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Q & A How do I go about insulating my home?

President Carter's energy conservation proposals have important implications for every American. Today, Globe Home and Garden editor Peter Hotton addresses the subject of home insulation.

Tomorrow's discussion: New energy sources for the home.

Q. How can I insulate my home if President Carter orders me to?

A. Do the easiest first. If you have an open attic floor, install 6 inches of fiber glass insulation between the joists (horizontal beams). If it has a paper or aluminum foil backing this is a vapor barrier and must be placed toward the heated part of the house.

Q. I have a floor in my attic. How do I put insulation up there?

A. It's a lot of labor, but you can rip up the boards — carefully — and install the insulation. Then put the boards back. If you don't need the attic for storage, don't put the boards back, use them for something else. If you can't rip up the boards, have the insulation blown in.

Q. I do not have any insulation in my walls. How can I put in insulation?

A. You can have it blown in by professionals. It is not a do-it-yourself job.

Q. What kind of blown-in insulation is best?

A. It's not so much which is best but how it is installed. Blown insulation can be fiber glass pellets, mineral wool pellets, cellulose material or a foam called urea formaldehyde. The latter two have more insulation value than the first two. Blown-in insulation is only as good as the contractor's job putting it in. Any gaps are like open windows through which the heat pours.

Q. How is insulation blown in?

A. A crew will remove clapboards or shingles and drill a hole through the siding, usually at the top and the bottom of the wall between each stud (upright beam). When the insulation is blown in, the hole is plugged and the siding replaced.

Q. What about condensation? I've heard so much about moisture penetrating the walls and condensing in the cool insulation?

A. That's why a vapor barrier is so important. In new construction, a vapor barrier (toward the heated part of the house) prevents moisture from penetrating the walls.

However, without a vapor barrier you could — repeat could — have trouble. Some blown-in insulation installers do not plug the holes they make, but cover them with roofing felt (tarpaper) which is not moisture-resistant. Then, when the siding is replaced, any moisture in the wall will penetrate the tarpaper and escape through the siding.

Another way to solve the problem is to paint the inside of the exterior walls with a vapor barrier paint. Glidden makes such a paint but you can make your own vapor barrier by painting the wall with two coats of flat oil paint. If the paint is the color you want, fine. If not, you can use any paint over it, or paper over it, too. In fact, some of the vinyl-coated and canvas-backed papers are also vapor barriers.

Q. What's all this going to cost?

A. If you put in the attic insulation yourself, 6-inch fiber glass costs about 29 cents a square foot. If your attic is 1000 square feet, that's $290.

Blown-in insulation is about 56 to 70 cents a square foot for a 3½-inch depth. Say you have a twenty Cape 30 feet wide and 20 feet deep, with a shed dormer on the second floor. The wall area is about 1200 square feet, which would cost about $600 to $850. That's not counting the attic.

Q. Where else can I insulate?

A. The basement ceiling, if the basement isn't lived in. Six inches is recommended, but 3½ inches will be helpful. Again, install a vapor barrier toward the heated part of the house.

If your basement is warm in the winter, it means your furnace is probably heating it too much. However, the warm basement will make your floors nice and warm. If you do insulate the basement ceiling, then insulate hot air ducts and hot water heating pipes, too.

Q. I have 4 inches of insulation in my attic floor now. Can I save heat by adding insulation to it?

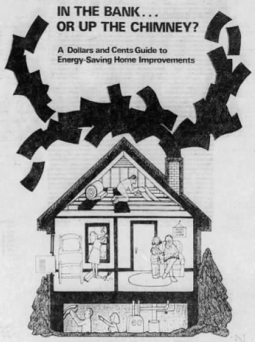
A. Yes. Add 6 inches of unbacked insulation. The original insulation probably has a vapor barrier. Whether it does or not, you do not want to add a second vapor barrier under any circumstances. If you can't get unbacked insulation, either pull the vapor barrier off before you install it, or install it with the barrier up, then make a slit with a utility knife the full length of the insulation. 4 inches in from each side.

Q. I've heard that attics must be ventilated when the floor is insulated. Won't this make the attic too cold?

A. It will make the attic cold, but the insulation will keep the cold from penetrating the house. Besides, the ventilation serves a more important purpose: Preventing condensation.

If you see frost on the nail points on the inside of your roof, or the rafters are damp, then you have either no ventilation or not enough ventilation.

Standard ventilation is one square foot of ventilation area at each end of the house for each 300 square feet of attic floor space. When you buy ventilators, you must subtract about 20 percent off the gross area to compensate for louvers and screens. Most aluminum ventilators have the net area stamped on them in square inches.



How to obtain insulation booklet

The Boston Globe is again offering its comprehensive booklet on insulating, "In the Bank ... Or Up the Chimney?" to its readers.

