

## ICE DAMS CAN CAUSE ROOF LEAKS

TRADITIONALLY, DURING MICHIGAN WINTERS, SOME HOMEOWNERS HAVE DISCOVERED DROPS OF WATER COMING THROUGH THE CEILING. THE ROOF IS DEFINITELY LEAKING, BUT IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT A NEW ROOF IS NEEDED. THE LANSING DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING SAFETY SAYS THE LEAKING COULD BE DUE TO AN ICE DAM PROBLEM.

THE PROBLEM IS CREATED BY THE FORMATION OF ICE ALONG THE LOWER EDGE OF THE ROOF. AS THE SNOW ON THE UPPER PORTION OF THE ROOF MELTS, WATER IS TRAPPED IN THE ICE DAM, WORKING ITS WAY UNDER THE SHINGLES, SOAKING INSULATION AND EVENTUALLY DAMAGING THE CEILING.

EXPERTS SAY THE BEST TIME TO TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT THE ICE DAM PROBLEM IS BEFORE TEMPERATURES BECOME COLD ENOUGH TO CAUSE ICE TO FORM. THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION IS TO KEEP THE ROOF SURFACE COLD BY ELIMINATING ANY POSSIBLE ESCAPE OF HEAT FROM THE HOUSE THROUGH THE ROOF. PROPER INSULATION AND ATTIC VENTING WILL MOST LIKELY SOLVE THE PROBLEM. IF THE ATTIC NEEDS INSULATION, MAKE SURE THE ACCESS OPENING FROM THE HOUSE IS ALSO INSULATED.

IF YOU FIND, HOWEVER, THAT TIME SLIPPED BY QUICKLY AND THE ICE DAM FORMED BEFORE YOU COULD INSULATE AND VENT YOUR ATTIC, THERE ARE SOME EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS.

AMMONIUM SULFATE, A LAWN FERTILIZER, CAN BE APPLIED LIBERALLY TO THE PROBLEM AREAS TO CREATE OPENINGS IN THE ICE FOR THE WATER TO ESCAPE TO THE OUTSIDE EDGE OF THE ROOF INSTEAD OF INSIDE THE HOUSE.

EXPERTS ADVISE AGAINST USING ROCK SALT, BECAUSE DAMAGE TO GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS WILL RESULT.

ANOTHER EFFECTIVE METHOD IS THE USE OF HEAT TAPES. THE TAPE SHOULD BE LOOPED TO EXTEND UP THE ROOF TO A POINT AT LEAST A FOOT BEHIND THE WALL. THE BOTTOM OF THE LOOP SHOULD EXTEND INTO THE GUTTER BUT NOT TOUCH THE BOTTOM OF IT.

SOME HAVE SUGGESTED USING A HATCHET TO CHOP V-SHAPED CHANNELS IN THE ICE DAM, BUT ANYONE USING THIS METHOD SHOULD EXERCISE EXTREME CARE IN BOTH CLIMBING THE LADDER (A DANGEROUS WINTER PRACTICE) AND MAKING SURE THAT THE ROOF IS NOT DAMAGED.

FINALLY, THE DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING SAFETY ADVISES HOMEOWNERS TO CHECK THEIR INSURANCE POLICY TO SEE IF INTERIOR DAMAGE, CAUSED BY THE LEAKS, IS COVERED.

