

Ice Dams

It's that time of year again when we have to watch for ice dams on our roofs. If you've done some energy efficiency improvements to your home and attic (good for you!) hopefully you won't be seeing the piling up of snow and ice along your eaves. If you have yet to do those improvements, the ice may already be accumulating on your roof. There is an old New England saying – “what with the high cost of heating, the average icicle on a roof costs about five dollars a foot.” (Eric Sloane – *A Reverence for Wood*) With the price of oil these days, we certainly don't want to spend our money on making pretty icicles! By buttoning up your attic and adding more insulation, you can improve the energy efficiency of your home and eliminate those nasty ice dams.

Ice dams and icicles along a house's eave are a tell tale sign of heat loss through the roof. Historic homes are often under insulated and not properly sealed to prevent heated air from entering the attic space. Warm air leaks heat up the roof, causing the snow to melt. As the water travels down the roof, it refreezes as it reaches the cold eave forming an ice dam and often spectacular icicles. Water can then backup behind the ice dam and leak into the house causing extensive damage to the interior of your home. Now is a good time to inspect your roof for such problems. Check around chimneys and roof vents for signs of warm air leaks. If the melt is evenly dispersed, you may just need to add additional insulation throughout the entire attic floor. Take notes (and photos) of your problem areas so you can make the appropriate repairs in the spring. If this is beyond your DIY capabilities, the Alliance can help you identify a weatherization contractor who can assist you. Your goal is for a more energy efficient home sans ice dams and icicles by next winter!

Helpful websites:

- www.umass.edu/bmatwt/publications/articles/ice_dams.html
- www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_solutions.hm_improvement_icedams
- <http://www.historicnewengland.org/preservation/preserving-historic-sites/property-care-white-papers/roofing-documents/pc-roofing-ice-dam-prevention-20090327.pdf/view>