The booklet tells in detail how much you can save in heating costs by installing or adding insulation, weatherstripping, caulking and storm doors and windows, and how to do such work.

For your copy, send check or money order for $1.66 (including Mass. sales tax and 35 cents handling), payable to The Boston Globe, to Reader Service Dept., The Boston Globe, Boston, Mass. 02107.

Q. Does aluminum siding or vinyl siding insulate?

A. No, unless it has some sort of foam backing, and this is minimal. The siding does make the house resistant to air and wind leaks.

Q. I plan to build or buy a new house. How much insulation should it have?

A. Standard insulation (and we're talking about fiber glass) is 3½ inches in the walls, 9 to 12 inches in the attic floor and 6 inches in the cellar ceiling.

If you can build the exterior walls of two-by-sixes spaced 24 inches on center, you can get 3½ or 6 inches in the walls, and that's so much the better.

Windows should have triple glazing (twin glass in the main window plus a storm window). Storm doors are a must.

All wood joists should be caulked, and the joists (horizontal floor beams) and sills (wood members on top of the foundation) should also be insulated. Sill sealer (fiber glass) should be placed between sill and foundation.

In other words, make the house as tight as possible.

This may cause too much moisture in the house, in which case a dehumidifier would be helpful. If you have too much moisture in the house, open the doors and windows for cross-ventilation twice a day for 5 or 10 minutes. You will clear the house of moisture without losing much heat.

Q. My attic floor joists are not the standard 16 inches apart. Can I get insulation to fill joists 24 inches apart or other distances?

A. You can buy insulation rolls or batts 15, 19 and 23 inches wide to fit in these odd widths.

If your house is quite old, you may find your joists at really odd widths. If you can't fit one piece of insulation in this odd width, put it in and cut another piece to fit the gap. It's more work, but necessary.

Don't try to squeeze a 15-inch width into a 12-inch opening. Compressing insulation decreases its insulation value somewhat and it's wasteful.

Q. Will blown-in insulation settle?

A. It may, particularly fiber glass, mineral wool and cellulose. Urea formaldehyde may shrink a little, too.

Q. I've heard that Styrofoam is a good insulator. Is this true?

A. Yes it is. Just see how cool a Styrofoam coffee cup is to the touch despite scalding your mouth on the coffee. However, it is flammable, and emits a toxic gas when it burns. If it is used for insulation, it must be sheathed on both sides, either with wood or plaster or plasterboard.

We make our houses flammable enough without adding to their flammability. Therefore, this homeowner does not recommend it.

Q. What other measures can I take to save heat?

A. Weatherstrip all windows. Install storm windows and storm doors if you haven't already. If possible, triple-glaze all windows, that is, install twin-paned windows and use storm windows as well. That is very expensive, however, so its priority is quite low.

Keep draperies closed at night. Keep draperies open when the sun is shining in.

Keep the thermostat at 65 during the day and 60 at night. A turn-down of 5 to 10 degrees for a minimum of seven hours will save fuel.

Wear a hat. No kidding, wearing a hat will keep your hands and feet warm because much of the heat of your body is lost through the head.

Q. How much can I figure on saving if I do most of these things?

A. Perhaps 30 to 40 percent. If you're lucky, even 50 percent.

Q. What should I do to save money and cool the house in the summer?

A. You've done everything except to set the air conditioner at 78. And while it's a better; turn the thing off when it gets below 65 outside.

You'll also be somewhat more comfortable even if you don't have an air conditioner.

If it's an unbearably hot day, and you're sweating in your own juice, here's how to appreciate cooling off. Find a dirty, filthy, sweaty job and do it. After you take a shower and sit down with a glass of iced tea, you'll feel pretty cool.

It's sort of like the fellow who kept hitting himself on the head with a hammer because it felt so good when he quit.

Sunday's People

By Sam Heilner

When **Steve Weisberg** of Philadelphia was about 3 years old, he began making faces. He particularly liked faces that looked like automobile grilles. His mother warned him, "Steven, if you don't stop that, one of these days you're going to make a face and it's going to freeze." When Weisberg was 7, the Ford Motor Co. came out with the Edsel, which didn't last long, but Weisberg's imitation of its grille did — for 19 years, up to this very day, when Weisberg, at 26, imitates not only the Edsel but the 1950 Ford, the 1955 Chevrolet (which resembles President Carter's teeth, Weisberg says), and the most difficult face of all, the 1952 Henry J grille. "Every muscle in your face hurts after doing the Henry J," he says. He told Sunday's People, "I'd make these God-awful faces to defy my mother . . . but I hope it doesn't freeze. I'd never want to go around life looking like an Edsel." Neither would the Ford Motor Co.

