

# What to Do When Your Roof Starts Leaking in the Middle of Winter

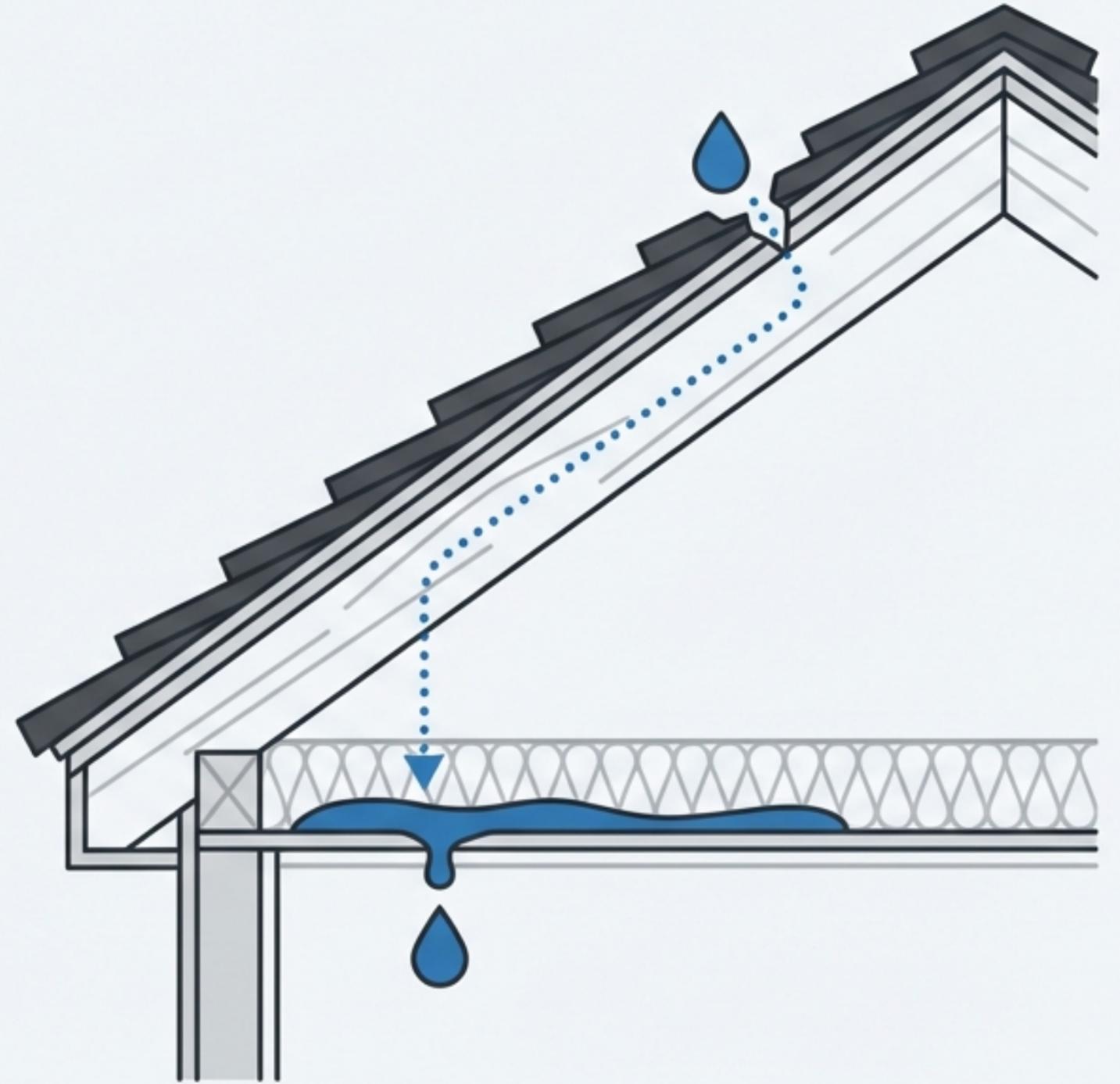
A Quick, Safe-Response Guide for Homeowners



Presented by T.A. Hughes III Roofing

# A Winter Leak Feels Urgent for a Reason

- Water can spread quickly, often out of sight behind walls and ceilings.
- The spot you see dripping isn't always directly below the source of the leak.
- Taking the right steps now can prevent thousands of dollars in damage later.



# Your Top Priorities in the First Hour



**Limit Interior Damage:** Protect your floors, furniture, and belongings.



**Stay Safe:** Avoid electrical hazards and risky DIY repairs.



**Get Experienced Guidance:** Understand the cause before the problem spreads.

*Calm, informed action makes all the difference.*

# Step 1: Contain the Water Immediately

- Place a bucket, trash can, or other container directly under any drips.
- Lay down old towels or plastic sheeting to protect floors and carpets.
- Move furniture, electronics, and rugs out of the affected area.



## Step 2: Relieve Ceiling Pressure (Only If Needed)

If you see a bulge in the ceiling: Place a bucket directly underneath it.

Carefully puncture one small hole in the center of the bulge with a screwdriver to let the water drain.

Do not press on the ceiling or poke multiple holes.



**STOP** if water is near light fixtures or electrical outlets. Avoid the area and consider shutting off the power at the breaker panel. When in doubt, call a professional.

# Critical Safety: What NOT to Do



**Do NOT** climb onto an icy or snow-covered roof. It is extremely dangerous.



**Do NOT** apply caulk, tar, or other sealants in freezing weather. They often fail.



**Do NOT** use an axe or shovel to chip away at ice dams. This can cause severe roof damage.



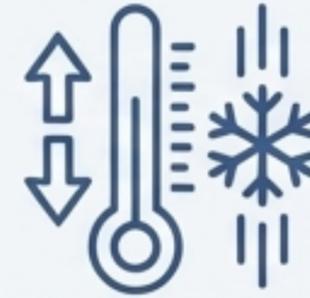
**Do NOT** ignore a 'small' drip. Water damage spreads quietly.

