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Insulation still a wise purchase

Despite growing interest in energy and energy savings, homeowners continue to be troubled by the amount of insulation they need and the proper material to install.

Here are the most asked questions on insulation answered by the CertainTeed Home Institute.

• How does insulation work?

Heat naturally flows from warmer to cooler spaces. During the winter heating season, warmth is flowing from your heated living areas and then directly outdoors. In the summer warmth from outdoors flows into the rooms you are trying to keep cool.

Insulation guards against this heat transfer by providing a barrier to block the flow of heat. The end result—warmer in winter, cooler in summer.

• Does my house need insulation?

If your home was built before 1980, chances are that it is one of the millions in the United States that are underinsulated. Most likely, energy was cheap and abundant when your home was built, and the amount of insulation installed in it was minimal.

Even if you have already added some insulation, you may find this is inadequate in view of the rapid rate at which energy costs are rising. Anything less than 10 inches (R-30) of fiberglass insulation in the attic is in-

adequate regardless of where you live.

• Why should I insulate?

As a homeowner, there are several reasons to add insulation: to save money, to save energy, to increase the resale value of your home and to increase your personal comfort.

Adequate amounts of insulation will enable you to use less energy to heat and cool your home so you will be saving year after year. You also will be conserving energy—a valuable and limited resource. Proper amounts of insulation help to maintain uniform temperatures throughout a house thereby increasing personal comfort.

• What is R-value?

An R-value is the measure of an insulating material's resistance to heat flow. The higher the R-value, the greater the insulating power. Specific thicknesses of insulation are recommended to achieve certain R-values.

• How much insulation do I need?

If your attic has six inches or less of insulation, at least the equivalent of six-inch thick R-19 fiberglass insulation should be added, according to government recommendations.

If your attic has no insulation, up to 12-inch thick R-38 fiberglass insulation may be required. For specifics, consult your utility company.

• What kind of insulation should I use?

The most popular kind of insulation among homeowners today is fiberglass which is available in rolls and batts for easy installations.

Fiberglass is an extremely effective insulating material because it contains millions of tiny pockets which resist the flow of heat. In addition, fiberglass insulation won't deteriorate with age and, unlike some other kinds of insulating materials, it is noncombustible.

• Do I need insulation with a vapor barrier?

Insulation with a vapor barrier should only be installed in new homes or in homes with no previously installed insulation. When upgrading a home which already has home insulation, use unfaced insulation.

When using vapor barriers, they should be installed toward the warm-in-winter side of your home.

• Where can I add insulation myself?

Wherever wood framing is exposed as in the joists of an attic floor, under the flooring the living space, the unfinished walls in a crawl space, the flooring in the crawl space, or along an unfinished garage wall, adding insulation is a job you can do yourself.

Wherever the frame is concealed as in finished walls, or if your home is not of frame construction, special equipment is necessary and the services of a professional insulation contractor are recommended.

More information on saving energy can be obtained by writing the CertainTeed Home Institute, P.O. Box 860, Valley Forge, Pa. 19482 for the free booklet, "Insulation Facts."

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