



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY
John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner

Division of Fire Safety
Office of the State Fire Marshal
J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Fire Marshal Warns of Building Collapse Danger

State Fire Marshal J. William Degnan announced today that due to recent successive snowstorms there is a greater urgency to clear roofs of snow and ice that has accumulated. A roof may collapse with little or no warning, and one common misconception is that only flat roofs are susceptible to collapse. High roof parapets can accumulate drifting snow and unbalanced loads due to the recent high winds add even more strain to roof structures. The following warning signs could indicate that you have a danger of roof collapse. You should immediately evacuate the building and notify your local building official, fire department, or contact a structural engineer to determine if the building is safe if you observe the following:

- Sagging roof steel – visually deformed
- Severe or new roof leaks
- Cracked or split wood members
- Bends or ripples in metal supports
- Recent cracks in walls, drywall or masonry
- Cracks in welds of steel construction
- Sheared off screws from steel frames
- Sprinkler heads pushed down below ceiling tiles
- Doors that pop open
- Doors or windows that are difficult to open
- Bowed utility pipes or conduits attached to the ceiling
- Creaking, cracking or popping sounds

Past fire investigations have determined that fuel-gas service to some buildings have been damaged due to heavy snow loads and snow sliding off roofs onto gas meters and components. In addition, snow sliding off roofs onto outside oil tanks has caused valves and filters to be broken off. The State Fire Marshal urges all citizens to do the following:

- Clear roofs of excessive snow and ice buildup, being careful not to damage gas and oil service to the building. Clearing the roof can be dangerous and should be left to professionals. Using a roof rake is recommended while keeping away from electrical lines.
- Keep all chimneys and vents clear to prevent carbon monoxide from backing up into the building. Some vents, such as pellet stove vents, may exit the building through a wall and are susceptible to being blocked by excessive snow buildup on the outside of the building.
- Keep all exits clear of snow, so that occupants can escape quickly if a fire, or other emergency, should occur. Keep in mind that windows should be cleared to allow a secondary means of escape in case the primary means of escape is blocked by fire. Keeping exits clear also allows emergency workers to access your building.

Specific fire and building safety questions can be answered by local fire and building officials or by contacting the State Fire Marshal's Office at 223-4289.

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