

Winter Water Diversion

Whether you are thinking of selling, buying, or just want to take care of your investment, water damage can be time consuming, aggravating, and costly; something I found out the hard way. After a recent storm, my daughter's room became flooded due to drainage issues around our home.

“Proper drainage through rain gutters will save you a lot of time and money in the long run. When performing home inspections, one area that I see overlooked much too often, is the rain gutter system. They need to be installed properly and maintained regularly. By collecting and carrying water safely away from the home you can protect your home in many ways,” said Ken Card with Advanced Home Inspections.

Card added that most gutter problems can be easily identified. He recommends you take a walk in the rain. “You will want to look for leaking gutters, improperly installed gutters, damaged or misplaced downspouts, or clogged gutters. If untreated, these small problems can turn into large problems.”

This is what happened at my own home. A clogged and misplaced downspout dumped gallons of water directly onto the ground next to the foundation. In my case, we had flooding requiring a dehumidifier, wet vacuum, and lots of fans! We have now begun the evaluation process to correct the issues leading to our flooding.

Keep in mind that the gutters and downspouts are only as effective as the conditions that exist around the perimeter of your home. They can either act in harmony with those conditions or negate their value entirely. I would encourage you to evaluate your home prior to experiencing water drainage issues; this could save you much frustration and money.

Card said that when evaluating your system you need to check the flow. “A good rule of thumb is to have the gutters slope downward $\frac{1}{4}$ inch for every 10 linear feet. Be sure all downspouts are in place and diverting the water at least 8 to 10 feet away from your home. The earth should slope away from your house at about a 5 percent grade or 3 inches for 5 feet. Look around for any standing water.”

It is also important to keep your gutters clear of debris such as leaves, pine needles, and twigs. Trimming trees and vegetation away from your home helps. Gutters filled with debris may allow water to back up on the roof, which can result in water damage to eaves and roofing material as well as cause the water to overflow and be deposited in an area resulting in damage. At my home, we trimmed some of our trees; however, we hired a professional for the larger limbs and cleanup.

“If there is a crawlspace, water can eventually get under the house. Not only will it affect the integrity of the foundation and footings, it could lead to cracking, settling, or an eventual collapse,” warned Card.

In addition, these problems can also affect your homes structural integrity. Card said this happens when water damages the fascia, soffit, or the wood framing of the house.

“Another concern resulting from improper water diversion is termites or other wood destroying insects. These pests need water to thrive and reproduce. Poor drainage can encourage termite infestation,” said Card.

Fungus can also be a concern. The corrective action will depend on the severity of the damage. I would encourage you to seek professional advice on the control measures for fungus, which will generally include identifying the type of fungus, removing or treating it, and, of course, how to prevent it.

Card added, “To keep the repair man at bay, divert the water away.” If you have any questions for Ken Card with Advanced Home Inspections, call 559-642-3335 or email him at kencard@sti.net.

You can find more winter home protection tips on snow accumulation, water intrusion, ice dams, flood damage, bursting pipes, and more, on The Weather Channel’s website. You can find their tips at www.weather.com. Click on site in the search box and type in winter home tips.

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