building! Put insulation on top of the whole house fan, hatch accessways to the attic, light fixtures, to prevent the heat from downstairs from getting to the attic. Then, be sure the ventilation is engineered properly.
5. **Solution # 2 - Shovel the roof?** There are ways to shovel the roof without getting on it to prevent ice dams from forming. At many hardware stores, a 'roof shovel' with a telescoping pole allows you to pull snow off the roof without getting on it. Simply clear the roof at the edge, without scraping all the way down to the roofing material. That way, it's not damaged by the shovel. Most roofing materials and fasteners may be sensitive to cold...and may be brittle due to the cold. *Don't forget to contact the roofing contractor who understands manufacturer recommendations for precautions.* Whether the roof is made of Asphalt Shingles, Wood Shakes, Slate, Tile, or Metal, there are things to be careful about. Even Low Sloped BUR, MB, and Single Ply roof membrane has precautions.

6. **Solution #3 - Call a Professional for Temporary repairs, and plan for the future!** The Chicago Roofing Contractors Association Professionals are ready to come and help you prevent damage by looking at your roof now. They know how to work at height safely, and understand the precautions to take when removing snow from some or all of the snow from roof.
7. **Solution #4 – Get ready for this spring summer’s roofing season!!** Then, when planning permanent repairs, CRCA Members can help you understand the choices available to plan ahead for the next big snow, rain, wind or hailstorm. Now is the time to plan your spring work...so call a pro today. How do I find a Professional Roofing Contractor, and what should I look for? See CRCA’s ‘How to Select a Roofing Professional’ ...on CRCA.org.

These recommendations are not exhaustive and are not meant as the answer to all problems.

Visit <http://www.crca.org> for a list of Chicago’s CRCA Member Professional Roofing Licensed Contractors.