Roof Rake Safety & Snow Removal Quick Guide

A practical companion to the Avalanche! SRD20 review — use these rules with any roof rake.

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1. The 7 Safety Rules

- **Stay on the ground — always.** Never use a roof rake while standing on a ladder. Wet rungs, a long pole, and falling snow are a dangerous mix.
- **Know your power lines.** A 20-foot metal pole and a live service line is a recipe for disaster. Map every line into your house before you rake, and steer well clear.
- **Clear the drop zone.** Falling snow is heavy and can hurt. Keep people, pets, and cars away from the eaves while you work.
- **Inspect the roof first.** Loose or curling shingles and snagging flashing can hook the rake. Walk the perimeter and look up before you start.
- **Dress for the job.** Insulated gloves, grippy winter boots, and eye protection — snow chunks fall fast and unpredictably.
- **Do not overreach.** If the pole is at full stretch and you are straining, you need a shorter tool or a professional. Strain causes slips.
- **Rake with a partner nearby.** Someone should know you are working under a loaded roof, especially on big storms.

2. The Layer Technique (How the Pros Rake)

- **Start at the bottom.** Pull the first 1–2 feet of snow off the eaves, then work your way up the roof in passes.
- **Pull, do not push.** Roof rakes are designed to pull snow down toward you — pushing from a window or dormer fights the tool's geometry.
- **Rake soon after the storm.** Fresh snow slides off easily. Snow that has sat for days compacts and sets — rakes struggle with it.
- **Let the wheels do the work.** On a wheeled head, keep the wheels rolling on the surface and use smooth, even strokes. Never slam the head down.
- **Clear valleys and eaves first.** That is where ice dams start. The middle of the roof can wait.

3. Ice Dams in 60 Seconds

Ice dams form when heat from the attic melts roof snow, and the water refreezes at the cold eaves. The ice ridge traps later meltwater behind it, and that water backs up under the shingles — into your ceilings and walls. Keeping the lower 3–6 feet of the roof clear of snow breaks the cycle. Raking is prevention; once a dam has formed, removal is a job for a professional with steam equipment, not a rake.

4. Pre-Winter Buying Checklist

- **Measure your eave height** before buying — a 20-foot rake suits most two-story homes; a single story needs far less.
- **Wheeled vs. plain blade:** wheels protect shingles and are worth the premium on asphalt roofs; plain blades are cheaper but scrape.
- **Pole type:** snap-together sections are simple and strong; telescoping poles adjust faster but can slip under load.
- **Weight:** 5–7 lbs is typical. Remember the pole gets heavy at arm's length — lighter is easier for long sessions.
- **Buy in fall.** Stock is full and prices are stable in October–November. January sellouts and price spikes are normal.

5. Rake Care (2 Minutes, Once a Year)

Before the first storm, check that every bolt on the head is tight. After the season, dry the pole sections, wipe the couplers with a little 3-in-1 oil or cooking spray, and store the rake broken down on its wall bracket. A rake stored dry lasts many winters.

Prepared by ZoxDeal as a free companion to the Avalanche! SRD20 snow roof rake review.
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