ICE DAMS

Ice dams can be a problem at any time in winter, but especially later in the season when there are more highs and lows in air temperature. They form when melted snow migrates down a roof and freezes at its edge. This ice “lip” increases in size over time and prevent water from draining from the roof. The water will then seep into the spaces between and under roof shingles, and through expansion, separate shingles from the roof and possibly make its way into the roof itself.
How can you tell if an ice dam is developing on your building’s roof?

1) Look for icicles at the edge of the roof. Icicles are an early indicator of ice dam development. If no water or ice has accumulated behind the icicles, then there’s a lower likelihood that an ice dam has developed. But any accumulation of water or ice behind icicles means that ice dam development is imminent. The icicles should be removed, not only because they are a danger to people below, but because their presence is one of the things that makes ice dams possible.

2) Discolored icicles almost always mean that the wood structure of a roof or building edge has been compromised by ice.

3) Look for water stains inside the structure.

Ice dams are easily removed. They should be removed as soon as practical, as the longer they are left in place, the more damage they cause.

**Calcium chloride ice melt is one easy way to remove an ice dam.**

Step 1. First use a roof rake to remove four feet of snow from the edge of the roof. You will need the lowest four feet of roof as clear of snow as possible. Try to get the removed snow away from the structure, as snow on the ground can be as much a hazard to people as it was to your building when it was on the roof.

Step 2. Spread the calcium chloride ice melt evenly through the cleared area, right down to the edge where the roof line meets the gutter. Sodium chloride and rock salt should not be used, as the mixture of these products and melt water will seep into the area between and beneath roof shingles and damage the roof.

Step 3. The spread calcium chloride probably will not melt the ice “lip” that set up the ice dam, whether it is in the gutter or at the roof edge. You’ll have to concentrate the ice melt on these stubborn areas. Find an old nylon stocking and fill it completely with the calcium chloride ice melt.

Step 4. Place it not along the lip but in a perpendicular fashion, to melt a channel through it. You might need several old nylon stockings to do this. After several channels have been melted, you can place the ice melt filled stockings along the lip to facilitate further melting.

Step 5. The mixture of ice melt and melt water can drip onto vegetation and damage it, so protect any vegetation you want to keep intact.
Ice Dams
Risk Management

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