

January 26, 2015

Snow on the Roof

How much is too much?

Homes in Connecticut are designed for a minimum snow load of **30 pounds per square foot** of roof area and the vast majority of roofs are built to hold more than that amount.

So what does that mean in snow depth?

30 pounds per square foot = 4 feet of fluffy snow = 2 feet deep dense snow = 6 inches of water

What kind of snow do we have on the roofs in Simsbury?

The first storm was light and fluffy and drifted into light to medium density snow. Saturday's rain was absorbed into the snow that is already on the roof. So most of the snow on roofs is between 15 to 17 pounds per cubic foot or a depth of **2 feet to equal 30 pounds** the roof is designed to carry. Most roofs have 2 to 4 inches of snow on them right now so that equates to a maximum of about 5 pounds per square foot.

The precipitation that is expected tonight, tomorrow and the next day is a blowing snow that could drift on roofs that have different levels. This type of snow is typically light weight but can accumulate to depths over four feet. This is normally not a problem in that only small portions of a roof are affected. High pitch roofs shed the snow and low pitch roofs tend to have the snow scoured from one or both sides of the roof. **If you see large areas of a roof with snow drifts in excess of four feet deep, it could be cause for concern. If the snow turns to rain and the roof has over two feet of snow, it could also be a cause for concern.**

What about the ice in my eaves?

Ice dams can cause some real damage to interior finishes but are typically not a structural problem in that they are over the outside walls. If the water is leaking into or around an electrical outlet, call a professional to either divert the water or shut the power off to the outlet that is affected.

On windy nights do not set the thermostat back and leave cabinet doors under sinks near an outside wall open to allow heat to get to the traps and piping.

Commercial buildings with flat roofs should make an effort to assure the drains are functioning. Most flat roofs scour and do not accumulate more than three feet of snow. Multilevel buildings are designed for the snow surcharge at changes in elevation and should not have a problem holding over four feet of light snow. If you occupy a newer building with secondary drains and see those working, take immediate action to free the main drains.

If you have concerns about the safety of a condition at your home, please call the Building Department at 860-658-3234.