

# THE GUTTER GUARD BUYERS GUIDE™

PRESENTED BY: LEAFFILTER™ GUTTER PROTECTION

LeafFilter™  
GUTTER  
PROTECTION

## **About This Guide**

This guide was produced by LeafFilter™ North, Inc. in order to educate consumers as they research gutter protection. There are many types of gutter protection systems on the market and it's crucial that homeowners understand the pros and cons of each. The Gutter Guard Buyers Guide™ exists in order to provide consumers knowledge that helps them determine which gutter protection system is right for their needs.

## **About LeafFilter™ North, Inc.**

LeafFilter™ North, Inc. has installed more than 15 million feet of gutter protection on homes across the midwest, eastern and southern United States. 15 million feet installed and zero clogged gutters. Only water gets into a LeafFilter™ protected gutter — guaranteed!

Introduced in 2005, LeafFilter™ gutter guards completely revolutionized the gutter protection industry. Our state-of-the-art micro mesh technology ensures no more dangerous trips up your ladder to clean your clogged gutters. LeafFilter™ gutter guards provide you and your home with a comprehensive gutter protection system that is guaranteed to keep your gutters clog free.

For more information please visit [www.leafilter.com](http://www.leafilter.com) or call (800) 290-6106.

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# The Gutter Guard Buyers Guide™

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# 1

## Why We Have Gutters

Gutters are simple in design. Rain water falls onto your roof, flows into your gutters and through your downspouts. Why is this important?

Gutters serve two main purposes:

1) To make sure that water does not gather on your roof, and 2) To make sure that water is diverted away from your house correctly.

### Industry Tips

#### REVIEWING AGENCIES - WHAT DO REVIEWS MEAN?

Reviews and ratings can mean a lot, or absolutely nothing at all. The basic rule of thumb when it comes to reviews is “do your own homework.”

*Reviews are only as strong as their source and their level of bias.*

Here are 3 reputable organizations buyers should check with for reviews for any consumer product.

- › Better Business Bureau®
- › Consumer Reports®
- › Angie's List™

#### Questions to ask yourself when you come across reviews:

1. Have I heard of the reviewing agency before?
2. Are they a legitimate operation or merely a smoke-and-mirrors website?
3. What is the reviewing agency's commercial policy? Do they accept money or profit from their reviews? Do they accept money, sponsorships or any financial support from the company's that they review?

#### STANDING WATER ON YOUR ROOF OR IN YOUR GUTTERS CAN LEAD TO:

- › Leaks (roof, windows, walls)
- › Algae, moss and mold
- › Ice damming
- › Wood rot
- › Mosquitos and pests

#### WATER THAT IS NOT CORRECTLY DIVERTED AWAY FROM YOUR HOUSE:

- › Landscape erosion
- › Siding, exterior house staining
- › Sidewalk or driveway cracks and shifting
- › Foundation damage and basement leaks

Effective gutter systems help to avoid potentially tens of thousands of dollars in damage. They are a key component in the maintenance of your roof, walls, landscaping and foundation.





# 2

## When Do Gutters Fail?

The most common types of gutter failures are: Clogs; Leaks; Misalignment; and Faulty Design.



### Clogs

The most common type of gutter failure is a clog. Leaves, dirt, shingle grit and other debris flow into your gutters but not out. Over time, more debris creates weak water flow and leads to overflow.



### Leaks, Cracks

Any standing water in your gutters will increase the likelihood of leaks and cracks; particularly in winter seasons when standing water can freeze and cause ice damming.



### Misalignment

Often a secondary effect of clogged gutters, misaligned gutters occurs when gutters sag, bow, or break away from the roof's edge.



### Faulty Design

Roofs with peaks and valleys may experience intense water flow towards sections of gutters. If the gutter system is not properly installed, the result could be an overflow from the system's inability to divert the water.





# 3

## Types of Debris and Gutter Clogs

There's almost no shortage to what can, and will, get into your gutters. From the common to the obscure, here is a listing of what to expect in your gutters.

