Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/436639023

Downloaded on Sep 1, 2023

Home & Garden

It's insulation time: How and where to do it

By Peter C. Hotton
Globe Staff

By the time the frost is on the pumpkin the frost will be on you if you delay an insulation job much longer.

One nice thing about these autumn days. They're not so cold that you get a chill working in attic or basement, but the attic has cooled off enough so you won't swelter up there.

It's insulation time. Time to put it in the attic floor, or add to it up there. Time to put it in that upstairs area you plan to finish off. Time to put it in crawl spaces and basements.

Besides the insulation you can install, you can save by doing something about the windows. And while it isn't insulation, weatherstripping of doors and windows will tighten up the house considerably, saving on that precious heating fuel.

Ventilating a house is an essential part of insulating it. The House Doctor writes, Page B19.

It really isn't important to say how much you'll save by insulating or adding insulation. It's sufficient to say that it will save fuel, from perhaps 10 percent to as high as 30 or 35 percent.

What kind of insulation to use? For do-it-yourself jobs, fiber glass in batts or rolls is probably the best buy, most readily available and easiest to work with. Batts or rolls are better than the "pouring" insulation.

For insulation blown into walls and other inaccessible places, mineral wool, cellulose and foam are big today. All three do a good job, but even more important is to make sure your contractor is honest as well as competent.

We're concerned here with putting in insulation yourself, where you are able to.

Here we go.

□

1. Insulating the attic.

If you have no floor in the attic, you can see the joists (horizontal beams) holding up the ceiling. Put down at least six inches, with a vapor barrier placed toward the heated part of the house. The vapor barrier can be aluminum foil or kraft paper. The foil is designed to reflect heat, but does very little reflecting in this application.

The six inches of insulation in the attic floor will help a great deal in reducing your heating bill. Another six inches, making a total of 12, will do more; not twice as much, but it's still worth it.

If the first six inches come up to the top of the joists, you can lay the second layer at right angles to the joists. This will cover the joists and make it very difficult to walk on them safely, but it is accepted practice.

If the first layer doesn't come up to the top of the joists, lay the second layer on top of the first, parallelling the joists.

The second layer should not have a vapor barrier. Buy unbacked batts or rolls. If you can't find unbacked insulation, you can use the backed stuff this way: Either pull off the vapor barrier or slice it its full length with a utility knife, four inches from each side.

Batts and rolls come in 15-inch and 23-inch widths, just enough to fit between joists on 16-inch and 24-inch centers.

If you have oddly spaced joists, you can cut the insulation to fit. It cuts readily with a utility knife. If the space is too wide for one width of insulation, cut another piece to fit into the space. Cut it so it will fit snugly, but not so tight that the insulation buckles.

When putting insulation in the attic floor, do not put it into the eaves. Put it just over the top of the wall. Batt or roll insulation will stay where you put it. With pouring insulation you should put in a wooden barrier to prevent its spilling into the eaves.

□

2. Adding insulation in the attic.

If your house has some insulation in the attic floor, check its thickness. If it's less than six inches, add another six, without a vapor barrier.

Some old-fashioned insulation is an envelope, maybe two inches thick, with paper on both sides. If this is intact, just put unbacked insulation on top of it.

If its top is torn and in bad shape, you can still put unbacked insulation over it.

If the bottom is torn, you're better off taking it out and throwing it away, starting from scratch. If there is any insulation in the eaves, take it out. If it's wet, take it out.

If there is some insulation and it has no vapor barrier (lift it to inspect the bottom), you can do one of two things: put down unbacked insulation on top of it, or remove the old stuff and put down insulation with a vapor barrier.

If your attic is properly ventilated, and it should be if you have insulation, you probably won't have any trouble if you don't have a vapor barrier.

The rules with a vapor barrier: Put it toward the heated part of the house, never sandwich a vapor barrier between layers of insulation, never put it on top of insulation and never have more than one vapor barrier.

