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Home insulation – slash your energy bills, stay snug in winter (and cool in summer)

Insulating your home is normally the biggest single thing you can do to save money on gas and electricity, and cut your personal contribution to climate change. The following article tells you about some of the things to think about when planning to insulate your home.

You can add insulation to almost any home. Depending on the structure of your building, the best areas to add insulation are normally the loft, and also the cavity between your home's inner and outer walls. Insulating these saves a lot of energy and based on calculations for a British home, usually covers its cost within 2 years. What's more, if you properly insulate your home you will prevent several tonnes of carbon dioxide being emitted into the atmosphere each year.

Insulating your cavity walls and loft will have the biggest impact on your bills. More heat is lost through walls than any other route – approximately 33% in an un-insulated home. 270 mm (10 inches) of loft insulation can save up to 25% of a home's heating costs.

In most houses in the United Kingdom built after the 1920s, the external walls are made of two layers with a small air gap or 'cavity' between them. If your home has unfilled cavity walls, a considerable slice of your energy bills will be spent heating the air outside. Filling the gap between the two walls of a house with an insulating material massively decreases the amount of heat which escapes through the walls. It will help create a more even temperature in your home, help prevent condensation on the walls and ceilings.

Cavity wall insulation is quick, clean and relatively inexpensive to install. It's injected into the cavity from the outside, taking between two and three hours for a three bedroom semi-detached house. In the United Kingdom it typically costs around £250, and with the savings homeowners then make on their heating bills, it can pay for itself in under 2 years.

Another really important area to consider is that you could be losing up to a third of the heat in your house through your roof and loft insulation can cut this right down. The recommended depth for insulation is at least 270mm. If you currently have insulation that is less thick than this you may consider adding another layer, although the payback time is longer.

There are various materials that you can use to insulate your loft. Most frequently used is mineral wool, although you can now use real wool if you want a natural alternative.

In the United Kingdom most people prefer to use a professional insulation contractor, who should also help you get government grants to reduce the cost. Because of the grants, using a contractor is normally cheaper than doing it themselves and with a professional you know that the job will be properly done.

Other cheap and easy steps which are well worth home owners considering include insulating their hot water tank, insulating the home's pipe-work and installing draught-proofing. Many homes are leaking heat through gaps in the joins on the panels that make up their windows and doors. In a typical home 20 per cent of all heat loss is through ventilation and draughts. Draught proofing is one of the least expensive and most effective energy efficiency measures for the home - yet it is too often overlooked.

Draught proofing offers a quick return, frequently paying for itself within a year and then saving year after year. There are many types of product - for around windows (sash, metal, timber); external doors (including weatherbars for door bottoms); internal doors - particularly kitchens, bathrooms and main living areas; the loft hatch, and even letter boxes, key holes and cat flaps!

Insulation, although not as headline grabbing as solar panel and wind turbines , is definitely the first place to start to make your home more comfortable and energy efficient.

For more information contact: info@downwithco2.co.uk