ORGANIC	DEBRIS	PESTS
Leaves	Shingle Grit	Bees, Wasps, Hornets
Pine Needles	Mud, Dirt	Birds
Spinners	Garbage, Paper	Mosquitos
Seeds		Squirrels, Chipmunks
Acorns		Ants
Moss		Termites
Algae		
Mold		
Catkins		





# 4

## What's The Fuss About Openings?

*“Many gutter guards have openings. Won't only water go through the holes and gaps?”*

**No.** If there are holes or openings of any kind then debris will get into your gutters. Marketing and salespeople may say otherwise, but if you see any holes or openings then material will get into your gutters.

1. Is there an opening large enough to allow bees in? Then bees will view your gutter as a perfect home for a hive.
2. Is there an opening large enough for pine needles to fit through? Then pine needles will get into your gutters.
3. Is there an opening large enough to allow shingle grit to fit though? Shingle grit will get in.

### Quick Facts

#### GETTING DEBRIS OUT

Systems that are partially sealed (they have holes and openings) will allow debris to enter your gutters.

Getting leaves, pine needles, spinners, bee hives and other items out of your gutters may be a difficult task.

Once debris enters a partially sealed system the homeowner will need to remove the gutter protection in order to access and remove the clogs.







# 5

## Protect Your Roof Warranty

*“My gutter guard company said that installing under the first couple rows of shingles is fine. What about my roof warranty?”*

There are a large number of gutter protection companies that install gutter protection systems under your shingles. Installing anything onto or under your roof can void your roof warranty.

An informed homeowner is the best protection against misleading sales and marketing practices. Make sure you review your roof warranty to understand what my impact or void it.

Following are the nation’s largest shingle manufacturers and installers. Each has specific language that may limit or void their warranty.

**CertainTeed**

**IKO**

**sears**

**TAMKO**  
ROOFING PRODUCTS

**OWENS CORNING**

**THE HOME DEPOT**

**GAF**

**LOWE'S**  
Home Improvement Warehouse







VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>

### Asphalt Shingle Limited Warranty

This Limited Warranty does not provide protection against, and CertainTeed will have no liability for, any failure, defect or damage caused by situations and events beyond normal exposure conditions, including but not limited to:

- Damage caused by **structural changes, alterations or additions, or by the installation of equipment** (such as, but not limited to, aerials, signs or air conditioning equipment) to the building after the original shingles have been applied.
- Damage caused by improper installation or **installation not in accordance with CertainTeed's installation instructions** published at the time of the original installation.



VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>

### Limited Warranty on Roofing Shingles

#### What is Not Covered

Our warranty does not cover damage to the shingles due to any cause not expressly covered herein. After our shingles leave our manufacturing facility, they are subjected to conditions and handling beyond our control that could affect their performance. This warranty does not cover any problems with non-defective shingles caused by conditions or handling beyond our control. Some examples of conditions not covered by this warranty include:

- Improper or faulty installation of your shingles—**installation must be in accordance with our written installation instructions** and comply with local building codes.
- Damage to the shingles caused by **alterations made after completion of application, including structural changes, equipment installation, painting or the application of cleaning solutions, coatings, or other modifications.**
- **Improperly designed or installed gutter or downspout systems.**





VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>

### Golden Pledge® Limited Warranty

**What Is Not Covered. GAF will NOT be liable for and this warranty does NOT apply to:**

Damages resulting from causes beyond normal wear and tear, such as:

- **Impact of foreign objects** or traffic on the roof.
- **Improperly designed or installed gutter or downspout systems.**



VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>

### Exclusions and Limitations

Except as and limited to what is explicitly set out in this Limited Warranty with respect to the Limited Wind Resistance Warranty and the Limited Algae Resistance Warranty, the coverage under this Limited Warranty is only for manufacturing defects that result in a leak of the Shingles on the Owner's roof, and for no other cause whatsoever. Conditions that do not result in a leak, or are not due solely to a manufacturing defect in the Shingles are not covered by the Limited Warranty or otherwise.

