Prime Time Warns Chicagoland Homeowners That Clean Gutters Alone Will Not Stop an Ice Dam

The fall gutter window in Chicagoland is only a few weeks wide, and the cause of ice dams sits in the attic rather than at the roofline

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Prime Time Window & Gutter Cleaning is encouraging Chicagoland homeowners to book fall gutter service early this year, while also correcting a claim common across its own industry: cleaning gutters does not, by itself, prevent ice dams.

Ice dams require three conditions to form. There must be snow on the roof, outdoor temperatures must be below freezing, and some section of the roof higher up must stay above freezing. That warm upper section melts snow, the meltwater runs down to the cold eave, and it refreezes there into a ridge. More meltwater then backs up behind the ridge and works under the shingles.

The root cause is heat escaping the house. University of Minnesota Extension guidance identifies air leakage through ceiling penetrations as the major mode of heat transfer behind ice dams in many homes, with warm air moving through gaps around fixtures into the attic. Other contributors include kitchen and bathroom exhausts that terminate just above the roof, chimneys and frequent fireplace or wood stove use, inadequately insulated or leaky ductwork in the attic, and knee wall spaces. Extension guidance is direct: ice dams are prevented by controlling heat loss from the home, starting with sealing the ceiling so warm, moist air cannot reach the attic, then addressing insulation.

Where gutters actually fit

Gutters are rarely the cause. They are frequently what turns an ice dam into an expensive one.

A clogged gutter holds debris that traps meltwater at the roof edge, where it refreezes. That ice adds weight to the gutter and the roofline, and it removes the drainage path meltwater needs to escape before it can freeze. A clear gutter lets water that reaches the channel move to the downspouts and away from the house. Ice dams can still form on a home with new, perfectly clear gutters, but a clogged system reliably makes the outcome worse.

That distinction matters when homeowners decide where to spend. Gutter cleaning is maintenance that limits damage. Attic air sealing and insulation address the condition that creates the problem, and a homeowner with recurring ice dams should be looking upward from inside the house, not only at the roofline.

The Chicagoland window is narrow

The practical argument for booking now is scheduling. Fall gutter cleaning is bracketed at both ends. Clean too early and the leaves have not finished dropping, so the gutters refill. Clean too late and the region has had its first hard freeze, ladders are working over ice, and the debris in the gutter is frozen solid rather than loose.

Across Chicagoland, that usable window is a matter of weeks, and every homeowner in the region wants it at the same time. Booking in August reserves a slot inside it rather than competing for one once the leaves are already down.

Prime Time also cautions homeowners against the common do-it-yourself responses once a dam has formed. Extension guidance notes that roof rakes can damage roofing materials, and that channeling through an existing dam, while useful in an emergency where water is entering the structure, becomes ineffective within days and is only a temporary measure.

Other work that belongs in the same visit

The company recommends bundling exterior work while access is easy. Roof washing and power washing are best done before the wet, cold months. Rooftop solar panels collect leaf litter and film in autumn, which matters more heading into winter, when the sun sits lower and daylight is shortest. For homeowners tired of repeating the cycle, gutter guards address the accumulation itself rather than the symptom.

Prime Time can be reached at 800-480-1360, by text at 888-327-2007, or online, and is open daily from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

About Prime Time Window & Gutter Cleaning

Prime Time Window & Gutter Cleaning, Inc. is a family-owned exterior cleaning company serving all of Chicagoland, northwest Indiana, and southern Wisconsin since 1996. Services include residential and commercial window washing, gutter cleaning, gutter guard installation, power washing, roof washing, and solar panel cleaning. The company has served more than 150,000 Chicagoland homes across 181 communities, holds a 4.5-star average across more than 1,500 verified reviews, and has been BBB A+ accredited since 2017. Prime Time is fully insured and bonded, operates seven days a week, and guarantees its work on one-time visits or the customer does not pay.

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