







Homeowners Guide to

Heated Gutter Systems

WHY IS A HEATED GUTTER SYSTEM IMPORTANT?



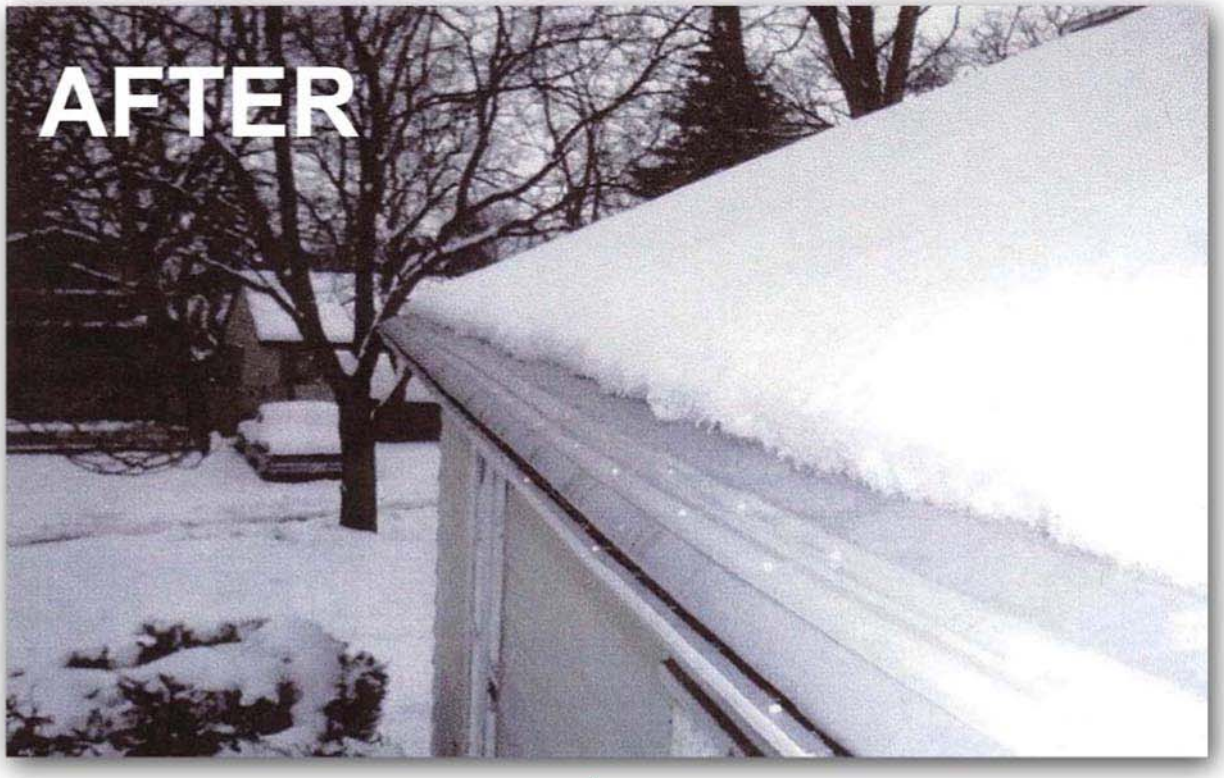


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SECTION 1. WHY IS A HEATED GUTTER SYSTEM IMPORTANT?

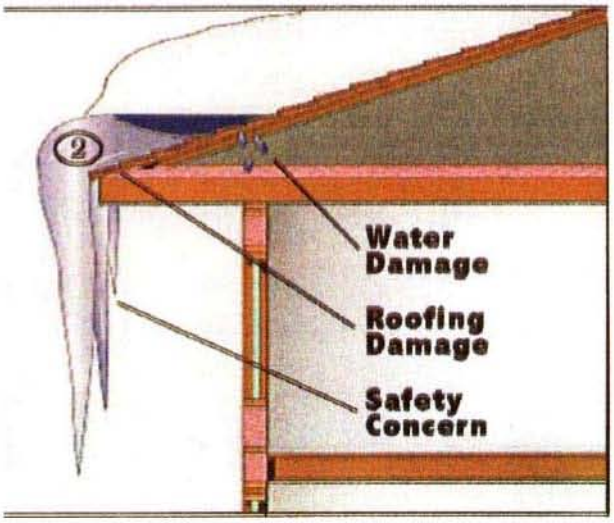
Twenty years ago, you might not have considered issues with your gutter system. You would likely have not thought as to how important the gutters were to prolong the life of your home. A TV home improvement expert once said that if there was a way to shunt the water away from your home, it would last forever.