As a result, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, IKO will not have any liability or obligation under the Limited Warranty or otherwise for the following:

- Any damage that arises after the roof is altered following the original installation of the Shingles. This includes **any alteration including structural additions, changes, or replacement; or equipment installations** (including but not limited to, signs, water towers, fan housings, air conditioning equipment, solar heaters, water heaters, television and /or radio antennas, satellite dishes, skylights, and equipment or machinery of any kind);





VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>

### Residential Roofing Limited Warranty

#### Exclusions from Coverage

TAMKO shall not be liable under any circumstances and shall have no obligation under this Limited Warranty for:

- Leaks or damages resulting from Acts of God (including, but without limitation, lightning, ice damming, wind (except as set forth in the Limited Wind Warranty), hurricane or tornado (regardless of wind velocity), hail, or other violent storm or casualty); acid rain; **impact of objects**; damage to a roof due to movement, settlement, distortion; failure, defects or cracking of the building or its roof deck, walls or foundation; or for any defect in or failure of material used as a roof base over which the Shingles are applied; or for damage by traffic on the roof.



### Uses GAF Shingles Warranty

VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>



### Uses GAF Shingles Warranty

VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>



### Uses Owens Corning Shingles Warranty

VIEW WARRANTY ONLINE:

<http://goo.gl/IF7p8>





# 6

## Types of Gutter Guards

Gutter guards seek to prevent debris from clogging so that water flows correctly through your gutters and downspouts. Here's how we classify Gutter Protection Systems:

### HOMEOWNER INSTALLED

This category refers to any of the dozens of gutter protection systems that are available for sale online and at the big box DIY stores.

### PROFESSIONALLY INSTALLED

This category refers to any of the gutter protection companies, roofers or contractors that provide professionally installed gutter guards.

### Pros and Cons

HOMEOWNER INSTALLED		PROFESSIONALLY INSTALLED	
<i>Pros +</i>	<i>Cons -</i>	<i>Pros +</i>	<i>Cons -</i>
A less expensive solution.	Requires personal installation.	Backed by warranties and guarantees.	Higher priced than DIY solutions.
Convenient to purchase.	Typically not a product with a warranty or guarantee.	Installed by professional and/or licensed individuals.	Numerous product types. Difficult to create like comparisons.
	Not a long lifespan. May require replacement within several years.	May have a lengthy, 20+ year, lifespan.	Some products may impact or void your roof warranty.
	Outdated technology. Will not keep all debris out of gutters.	Newer, advanced technology.	
	Will still require manual gutter cleaning.	May require minor upkeep.	





## Which type is the best? There's no right answer for everyone.

If you are a do-it-yourselfer, you're looking to save a few bucks, and you don't mind having to perform gutter cleaning and maintenance – the homeowner installed solution might be best for you.

**\*NOTE** – if the homeowner installed system let's smaller debris into your gutters then your gutter cleaning would become a three-part chore.

Step 1: Remove or uninstall the gutter guards.

Step 2: Clean your gutters.

Step 3: Reinstall your gutter guards.

If you are looking for a permanent solution that requires little or no maintenance then a **professionally installed solution may be best for you.**

**Within the Homeowner and Professionally installed groups there are several subcategories or product types.**

<b>HOMEOWNER INSTALLED</b>	<b>PROFESSIONALLY INSTALLED</b>
Metal Screens	Slit/Hole Gutter Covers
Plastic Screens	Reverse Curve
Sponge/Foam	Micro Mesh
Brush Inserts or Pipe Cleaners	
Slit/Hole Gutter Covers	





# 7

## The Homeowner Installed Systems



### Metal Screen Notes

#### PROS +

- › Easy to find.
- › Inexpensive.
- › Won't disturb your shingles.
- › Installs on top of existing gutters

#### CONS -

- › Easily clogged by small debris.
- › Attracts nesting animals, bees and insects.
- › Prone to bowing & displacement.
- › Routine maintenance needed.
- › Not a long-term solution.

### Metal Screens

Metal Screens can be found at any major home improvement store. They are typically made out of a steel or aluminum frame and are about 4 feet in length. They install on top of your existing gutters with no disturbance to your shingles or roofing material and are relatively easy to install.

### Clog Concerns

A concern with Metal Screens are the various openings in the system. These types of guards will keep out the big culprits such as large leaves, pine cones, birds – but they will allow a lot of smaller items to enter and clog your gutters. Pine needles, seeds, bees, mold...anything that can fit inside an opening about as wide as a dime will make their way into your gutters.

