

Plastic snow guards prevent roof avalanches

CAMP HILL, Pa. — The same tough plastic used in astronauts' face masks has proven a major Space Age advance against a serious, centuries-old problem that recurs every winter — heavy drifts of snow and ice that accumulate atop homes and other buildings with sloping roofs, then suddenly cascade down and off the roofs.

Such an avalanche can tear loose gutters and downspouts — requiring costly repairs. It can even injure people and cause damage on the ground below.

For many years, people in the snowbelt have fought rooftop avalanches by attaching "snow guards" — small upright strips of wood or metal — across the lower part of a roof. These hold back snow and ice, but can cause other troubles. Wood softens, rots and erodes. Metal corrodes and creates ugly stains on rooftops.

Then Jack McMullen, a metal building dealer for the construction industry, developed the concept of making snow guards out of a transparent plastic that resists corrosion and looks far less obtrusive on a rooftop.

After acrylic units were found to turn brittle and lose strength in extremely cold weather, transparent Merlon polycarbonate was substituted. This engineering thermoplastic resin manufactured by Mobay Chemical Corp., of Pittsburgh, Pa., has high impact strength and excellent resistance to extreme heat and cold.

During two years of practical testing in roof installations in the northeastern and midwestern United States, Canada and Alaska, the Merlon polycarbonate "Snojax" snow guards have withstood extended exposure to winter cold as low as -25°F. and summer heat of 100° F. or higher, without showing any adverse effects, according to McMullen, president of Snojax, Inc., headquartered at 1500 State St., Camp Hill, Pa. 17011. The units are molded by ASM Industries, of Leola, Pa.

The polycarbonate snow guards, McMullen points out, are ideal for houses, garage, barn, school, church, office, factory, warehouse or any other building with a sloping roof. The wider the roof, and the steeper its pitch, the greater the chances of a serious avalanche. In recent years, the widening popularity of pre-fabricated standing-seam roofing in either aluminum or coated or enameled steel, with glossy coatings, has tended to foster an aggravated snow buildup and avalanche problem.

For maximum effectiveness in preventing rooftop avalanches, McMullen recommends installing at least two horizontal rows of Snojax just above the eaves on each sloping surface of the roof. The snow guards in each row

should be about two feet apart, and about four or five feet allowed between the two rows. The rows should run the entire length of the roof — and should be staggered, so that each Snojax in one row is positioned opposite a

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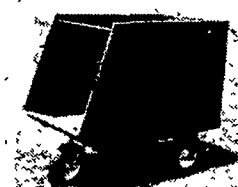


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