When you have clogged gutters, water overflows next to the foundation sometimes flooding the basement. Landscaping is ruined in some cases, mold forms, and the foundation sometimes cracks because of the water freezing. During the warmer months, you create a safe haven for mosquitoes.

These issues have been solved with a wide variety of gutter protection systems ranging from vinyl screens to metal dome covers. There is a strong consumer acceptance of these products, even though most of them don't work as well as promised. But even the better ones have issues, especially in the northern climates. Why? They can't guarantee the homeowner that they will have free-flowing gutters all year round. Why? **Frozen water doesn't flow!**

Ice and snow on the roof cause a wide variety of issues:

Ice Damming



Ice damming is where accumulated ice and snow melts on the roof and then refreezes on the gutters and fascia. Damage to the roof, gutters, and fascia occurs with extreme amounts of ice and snow. Ice damming can be minimized to a certain extent by insulating the attic so that the roof isn't heated by warm air leaving the home through the roof.

There is always going to be some ice damming due to ice and snow melting from the sun and refreezing on to the gutters. Sometimes the ice will build up in the downspouts and work its way up to the gutters and wreak havoc with the home.

Ability to Have Gutters



House without Gutters

Some areas of the country receive such a large volume of snow that gutters are not practical since they do more harm than good. The large volume of ice rips off the gutters, damages the fascia, and ruins the roof. Homeowners will either take them off every year, or more commonly do without. The home is then exposed to the issues that happen without gutters. Neither scenario is favorable.

Safety

Hanging icicles are a major issue. Falling ice is a hazard in itself. What's worse is the icemelt from the roof and gutters dripping on to walkways and then refreezing. Who hasn't fallen on the ice? As you get older, this is more of a serious liability.

Seepage in Foundation



Water Next to Foundation

Ice melt dripping from the roof and gutters can collect near the foundation, and cause cracks when it refreezes.

Protecting the Integrity of Your Roof

When the gutter is full of ice, it has no option but to go under the first row of shingles pushing them up. Winter ice is very commonly the culprit for roof damage. Even though a roof may have a warranty for several years, ice damming can substantially curtail the life of the roof.

Issues with Gutter Protection

With some gutter protection, there is a mixture of good news and bad news.

First the good news: a gutter protection that fastens under the second row of shingles provides critical defense against ice damming. The ice forms on the top of the gutter protection instead of under the first row of shingles. Ice damming usually isn't an issue past the first row of shingles.

Now the bad news: Because gutter protection is commonly made of metal and we all know metal conducts, the homeowner sees ice much sooner than before gutter protection. Icicles are seen much sooner since the ice forms on top of the gutter protection versus filling up the gutter first and spilling over. Now you have the issues of falling ice and refreezing ice melt on walkways. This problem doesn't always happen and may not be as much of an issue depending on which way your home is facing and the cycle of thaw and freeze during the winter. Sometimes the icicles can be knocked off with a broom and the problem is solved.

Sometimes there are situations where the gutter protection has to be fascia mounted. There are also many systems such as the gutter / gutter protection combos that have to be fascia mounted. A fascia mount is a horrible situation when there is a great deal of ice. The gutter protection is either monted directly under the first row of shingles or butted up next to the first row. The ice forms on the top of the gutter protection and the roof is right there. Ice damage to the roof and fascia commonly occurs with a fascia mount.



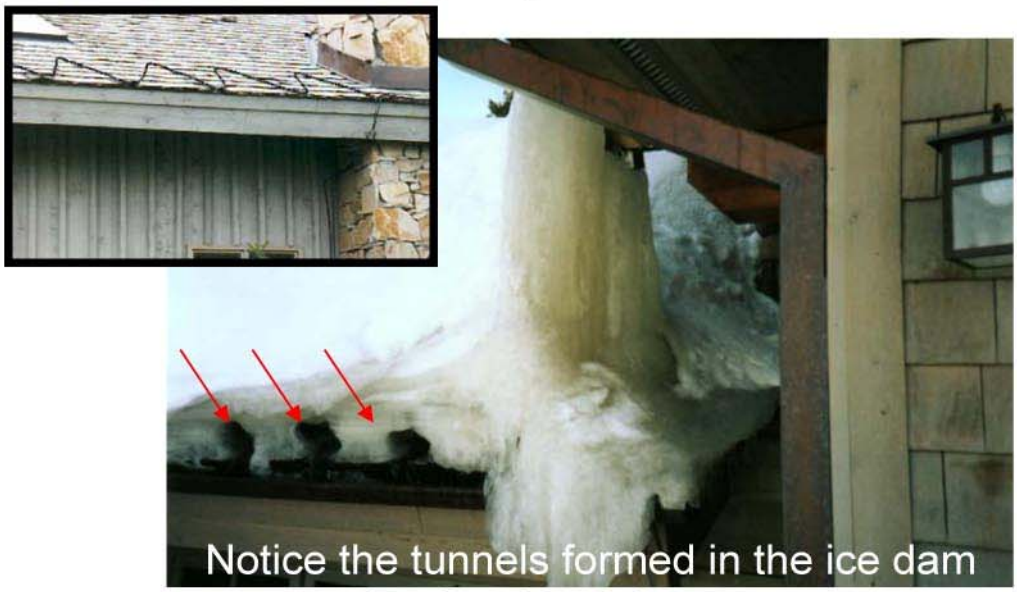
Ice Damage Caused by a Fascia Mount System

