



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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Roof Drains

Roof drainage is regulated by both the Minnesota Building Code and the Minnesota Plumbing Code. The following is a summary of the requirements.

Primary roof drains:

- Drains shall be designed and sized according to the Minnesota Plumbing Code.
- All roofs shall discharge to a storm sewer or drain to daylight at grade at a safe location approved by the building official.
- Roof drains shall NOT drain onto a public sidewalk.
- One and two-family dwellings may drain to the street or lawn, provided it flows away from the building.

Secondary (overflow) roof drains:

- Required on roofs where water could be entrapped and exceed the designed roof load if the primary roof drains were blocked.
- Shall be designed according to the Minnesota Plumbing Code and sized to handle the same rainfall rate as the primary drains.
- Shall be completely separate from the primary drain system and must discharge to a conspicuous and safe location to alert the owner that the primary drains are blocked.
- Must not discharge onto a public sidewalk.
- If scuppers are used, they shall have an opening dimension of at least 4 inches and shall be directed to grade level in a manner and location approved by the building official.

Policy on Roof Drains:

Article 1300.0110, subpart 1 of the Minnesota Building Code (Duties and powers of building official) states:

“The building official may render interpretations of the code and adopt policies and procedures in order to clarify its application. The interpretations, policies and procedures shall be in conformance with the intent and purpose of the code.”

My predecessor, with whom I concur, interpreted the Minnesota Building Code to require roof and overflow drains to either discharge to a storm sewer or to “drain to daylight, at grade.” That requirement has been printed on all plumbing permits for years and continues to be our policy. Roof scuppers shall be allowed only where they will discharge to an approved safe location. This may require being conducted to grade with an open-channel down spout where it would otherwise discharge onto a public walkway or create a dangerous condition.

A “safe location” would generally be an area where the water could soak into the ground or drain to a catch basin without creating an icy hazard on a walkway. One story buildings with a relatively flat roof and no parapets would not necessarily require interior roof drains, but the roof must still drain to a safe location.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

James T. Bloom
Building Official