

Heavy Snow on Your Roof: What You Need to Know



Topic	Details	Important Notes
Understanding Snow Load	Snow load refers to the downward force exerted on a roof by snow and ice. It is measured in pounds per square foot (psf) and varies based on snow density, roof design, and geographic region.	Homes in areas with heavy winter weather are built to withstand greater snow loads. Light, fluffy snow exerts less weight than dense, wet snow or ice.
Factors Influencing Snow Load	Key factors include roof pitch, snow density, geographic location, climate, and era of construction. Steeper roofs shed snow more efficiently, and homes in snowy areas have stricter building codes for load capacity.	Light snow may weigh around 3 psf, while wet snow or ice can weigh over 20 psf. Older homes may have reduced capacity due to outdated codes.
Warning Signs of Overload	Indicators include sagging rooflines, ice dams, unusual creaks, cracked ceilings, and sticking doors or windows. These signs suggest a roof under significant stress.	Proactive inspection and early action can prevent structural damage. Monitor conditions closely during storms.
Safe Snow Removal	Use a telescoping roof rake to remove snow from the ground. Avoid completely scraping the roof to protect shingles. If necessary, hire professionals, especially for ice removal or extreme conditions.	Leave a thin snow layer to prevent damage to shingles. Never attempt to clear snow on a slippery or steep roof without proper safety measures.
Prevention Strategies	Maintain the roof by inspecting for damage before winter, keeping gutters clean, and addressing insulation and ventilation in the attic. A cold attic reduces the likelihood of ice dams forming.	Proper insulation and ventilation prevent heat escape that contributes to ice dam formation. Professionals can assist with upgrades if persistent issues occur.