SECTION 2. WHAT IS AVAILABLE NOW?

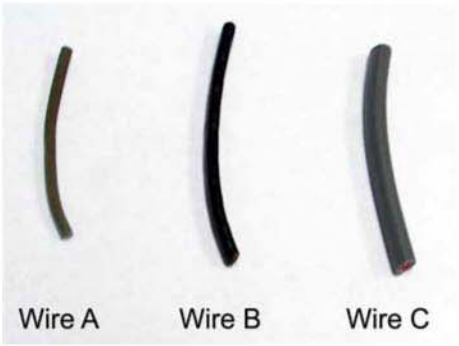
Consumer awareness is starting to grow regarding the need to have a heated gutter system. There have been some products available for some time but they have had serious pitfalls and are not effective.

However, there is some excitement now with encapsulated panels as they are producing satisfactory results.

The heated systems do draw electricity which will reflect in higher electric bills, especially when you are heating long portions of the gutter system.



Wires



Heat wires can be purchased at the hardware store. They range in grade from very thin to thick insulated wires. Typically they are mounted on the roof in a zigzag fashion and then plugged in.

There are many problems with these systems; the most notable is that they are dangerous. Some heat wires have no control over the temperature. It is not uncommon to see areas in the wires, where the insulation has worn, eroded, or burned off. Then the naked wire is exposed to a flammable portion of the home. The oldest home in Naperville, IL burned down in the winter of 2006. The thin wire system caught the roof on fire. When heat wires are functioning properly, the effect is not satisfactory. The wires usually heat up the area immediately surrounding the wire and create tunnels. Ice and snow can still build up on the roof.

Then there are esthetics issues. These wires are permanently mounted in a zigzag fashion on the roof, and the effect is not pleasing.

Bottom Line – Heat wires are very not a viable solution and are dangerous as well. The only good thing is that you won't spend very much money to find out that they don't work.

Wired Panels

Some gutter manufacturers offer the option of mounting self regulating cables on to the underside of the gutter protection. Self regulating cables do not get as hot as heat wire, so at least they are safe. The cables are not visible so the esthetics of the home are not compromised. These systems are very expensive due to materials and the need for a licensed electrician.

However, these systems are still not that effective at keeping up with ice and snow melt. These systems still melt a small portion of the ice and snow. On top of it they are hard to install. Some manufacturers have just started experimenting with these systems and are marketing products in which there is no track record or have the glitches worked out. There are other products available that have a proven track record and are very effective.

Bottom Line – Wired panels are an expensive option but do a much better job than regular heat wire. However, many systems don't work as promised and even the best ones will not product satisfactory results. There are better options available.

Encapsulated Panels



One of the biggest stumbling blocks to a heated system is the inability to heat a large area and to keep up with the accumulating ice and snow melt. Encapsulated panels have provided the solution to this issue. The panels themselves disperse the heat over a wider area and provide a bulwark to a bank of encroaching ice and snow buildup in the gutters and downspouts. The cables are still not visible so the esthetics of the home are not compromised.

These systems have been available for the last four years and have a proven success rate. The systems can be mounted on top of gutter protection in areas of heavy leaf debris or just mounted in the gutters if ice is the only issue. Downspouts, roof valleys, and drain tiles are also treated to ensure that the total gutter system is free flowing. The system is hard wired into the home and is very safe. The homeowner can turn the system on when it gets cold and off when it warms up. The materials and labor (licensed electrician required) make these systems expensive, but you will have a system that is effective.

