



Roof Collapse and Snow Removal Safety Information

Homeowners, tenants, and businesses should be aware of the danger posed by heavy snow loads on roofs, and the warning signs of structural weaknesses.

In many instances, roof collapse and other risks posed by accumulated snow can be reduced by removing snow from roofs. Flat and low-pitched roofs mostly found on industrial buildings but also used in certain home designs are at the greatest risk of buckling under heavy snow and ice accumulations.

The combination of ice and height makes removing snow from your roof a dangerous chore. Consider hiring professionals for the job. If you choose to perform the task yourself, follow these tips:

Clear Snow from Your Roof Safely

DO

- Use a snow rake (available at most hardware stores) to remove snow from pitched roofs.
- Start from the edge and work your way up the roof.
- Try to shave the snow down to 2 or 3 inches on the roof instead of scraping the roof clean, which will risk damage to your shingles or other roof covering.
- Keep all ladders, shovels, and roof rakes away from utility wires.
- Plastic shovels are usually best. Metal tools may cause damage to your roof.
- Shovel snow from flat roofs by throwing the snow over the side away from the building.
- Carefully remove large icicles if they're hanging over doorways and walkways.
- Wear protective headgear and goggles when performing any of these tasks.
- Have someone outside with you to assist.
- Keep gutters and drains clean and free of ice, snow, and other debris, and keep downspouts clean at ground level.

DON'T

- Don't stand on or place heavy equipment on the roof unless approved by a registered professional engineer.
- Don't use a ladder, since ice tends to build up on both the rungs of the ladder and the soles of your boots. If using a ladder, be extra cautious during cold and icy weather.
- Don't use blow torches, open flames, or electric heating devices like hair dryers or heat guns to remove snow and ice.
- Don't use an electric or gas power snowblower on the roof.
- Don't try to remove ice or icicles from utility wires or meters. Call your utility company for assistance.

Warning Signs of Structural Roof Problems

- Doors or windows that are difficult to open
- Doors that pop open
- Creaking, cracking, or popping sounds
- Sagging roofs
- Cracked or split wood members
- Bends or ripples in supports
- New cracks or enlarging cracks in walls or masonry



What to Do if You Have Structural Damage

- If you notice any signs of roof damage or suspect a gas leak from falling ice or snow, leave the building immediately and call 9-1-1 from an outside location.
- For general questions, call your local building or fire department business line.

Other Safety Tips

- Clear snow away from furnace and dryer exhaust vents to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.

Information for First Responders:

Homeowners, tenants, and businesses should be aware of the danger posed by heavy snow loads on roofs, and the warning signs of structural weaknesses.

In many instances, roof collapse and other risks posed by accumulated snow can be reduced by removing snow from roofs. Flat and low-pitched roofs mostly found on industrial buildings but also used in certain home designs are at the greatest risk of buckling under heavy snow and ice accumulations.

Warning Signs of Structural Roof Problems

- Doors or windows that are difficult to open
- Doors that pop open
- Creaking, cracking, or popping sounds
- Sagging roofs
- Cracked or split wood members
- Bends or ripples in supports
- New cracks or enlarging cracks in walls or masonry