AROUND THE HOUSE

Good skylight installation vital

Skylights are great additions to a home. They add light and a contemporary ambiance that's hard to match. When installed properly, they can operate indefinitely and will need virtually no maintenance beyond cleaning.

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With the well-made units available today, the most common problem with skylights is poor installation. If the skylight doesn't have a manufactured or site-huilt 'curb' (an elevated frame) with proper step and counter flashings, you will probably have a leaking skylight.

The recommended height of the curb will vary based on the type and slope of the roof. If your roof has a steep slope, the curb can be about four inches high. However, if your roof is flat, a curb of not less than eight inches is recommended.

In colder climates, height requirements should also accommodate the presence of snew on the roof and its effect on the skylight. Snow on the south side of the house melts faster than snow on the north side, due to the rotation of the Earth. Subsequently, skylights on the north side need to be higher than on the south side because the snow lasts longer there. It melts

underneath the top layer of snow due to heat in the home, yet it is trapped by the top layer. This trapped water stands a better chance of entering the skylight area than if it were on the south side.

A counter flashing is an inverted Lshaped piece of metal that goes under the skylight bubble or glass and covers the vertical section of the step flashing. Its purpose is to divert the water from the bubble to the step flashing.

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A step Hashing is an L-shaped piece of metal that goes under each course of shingles and goes up the curb, or wall, of the skylight. Its purpose is to divert the water away from the corner where the skylight and roof connect. This is the same detail that is used successfully at chimneys, walls and other roof projections.

Skylights come in different types, including wood, aluminum and vinyl. They also come in a variety of sizes. The costs range significantly based on the style of skylight you choose, as well as design of the roof. For an average size skylight, perhaps 30 inches by 40 inches, you can spend as little as \$150

for a plastic bubble to \$850 or more for a double-glass, motor-operated window with screen and blinds.

Installation is an additional expense. For a normal skylight installation, fees will probably range between \$300 and \$500, depending on the type of roof and skylight design. Look for a few professional carpenters who are familiar with skylight installation to give you bids.

Before you decide on what type of skylight you want, consider the purpose it will serve. If you just need additional light, you can probably get away with a plastic bubble. If you are putting an office in an attic with no windows, you may benefit greatly from a hand crank or motorized model that will allow fresh air, as well as light, to enter the space.

Around the House, by the AmeriSpechome inspection service, 1378 S. Main in Plymouth, instructs homeowners about the basics of home maintenance and repair. If you have a question, write to: Around the House! At Home, The Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

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a totally dark bedroom. Yet, because the night light has a built-in photoelectric sensor, it will turn off at dawn. Something like this costs \$4 at your local grocery or drug store.

One drawback is that even the little photoelectric sensors add several inches in height of the light bulb. So you can't add photoelectric sensors to some living room lamps. But if you could use a light coming on automatically at dusk, visit your local hardware store and tell them you want to buy a photoelectric sensor.

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