

House's energy efficiency means year-round comfort

Would you like to significantly increase your house's energy efficiency and comfort this winter? You can, by taking a few simple steps.

Energy experts agree that one of the best ways to reduce energy usage is to make sure your house is properly insulated.

Your attic is one of the first places you should check to see if you have enough insulation. If you attic is unfinished and unfloored, but has some beams to walk on, you can easily find the R-value of the existing insulation. It will be printed on the top or bottom of the batts.

If you existing attic insulation is loose fill, you will need to measure the depth of the insulation between the framing members. If the insulation is fiber glass, you can use the following guidelines to determine the approximate R-value. Other types of insulation may yield different R-values.

Depth of loose fill Minimum Insulation R-value:	R-value
three inches	R-7
six inches	R-14
nine inches	R-21

ONCE YOU KNOW how much insulation you have, you can determine how much more you need. Just subtract the R-value of the existing insulation from the recommended R-value for Michigan.

The first few inches of insulation save you the most money, but since utilities are offering zero-interest loans on ceiling insulation, the more insulation the better.

A practical limit is in the 40s, but if you want to insulate to the 60s, that will save you money. Most of us, however, will have to settle for R-30. That's a foot of fiberglass insulation.

If you can put in more, you will save more. However, the heating and cooling bill savings between R-30 and R-60 is not enough to pay for the extra insulation in a few years.

If your unfinished attic has a floor, use a ruler to poke through the cracks and around the edges to see how much insulation, if any, is there. If there is less than four inches, add more.

The next place to check is your exterior walls. You can determine whether they are insulated by removing the cover from a light switch on an outside wall. Turn off the power first.

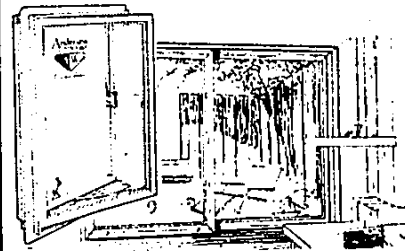
Shine a flashlight into the space between the switchbox and the wall and see if you can see insulation. If not, you may want to put some inside that wall.

Your decision will be guided by the size of your energy bills, the amount of room inside the wall for insulation and how easy it is to get into your walls. If you are adding on a room, you have access to the walls and can put in a lot of insulation.

If you live in a brick house with wet plaster walls, the cost of insulating may be much higher than the savings from insulating.

A professional contractor can give you a free cost estimate and help you determine if additional wall insulation is feasible.

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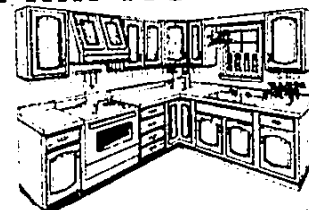
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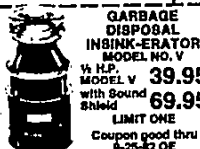
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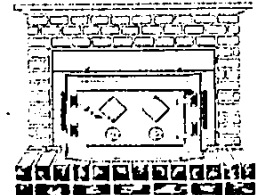
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