### Cleaning & Maintenance Concerns

When material gets into your gutters someone (you) will have to get it out. And, that starts with the process of removing the gutter guards. There's lots of gutter clutter that will fit in dime-size wholes. Unfortunately, your hands won't.

This is an "OK" solution for someone who doesn't mind performing routine gutter maintenance. But, left unattended, it's debatable whether this type of gutter guard is even better than no guard at all.



## Sponge/Foam Notes

### PROS +

- › Easy to find.
- › Inexpensive.
- › Won't disturb your shingles.
- › Relatively easy self-installation.

### CONS -

- › Supports seedling, plant growth.
- › Prone to molding and rotting.
- › May not be flame retardant.
- › Short-term solution.



## Sponge/Foam

A homeowner installed solution, this is a foam or sponge material that is placed inside your gutters.

Most Sponge systems use an open-cell, polyurethane insert – a foam material – that is placed into your gutters. The Sponge is placed into your gutters with the intent of allowing water to drip through while keeping debris out.

### Fire Concerns

There are a few things to consider with these types of systems. Some of the Foam material is not flame retardant. If you live in an area that may be prone to fires or embers then adding a flammable Foam to your roof may not be advisable.

### Growth, Mold & Rotting Concerns

It's also common for the Sponge to trap leaves and seeds inside of it along with water. Seeds plus water...that's the perfect combination to turn your gutters into a planter box. Furthermore, the leaves and seeds that do get held within, or on, the foam will rot and decompose. Now, you're dealing with a compost pile in your gutter.

Sponge/Foam systems are not a long term, maybe not even a short term, solution. Mold, rotting, weed and seedling growth are all potential problems with Sponge/Foam gutter guards.



## Brush Inserts Notes

### PROS +

- › Readily available and inexpensive.
- › Relatively easy self installation.
- › Installs with existing gutters.

### CONS -

- › Both large and small debris may become lodged and form clogs.
- › Ideal for nesting animals.
- › Difficult to perform maintenance and clean.
- › Short-term, ineffective solution.



## Brush Inserts or Pipe Cleaner

This type of system is a tube with numerous spikes protruding in all directions — like a large pipe cleaner — that is placed into your gutters. The intent is for the spikes to repel debris away from your gutters. It's a simple solution, but there are with some serious flaws and concerns.

### Clog Concerns

It will not keep most debris out of your gutters. The spacing and gaps between the spikes allow leaves, needles, seed and other debris to settle and become lodged within the spikes. As the brush inserts collect leaves and other material, they create the ideal home for birds and other nesting animals.

And, these types of inserts can be difficult to maintain — often requiring removal of the inserts in order to clean and dislodged debris.

## Plastic Screen Notes

### PROS +

- › Easy to find.
- › Inexpensive.
- › Won't disturb your shingles.
- › Installs on top of existing gutters.

### CONS -

- › Easily clogged by small debris.
- › Attracts nesting animals, bees and insects.
- › Prone to bowing & displacement.
- › Routine maintenance needed.
- › Not a long-term solution.



## Plastic Screens

Plastic screens are similar to Metal Screens, except a plastic frame is used. The installation is usually based on sliding or snapping into place, no screws needed. Plastic such as vinyl or uPVC are suitable for exterior home use. Plastic screens are available in either 3-4 ft. panels or rolled bundles of 6-20 feet.

### Clog Concerns

Much like metal screening, Plastic screens have wide openings that will allow almost every type of debris to enter your gutters.





## Slit/Hole Notes

### PROS +

- Typically more effective than screens, foam or brush guards.
- Will deter most large items.

### CONS -

- Easily clogged by small debris.
- May require removal of the guards in order to clean clogs.
- Prone to insects and hives.



### Slit/Hole

This type of gutter protection is a three to four foot plastic panel that has a slit, or opening, near the front edge. The design intends for only water to enter the slit while other debris will be washed off the edge. Installation varies and includes snap-on and screw-on systems.

### Clog Concerns

The concern with this type of system is the opening that runs along the entire front portion of the gutter guard. While many large items (pine cones, maple leaves, etc.) will not find their way into the opening, smaller items (pine needles, seeds, spinners, dirt, bees, and more) can get into your gutters.

