

Roof Damage Prevention - Snow Loads

With the arrival of Winter, municipal buildings and schools are at risk for structural damage and/or collapse of roofs. First and foremost, roof collapse poses the risk of serious injury to occupants as well as the risk of serious property damage and continuity for municipal operations. Buildings with flat roofs are especially vulnerable to collapse under these conditions.

The danger of roof overload is significantly increased when a flat roof abuts a pitched roof of higher elevation. Snow may slide off the pitched roof onto the lower flat roof, significantly increasing the snow load on the lower portion of the roof. Should a moderate to heavy rainfall occur before significant melting occurs, the danger from a roof overload or collapse is further heightened.

To guard against these potentially serious risks, MIIA recommends the following precautions:

- Inspection – Visually inspect flat roof surfaces and remove as much snow as possible. Take extra precautions not to damage the roof surface, especially rubber membrane roof surfaces.
- Maintenance – Be sure to inspect and clear all drains. This will allow for proper run-off of water, which will lessen the weight of the snow load.
- Internal Inspection - Check inside buildings for any indication of roof weakness (Settling of ceilings, broken structural elements, leaks, etc.).
- Professional Intervention - If you even suspect a problem, contact your Building Inspector for assistance.

In the event you or the Building Inspector have doubts as to the integrity of the roof, please be sure to evacuate the area until the situation can be analyzed by a professional engineer.