

# Home Matters

Ice dams are caused by a combination of uneven heat loss from your home and wintry conditions re-freezing melted snow. This causes the roof to warm above freezing temperature, which allows snow to melt and then re-freeze before it reaches the roof's edge.

If this cycle repeats consistently, an ice dam forms and water collects behind it. As the water pools, it collects and can cause costly water damage. Follow these tips to prevent the formation of ice dams.

- Keep the attic well ventilated. According to the Department of Energy, one square foot of free ventilation opening is recommended for every 150 square feet of attic space.
- Seal air leaks to prevent warm air leakage from plumbing vents, junction boxes from ceiling fixtures and attic hatches.
- Keep the attic floor well insulated (between 16 and 22 inches of insulation) to minimize the amount of heat rising into the attic from below.
- Clean leaves and other debris from gutters before the first snow. This will help prevent ice buildup in your gutters.
- Consider using an ice shield under your shingles when your house is getting re-roofed.
- Use a roof rake to clear the snow above the gutter. Clear as much as three to four feet above the gutter to allow water to drain freely into the gutter.
- Consider hiring an energy specialist to evaluate the performance of your home and recommend some things you can do to minimize energy waste.

During cold winter months, the icicles on your home's eaves may be a sign that a ridge of ice is forming at the edge of the roof. This ridge, also known as an ice dam, can prevent melting snow from draining properly.

If an ice dam forms, sprinkle a melting compound to break it up. Avoid using traditional rock salt, as it may cause further damage and faster deterioration of your gutters.

For more household maintenance guidance and homeowners insurance solutions, contact us today.

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