



## SALT SOCKS, PANTYHOSE AND ICE DAMS

Observations on the Effectiveness of Ice Melting Compounds on Ice Dams



### CAN DAD'S OLD PANTYHOSE SAVE YOUR HOME?

Over the past 25 years we have seen many different methods used to address ice dams. More often than not those measures are reactive, not proactive. Thus is the case of the lowly salt sock, otherwise known as a cloth tube of some sort filled with an ice melting compound of some sort.

Salt socks work on the principle that ice melting compound is contained in a linear form which, when laid across an ice dam, will melt a channel through the ice. That path would then presumably be used as an escape route for water that may tend to get trapped behind the ice dam. The purpose of the sock is to hold the ice melting material in place, thereby concentrating the melting action.

(Yes, that was a cross-dressing joke about dad).

### CONCEPT VERSUS REALITY

The only problem with the salt sock is that it simply doesn't work. The examples below show typical results. In theory, salt socks seem like a great idea. In practice, however, using them to deal with an ice dam is not practical. One problem is that in order for them to do their intended job (cut channels through the ice dam) they need to be placed somewhat meticulously, every 16" or so. That's a lot of socks. Next, we see that they tend to only melt about 90% down through the ice dam and then putter out. We have no idea why they don't melt a clean slot right down to the roofing material but it never happens? The net result is that the melt water that causes ice dams, and the leaks that follow, still can not find a way off the roof. That's bad. Perhaps the most dangerous part of using salt socks (outside of balancing on a ladder to position them all perfectly) is that they create a false sense of hope. Homeowners tend to 'install' them and not look back. That is, not until water is dripping through the ceiling. Here's the bottom line: Don't use salt socks or pantyhoose filled with ice melting compounds to manage your ice dam problem. It simply doesn't work.



Sad and ineffective pantyhoose, encased in ice.



These salt socks didn't melt down to the roof, resulting in massive water damage to the interior walls. (Can you find the ice on the siding?)