



A good chimney cap, with a screen mesh, will keep water and animals from entering the chimney

**T**he roof, gutters, and chimney of a home add to the home's comfort and external appeal. These sturdy elements need occasional maintenance to keep them in prime condition.

### Roof

Your roof comprises about 40% of the exterior of your home. More importantly, it protects the rest of the house. It requires periodic inspection. The shingles and flashings should be inspected every few years. Be sure your attic is properly ventilated to remove excess heat and moisture.

Damaged and missing shingles can be replaced without re-roofing if the roof itself is in good condition. Generally, if your roof is 20 years old or more and shows visible signs of wear, it should be replaced.

Even if the shingles are in good condition, you need to make sure the flashings are strong and watertight. Flashing is used wherever roof surfaces, walls and chimneys meet. Certain flashing around chimneys should be soldered to form a permanent seal.

### Gutters

It is important that you keep your gutters and downspouts free of leaves and debris to prevent water backups. These can lead to leakage. You should clean your gutters in late autumn after all the leaves have fallen and again in spring after seed pods and leaf buds have dropped.

A blower-vac with a gutter attachment does a good job of cleaning if the gutters are accessible. If you want less maintenance, you could invest in one of the new gutter protection systems on the market. These premium systems, when professionally installed over existing gutters or as new one piece systems, prevent clogging from leaves, needles and other

debris. Unlike wire mesh covers, they have solid, patented designs which cause leaves and debris to blow over the edge, not into the gutter. Water flows directly into the gutter, even in extreme downpour conditions.

### Chimney

You should have your chimney inspected and cleaned, if necessary, prior to using it for the first time. If you like to keep your fireplace going on a regular basis, a professional chimney sweep should check it at least once a year.

A good chimney sweep will inspect for cracks in mortar or liners and perform any chimney repairs or flue corrections that are necessary. Be sure the damper is operating properly and is kept closed when the fireplace is not in use. Fireplaces, inserts,

and woodstoves need to be monitored for creosote.

Creosote is a black, highly flammable by-product of wood that builds up in chimneys with frequent use. If your chimney is not cleaned regularly, the creosote will glaze and almost bake into the chimney lining. If a chimney fire occurs and the amount of creosote build-up is great, the amount of heat generated can endanger surrounding walls and attics.

You should also consider installing a chimney cap to keep animals and damaging rain water out of the chimney. Aside from squirrels or birds nesting in the chimney, if it is trapped, water can seep beneath the masonry at the top of the chimney. When the water freezes in wintertime, the newly-formed ice expands, causing damage to the masonry.