### Maintenance Concerns

And, as with the other homeowner installed systems, when it's time to clean the gutters you'll be faced with first having to remove the gutter guards.

## Homeowner Solutions Summary

While cost-effective and convenient to purchase and install, homeowner solutions are mass produced without any custom fitting to the structure of your home.

Frequent scheduled maintenance and possible replacement is needed to ensure a system's effective use.





# 8

## Professionally Installed Systems



### Slit/Hole Notes

#### PROS +

- › Typically more effective than screens, foam or brush guards.
- › Will deter most large items.
- › May be backed by an installer, manufacturer warranty

#### CONS -

- › Easily clogged by small debris.
- › May require removal of the guards in order to clean clogs.
- › Prone to insects and hives.
- › Typically, the least effective of all professionally installed systems.

### Slit/Hole

The professionally installed gutter slit/hole systems are similar to the homeowner installed systems. In many instances it is the same product with the only difference being who performs the installation.

### Clog Concerns

As with the homeowner installed category, many of the same problems exists. There are holes and openings that will allow debris to enter your gutters. Larger items such as pine cones and leaves will most likely be kept out of your gutters, but smaller items — shingle grit, pine needles, seeds, small leaves, etc. — will find their way into your gutters.

### Limited Guarantee

A professionally installed system may come with a guarantee. These are typically not a “no clog” guarantee but an offer to clean clogged gutters. Homeowners should be wary of a guarantee that offers to “clean gutters” or “remove clogs.” This type of guarantee is an acknowledgement that the system will eventually fail, clog and require maintenance.

Whether it is homeowner installed or professionally installed, a slit/hole gutter guard will require maintenance and will clog over time.



## Reverse Curve Notes

### PROS +

- › Professionally installed.
- › Typically backed by a warranty.

### CONS -

- › Easily clogged by debris.
- › Prone to bees, wasps and other insects.
- › May require replacement of existing gutters.
- › May impact roof and void roof warranty.
- › May be visible from ground and impact your home's curb appeal.
- › Difficult for homeowner to perform maintenance — may require removal of system to clean.



## Reverse Curve

For several decades, Reverse Curve, or Reverse Flow, gutter protection systems were the industry leader in professionally installed gutter guards.

The first reverse curve patent was issued in the early 1900s. Prior to 2005 this type of system was typically viewed as the best gutter protection system available.

With a reverse curve system the top of the gutters are completely sealed. Water flows to the front of the gutters where a curve leads to an opening that runs along the entire front edge of the gutter guard. The intent is that water will follow the path of the curve into your gutters while leaves and debris are pushed off the front edge.

### Pest Concerns

Reverse curve systems are prone to attracting bees and other insects. The opening that runs along the entire front of the gutter guard will allow pest to enter your gutters. Hives are routinely discovered within reverse curve systems. Getting rid of these pests may require removal of that section of the gutter guard.

### Clog Concerns

Pine needles, shingle grit, seeds, spinners and other debris will also flow with rainwater into your gutters. While a reverse curve system will divert larger debris, there will be items that find their way into your gutters and form clogs.

As with pest removal, taking care of cleaning and clogs will require removal of the gutter guard in order to gain access to your gutters.

### Installation Concerns

Most reverse curve systems install under the first row(s) of a roof's shingles. Disturbing or impacting your existing roofing material will limit coverage by every major roof warranty. Reverse curve systems that install your roofing material should be avoided if a homeowner wishes to preserve and protect their roof warranty.



## Micro Mesh Notes

### PROS +

- › Professionally installed.
- › Completely sealed system.
- › Keeps debris out of gutters — only water gets in.
- › Backed by warranty.
- › Installs on existing gutters.

### CONS -

- › Typically a more significant investment than homeowner installed systems.
- › Some systems may impact roof and void roof warranty.



## Micro Mesh

The last category of professionally installed gutter protection that we will cover is micro mesh (also called micro screen or micro filter). Micro mesh gutter protection first appeared in 2005 (LeafFilter™ was the first patented micro mesh product).

### Micro mesh gutter protection consists of two parts:

1. A ultrathin (typically surgical steel) mesh.
2. A frame that pulls water through the mesh and into the gutters.

Micro mesh systems create a completely sealed system. The openings in the micro mesh are thin enough to keep out items as small as a grain of sand. As water flows off of your roof it is pulled into the micro mesh screen. Shingle grit, dirt, leaves...every type of possible debris either falls off edge of the gutter or accumulates until a wind comes blowing.