□

3. Insulating a finished attic.

If the attic is finished, it is pretty difficult to insulate it. But if you can get through the ceiling (there should be a crawl space above it), insulate it as you would the attic floor.

Also, insulate the knee walls (the low walls connecting the slanting roof rafters with the floor. If there is no true door giving access to the ceiling, make one. And if there is no door to the space behind the knee wall, make one.

If your attic is not finished but you plan to build some rooms up there some day, here's what to do.

Incidentally, many Cape Cod style houses are built with the upstairs unfinished. Cape houses are essentially one story, with the roof starting at the top of the first story. A dormer is usually built into this type of house, allowing plenty of room upstairs when the homeowner is ready to finish it off. This second floor amounts to an attic.

Anyway, even if you don't plan to finish it off for a while, you can still insulate it.

You can add collar beams connecting the rafters. Let's say the rafters form an upside down "V". The collar beams and rafters form an "A," the beams forming the cross bar to the "A."

You may have to add to the collar beams, if they don't connect each pair of rafters. After all, that's where the ceiling is going to go.

Add insulation between those collar beams. You can staple the insulation right to the beams, again with the vapor barrier facing the heated part of the house.

Build knee walls, and insulate them with 3½ inches, more if you build the knee walls with 2 x 6s instead of 2 x 4s.

The knee walls are low (three or four feet or so), so there's a length of rafter between the top of the knee wall and collar beam. Insulate the space between the rafters with six inches of backed insulation. Staple the foil right onto the rafters, but make sure there is at least an inch of air space between the insulation and the roof boards.

□

4. Insulating unheated basement or crawl space.

Insulating these areas is relatively new. As for unheated basements, there is not full agreement over this, because the heat from the furnace and heating ducts or pipes keep the floor warm. Suffice to say that an insulated basement or crawl space ceiling will save you money.

Put in six inches of insulation, with the vapor barrier toward the heated part of the house.

Instead of struggling to staple it, which would require pushing aside the insulation, just set it in place, letting it line up with the bottom of the joists.

Then staple chicken wire or any other coarse mesh to the studs to hold the insulation in place. The air space between insulation at floor will add to the insulation value.

The perimeter of the basement or crawl space wall should also be insulated. This area is either between the ends of the joists, where the joists sit on the sill which in turn sits on the concrete or stone foundation, or parallel to the joists, where one joist sits on the sill.

You can fold the ceiling insulation so that it covers the space, or cut a separate piece of insulation and install it before putting in the ceiling insulation.

If you insulate the ceiling of an unheated basement or crawl space, you must also insulate heating ducts and water heating pipes, or domestic water pipes, too. The latter are the pipes that serve you hot or cold water that comes out of your faucets.

You can buy pipe insulation and duct insulation. The latter is one-inch fiber glass backed by a vinyl lining. It is installed with the vinyl on the outside. Wrap the insulation around the ducts and staple its edges together. You can rent or borrow a stapler that will do this, usually from the dealer who sells you the duct insulation.

It is now recommended that you insulate ducts with 2½ or 3½ inches of regular insulation with a foil backing. However, this is very awkward to work with and the foil (or paper) doesn't hold up to well to the beating it could take.

□

5. Insulating heated basement.

If your basement is heated, chances are you're going to use it for living space.

If it isn't finished off, then the job is more or less easy. Install a stud wall along the foundation and put in 3½ inches of backed insulation between the studs. Staple the foil or paper right to the face of the studs, or better yet, staple the backing to the side of each stud. What you're doing is leaving an air space between the foil and any wall finish. This air space makes the foil a reflector of heat, and also adds a little to the insulating value of the wall.

The ceiling of the heated basement does not have to be insulated, unless

INSULATION, Page B20

Energy booklet available

"In the Bank ... Or Up the Chimney," a 72-page how-to-do-it booklet on insulation, weatherstripping, storm windows and caulking is available from The Globe.

