

The Importance of Keeping Your Gutters Clean

If cleaning your gutters isn't near the top of your list of favorite things to do during your free time, you can be forgiven for that. Cleaning gutters has a tough time competing with the many other activities you might like filling your weekends, days off, and fleeting hours between work and bedtime with.

Nevertheless, keeping your gutters clean is important because gutters protect your home and your property, and even you, in a number of ways. Properly functioning gutters redirect rainfall off your roof and away from your foundation, walls, and landscaping. Here in the Pacific Northwest, with all the rain and snow we get, it's even more important than ever to make sure your gutters are in good shape.

When gutters and downspouts become clogged with debris, the water doesn't magically go away. Instead, it can stay in place, eventually causing the gutters to sag or even detach from the house. Overflowing water causes trouble as well.

Problems resulting from clogged or damaged gutters are messy, difficult, and expensive to fix.

Signs that your gutters or downspouts are clogged:

- Wood rot on the roof or siding
- Puddles near the base of the home
- Leaks inside the home
- Noticeable rodent or insect activity in or around the gutters

Now let's take a look at some of the reasons it's important to keep gutters clean.

Protecting the Roof and the Siding

When water in clogged gutters and downspouts overflows, it backs up onto the roof and/or drips down the sides of the house. In both cases, this can cause rot to the roof and the siding (which may in turn cause leaks in ceiling and walls). Repairing this, especially where the roof is concerned, can get very expensive, running into tens of thousands of dollars in repair costs.

The leaking water can also create stains on the siding, and, in regions with cold winters, it can result in ice dams on the roof or in the gutters. Water backing up behind them can leak into the home and damage ceilings, walls, insulation, and more.

Protecting the Foundation

When laying the foundation of a home, any competent builder makes sure that the land edging the foundation slopes away enough that it cannot stagnate against the foundation or close to it.

Gutters and downspouts play a crucial role in this, too, by sending rainfall well away from the foundation of the home.

If gutters and downspouts are not working the way they should, though, the water that leaks down can overwhelm even the best-planned foundation and start penetrating deep into the ground adjacent to it.

When this happens, the water over time makes cracks in the foundation and then leaks into the basement. Anyone who has ever dealt with the mess, destruction, and expenses of a flooded or leaking basement knows that this is something no one ever wants to deal with. Mold, rot, structural damage, and property loss (destroyed carpeting, furniture, and personal belongings, for example) are just some of the consequences.

In the winter, the water that accumulates against the foundation can freeze, and the expansion and contraction associated with the freeze-thaw cycle can cause cracks in the foundation as well.

Even if a home does not have a basement, a poorly functioning gutter system is a threat to the foundation. The cracks that can ensue are costly to repair. Furthermore, water damage can destabilize the foundation over time and cause it to settle or tilt. The costs associated with repairing this are the things of nightmares.

Protecting Your Landscaping

As the rainwater leaks from clogged or collapsing gutters and from blocked downspouts, it also goes straight into flower beds, ornamental shrubs, and other landscaping you have along the perimeter of the house. Yes, those features need water, but there is such a thing as too much water, and you don't want to see mulch washed away, flowers drowned, and carefully tended shrubs turn into swamps.

Keeping Insect Pests at Bay

Standing water is a paradise for mosquitoes and many other insect pests because it is about as perfect a breeding ground as they could ask for.

The stagnant water in clogged gutters and around the foundation due to clogged gutters can attract mosquitoes, biting flies, and other unwanted pests.

At the very least, this can diminish your enjoyment of the outdoors during the very times of year you most want to be outside. Left with the choices of suffering itchy bites, coating themselves

with chemical repellents, paying for pest control, or mostly staying indoors, many are going to take the last option because it might seem like the easiest. And what a shame that would be.

At the worst, mosquitoes and other pests can transmit dangerous diseases such as the West Nile and Zika viruses. They can also transmit parasites to both people and pets.

Properly functioning gutters don't guarantee a mosquito-free property, but they certainly will not attract or cause an increase in such pests.

When Should You Clean Your Gutters?

How often you should clean your gutters depends on where you live and how many trees are near your home, but a general suggestion is to check them monthly and clean them in the spring and the fall at the very least. In the spring, a lot of airborne seeds find their ways into gutters, and in the fall, leaves can quickly turn a gutter system into an unwanted body of standing water.

Consider Gutter Guards

Gutter guards fall into that category of things that are a short-term expense with long-term savings. With gutter guards, you have a means of blocking most debris from getting into your gutters and downspouts and clogging them, and they can vastly improve drainage and simplify maintenance.

They are not, however, infallible, and it is likely some debris will still get in. Thus, gutter guards still require inspection and cleaning, but they will significantly reduce the work you have to do.

Why Should You Go with a Pro?

For many people, it's not that big of a deal to clean their gutters themselves, but there are several reasons to consider hiring a professional:

- Cleaning gutters means time spent on ladders and roofs, which brings a chance of accident and injury, especially when surfaces are soft or uneven and you have to take additional measures to steady a ladder.
- Cleaning gutters is often, quite frankly, an unpleasant task because of the smells of rotting matter and the messes to clean up.
- Clogged downspouts can be hard to clean, and professionals will have the tools and experience to get the job done.
- You probably have better things to do with your time.

Whatcom Pressure Washers (WPW) can take care of these headaches for you. We're an industry leader in gutter cleaning and maintenance, pressure washing, and more. In addition to inspecting, cleaning, and repairing gutters, we can install gutter guards if you're interested in going that route. Use our [easy online form](#) to find out how we can start protecting your greatest investment today!

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