

Snow damage in Tahoe creates work for contractors

By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

Engineering and construction firms are scrambling to repair the damage to buildings caused by massive accumulation of snow in the Lake Tahoe Basin last winter.

Jared Krupa, principal engineer for K2 Engineering and Structural Design of Reno, has taken on repair work for a half-dozen structures in and around Lake Tahoe that were damaged by the weight of snowfall. In many cases, Krupa says, buildings were three or more decades old and were not built to today's standards.

However, Paul Laudenschlager, chief executive officer of Alpen Engineering of Truckee, says one of the structures he's repairing is just three years old. Though it was built properly, its roof was not engineered to withstand the weight of more than a dozen feet of snow, and a section of the roof ripped away from the main house under heavy snow.

Areas of failure, he says, typically include deck ledgers that tear away from buildings, or lower roofs that become detached under the extreme weight of water-laden snow building up over time.

"There have been some failures with code-conforming buildings on Echo Summit," Laudenschlager says. "Some of the failures were caused by inadequate engineering or construction. Others were caused by the snow situation itself and the failure of the engineer to take into account the actual situation with the building."

Laudenschlager says some problems arise when engineers fail to consider lateral snow issues, which may exceed seismic and

wind requirements. Walls can inadvertently act as a retaining wall for wind-driven snow, and many caved in this winter, particularly on Echo Summit in eastern El Dorado County.

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