

Winter thaws can bring ice dams

A big buildup of snow means the potential for ice dams and damage to inside walls and ceilings.

What they are

A buildup of ice at the edge of the roof - the eaves - that prevents snowmelt from draining off the roof.

2 Snow melts unevenly, usually because ventilation or insulation problems cause the roof over the attic to be warmer than the roof over the eaves.

1 Snow covering a roof traps heat from the house and creates a source of water.

3 Ice builds up at the edge of the roof, clogging gutters and trapping water below the snow.

4 With nowhere to drain, meltwater seeps between shingles and works its way back into the home.

Sources: www.todayshomeowner.com; The National Ag Safety Database (NASD) at nasdonline.org

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How to prevent them

- **Cooler attic area:** Attic insulation needs to be at least 12 inches, with any openings from the heated part of the home to the attic sealed. Proper roof ventilation should allow heat trapped in the attic to escape.

- **De-icing cables:** Electric cables will melt ice. Check local codes to see if these are allowed.

How to get rid of them

Anyone working on a roof in the winter is risking injury or damage to the roof or home. But if you must clear the ice, here are some temporary fixes from the experts:

- **Clear snow from roofs:** Remove snow above the dam to limit the amount of water that collects behind the dam. Use brooms or long-handled roof rakes.

- **Break up the dam:** A hammer and chisel will cut channels into the ice and let water drain, but it's very likely the roof could be damaged. Use warm water to melt the ice.

- **Ice-dam breaker:** Fill the leg of a pair of pantyhose with a calcium-chloride ice melter. Lay the hose so it overhangs the gutter slightly and is perpendicular to the edge of the roof, crossing over the ice dam. The ice melter will cut a channel through the dam.

Thaw could bring icy mess

BY TIM BRODERICK

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Warmer temperatures may bring a respite from winter for many, but they could also bring a headache to homeowners in the form of ice dams.

Through early next week, high temperatures are expected to reach up to 40 degrees with most days being partly sunny.

Higher temperatures and more sunlight will melt snow and could result in water seeping into the home if the roof cannot drain normally due to ice buildup.

According to a report on the National Ag Safety Database at nasdonline.org, these ice dams form when a snow-covered roof above the attic is warmer



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than the area that overhangs the home — the eaves. Melting snow from the warmer part of the roof runs down and freezes at the edge of the roof, forming a barrier that prevents further

melt from draining properly.

The best way to prevent ice dams, the report notes, is to make sure attics are sufficiently insulated and properly ventilated.