



Building Success 101

Q: Should I insist on or install gutter protectors?

A: There are several "solutions" available to help keep debris out of your gutter system, which is the primary cause of problems and damage. Some methods simply cover the top of the gutters while others are actually inserts that soak up and drain water but do not allow debris to collect. If you wish to install gutter protectors or new gutters our gutter and leader contractor Storm Master Co., Inc. can help you. Call them at 732-521-4989.

Roofing and Gutters

While not among our homeowners' favorite weekend chores, periodic roof and gutter system maintenance is essential. As professional builders, we strive to select and install products on our homes that will last and perform for many years. To protect both the roof and our owners' investment in them, we encourage our customers to include roofing and gutter care on their annual home maintenance calendar.

Roofs: Think about it. A roof takes more abuse from the weather than any other part of a house. It is the area that is the most vulnerable to potential damage. Twice a year, ideally in the early spring and late fall, we recommend that homeowners hire out or personally conduct a thorough inspection of the roof: Gently walk or visually inspect the entire roof, looking for damaged material or areas where the roof structure (usually covered with a black tar paper) is exposed. Then replace (or have a professional replace) any damaged or exposed areas with new material.

In addition, it is important to clear off any debris, as it can hold water and hasten deterioration. Trim back overhanging tree branches so that they don't scratch and damage the roofing material or drop their leaves or needles directly onto the roof and into the gutters.

Removing overhanging branches will make debris clean-up easier and safer.

Proper roof maintenance should include checking the condition of any exposed metal sections. Typically, exposed, galvanized sheet metal is found around vent and chimney penetrations through the roof. It is also located along the roof's valleys, where two roof sections meet to form a V-shaped gutter to shed water. Make sure the sheet metal sections are tightly fastened, show no rust, and are free of damage that might cause water to seep in underneath them.

A roof checklist should include inspection of the mortar around the chimney and/or parapet walls. Have the mortar repaired right away if it shows wear, such as cracking, flaking, or gaps.

Lastly, make sure that the attic space or framed roof structure is adequately vented so that air can circulate and moisture is kept in check.

Gutters: Not every house has a gutter system, but for the majority that do, gutters are a critical element of overall roof "health," performance,

and durability. We recommend troubleshooting the gutters, downspouts, and splash blocks at the same time as a roof inspection to make sure that everything is working as designed.

The critical chore is clearing the gutters of debris. From leaves and twigs to rocks and sludge, debris not only clogs the system but can also cause damage or loosen gutter supports. At the same time, identify and repair any gaps in the gutters or downspouts and make sure their supports hold these components tight to the structure.

Clearing debris and repairing gaps will ensure that water and light debris are carried to the downspouts and completely flushed out. To make sure that's happening, hose down and flush the inside of the gutters once they're clean, gap-free, and properly supported. Clearing the gutters can be hazardous to the owner and the roof. Consider hiring a professional. Whenever possible, use a ladder (safely!) to clean out the gutters instead of walking on the roof, which can damage that surface.

Lastly, make sure water exits the downspouts away from the foundation to avoid water pressure on the home's structure. Extend the downspouts, if necessary, and consider installing splash blocks at the end of each downspout to divert and dissipate water instead of allowing it to pool.

Whether the task is performed by the homeowner or by a hired professional, regular roof inspection is essential to the preservation of the home's integrity.

Warm regards,

Richard

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