

AmTrust Property Zone

Maintaining Roof Drainage Systems

When was the last time you checked your roof drainage system?

The drainage system is an essential part of the roof that allows for the proper flow of water during heavy rain. Proper drainage reduces the risk of interior water damage stemming from water backing up on a roof. If you're not taking steps to maintain your roof's drainage system correctly, you might as well be throwing money down the drain.

The Roof Drainage System

Some roof drainage systems use gravity to remove water from the roof. Other roof drainage systems are siphonic and operate by siphoning water off the roof. Knowing what type of drainage system your roof uses can help you understand how it works, so you can ensure it's protecting the building as it should.

Your roof's drainage system may include these common components:

- Gutters
- Downspouts
- Interior Drains
- Scuppers

Threats to Your Drainage System

Your roof's drainage system is exposed to the elements all day, every day. This exposure may include common threats to your drainage system. A few of these risks include:

- **Leaves and Other Plant Matter:** Leaves can accumulate in the drainage system, resulting in blockages that prevent water from draining correctly.
- **Animals:** Birds and other animals may build nests in the drainage system. This can lead to damaging blockages.
- **Storms:** Bad weather can damage your roof's drainage system. Strong winds may move gutters out of place, for example, while large hail may dent the gutters.
- **Debris and Other Material:** Items left on the roof by occupants, contractors or others, can wash into, cover or plug drains.

The Risks of a Poorly Maintained Drainage System

Damage may start with the drainage system, but it won't necessarily end there. If your roof's drainage system is damaged, your roof – and possibly the entire building – may experience problems as a result.

Here are a few things to look for when performing maintenance procedures on roof drainage systems:

- **Standing Water:** A poorly functioning drainage system may lead to standing water on your roof, a phenomenon called ponding. This can cause damage to the structure of the roof. It can also lead to fungal growth, and the water may attract animals, which can cause further damage.
- **Ice Dams:** If melted snow doesn't drain properly, it may refreeze on your roof and create ice dams. Ice dams can result in significant damage to the structure of your roof. You could end up with leaks, cracks and other serious problems.



Your Roof Drainage Maintenance Checklist

- Have your gutters and downspouts inspected every spring and fall. Look for leaks, clogs, dents and other signs of damage.
- More frequent checks may be needed depending on where you live. For example, if you live in an area where a lot of leaves drop in the fall.
- Keep your gutters and downspouts clear of debris.
- Watch out for standing water, or ponding, on your roof that doesn't drain in a day or two.
- Keep trees and tree branches away from your roof. This can reduce the amount of plant matter in your drainage system. It can also help with fire safety.
- Check your ceiling for signs of water damage, which could indicate a problem with your roof's drainage system.

For additional information and resources on this topic and other safety and risk management subjects be sure to visit the Loss Control section on our website:

www.amtrustfinancial.com/loss-control



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