



Keeping Winter Outside

By Tom Lienhard, PE, CEM

With winter fast approaching, now is the time to make sure your home is energy ready. When it's cold outside, it may be too late to do some measures like caulking that can help you save energy during winter and help keep you comfortable inside.

Homes breathe and move, so caulking that is several years old may have pulled away from surfaces because of wind, rain and temperature changes. Look for old caulk that needs replacing, then re-caulk around windows, doors and other places where two dissimilar materials meet up.

Make sure that insulation in your crawl space has not dropped from the floor above, ductwork in unconditioned parts of your home is sealed and insulated, and water pipes are insulated and freeze protected.

If you don't have insulated windows, consider using plastic to create exterior storm windows by tacking it to exterior window trim with a thin trim strip. Make sure to caulk the window so infiltration will not cool your home. A do-it-yourselfer can do this for less than \$10 per window. How do you know if the infiltration is bad? Do you feel air coming in a window? Can you hear everything outside as if the window is open? Do you avoid sitting near the window in the winter because it is too uncomfortable? You will not only lower your energy use if you fix it, you will also have a more comfortable home.

An easy way to check for leaks around doors is to have someone run a flashlight around the exterior door jam at night while you stand inside in the dark. If you see light, fix or add weather-stripping in that location. Also, think about anything added to your home during the year that may have penetrated walls, and fill in those penetrations.

If your attic is well ventilated and insulated, you will be less likely to have ice dams build up on eaves. Clean out your gutters so water doesn't get trapped and freeze. Make sure they have not sagged, so melting snow and winter rain can drain properly.

To save additional money, check with your local energy provider on energy efficiency rebates they may offer. Also, state rebates and federal tax credits may be available for energy efficiency upgrades to your home.

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