

Planning and Maintenance for Snow & Ice on Low-Slope Roofs

MAINTENANCE TIP

Recent television ads have stressed the importance of homeowners preparing their homes for severe weather. However, in a state of severe weather, people are often too quick to react, resulting in ill decisions.

Severe winter weather can wreak havoc on commercial and industrial buildings—causing roof drains to freeze over with ice up to several inches thick. Then, as the accompanying snow begins to melt, the water becomes residual, unable to drain from the roofs, causing various dilemmas.

Too often, the typical reaction of building-maintenance personnel is to rush to the roof to break-up the ice around the drains by any means possible—often times using an axe or other sharp tool. This type of reaction to the problem usually only furthers the predicament, with holes being cut in the roof.

To avoid reactionary approaches, building owners should be pro-active and develop a plan for these type situations. Some items to consider in planning:

- Have a registered roof consultant examine the drains to determine if they are prone to freezing and what could be done to prevent damage.
- Have maintenance personnel inspect the roof and drains in the late fall, and periodically during the winter, to ensure there is no debris around the drains that would cause water to build up and freeze in the area.
- Make arrangements with a licensed commercial roofing contractor, who has the knowledge and experience, to respond to rooftop emergencies and safely remove ice from roof drain areas.



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