The use of surgical grade steel (recommended) ensures that no organic material will grow on, or adhere to the surface.

### What to consider when looking at micro mesh gutter protection:

- › At what slope is the product installed? If the slope is similar to that of your roof there is the potential for heavy rain and water flow to run off of your gutters. Installing at a lesser slope than your roof will create a type of ledge that will slow the water flow and allow the Micromesh to functional properly.
- › Does it install under my roof or disturb my roof in any way? Installing any item that disturbs your shingles and roof may void your roof warranty.

Micro mesh gutter protection systems are widely recognized as the best solutions for keeping gutters clog free. Homeowners who are interested in a micro mesh system should compare the major points of differentiation: 1) pricing; 2) warranty coverage; 3) impact on your roof and roof warranty.





## **Professional Solutions Summary**

Professional installed systems are typically more of an investment than homeowner installed options. However, the professional systems all offer better clog protection, extended longevity and are backed by varying warranties.

Homeowners looking for permanent or long-term gutter protection are best served by a professionally installed system.

Understanding the pros and cons of each system is paramount to a homeowner selecting the system that is best suited for their needs.





# 9

## Understanding Warranties/Guarantees

Most Professionally Installed systems offer some type of warranty or guarantee.

### Here's what consumers should look for in a warranty?

- › How long is the coverage?  
10 years, 20 years, lifetime?
- › Is the warranty transferrable?
- › Will anything void my warranty?
- › Does it guarantee that my gutters won't clog or that the company will clean my gutters?

The last question is of particular importance. If a gutter guard company guarantees that they will clean your gutters if they clog, they are acknowledging that your gutters will clog. Products that offer this type of guarantee are aware of their system's inefficiency.





# 10

## Gutter Guard Pricing

Gutter Guard pricing varies from category to category (Homeowner Installed and Professionally Installed) . For Homeowner Installed systems pricing can be found on major home improvement websites (Lowe's.com or homedepot.com).

**Professionally Installed systems typically require a visit to your home. A professional estimator will:**

- › Measure your existing gutters
- › Measure the roof/gutter height
- › Count the # of inside/outside corners
- › Assess any problem areas (cracked gutters, sagging gutters, etc.)
- › Provide an overview or product demonstration
- › Provide a written quote





## Top Questions to Ask When Selecting Gutter Protection

Below are the “**must ask**” questions that every homeowner should get answers to before selecting a gutter protection system.

1. What is the cost/estimate? How long do you honor estimates?
2. Is there a warranty? What does it cover? How long does it apply for? Is it transferrable?
3. Is it a completely sealed system? Are there any holes or openings?
4. How do you train, or oversee, your installers? What quality control measures do you employ?
5. Will the installation impact or disturb my roof? Does the product install under my shingles or roofing material?
6. How much rain can the gutter protection handle?
7. Do you guarantee that my gutters won't clog?
8. What type of maintenance, if any, is required?
9. Are you a Better Business Bureau accredited business?
10. How long have you been in business? How can I be sure you will be around to handle any service issues?
11. Who do I contact you for service issues? What is the typical response time?





## Gutter Guard Buyer's Checklist

Below are some great things to check off of your list when researching Gutter Guards.

### Checklist Resources

#### ANGIE'S LIST

Look for recent customer reviews in your area of service. This is a great way to get a true feel for the company.

[www.Angieslist.com](http://www.Angieslist.com)

#### BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

Check out the company's rating and also look to see if they are accredited with the BBB.

[www.BBB.org](http://www.BBB.org)

- Check out the company with the Better Business Bureau and Angie's List.
- Protect your roof! Confirm that the product does not install under your shingles or impact your roofing material in any way.
- Confirm that there are no holes or openings wide enough for the smallest debris (shingle grit and pine needles) to enter.
- Confirm the pricing and the duration that the estimate will be honored.
- Review the guarantee/warranty.
- Confirm how installers are trained and what quality control measures are used.
- Confirm who you contact for support or maintenance.

#### NOTES

