

RISK MANAGEMENT

PREVENT WINTER ROOF DAMAGE AND COLLAPSE

We See Risk Through Your Lens

On average, snow weighs about 15 pounds per cubic foot. But averages can be deceptive. Snow weight per cubic foot varies widely; about seven pounds when dry and fluffy to 20 pounds or more when compacted and wet snow. When snow piles up, weight can quickly add up.

Tips for making sure your building holds up this winter include:

- 1 Know how much snow your building can safely handle. Check construction drawings or structural engineering analysis.
 - 2 Keep roofs well maintained, clear debris from drains and create a path to the edge of the roof and drains coinciding with the pitch of the roof.
 - 3 Monitor both the depth of snow and roof deck deflection. Changes in deflection can be measured by hanging a string from the deck or using a laser measuring device.
 - 4 Pay close attention to areas where low roofs meet high roofs as drift will occur, and to areas where new rooftop equipment has been installed which increases the dead load of the roof.
 - 5 Have shovels and snow blowers readily available and start removal before snow levels get too high. Remember to adjust the snow blower's blade height to avoid roof damage and take care not to create drifts.
 - 6 Know the warning signs; sagging of purlins, joists, beams or trusses; sprinkler heads deflecting below suspended ceilings.
 - 7 When removing snow from roofs, do not block building exits, fire hydrants, or utility valves.
 - 8 If collapse seems likely, consider shutting gas mains and sprinkler systems. Eliminate ignition sources before turning off sprinkler systems.
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