

Media Release

All the leaves are brown and the sky is grey – time to clear roof gutters ready for winter

Victoria's recent windy weather and rainfall are reminders that autumn leaves are falling and winter is on its way.

According to the Victorian Building Authority (VBA), that means it is time to check the gutters at your home and clear them of leaves, twigs and other tree litter that has ended up there after the wind and rain.

The VBA Director of Technical and Regulation, Jarrod Edwards, said that leaves in roof guttering of homes pose a number of risks including:

- Clogged downpipes, resulting in trapped rainwater backing up and overflowing into eaves and the inside of buildings causing damage
- Trapped wet leaves that sit in guttering leading to surface damage and corrosion, with leaks rendering the guttering ineffective
- Potential contamination of rainwater that is being harvested from the roof as part of an integrated water management system.

In addition, Mr Edwards said that clearing roof gutters of leaves and other tree litter invariably involves the use of a tall ladder, so it is important for homeowners to give consideration to whether they want to do this work themselves.

Anyone, homeowner or qualified professional, who uses a ladder must follow strict safety guidelines. Information on the safe use of ladders is available from WorkSafe Victoria and can be viewed at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

"Gutter maintenance is an important part of annual property upkeep," Mr Edwards said. "In addition to the potential for damage from rainwater overflowing into eaves and ceilings as a result of blockages, corroded gutters and downpipes are ineffective and can cause problems within walls and may damage the foundations of houses and out-buildings such as sheds and garages.

"While clearing gutters is not regulated plumbing work, any clearing of blockages that requires the gutter or downpipe to be detached or altered must be carried out by a licensed or registered plumber.

"Likewise, all installation, alteration or repair of guttering and downpipes constitutes plumbing work, which must be carried out by a licensed or registered plumber and to the required standard. A compliance certificate, issued for any plumbing work that costs more than \$750, provides home owners with protection against plumbing work that fails to meet mandatory standards," Mr Edwards said.

There are many products on the market that can be installed or used to prevent leaves from making their way into the guttering and downpipes and there are an increasing number of businesses providing gutter cleaning services.

To check that a plumber is appropriately registered or licensed to install roof guttering and downpipes, connect them to the stormwater system or connect it for use within the house as part of an integrated water management system, including to meet the 6 Star energy efficiency standard, visit the 'Find a Practitioner' section of the VBA website www.vba.vic.gov.au

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