

# Cleaning Gutters Prevents Repairs

by Angie Hicks, Founder of Angie's List,  
[www.AngiesList.com](http://www.AngiesList.com)

**D**on't fall down on the job of keeping your gutters and downspouts clear and in good repair. They may be an "out of sight, out of mind" aspect of your home exterior, but neglecting them can lead to costly repairs. Here's a basic guide to gutter maintenance, compiled by our researchers and based on the expertise of gutter pros rated highly by Angie's List members:

## *When to check, clean gutters*

Fall is a good time to think about gutters, since leaves dropping from trees are a main cause of clogging. But gutters and downspouts can be blocked by other things, too, including pine needles, twigs, "helicopter" maple seeds and even tennis balls.

Experts recommend checking your gutter system at least twice a year, in the spring and in the fall after trees have shed most of their leaves and needles.

Depending on how many trees you have, you may need to clear gutters and downspouts as often as every three months. If you have few trees or your gutters are covered by a screen or other guard-type product, they may need to be cleaned only once a year or every few years.

## *The cost of neglect*

You could pay a price if you ignore periodic inspection and cleaning. As one top-rated gutter professional told our researcher: "Gutter prevention is measured in pennies; repairs are measured in dollars."

Clogged downspouts and gutters cause water to overflow the gutter, which can damage fascia or soffit boards, erode landscaping, or cause a roof leak, which in turn may create additional exterior or interior damage. Fixing these problems can cost you thousands of dollars. Clogged gutters can also be related to pest and rodent infestation.

## *Hire or DIY?*

If you clean your gutters, be careful when working from a ladder and don't forget to clear downspouts, too.

Even if you have gutter guards, you may want to hire a professional. Experts say up to 20 percent of leaves and other material can get through a gutter cover, and that experienced workers may be better at removing and reinstalling the guards.

A professional gutter cleaning should include removal of all leaves and other material from the roof, gutters and downspouts, as well as a check of overall gutter condition and repair of any loose gutter spikes. In addition, the person who does the work should leave your yard clear of debris.

## *Pricing and hiring tips*

The cost of gutter cleaning depends on the size and height of your home. Special equipment may be required to clean gutters of a three-story home, for example. Prices range from \$75 to \$225 for an average home, depending on the length of gutters and height of house. Most companies charge a flat fee per foot of gutter, but the cost can rise, depending on the complexity of the work.

If you're thinking about having gutter covers installed, be aware that the price usually starts at around \$1,500.

To find a reliable gutter expert, get recommendations from family, friends and neighbors, or check a trusted online review source. Ask for and check references, get several estimates and confirm that the company you hire is properly licensed and adequately insured.

*Angie Hicks is the founder of Angie's List, a resource for local consumer reviews on everything from home repair to health care. Follow her on Twitter at @Angie\_Hicks.*

**Angie's list**