As a postscript to the item on **Beatrice Lillie** last week, which reported she was feeling better and "taking a blue streak," one report from New York City, where Miss Lillie has been laid up since suffering a stroke, indicates that the great star will be taken back to Britian, her homeland, and her Manhattan apartment and assets will be sold by her conservator. In the twilight of her life, with her career behind her, the comedienne might like to use the line she wrote to the cast on the opening night of one of her shows in London during World War II. She had just received word that her only son, **Robert**, was missing in action. She said, "Don't talk about it, darlings. Now let's get on with the show."

Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her 51st birthday last week. She marked the day quietly, but had plenty to celebrate — her silver jubilee year, commemorating 25 years on the British throne, the forthcoming birth (in November) of her first grandchild, who will be **Princess Anne's** first child. However, Her Majesty must act fast to bestow a title on Anne's baby, because otherwise it will be outranked by a child expected the same month by the **Duchess of Gloucester**. The duchess, who is Danish, was a secretary when she met the Duke, who is the Queen's first cousin, and his child will be a Viscount, if a boy, and a Viscountess if a girl. Anne's child will be just plain "Master" or "Miss" unless...

Albert Kouba, a businessman and alderman in Minot, N.D., sent his tax form 1040 and signed it, but didn't pay any state or Federal taxes because he thinks US money is illegal tender. He was quoted as followed: **Q.** An item quoted you as saying "The money we have is illegal." Why? **A.** When I found out what my constitutional rights are ... I've actually been set free . . . I'm going to write our state tax commissioner . . . the thing I'll ask him is "give me the definition of a dollar." They refuse to do it. They know if they do, it'll blow this thing wide open, because the definition of a dollar is 412½ grams of silver and 25½ of gold. As of 1964 our money is no longer backed up by silver and gold which is legal money by the Constitution and, of course, they are violating the Constitution by turning our money system over to a foreign power which is the Federal Reserve System ... **Q.** Thank you very much, Mr. Kouba. Goodby.

Just a week after **Robert D. Ballard**, a scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, commented on the validity of the Bermuda Triangle as "crap," he offers a similar comment concerning a Loch Ness monster story. The story, in the Aberdeen, Scotland Press and Journal, said that in March, **Mel Stevens**, 60, of El Monte Calif., arrived in Inverness, near the Loch, "to drain 500 gallons of water from Loch Ness and ship it to California" at a cost of $1000. **Mel Stevens Jr.**, who also made the trip, "stopped off at Fort Lauderdale to take 500 gallons of water from a lake there," the article added mysteriously. Ballard was asked, "Why would he take 500 gallons of water out of Fort Lauderdale?" He replied, "Well, unless he's looking for something else, I don't see any connection ... it sounds far out ... if I were to place a bet, it would have to be damn good odds before I'd bet on the monster."

Ah, those little Paris dogs, how cute, how cunning. **Fifi, Froufrou, Cosette** and how forgetful about where they go to the bathroom. Would one believe . . . right in the street? And so, in 1975, Paris had the great plan to set up the private flush toilets for dogs all over the city. Alas, the idea — how you say — it flop. Then they offer medals to all dogs who behave with dignity. Also, also, that was the big bust. But last week **Mayor Jacques Chirac** said the little and figure of a dog dogs from now on will have relief. It will be the place in the gutter, with the big white cross, and the arrow painted on the sidewalk. The little dogs — and the little pedestrians — they will be so happy . . .

Names... Faces in The Globe-on Monday morning, April 4, carried an item about 82-year-old **Ben Cooper**, who said he would close his popcorn stand in Walla Walla, Wash. rather than pay a $15 license fee to the city. "I give away more popcorn than I sell," Cooper said, adding that $2 was a good day's profit. Cooper has now received a check for $15 to pay the fee, with a letter saying, "the money is a portion of the profit from our recent bake sale. Good luck." The letter is signed, **"Your friends, Grade 6, Goodrich Street School, Fitchburg, Mass."**

Alex Haley is facing the first of what may be a number of lawsuits connected with "Roots." In the suit, filed in US District Court in New York City, Haley is charged with copying large portions of the American part of "Roots" from another novel, by Margaret Walker Alexander of Jackson, Miss. In 1960 she published "Jubilee," about black life in Georgia, and she asked for an injunction against "Roots" sales and that she receive a portion of its profits.

Did you wash your face this morning? Brush your teeth? Buff your feet? . . . According to **Dr. Earl Cherniak**, formerly of South Boston but now a California podiatrist, one should indulge in epidermabrasion daily, just like brushing the teeth. Cherniak is director of research for a program of foot-buffing, but research was also done at Boston City Hospital under the direction of **Dr. C. Robert O'Keefe.** Something called a "Buf-Puf" has long been used for arse, but this is a breakthrough in feet. Dr. O'Keefe told Sunday's People, "It's good for people who have dry, scaly feet. . . who have ulcers on the feet. . . and it has worked out very well for people who've had amputations," he said. Foot-buffers may be obtained at your neighborhood drugstore.

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