Hemlock Decks & Porches Issues Advisory on Porch Roof Connections

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WOBURN, MA - September 08, 2026 -
Hemlock Decks & Porches has issued a seasonal advisory on water management where a covered porch roof meets an existing house, noting that the detailing decisions governing that junction are made at design stage and that roof work of this kind is completed before freezing weather arrives.

Adding a roofed structure to a house creates a new intersection between two roof planes, and building science research identifies that geometry as the harder condition to detail correctly. Guidance published by Building Science Corporation notes that roofs with multiple intersecting levels, valleys, dormers and other projections are more difficult to air seal, insulate and ventilate than simple roof forms, and that simpler assemblies are more forgiving. A porch roof tying into an existing roofline or exterior wall introduces exactly that complication into a structure that did not previously have it.

Water management at the junction depends on layered detailing rather than on any single component. Step flashing is integrated with the existing roofing as it is installed, counterflashing directs water back out over the step flashing, and the drainage plane behind the cladding carries anything that gets past both away from the structure. Each layer assumes the ones beneath it will eventually be tested. Where one is omitted or installed out of sequence, wind-driven rain can enter the wall cavity, and the failure is concealed behind siding rather than visible from either side.

"The tie-in is the one detail on a covered porch that nobody sees and everybody finds out about later," said Teddy Labonte, Owner of Hemlock Decks & Porches. "Water does not announce itself at the junction. It shows up somewhere below it, usually a season or two after the mistake was made."

Self-adhering roof protection membrane has become standard practice in regions prone to ice damming, and building science guidance describes it as a waterproofing underlayment that seals around fastener penetrations and protects against infiltration. Its role at a porch tie-in is the same as at an eave, which is to

hold water out where standing water is most likely to develop.

Ice damming is the winter condition that tests the junction. Research summarised by the Building America Solution Center, citing work from the University of Massachusetts Amherst Department of Environmental Conservation, identifies three conditions as necessary for an ice dam to form: snow on the roof, an attic that is poorly air sealed or poorly insulated, and freezing temperatures. The same guidance notes that a dam can form with as little as two inches of snow accumulation, which is a lower threshold than most homeowners assume.

The mechanism is straightforward. Heat escaping into the attic warms the underside of the roof deck and melts snow above it. That meltwater runs down the roof until it reaches a colder surface, where it refreezes. As the process repeats, the ice ridge grows and holds standing water behind it, which can then be drawn up beneath the shingles by capillary action. At a porch tie-in the geometry works against drainage, because the junction between two planes is where water already concentrates.

Roof configuration is settled at design for the same reason. Gable, hip and shed forms each connect to an existing house differently, and the pitch of the new roof determines whether water is directed away from the junction or toward it. A shallow pitch moves water more slowly and holds it longer at the point where the planes meet. Hemlock Decks & Porches builds covered porch roofs with shingle roofing systems and matches the porch roof form to the existing house so the addition works with the drainage pattern already present rather than against it.

The company noted that attic air sealing and insulation, which are the conditions that determine whether ice dams form in the first place, sit with the existing house rather than with the new structure, and that a homeowner planning a covered porch on a house with a history of ice damming has two separate questions to resolve rather than one.

"If a house already gets ice dams, adding a roof to it does not fix that, and the new junction is one more place for the water to find," Labonte said.

Timing is the practical reason for issuing the advisory now. Flashing and membrane work has to be completed while conditions allow, which places the useful planning window ahead of the first freeze rather than after it. Structures showing staining on siding below a porch junction, interior marks on a ceiling near an exterior wall, or shingles lifting where the two roof planes meet are worth examining before winter rather than during it.

Hemlock Decks & Porches is a family-owned deck, porch and outdoor living contractor operating across Massachusetts and Connecticut, and is a TrexPro Platinum Installer and TimberTech Gold PRO Contractor.

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Hemlock Contracting of Woburn

Hemlock Contracting is a premier deck builder in Woburn, delivering high-quality, custom decks designed for durability, style, and long-term performance.

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