



Professional Property Inspections

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# NEWSLETTER



## Winter On Long Island: Snow Roof

Let's face it, the winter on Long Island has been rough on all of us. Snow, sleet, rain, cold, warm, then FREEZING! If you think it's bad, just imagine how your roof feels. The roof on your home or office is exposed to all the elements and it's the first place precipitation lands. There are a few different aspects of New York winter weather that can have adverse effects on your roof. Let's explore them:

**Temperature Fluctuation:** We all love a warm day in January, especially after a spell of really low temperatures, but this has a big impact on your roof when the temperature drops again. Cold air contracts while hot air expands (think of a hot air balloon). This also goes for the structure of your home and your roof – the roof deck, shingles, flashing, they all contract when it gets cold, but on warmer days they expand. The more the temperature fluctuates between warm and cold weather, the more wear and tear on your roof. Homes on Long Island are not typically built for this.

Another way temperature fluctuation can impact your roof is the infiltration of moisture that turns to ice. When snow on your roof begins to melt and the moisture drains out from under the accumulation, it finds its way into smaller crevices and ridges in between shingles and flashing. When the temperatures drop again when the sun goes down, these small deposits freeze, causing the moisture to expand. This is the cause of winter roof problems and compounds existing roof structure issues.



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**icicles on roof** **Dams & Icicles:** Ice dams are created when heat collected in your attic warms your roof. The ice and snow begin to melt but once they hit the eaves, the moisture cools down again and freezes up. The warm roof continues to melt the snow and ice continues to build up at the eaves causing icicles. While a beautiful symbol of winter, icicles spell major damage for your roof: tearing off gutters, loosening shingles or even worse, causing water to back up and pour into your home or office.[1]

**Snow Overload:** Blizzards are a part of winter on Long Island, dumping inches and even feet of snow and causing great snow drifts. In more exposed areas with less tree-cover, like the many housing developments we have on Long Island, snow drifts and gusts are more likely. When this happens, snow builds up, putting a lot of weight on your roof, often unevenly distributed. Smooth and steep roofs are ideal for fast drainage, but flat roofs or slightly pitched roofs are more vulnerable. Even more vulnerable are the flat and slightly-pitched roofs adjacent to smooth, steep, well draining roofs which drain off onto the garage, porch, or hastily-built home additions. This can cause roof leaks or worse, collapse.

So what can you do to prevent winter damage to your roof than necessary?

### Fast Fixes:

1. Use a long-handle aluminum roof rake to pull down snow before it begins to melt. The extending arm allows you to remain safely on the ground while you remove any buildup of snow and ice, therefore preventing moisture build up and moisture from thawing and freezing up in crevices and ridges.
2. Have a fan running in your attic, pointed up towards the roof, keeping the roof cool and helping to prevent melting water. This will help prevent ice dams and icicles.

### Long-Term Fixes

1. Insulate your attic from the rest of your home. This will keep the attic closer to the outdoor temperature, enabling the roof to stay cold enough to help prevent ice melt under snow accumulation.
2. Consider steel roofing. "It goes on fast, lasts a very long time and is recyclable" says Green Building Advisor, Martin Holladay.[2] Not only is it more sustainable, and therefore money-saving, it promotes easy and fast drainage without allowing moisture to get under shingles.
3. Change the slope of your roof. Have you been thinking of remodeling or updating your home? Here's a great opportunity to increase the slope of your roof to prevent buildup of snow and moisture, and the headaches that come along with leaky or unstable roofs.



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There is no stopping mother nature, that's for sure. But if you take steps to lower the impact of winter precipitation on your roof, you'll avoid some of the more costly, and far more damaging issues that can arise. Still not sure if your roof is weathering the storm? Have one of our inspectors come out to your home and assess the situation, as well as the impact on other parts of your home. Safe Harbor Inspections Inc provides thorough home inspections that provide great insight to the state of your home. Call 631-275-8080 to schedule a home inspection.

<http://www.greenbuildingadvisor.com/blogs/dept/musings/martin-s-ten-rules-roof-design>

Sources:

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[1] [www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/article/0,,1131314,00.html](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/article/0,,1131314,00.html)

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