
Preparing Your Roof for Winter: The Time is Now

By Tom Daniel

The memories of the blizzards of 2010 still are fresh for many Capitol Hill homeowners. Internal damage to homes from roof problems, including downspouts and gutters, was significant. Snow and ice volumes were overwhelming and, while the severity of the weather was unique in this area, it does serve as a reminder to Be Prepared!

Following is a homeowner's checklist for your roof so snow can still be pretty for you in the upcoming winter season.

1. Gutters and downspouts should be cleared of all debris, including leaves, tree branches, dirt and mud, acorns and other nuts that fall from trees. This will enable melting snow and ice to flow more freely and help prevent "ice dams" from leaking water into your house. In addition, gutters filled with water in non-winter months because they are hung improperly or filled with debris are a warning sign of future roof failure.
2. Roof flashing is found on the roof around the perimeter of your home as well as vents, pipes, chimneys and skylights. High winds, heavy winter rains and ice and snow can cause flashing to loosen, rip and tear. If flashing is not inspected before the rough winter months, you could have a costly problem on your hands.
3. Stains and signs of leaks on ceilings and interior walls could be roof leaks. Take time to have all roof leaks repaired before the weather becomes severe. Accumulated snow and melting ice on your roof can greatly increase the danger to your home from untreated roof leaks. Leaks are nearly impossible to locate



when the roof is covered with ice and snow.

4. The roof deck itself (the main roof surface) should be checked for any signs of deterioration, tears and holes. Joints should be checked for signs of splits or thin areas of roof membrane and deteriorated caulking or loose metalwork.
5. All loose debris should be removed from the roof surface itself to avoid future problems.
6. All penetrations on the roof (including those from satellite dishes, heat and air conditioning units and other structures) should be inspected. Any point of possible water or air infiltration needs to be checked and restored to a properly sealed condition to avoid contamination.
7. There are numerous areas on and around the roof, including the parapet or wall cap, behind the gutters and under the roof edges, where openings could allow birds, squirrels and other furry creatures into the attic space. Animal droppings in the attic or crawl space

are clear signs of a problem. All these areas should be inspected and repaired as necessary.

Being proactive to prevent potential problems and not reactive after problems have already occurred is a good way to protect your home and avoid higher future costs.

A final word: Stay off your roof in the winter! You, your loved ones and neighbors should practice safety first and call roofing professionals to deal with your roofing problems.

[Tom Daniel of R. Thomas Daniel Roofing is the third generation of a family that's provided roofing services to Capitol Hill for over 90 years. The firm is the roofer recommended by Capitol Hill Village and Dupont Circle Village. Tom is a Hill resident and can be contacted at 202.569.1080 or tom@rthomasdanielroofing.com. The company website is www.rthomasdanielroofing.com.