

A Science Service Feature

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DANGEROUS ICICLES

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Big icicles, capable of doing much damage if mild weather causes them to fall, often form in winter on leaky sprinkler tanks. At the plant of an electric company, at Mount Vernon, New York, a leak developed in the bottom of the wooden tank during a week-end last winter. The result was a huge icicle weighing about three tons, suspended 75 feet directly over the boiler house roof, above which the tank was located. To wait for warmer weather and allow this great weight to drop was dangerous. Such falling icicles have wrecked the roofs of structures below, have broken pipes in valve pits and thus drained the tank, and have even caused the collapse of tank structures by damaging tower members. In this case, a man with a gasoline blow torch was suspended in a bos'n's chair. Starting at the bottom of the icicle, he melted away about eight inches at a time, and it took eight hours' steady work to complete the job. A temporary patch was then applied to stop the leak.

A still greater mass of ice developed last winter from leakage between the staves of an old wooden tank at a paper-board mill in upper New York State. The ice was removed by men standing on planks laid on the cross members under the tank, and using long, sharp poles. Some of the falling icicles broke several diagonal rods, and the situation was precarious, as the trestle thus weakened might have collapsed, endangering employees, impairing fire protection, and possibly shutting down the plant by wrecking the boiler house.

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