

## Maintenance tips for all types of gutters

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Regardless of what type of gutter system you choose, gutters and roofs need maintenance. If you have open rain gutters, they should be cleaned at least twice a year: in the Spring after trees bud, dropping flowers acorns, and seed pods; and in the fall after they drop their leaves. Depending on weather conditions where you live, an additional cleaning or two may also be necessary.

If you also have a low-sloped roof, even a leaf protection system cannot prevent debris from accumulating on your roof, so with or without a leaf protection system, roof maintenance is required. A simple cleaning with a broom or blower is all that is necessary. Plus, loose debris accumulating on the roof is a fire hazard and is extremely bad for the roof, accelerating wear and backing water up under the shingles.

However, cleaning out your gutters and brushing debris from your roof, though an important task, is not an easy one. Climbing and moving ladders and working several feet off the ground can be dangerous. It requires strength and agility to maintain your personal safety, as well as climbing protection systems or devices. If you cannot do this safely, call a contractor or install a system that offers leaf protection.

## Fall & Winter Gutter Cleaning

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Ice, snow and wind can have devastating consequences. Every winter there is a chance that pipes burst, frozen gutters and other weather-related disasters. Remove leaves, acorns, sticks and other debris from gutters, so melting snow and ice can flow freely. And check your roof insulation. Improper insulation and ventilation in your attic are at the root of most ice damming and gutter back-up causing leaks.

## What you should know about ice dams and icicles: Causes and cures

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### What causes an ice dam?

An ice dam is a ridge of ice that forms at the edge of a roof and prevents melting snow (water) from draining off the roof. Ice dams usually occur after a heavy snowfall and several days of freezing temperatures. Usually caused by poor attic insulation and ventilation, the ice dam is formed when the warm air inside your home leaks into the attic and warms the underside of the roof causing snow and ice on the roof to melt.

The melted water drains along the roof, until it reaches the cold overhang. The overhang tends to be at the same temperature as the outdoors and the melted water refreezes and forms an ice dam which can cause icicles. As more snow melts the ice dam grows and runoff water is trapped behind the ice dam. Eventually, this dam can force the water to back up under the shingles and sometimes into the ceiling or walls of the home. Contrary to popular opinion, gutters do not cause ice dams. They can occur whether or not gutters are present.

### Short-Term Solutions

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First and foremost, it is not recommended that you get on your roof to solve an ice damming or icicle problem. It could be dangerous. Also, do not stand on the ground and chip away at the ice. This can cause damage to roofing materials and you might be subject to injury from falling ice, debris, or tools.

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Some homeowners have installed roof mounted heating cables to melt ice dams. Heating cables should always be installed by a reputable electrical contractor and should not be installed by the homeowner or gutter contractor unless the gutter contractor is qualified.