Water Damage Prevention: Gutters and Downspouts

The purpose of a rain gutter is to collect water from the roof and direct it safely away from the building's foundation. When gutters are clogged, however, they crack and overflow, allowing water to seep into the soil immediately adjacent to the building, endangering the foundation and potentially causing indoor flooding. Missing or damaged downspouts also allow the water to run down exterior walls, potentially damaging the outside of the building. To prevent these problems, consider the following inspection tips.

Gutters

- Clean gutters several times a year (at least twice per year, though the frequency depends on the climate and landscape of the area). Conditions that may require more frequent inspection and cleaning include the following:
    - Buildings surrounded by tall trees;
    - Buildings located in areas of the country where rainfall is more prevalent; and
    - After severe weather occurs.



To effectively remove water from the roof, gutters need to be kept clear of debris. This photo shows clogged gutters; water will overflow when gutters are not kept clear of debris.

Downspouts

- Inspect downspouts for debris that may impede the flow of water and determine if the water is being adequately directed away from the building's foundation.
- Equip all downspouts with a minimum six-foot extension from the building to carry water away from the foundation.

While cleaning gutters is certainly not a task that anyone looks forward to completing, it is an important part of your building's maintenance routine. By simply taking the time at least twice each year to clean out gutters and inspect downspouts, you could save your facility thousands of dollars in costly repairs.



This photo illustrates a missing downspout. The water damage to the building includes algae growth and cracks in the block walls. Regular inspections looking for missing downspouts would have prevented this condition.

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