

COLUMN FOR MAY 8, 2004.

HEADLINE; GUTTERS, EVETROUGH & DOWNSPOUTS

Q: We bought a home built in the 70's and it does not have eve trough and gutters installed along the edge of the roof. Our basement gets damp at times and we have been told installing these will fix this problem, is that possible? If we get it installed, what does it cost and is it possible to do it your self?

A: First lets clear up the definitions, gutters and eve trough are the same thing, just different terms. The water collected off the roof gathers in these and then discharges through the downspouts. This runs onto the lawn through the extensions installed at the downspout elbow end and then discharges the water some distance from the house. There are a number of causes of water or dampness in basements and to say that installation of gutters will fix the moisture problem could be stretching it a little. Installing these will however have some positive effect on your basement. You would be shocked how quickly a rain barrel fills that is used as a collector from some gutter systems after a good rain. Tests have shown that in some good rains, hundreds of gallons of water runs off a roof and creates a soaked line all around a home. This water has to go somewhere and in a home of this age it is unlikely that any form of membrane is installed around the foundation that would inhibit this from entering the basement. I recommend these all the time and I cannot understand why the building code does not require them, most good builders today install them.

Our reader is in Cornwall Ontario and I would expect that the local installers prices would range from \$3.00 to 4.00 per foot. They're a number of things to ask the installer. The first question, is this going to be seamless eve trough? This is the preferred method of a gutter system. Take the time to discuss the installation with your Professional Gutter Installer, agree on the installation and where the downspouts will go, get three quotes too. The installer will then bring a large truck to your home with different rolls of aluminium with him. There are many colours now, you are not limited to white any more. They will measure up your fascia area and set the machine in their truck for the size they recommended or were contracted for. There are different sizes of gutters, discuss this with your contractor. A steep roof of a large home should be 5" rather than 4" for example. If you have a limited number of places for the downspouts, this can also cause a change in size. There are also different sizes for the downspouts too and if you intend to "Yoke" them together it will have to change again. A "Yoke" is where two downspouts are united if there is a problem getting a second level or a side/back split correctly discharged. You can make this a do-it-yourself project if so wish. There are a couple of different styles of plastic eve trough on the market and while it will do the job, many installations I see that are homeowner done fail in a number of areas. The main issue with plastic gutters is if they fill with water and freeze, they will break easily, it is also hard to put a ladder against the roof for maintenance with plastic gutters. The biggest installation error I see is a lack of downspouts, cases where a home that is 40-50 feet long with one discharge at the end. Lack of a proper slope, which then allows the water to pool and once the leaves and debris collect this blocks the eve trough and they overflow. Try to get a minimum of $\frac{3}{4}$ " of an inch in 20 feet for reasonable slope. Improper use of jointers and not using enough supports is next on the list. This will allow the trough to either leak or sag and overflow. If you have a two-story home where the second level downspouts is allowed to drain onto the roof below, the shingles in this area will wear out very quickly. Install a section of downspout that drains into the main level eve trough. The number one error is a lack of extensions on the downspout; often only the elbow is installed. Now you have all the roof water collected into one steady stream heading into the basement. If you have a moisture problem in your basement in the corners and there is a white stain showing that rises up the concrete wall you can bet the downspout is right there and no extension installed. I like to see a minimum discharge of six feet from the building. This

is difficult in some homes that built closer together; get to the lot line at minimum. You are not allowed to discharge your water onto your neighbours lot in most municipalities so you may want to get together with your neighbour on this one. I saw a great idea on this a couple of years ago. The two neighbours dug a trench. Lined it with old pool liner and filled it with stone, it was about a foot wide. They had carefully sloped this to the road. Both of them then used it for their discharge extensions.

Properly installed gutters and correctly discharged downspouts should have a noticeable effect on how dry your basement is. They are well worth the costs no matter whether it is professionally installed or a do-it-yourself project.

And now the answer to last weeks "Trivia About Homes" question. A Lintel is a laminated beam that supports the load over a door or window. Many people call this a header. A header is actually a wood member at right angles to a series of joists or rafters. And now this weeks question. What is "Slump?" Is it A) Test for fresh concrete, B) the measure of a sag in a floor C) Term for landscape grade work D) Contractors slang for poorly graded lumber. The answer in next week's column!

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