

## **Extension Notes**

Personal Column for February 9, 2010

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

### **Ice Dams On Your Roof**

With all the snow we have had there is a good chance you are going to see some ice dams forming on a roof or two. Ice dams occur when a snow-covered roof over the attic or room is warmer than the eaves, or overhang of a roof.

If the roof is warm from heat escaping from the living area into the attic, it will cause the snow to melt over the attic area and run under snow on the roof. When the melted snow hits the cooler eaves, it freezes.

As ice builds up on eaves, it eventually traps water behind it. I have seen many gutters filling with ice and falling off the structure. The fascia may be damaged, water may leak down inside the wall frame into the wall cavity, and attic insulation may become wet and compressed reducing its R-value. Fortunately, there are several ways to remedy the problem.

A cooler attic area will help decrease problems with ice dams.

Make sure the attic floor is well insulated to minimize the amount of heat rising through the attic from within the house. Increase insulation in the attic floor to at least 12 inches or R-value of 38 - 49. Also, safely seal any thermal shortcuts – openings that allow air to move from the heated part of the house into the attic.

Chases or cracks around chimneys, plumbing vents, attic hatches and ceiling fan mounts are common thermal shortcuts. These should all be sealed or insulated

If there is an immediate problem with ice dams, hire a professional to safely remove the snow from the part of the roof directly above the ice dam. This limits the amount of water that can collect behind the dam.

If you must do it yourself, use safety precautions. Remove the snow using a roof rake, or push broom which will do less damage to the roof. Don't go onto the roof itself. Not only is it hazardous but the shingles are not designed to be walked on and especially when wet or icy.

Follow simple safety precautions when removing snow from your roof. You can avoid injury and becoming the feature video on one of those funny video shows or YouTube.

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