

Snow and cold temperatures usually have forced people indoors to keep warm, but the Town of Hampton wants to the opportunity to remind its residents to take extra precautions to protect their home's safety during winter storms.

The amount of snow a roof should be designed to handle depending on snowfall averages. Most new homes are built to these codes, but older homes, especially those with flat roofs, may have been built under different codes and therefore present a greater risk of roof compromise.

Another potential problem homeowner's face is ice dams. As winter progresses through cycles of freezing and thawing, buildings experience ice buildup and roof damage. In general, ice dams are formed when attic heat moves up to warm the roof and melts snow at or near the ridge. Snow melts, runs downward and hits the edge of the cold roof, resulting in re-freezing. These cycles cause ice to accumulate and back up under shingles. Damage appears in the form of soaked insulation, stained, cracked and damaged sheet rock, damp, smelly, rotting wall cavities and stained, blistered and peeling paint. This may also lead to the growth of mold and mildew, which could have an adverse impact on your health.

How should a homeowner deal with ice dams? For immediate action, you can take the following steps:

- Remove snow from the roof. A "roof rake" and a push broom can be used to remove snow. Performing this work can be very dangerous. It's best to have professionals do this job.
- In an emergency situation to stop water from continuing to flow into the house structure, make channels through the ice dam. Hosing with warm water will do this job. Work from the lower edge of the dam up. The channel becomes ineffective within days, however, and is only a temporary solution.
- The ice dam can be removed from the house, but this places the roof and the remover at tremendous risk. This also should be done by professionals.

The public is advised to hire a roofing expert to remove snow and ice from roofs and gutters.

Heating and dryer vents should also be cleared of snow to prevent possible carbon monoxide poisoning.

For more information about Ice Dam Prevention, contact a Roofing Expert.