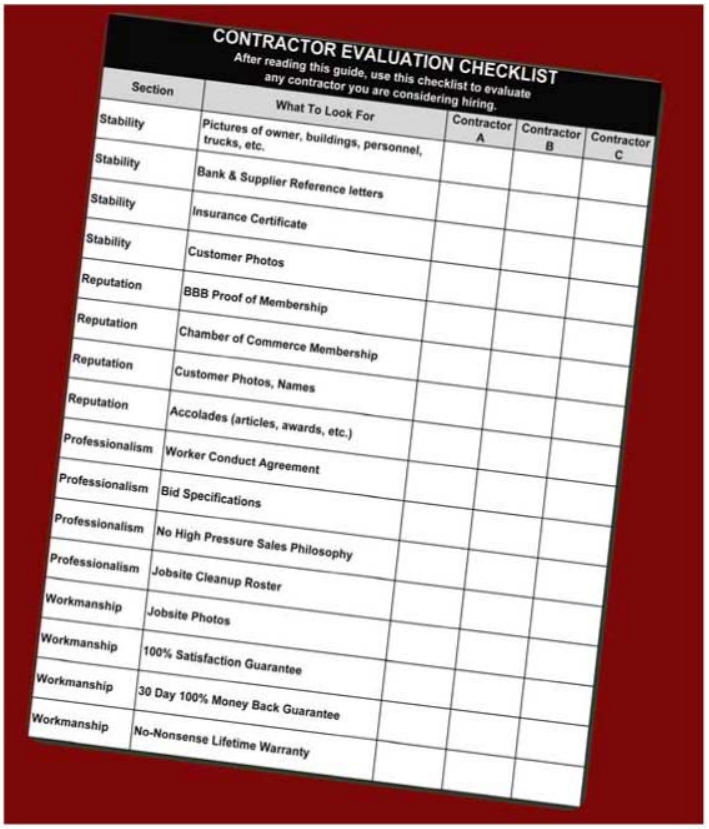
Bottom Line – Encapsulated Panel systems provide a satisfactory solution to ice and snow accumulation in the gutter system and are very safe. Although expensive, they are the only solution available that delivers as promised.

SECTION 3. HOW TO CHOOSE THE PROPER HEATED GUTTER SYSTEM CONTRACTOR

Making a major home improvement purchase such as a heated gutter system can be a scary proposition. Unlike buying a washing machine or even a new car, most homeowners rarely make major home improvement purchases. The lack of experience can easily bring about fear of making the wrong decision, uncertainty, and general uneasiness.

Unless you have a trustworthy relative or a good friend in the business, it's going to be necessary for you to deal with a gutter protection company. Your success in finding a reliable, honest, and dependable contractor will probably dictate your ultimate happiness or disappointment in your project.

If you know just ten critical characteristics, you can eliminate 95% of the fly by night and disreputable contractors who give this industry a black eye.



CONTRACTOR EVALUATION CHECKLIST

After reading this guide, use this checklist to evaluate any contractor you are considering hiring.

Section	What To Look For	Contractor A	Contractor B	Contractor C
Stability	Pictures of owner, buildings, personnel, trucks, etc.			
Stability	Bank & Supplier Reference letters			
Stability	Insurance Certificate			
Stability	Customer Photos			
Reputation	BBB Proof of Membership			
Reputation	Chamber of Commerce Membership			
Reputation	Customer Photos, Names			
Reputation	Accolades (articles, awards, etc.)			
Professionalism	Worker Conduct Agreement			
Professionalism	Bid Specifications			
Professionalism	No High Pressure Sales Philosophy			
Professionalism	Jobsite Cleanup Roster			
Workmanship	Jobsite Photos			
Workmanship	100% Satisfaction Guarantee			
Workmanship	30 Day 100% Money Back Guarantee			
Workmanship	No-Nonsense Lifetime Warranty			

A reputable contractor should be able to provide you with answers on the following:

- **Numerous Customer References**
- **Location of Office and Showroom**
- **Pictures of Work Done (with homeowner in at least one picture of each job)**
- **Detailed proposal of the work that will be done for a specific cost including electrical cost.**
- **Written Warranties for Product and Workmanship**
- **Proper Liability Insurance**
- **Long Term Reputation for Service**
- **Name of Licensed Electrician Doing Hard Wire Hookups**
- **Amount of Deposits Paid Up Front**
- **Standards for Installation and Installation Crews**

SECTION 4. WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Contact a heated gutter protection contractor and arrange for a no cost, no obligation **FREE QUOTE**. **(Insist on a firm proposal cost. Never accept an "estimate" as it gives the contractor license to add up to 20% more on the cost of the job.)** You will be able to ask the contractor about all the information you have learned about heated gutter protection.

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