# Why Winter Leaks Are Different



## Ice Dams

Melting snow backs up behind ice at the roof's edge, forcing water under shingles.



## Freeze-Thaw Cycles

Water gets into tiny cracks, freezes, expands, and widens the opening.



## Wind-Driven Snow

High winds can blow snow up and into roof vents or under flashing.



## Condensation

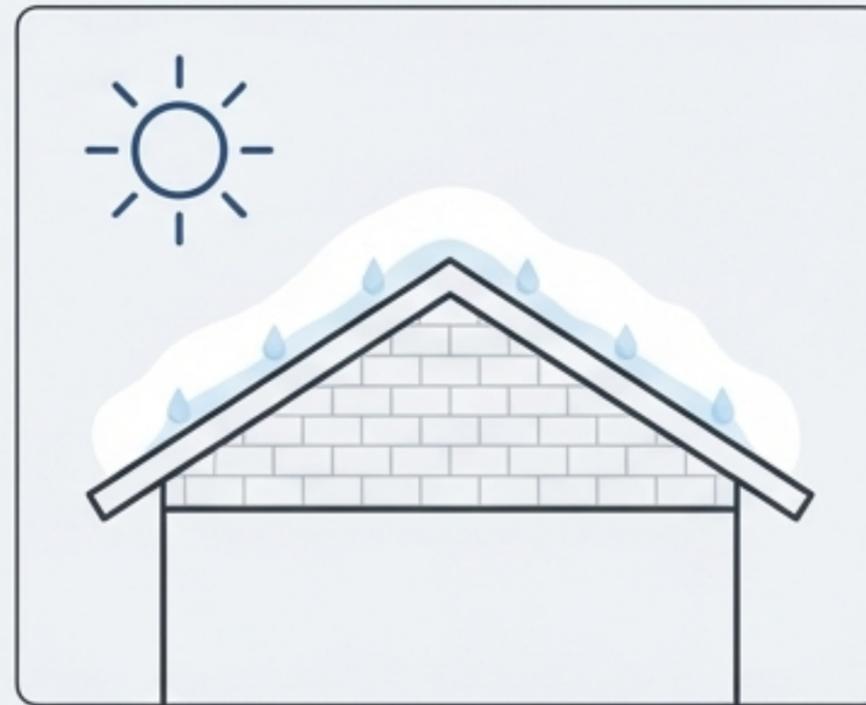
Sometimes, warm, moist air in an attic can mimic an active leak.

# The Delayed Leak: Why It Often Appears After the Storm

A thick blanket of snow can sit on a roof for days. As the sun comes out or temperatures rise slightly, the snow underneath begins to melt. This meltwater then finds its way into existing weak points, causing a leak long after the weather has cleared.



**Snow Blanket**



**Sun/Warming Melts Snow**



**Meltwater Seeps into Weak Point**

# Temporary Measures vs. Unsafe Fixes



## ✓ Safe Temporary Solutions

- Continuing to manage water inside your home.
- Professional-grade temporary protection installed by a trained crew with proper safety gear.
- Controlled ice dam mitigation or snow removal by an experienced professional.



## ✗ DIY Fixes That Often Make Things Worse

- Applying hardware-store sealants in cold or wet conditions.
- Attempting to patch the roof yourself without proper equipment.
- Delaying a professional evaluation, allowing hidden damage to spread.



# When to Call a Professional Immediately

Seek professional help right away if you notice any of the following:

- Water is actively dripping or flowing.
- The ceiling is visibly sagging, cracking, or feels soft.
- Water is emerging near light fixtures, outlets, or the breaker panel.
- This is a recurring leak that appears every winter in the same area.

# What an Experienced Roofer Can Do in Winter



**Access the roof safely** using proper fall-protection equipment.



**Identify the true source** of the leak, which may be far from where it appears inside.



**Install durable temporary protection** designed to hold up until a permanent repair is possible.



**Provide clear documentation** and a report that can be used for your insurance claim.

*Experience matters most when conditions are dangerous and time-sensitive.*

# A Quick Guide to Insurance Coverage

Coverage for a winter leak often depends on its cause. (Always review your specific policy.)

## What is often covered:

- ✓ Sudden damage from a storm or falling object.
- ✓ Leaks caused by the weight of ice and snow.
- ✓ Wind-driven snow intrusion.

## What is often NOT covered:

- ✗ Damage resulting from long-term neglect or poor maintenance.
- ✗ Leaks from pre-existing issues that were not addressed.

## What helps your claim:

-  Clear photos and videos of the leak and any damage.
-  Notes on the date the leak started and recent weather conditions.
-  A professional inspection report detailing the cause of the leak.

# How to Prevent Future Winter Leaks

Proactive maintenance is the best way to prevent emergency repairs.



**Schedule a professional roof inspection** in the fall to identify issues early.



**Ensure your attic has proper insulation and ventilation** to reduce ice dam formation.



**Keep your gutters clean** before winter arrives so melting snow can drain properly.

*Small issues addressed before winter rarely become major problems during it.*

# Winter Roof Leaks Aren't the Time for Guesswork.

Taking the right steps immediately protects your home. If you need help identifying the source of a leak or need a safe, professional assessment, our team is here to provide guidance.

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**T.A. Hughes III Roofing | Decades of Winter Emergency Experience**