Leaves in roof gutters pose risks

Victoria’s garden state reputation brings with it some hidden problems for homeowners, particularly as the city’s deciduous trees shed their autumn foliage.

Leaves in the roof guttering of homes poses a number of risks, including:

- clogged downpipes, resulting in trapped rainwater backing up and overflowing into the eaves and the ceiling
- trapped wet leaves that sit in the guttering and lead to corrosion, rendering the guttering ineffective
- potential contamination of stormwater that is being harvested from the roof as part of an integrated water management system.

While encouraging consumers to keep their home’s roof gutters clear of leaves, the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) reminds them that installing, altering or repairing guttering and downpipes constitutes plumbing work, which must be done by a registered or licensed plumber.

Getting a registered or licensed plumber to install roof guttering and downpipes can help make sure the collection of rainwater and its direction into the home’s stormwater drainage system is done to the required standard.

The VBA’s Director Technical and Regulation, Jarrod Edwards, said that gutter maintenance is an important part of annual property upkeep.

“There are many products available that can be installed or used to prevent leaves from making their way into guttering and downpipes and there are many businesses providing gutter cleaning services,” Mr Edwards said.

“Clearing leaves from gutters manually can involve using a tall ladder so it is important that people who engage in this work follow strict safety guidelines.” The Victorian WorkCover Authority has a guidance note for the safe use of portable ladders. Visit www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Mr Edwards said that while clearing leaves and debris from roof gutters is not regulated work, any clearing of a blockage that requires the gutter or downpipe to be detached or altered must be undertaken by a registered or licensed plumber.

To check that a plumber is appropriately registered or licensed to install roof guttering and downpipes and to connect it to the stormwater system, visit www.vba.vic.gov.au/check-a-plumbers-registration

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