

# Condominium Home Owners' Association

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Bulletin: 300-211

## Condo Smarts

Headline: Ice dams pose serious problem for roof

Topic: Repairs – roofs

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**Dear Condo Smarts:** We live in a Townhouse complex in Coquitlam and have a strange problem that we are seriously concerned about.

With the heavy snows followed by cold weather, we've noticed large amounts of ice on the roof of our lower level, and as the weather warms, it is dripping from the upper level and freezing in what appears to be large, possibly unsafe masses and icicles.

In addition, where our two roofs meet, there's some staining on the ceiling in our lower entry.

Our roofs are only four years old but now it appears we have leaks. Is there any way to stop the ice build-up?

Our strata and manager say to just wait till it melts and it will take care of itself.

What's going to happen when this all turns to rain?

**Dear Wei:** Many homes in the Lower Mainland and along coastal communities are experiencing serious cases of ice damming.

Ice dams are the large masses of ice that collect on the lower edge of the roof or in gutters. After more snow melts, it freezes in those areas and backs up further, sometimes under the shingles and into our homes.

Near attic areas, it's usually warmer, causing the snow and ice to melt, but where the gutters are located, there's no warmth so the water freezes.

Ice dams often show up where there is inadequate insulation or major air leaks in attics or areas that are not properly insulated.

We often encounter these where people incorrectly vent their bathrooms, kitchens and dryers directly into the attic spaces. This also causes moisture and ice build-up within attic spaces resulting in serious damage.

At this point, there's not much you can do. However, the strata should retain a qualified roofer to monitor the ice build-up in case some removal is required.

They should also remove large icicles that may damage the buildings or pose a safety risk.

Removal with picks, salt, or chemicals can cause serious damage to your roofing systems and gutters – not to mention the effects of gravity on the human body when someone slips and falls off the roof. Once the weather warms and the ice clears your buildings should be inspected for damage to the roofing tiles, flashings, drains and gutters.

Attics should also be inspected as early as possible to search for leaks, missing insulation, disconnected vent hoses or plugged venting that is creating the conditions for ice damming. There are a number of excellent guides published by CMHC at [www.cmhc.ca/en/search/search\\_001.cfm](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/search/search_001.cfm)

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