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SAFETY AGENCY ISSUES CAUTIONARY SNOW LOAD ADVISORY
Building Managers Urged to Monitor Rooftop Accumulations

(Meridian, ID) – With heavy snowfall recently in northern Idaho and elsewhere, the Idaho Division of Building Safety (DBS) is asking facility managers with responsibility for public buildings, especially school buildings, to be vigilant in monitoring snow accumulations to guard against possible roof damage.

“Some areas of northern Idaho saw one-day snow accumulations of 12” and more last week, bringing to mind damages sustained by a number of structures in recent years due to heavy snowfall,” said DBS Administrator Kelly Pearce. “We want to make sure facility managers recognize the potential for damage and to caution them that steps should be taken to remove excess snow buildup from rooftops before a building’s design snow load capacity is reached.” Pearce added that low-pitch and flat rooftops are particularly susceptible to excess snow buildup and should be more closely monitored in snowstorm conditions.

Heavy snowfall in recent years caused substantial damage to a number of public school buildings, most notably in the Sandpoint area and in Worley, where heavy snow damaged roof support trusses at Lakeside Elementary. The event created an imminent safety hazard that resulted in eventual closure and abandonment of the school. In 2008, a partial roof collapse of the bus barn for the Wallace, Idaho school district damaged or destroyed six school buses. Recent heavy snows have also damaged a number of commercial structures in northern Idaho and eastern Washington.

“Fortunately no one was injured in any of the Idaho incidents,” said Pearce. “This cautionary statement is part of our effort to keep public buildings safe.” He noted that while the message is directed to public building managers, private structures should be similarly monitored and excess rooftop snow removed in order to avoid catastrophic damage.

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