

Ice Dam Prevention Checklist

SURVIVALSTOCKUP

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Reduce roof heat loss, monitor snow buildup, and respond safely to leaks.

STAY OFF ICY ROOFS. KEEP CLEAR OF FALLING SNOW AND ICE.

Ice dams form when roof snow melts and refreezes at colder edges, trapping water behind it. Gutter cleaning helps drainage; lasting prevention also addresses heat escaping from the home.

Home / person completing checks

Inspection date / next weather check

01 BEFORE SNOW ARRIVES

- ☐ **Arrange roof and flashing checks**
Have a roofer inspect damaged shingles, flashing and past leak areas before winter.
- ☐ **Clear gutters and downspouts**
Arrange safe debris removal before freezing weather. Avoid ladders on icy ground.
- ☐ **Record previous trouble spots**
Note recurring ice at eaves, valleys or dormers. Save a roofer and energy assessor contact.

03 AFTER SNOW OR A THAW

- ☐ **Look from a safe ground position**
Watch for growing ice ridges, uneven snowmelt and blocked drainage. Stay out from under overhangs.
- ☐ **Inspect accessible indoor areas**
Use a [battery flashlight](#) to look for fresh stains or dampness. Do not step between attic joists.
- ☐ **Track changes after each storm**
Photograph trouble spots from safety. Call a roofer for recurring buildup or any active leak.

02 CONTROL ATTIC HEAT LOSS

- ☐ **Book an air-leakage assessment**
Have a qualified contractor check ceiling penetrations, duct leaks and attic access.
- ☐ **Seal the attic access properly**
Use suitable [hatch weatherstripping](#) where appropriate. Preserve safe operation and any fire rating.
- ☐ **Review insulation and vent paths**
After air sealing, assess insulation for your climate and roof design. Do not block soffit vents.
- ☐ **Check exhaust duct routing**
Have bath and kitchen exhaust routed outdoors. Preserve required clearances at flues and lights.

04 MANAGE SNOW SAFELY

- ☐ **Use a roof rake only if safe**
A suitable [roof snow rake](#) may remove reachable snow from firm ground. Otherwise hire a professional.
- ☐ **Stay clear of falling material**
Keep people and pets away. Never work beneath sliding snow or ice, or near overhead wires.
- ☐ **Protect the roof covering**
Follow rake and roof-maker directions. Do not scrape shingles, chop ice, climb a ladder or get onto the roof.

Heat cables are not a cure for attic heat loss. Ask a qualified installer about roof-compatible systems; never improvise with pipe-heating cable.

Leak Response & Follow-Up

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Protect people first, document damage, and arrange lasting repairs.

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05 IF WATER ENTERS THE HOME

- ☐ **Keep away from electrical hazards**
Do not touch wet lights, outlets or wiring. Get an electrician; never cross water to reach a breaker.
- ☐ **Move belongings only if safe**
Catch small drips only away from electrical hazards and sagging ceilings. Keep people out of affected areas.
- ☐ **Call for professional help**
Contact a roofer experienced in ice dams. Request roof-safe removal; notify your insurer or landlord.

06 AFTER THE LEAK IS STOPPED

- ☐ **Document and track damp areas**
Use photos and a [moisture meter](#) to track changes. Readings do not prove a cavity is dry or mold-free.
- ☐ **Arrange drying and inspection**
Have wet insulation and concealed areas assessed. Repair interior finishes only once materials are dry.
- ☐ **Fix the cause before next winter**
Coordinate roof repairs, air sealing and insulation. Review ventilation for your specific roof design.

Leave unsafe areas. Sagging ceilings or roof sections, cracking sounds, or rapidly worsening damage need urgent professional assessment. Leave the building if collapse appears possible and call 911. Do not puncture a bulging ceiling or attempt rooftop repairs.

07 YOUR ICE DAM ACTION PLAN

Roofer / emergency phone

Energy assessor / insulation contractor

Landlord / insurer / claim contact

Leak location / first noticed

Priority repair / person responsible

Next inspection / completion date

08 USEFUL INSPECTION & PREVENTION GEAR

Roof snow rake - Amazon

Ground use only, where conditions are safe.

Attic hatch weatherstripping - Amazon

Match the access hatch and its requirements.

Battery flashlight - Amazon

Inspect only safely accessible areas.

Moisture meter - Amazon

A screening tool; confirm damage professionally.

[UMN Extension: ice dams](#)

[NWS: prevention](#)

[DOE: roof heat loss](#)

[OSHA: snow safety](#)