



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Public Safety

February 17, 2015

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Public Safety Advisory

Roof Collapse Concerns

The Department of Public Safety recently issued a notice concerning the [dangers associated with heavy snow loads on roofs](#). Repeated snowstorms have contributed to severe roof load conditions, causing collapse in many instances.

Although some roof failures were to older, poorly maintained buildings, others occurred in newer, more robust structures reinforcing the need for homeowners, tenants, and businesses owners to remove excess snow from roofs, decks and other areas of concern. Removing snow from these areas will minimize the likelihood of structural collapse. Flat and low pitched roofs, most often found on industrial buildings, but are also used in certain home designs, are at the greatest risk of buckling under heavy snow and ice accumulations.

Also, many large, box style stores have sections dedicated to the storage and display of seasonal merchandise such as grass seed, mulch and other lawn care products. Often these areas are protected only by light-weight, corrugated metal roofs that may not be able to sustain excess snow loads. There have been several instances of failure with these types of roofs as a result of recent storms.

Additionally, [air-inflated structures](#) that may protect athletic fields or similar facilities may be susceptible to increased roof loads imposed by snow. Like others mentioned, excess snow should be removed from these structures as well. In fact, most often, manufactures require snow to be removed from membrane structures when build-up reaches a certain level.

In order to help prevent further instances of roof collapses, we at the Department of Public Safety ask municipal building inspectors to check these types of vulnerable structures in their communities to make sure that preventive measures to remove snow build-up are in place.

Finally, we encourage all municipal building inspectors to report any instances of structural failure due to snow loads within their communities to the *Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency* via [WebEOC](#) or by calling (508) 820-1444.

Thank you for your assistance with this important public safety matter.

Sincerely,

Robert Anderson

Department of Public Safety

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