

Tips for clearing snow from roofs

South Lake Tahoe's Building Division is providing the following information to assist homeowners and commercial property owners in assessing potential hazardous conditions due to the snow load on their properties.

Flat and low pitched roofs, most often found on industrial buildings, are at greatest risk of buckling under heavy snow and ice accumulations. Lower roofs, where snow accumulates from higher roof areas are also vulnerable to damage and collapse. Also, some commercial properties have sections dedicated to the storage and display of seasonal merchandise protected only by light-weight, corrugated metal roofs that are likely not able to sustain excess snow loads. Air-inflated structures that protect athletic fields or similar facilities may be susceptible to increased roof loads imposed by accumulated snow.



Now is the time to clear roofs of snow while there is a break in the weather.
Photo/LTN

Tips for removing snow and ice from roofs and other areas:

- Use a snow rake for pitched roofs (available at most hardware stores) to remove snow from your roof.
- Start from the edge and work your way into the roof.
- Try to shave the snow down to a 2 or 3 inches on the roof instead of scraping the roof clean, which will risk damage to your shingles or other roof covering.
- Keep in mind that any metal tool could conduct electricity if it touches a power line.
- Metal tools will do more damage to your roof.
- Shovel snow from flat roofs throwing the snow over the side away from the building.
- Most plastic shovels are better, except for the ones with curved blades—those too will do some damage to your roof.
- Remove large icicles carefully if they're hanging over doorways and walkways. Consider knocking down icicles through windows using a broom stick.
- Wear protective headgear and goggles when performing any of these tasks.
- Consider hiring professionals to do the job. The combination of heights plus ice makes this one of the more dangerous house chores.
- If you don't hire professionals, at least have someone outside with you in case anything does go wrong.
- Keep gutters and drains clean, free of ice and snow and keep downspouts clean at ground level.
- Don't use electric heating devices like hair dryers or heat guns to remove snow and ice.
- Don't use open-flame devices to remove snow and ice.

How to recognize potentially hazardous snow load on roofs:

- Sagging roofs
- Severe roof leaks
- Cracked or split wood members
- Bends or ripples in supports

- Cracks in walls or masonry
- Sheared off screws from steel frames
- Sprinkler heads that have dropped down below ceiling tiles
- Doors that pop open
- Doors or windows that are difficult to open
- Bowed utility pipes or conduit attached at ceiling
- Creaking, cracking or popping sounds.

– *City of South Lake Tahoe*