



PACE Property Coverage Change Guidance (Collapse and Trusses)

Effective Jul 1, 2025

This guide is not intended to be an explanation of coverage and does not guarantee coverage in the event of a loss. If you have specific coverage questions or concerns, please contact your agent of record or email underwriting@sdao.com.

Over the past several years, some PACE members have experienced the partial or complete collapse of a building. Most of these incidents involved older, large-span engineered trusses. PACE's reinsurance carriers have taken note of these claims and have required changes to how and what we will cover regarding large-span trusses and beams. Our research suggests that the useful lifespan of these trusses is approximately 50 to 70 years.

The intent of this guide is to provide a brief overview of these changes and share best practices to help reduce the risk of collapse or truss failure.

Named Perils

The collapse or failure of an engineered truss in an insured property is only covered if caused by a named peril in your policy, such as fire, wind, or the weight of rain, snow, or ice. A complete list of named perils can be found in your coverage document or by contacting your agent of record.

Reporting Timeframe

Starting July 1, 2025, losses must be discovered and reported to PACE within 180 days following the named peril.

Engineered Wood Trusses

Although all engineered wood trusses are included in this coverage change, of most concern are large-span trusses, such as wooden bowstring and glue-laminated trusses, which are often found in gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums. These trusses were commonly used in school construction until the mid-1970s.

Exclusion

Engineered wood trusses that are more than 50 years old will be excluded from coverage. However, coverage will be added back if:

- The cause of loss is due to a named peril, and
- There is no evidence of preexisting structural damage, or
- The trusses have been repaired or deemed structurally sound by a licensed structural engineer within an inspection interval recommended by the engineer.

Best Practices

- Identify and document all large-span engineered wood trusses in your facilities.
- Conduct a documented visual inspection of the trusses.
 - If any damage is found (e.g., checking, cracking, sagging), consult a structural engineer for evaluation.
- Hire a structural engineer to assess the condition of these trusses.
 - Some original engineered weight ratings may have been inaccurate, and aging trusses may have deteriorated, reducing their capacity.
 - Have a structural engineer evaluate load capacities before adding or replacing anything on the roof.
- Keep all documentation on file, including engineering assessments and repair records.
- Develop a long-term inspection and replacement plan (as appropriate) for these trusses.
- **Storm Events**
 - Establish procedures to inspect trusses after significant weather events.
 - Identify accurate weight ratings and have procedures in place to remove ice and snow loads approaching safe limits.

Note: The goal is to reduce weight. Attempting to remove all snow may damage the roof.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Scope and Applicability

Q: If a facility has no visible signs of distress, is a visual inspection by district maintenance staff sufficient or must a structural engineer still be engaged?

A: First, we're not necessarily 'requiring' an inspection. Our coverage change is that we're providing coverage for the failure of a wood engineered truss in excess of 50 years old for specified perils (weight of snow/ice/rain, fire, fallen objects/missiles, etc.) unless, *at the time of the loss*, it's determined that there was pre-existing damage, such as: bulging, checking, cracking, creep or creep rupture, delamination, distortion, expansion, settling, shifting, shrinking, spitting, warping of the truss or other attached structural element.

This exception does not apply if that damage was previously identified and determined to be repaired or otherwise sound by a licensed structural engineer. So, it's up to the district (hopefully taking into consideration the advice of an engineer) what they're willing to accept from a risk perspective when it comes to the level of inspection they should be getting.

Q: Are steel trusses or hybrid wood/steel assemblies included under the same requirements, or are they excluded from this guidance?

A: This coverage language only pertains to wood engineered trusses in excess of 50 years old. Hybrid or steel trusses are not subject to these limitations.

Q: What constitutes a "large-span" truss for the purpose of this guidance? Is there a specific span length threshold?

A: The coverage language applies to *any* engineered wood truss in excess of 50 years old. That said, the losses we have seen are the failure of trusses that span gyms, auditoriums and cafeterias/multipurpose-type spaces. From what we have seen, trusses that are supported by load-bearing walls have not experienced the kinds of 'mysterious' failures that we have seen in gym/auditorium/cafeteria-type spaces, but are technically subject to the coverage limitations as well. We are suggesting members start with the large-unsupported-span trusses.

Inspection Requirements

Q: Will PACE accept an engineer-recommended interval (e.g. 3 or 5 years), or is a 12-month inspection interval expected to maintain eligibility for coverage?

A: PACE has removed language dictating inspection intervals, engineer-recommended intervals are sufficient. If there is evidence of pre-existing damage at the time of the loss, we will be looking for an engineer's report issued within an engineer-recommended interval that says it was repaired and/or sound.

Documenting and Reporting

Q: What level of documentation is expected for visual inspections (e.g. written notes, photos, standardized checklists)?

A: This will be up to the engineer doing the inspection, as the only requirement PACE has is that it gives a clear opinion of the soundness of the structure and gives what a 'reasonable' engineer would consider to be adequate evidence of the soundness.

Post-Storm and Emergency Inspections

Q: What types of storm events trigger mandatory inspections (e.g. specific wind speeds, snowfall levels)?

A: Our coverage is about what PACE identifies at the time of the loss. PACE recommends if there is any significant snow, ice or water build up on a roof, the member should be checking. We would urge them to consult with an engineer for specific loading thresholds to trigger a full-blown inspection.

Q: Can post-storm inspections be performed by district staff, or must they be conducted by a structural engineer?

A: If we identify damage at the time of a loss, we'll look to see if it was identified and re-mediated and deemed sound by an engineer. So, similar to the previous question, the threshold for the storm severity triggering an inspection is a risk management decision the district will have to make in consultation with experts.

Historical Compliance

Q: Do structural assessments completed before July 1, 2025 satisfy the coverage requirements, or must they be repeated under the new guidance?

A: If the report deems the building as structurally sound and properly inspected the trusses, then yes.

Q: If a truss was assessed more than a year ago but found to be sound, would that qualify for continued coverage without a new inspection?

A: We would want the member to go back to the inspecting engineer for an opinion on an inspection cycle, if one doesn't exist. Then they'll want to stay within that recommended interval.