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NOVEMBER RAINS

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Uh oh! It's raining...

It's dark. You arrive home after a long day of work and you're tired. You change into some comfortable clothes, your favorite slippers and cozy on into your favorite chair with a hot cup of tea! Ahh...life is good.

Then it starts raining...HARD. And it hits you. You have let the last several weekends slip by without checking on your roof and cleaning your gutters. You know your roof is no spring chicken anymore. The moss is getting a foot hold again and that tree at the back corner has been scraping on the shingles lately. To top it off, you see that gutter full of leaves every day when you pull in the driveway. Nothing you can do but cross your fingers and hope you can get away with it again. Good luck and keep a close eye on that ceiling for water stains.

There's a better way you know. You can take charge of your roof and drainage system and rest easy when the rains begin.

Where to begin...

First of all, let me just say, "**BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!**". Seriously, getting up on your roof is dangerous. I like to listen to the 'Handle on the Law' radio show. Before Bill Handle gives out legal advice, he states his disclaimer, "Don't listen to anything I say!". I'm with Bill, please don't listen to me. If you do, you could hurt yourself or actually cause your roof to leak. This is what works for me. Proceed at your own risk.

Back to being carefull...if your roof looks a little steep on your way up, it's always worse on the way down. Early in my home inspection career I climbed on roofs I shouldn't have. More than once, after I'd reached the top, I wondered how the heck I was going to get down. I was just about to take my shoes and socks off (to get all the traction I could), when someone opened a window for me to climb in. If you have any doubts, hire a professional. Also, newer homes have attachment points at the ridge that you can tie onto. Whatever you do, use your head! You must be smarter than your roof if you want to out live it.

NOTE: If you have anything other than a composition shingle roof, just go straight to the professional. Wood and metal roofs are VERY slippery and require special equipment.

OK, with that said, lets get to work. There are just a few things you need to do to get water off your roof as quickly as possible. Here's what I recommend.



1. **Clean off the moss.** Moss grows on the shady cool side, usually the north side of your roof. It will also grow under any large trees which overhang your roof, or in the shadow of the house next door. If you let it build up, it will slow the water down as it tries to run down your roof. It also grows under the edges and lifts your shingles. If it does fall off, it rolls into your gutter or flashing and just creates blockage in other areas as well. It is best to kill it first, with some sort of moss killing powder. When it's dead, it loses it's grip on your roof. Once dead, you can brush it or sweep it off. It will still put up a bit of a fight, even when dead but if find a decent brush that is soft enough to avoid damaging the shingles but rigid enough to scratch off the moss, you'll find you can remove it pretty easily. Just be careful not to damage the shingles! **DO NOT POWER WASH YOUR ROOF!** I have inspected many a roof damaged by power washing. Also, like anything else, the more you keep up with it, the easier it is.
2. **Once your roof is clean, inspect it for damage.**
 - If there are trees scraping it, or almost scraping it, trim the trees.
 - Look for broken, damaged, missing and cracked shingles.
 - Look for nails or staples which are pushing up the shingles above them or actually penetrating through the shingles above them.
 - Look at the valleys.
 - If there is tree/leave debris on your roof, clean it off.
 - Look at the things that stick up through your roof, like your attic vents and your plumbing stack vents (the pipes). Look at the flashing around everything that sticks through your roof. These are the weak points of any roof. After a few years, the rubber around the plumbing stack flashing begins to crack and split, leading to leakage (darn UV rays).
 - Overall, your roof should last about 20 years (varies by the type of material). However, once you get over 5 years of age, anything can happen. A lack of maintenance can make a young roof leak (See my story below). Every year that your roof gets older, the more you need to babysit it, especially if it is a shallow pitch. As a homeowner, you should expect to periodically check out your roof and all the other components of your home and maintain them properly. If you find the deficiencies described above, you need to fix them or pay someone to fix them.

Where are we so far?...Keep your roof clean and check it for needed repairs!

3. **Clean the gutters.** If you own the typical modern 2 story home with a medium to steep roof...just call the pros. Believe it or not, it doesn't cost that much to have someone clean your gutters. If you have a shallow roof and it's not too high off the ground, I have found that a gas leaf blower is magic when pointed down into a gutter. Everything inside is blown out and you don't even have to bend over. However, there can be quite a mess on



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the ground waiting for you. A carefully placed and secured ladder also works well, just takes longer. Here's a few other points regarding gutters:

- If you live in a pretty heavily treed area, you should have them cleaned more than once in the rainy season. I suggest at least twice, if not three times.
- If you look out your windows and see your neighbor's gutters are full of debris...yours are too.
- If you have gutters that wrap around corners (hip roofs or around porches for example), your corners like to leak. Every couple of years, you will need to thoroughly clean these areas and apply a coating of caulking at the interior side to keep them from leaking into your eaves/fascias/soffits where they will rot these things away over time.
- Once they are clean, make sure they actually direct water to the downspouts. Adjust the slope if your gutters are just collecting water.
- Along this same line, make sure they are secured to your eaves properly. Repair/secure them if they are falling off.
- Are your gutters corroded and rusting through? Time to replace them. It costs nothing to have a reputable company provide you price estimates. I'm always surprised at how inexpensive (relatively speaking of course) replacing the gutters on a home can be.
- How about those downspouts!? Check them out too. Do not do all the hard work of keeping your roof clean and working and your gutters clean and working, to simply dump all that water at your foundation. Your downspouts and extensions and/or drains should be collecting all of the roof water and discharging it somewhere away from your home. If your roof water discharges 20 feet away from your foundation, only to follow the sloping grade back to your foundation, that's not good enough! You will have a wet basement, or crawlspace or....
- Remember this: **WATER IS YOUR WORST ENEMY!**

Well, I think that's a good start. Take care of your roof and it will take care of you! Usually...

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