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With the recent snow, there is a greater urgency to clear roofs of excessive 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.

Buildings that can be considered most at risk are ones where the snow load is not even across the roof with large accumulations of snow and ice. The factors that also contribute to the potential of collapse of these structures are ice dams, structural design issues, and damage to structural components. The balance of the snow load is also a major element to consider as having the weight all on one side of a roof can cause excessive loading and possible collapse.

The Building Department urges all citizens to do the following due to the potential of warmer temperatures and heavy rain this weekend:

•   Clear roofs of excessive snow and ice buildup, being careful not to damage your roof along with gas and oil service to the building.

•   Keep all chimneys and vents clear to prevent carbon monoxide from backing up into the building. Some vents, such as gas and oil heaters and 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.

Working on or near a roof to clear snow can be very hazardous. Make sure you have good footing and a safety line if you are on a roof, stay clear of the fall zone for snow and ice that is coming off a roof. Use a company with people that are trained to work on roofs whenever possible.