



MNSPECT

HELPING YOU COMPLY WITH THE CODE

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MNSPECT MINUTE

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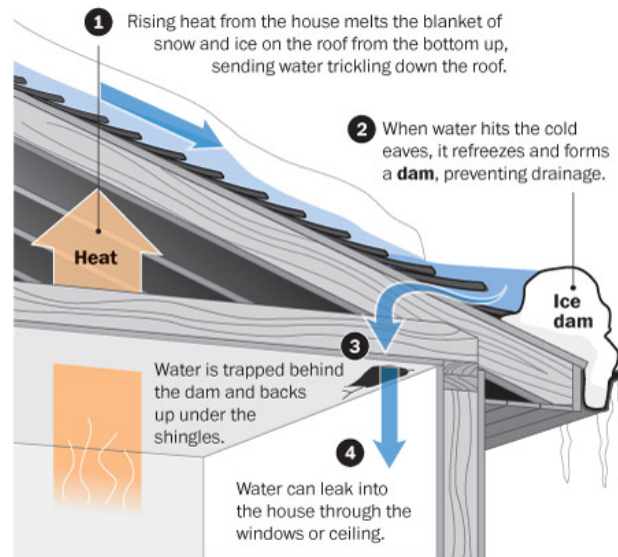
NEWS ALERT: Minnesota Plumbing Code, Chapter 4714, effective **January 23, 2016!** As of January 23, 2016, Chapter 4715 is repealed.

DARN THOSE ICE DAMS!

Although your kids may think those really big icicles are cool, they can cause a lot of damage to your home. Let's take a quick look at what an ice dam is, what causes ice dams, the damage they can cause to your house, and how you can prevent them.



What is an ice dam? An ice dam is kind of what it sounds like - a ridge of ice at the edge of your roof that prevents melting snow from running off the roof. The water then backs up, refreezes, and continuously builds up.



What causes an ice dam? It takes three things to create ice dams: snow, heat to melt the snow, and cold to refreeze the melted snow. If you look at the picture to the left, you will see that there is no insulation under the overhang. You will also notice the heat escaping from inside the house and heating the underside of the roof. This causes the snow to melt and the water to run downward towards the overhang. The snow/ice above the overhang has not melted, so the running water refreezes when it hits this "dam." As this process repeats itself over time, the dam gets bigger and bigger.



Condensation

Window condensation is not caused by faulty windows. It is caused by modern, energy-efficient homebuilding techniques and products. The moist air from your showers, cooking, dishwasher, etc. cannot escape the house, so the moisture builds up on the coldest material in your house – your windows. What can you do to prevent this moisture buildup and damage to your window trim/frame?

- Crack open a window or door daily to air out your house (just don't forget to close it again!);
- Run exhaust fans longer in the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry room;
- Open drapes and blinds, allowing air to circulate against windows;
- Install and use a dehumidifier.
- Turn off any humidifying devices in your home.

What can a little ice do to my house? Not much - if you don't mind water-stained ceilings, dislodged roof shingles, sagging gutters, peeling paint, and damaged plaster or drywall. Moisture entering the home from ice dams can also lead to the growth of mold and mildew. Ice dams actually cause millions of dollars of damage every year – sadly, this could all have been prevented!

What can I do to prevent these beauties from forming on my house? It is pretty simple: Don't heat your roof. The underside of the roof deck should not exceed 30° F. The best way to do maintain this low temperature is by ensuring that there is adequate insulation on the attic floor and making sure there are no gaps that let warm air pass into the attic from the house. These gaps can be found where the floor insulation has moved or been damaged, around wire and plumbing penetrations, and through wall cavities. Another prevention method is to make sure there is enough ventilation to allow the cold air to circulate in your attic. A lot of people think that if you keep the attic warm, you won't have an ice dam problem; however, the opposite is true.

If you have ice dams already, a quick, temporary fix is to remove the snow from your roof.