




Facts and Misconceptions About Ice Dams

During the cold winter months, heat from inside your home warms wood framing which in turn warms the roof and rafters from contact heat. Heat rises and transference warms walls, ceilings and insulation. **Positioning to the sun, elements, venting, insulation and large amounts of accumulating snow are all factors in creating ice dams.** Every household has its own unique design issues to consider. Addressing each one individually can dramatically reduce ice buildup.


Here are 11 “need-to-know” facts and common misconceptions to help you make informed decisions when dealing with ice dams and snow:

Myth: My roof shingles or other roofing materials are incorrectly installed or defective and causing ice dams. 

Fact: Ice dams are **NOT** caused by your roofing materials or a result of faulty installation. Ice build-up on shingles is created when the cold air in the soffit meets the warm air in the shingles above the soffits.

Myth: If I replace my asphalt shingle roof with one that includes ice and watershield protection, my roof will no longer form ice dams or allow water intrusion.

Fact: A new asphalt shingle roof with ice and watershield protection will not hold out water caused by ice dams. A new roof will most likely reduce water intrusion, but no matter how new the roof is, it is designed to shed water – not hold it.


Myth: Ice dams cannot crack, unseal or damage roof shingles. 

Fact: After one ice dam occurrence, shingle seals that have been lifted by expanding ice may not reseal causing future failures earlier with smaller amounts of ice and water.


Myth: Ice dams are not known to cause damage to anything other than the immediate roof area. 

Fact: Once the sun warms the roof shingles and gutters, ice can detach and fall off. **This creates the potential for liability** and damage to persons or property below.

Myth: It's too costly to hire a contractor to remove ice dams and snow and is an expense you can do without.

Fact: It's **far less expensive** to remove snow and ice **before** it causes major interior damage. Who likes to spend money on something with no tangible value? However, once you have a leak you must not only remove the snow and ice, you are then forced to replace costly items inside such as drywall, ceiling textures, paint, insulation and more. 

Myth: If you see water or ice dripping out of your siding or soffits, it's nothing to worry about.

Fact: Water and ice dripping out of soffits, windows and siding is actually coming from the underside or inside of your roof sheathing or vapor barrier. **This is a precursor to a certain leak** and is only a matter of time before it reaches the inside of your home. 

Myth: Removing 3 to 6 feet of snow from the roof edge is guaranteed to stop an ice dam from forming or reforming.

Fact: Ice dams **will continue to form and reform until snow is completely removed.** Ice will not form without water to feed it. With a substantial snowfall and frigid temperatures, **removing only partial snow will allow the ice dam to reform.** Ice dams feed off of new snow, too. Once an ice dam forms, it will grow upon each new snow fall.



Myth: Roof vents covered with snow and ice aren't a problem and the heat from the vent will melt it.

Fact: Roof vents covered with snow and ice will trap heat in the attic. Not allowing heat to escape from vents warms the attic air temperature creating a winter "green house" affect and causes ice dams.

Myth: Steamers are the best way to remove ice dams.

Fact: Steamers are **actually pressure sprayers** and create unnecessary icy conditions below, along with adding excessive weight which can cause more damage. Asphalt shingles are designed to resist rain and wind. They are **NOT** designed to withstand 200 degree temperatures and water pressures created by steamers. The pressure from these machines has been known to cause blown off granular loss, too.



Myth: All of the damage from an ice dam is cosmetic and can be easily repaired.

Fact: Even a one-time leak from an ice dam creates damage that **cannot always be seen without investigation.** Long term exposure to moisture and condensation can lead to hidden plywood damage as well as damage to your insulation and more.



Myth: Once your attic insulation is wet, it will dry and no harm is done.

Fact: Once insulation gets wet, **it will not perform as it was intended.** Although wet insulation can dry out, it will also collapse and condense losing its entire R-value. This lets excessive heat into the attic which accelerates the ice damming process. This heat loss turns into steam that collects under the roof sheeting which builds interior ice that eventually melts. This melting ice drips back onto insulation and ceiling furthering the compacting and loss of the insulations R-Value.



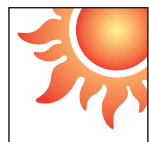
Preventive Measures:

- Adding roof vents, insulation, and fully vented soffits can reduce the attic temperature.
- If you remove ice dams, take measures to keep your attic space the same temperature as the outside temperature and any additional snow accumulation should melt or evaporate on sunny days.



Budgeting or planning for a new roof or siding? Before you spend the money to renovate, consult with a knowledgeable contractor who can assess your current ventilation system to correct these deficiencies or you could end up with the same icy issues you've always had. **If you have questions and/or would like to schedule a consultation, please contact Jeannie at Xtreme Exteriors: 763.441.1334 or e-mail jeannie@xtremeexteriors.com.**

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