To get your copy, send a check for $1.00, payable to The Boston Globe, to Readers Service Dept., Boston Globe, Boston, Mass. 02107.

Hot line open to energy queries

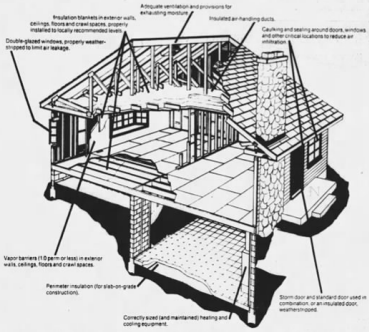
The Energy Phone, a toll-free number, is now available to help people save heat and money.

It's at Clark University in Worcester, and it is 1-800-922-8265.

Paul Levy, deputy director of the state's Energy Policy Office, sponsors of the Energy Phone, noted that a well trained staff offers immediate assistance with all energy questions, including home weatherization and insulation questions.

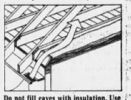
It will be available seven days a week, including holidays, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The line will also aid people seeking information on energy courses, speakers, sources of funding, and alternative energy.



Cutaway of house shows where it can be made energy efficient to save fuel and money. Illustrations are from Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corp., Toledo, Ohio.

Insulate an attic floor. Keep insulation three inches from recessed light fixtures. Stuff unbarked insulation between joists and chimney.



Do not fill eaves with insulation. Use a board as a baffle to prevent insulation from blocking air passage.

Install collar beams, then insulate between them before putting on ceiling when finishing the attic.

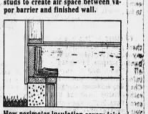
Install insulation between rafters and between knee wall studs.

In unheated basement or crawl space, install six inches of insulation in the ceiling.

Nail (stapling is easier) chicken wire or other rough mesh to joists to hold insulation in place.

To insulate basement you plan to finish off, build a stud wall next to foundation.

Staple insulation between basement studs. Staple vapor barrier on side of studs to create air space between vapor barrier and finished wall.



How perimeter insulation covers joist and sill in basement where ceiling is not insulated.

Turnip termites? Well, not quite ...

By John B. White
Globe Staff

Mammy Yokum, where are you now that I need you?

For years as I followed Al Capp's Li'l Abner through his Dogpatch adventures, I especially looked forward to the annual invasion of the turnip termite, a mythical winged beastie that greedily devoured Dogpatch's staple crop, the turnip. Always Mammy Yokum came to the rescue.

What a gasser: Termites in the garden!

Well, it's not funny to me anymore. I've got 'em. Not turnip termites, mind you, but that plain old wood chewing subterranean termite is making dessert of my cantaloupe.

It's my own fault, I suppose. I knew they were about. My neighbors had them and the pest control people have been working steadily in my neck of the woods. They've been chewing a maple stump and have done a little damage to a post or two, but they're not in the house. Yet.

With that in mind, perhaps it was unwise to use newspapers and hay for mulch; it's good mulch but paper is processed wood and, well, you know termites. The melons are of a midget variety which will mature quickly enough to make them worth the effort, even in frosty New England.

I grow them on trellises and hang the melons on cloth slings as they get too heavy for the vine to support them to maturity. How did the termites get in?

A couple of melons at the bottom of the trellis got very, very heavy; the rains came and the soggy slings gave way; the melons came to rest on the mulch.

Faithfully I went out and turned them so they wouldn't rot or something in the wet mulch. (I feared slugs would get them.) But, then there were those days I worked late and didn't get home until after dark. Saturday morning, I went out in the rain, moved a melon and behold, holes in the melon, termites on the ground, termites in my melon.

What now? you ask. I'm going to try diazanon on the advice of a man who knows such things. Diazanon will kill termites and maybe we can rescue the melon patch. Diazanon doesn't linger in the soil.

If not, it's chlordane and my melon patch becomes a flower garden. You just can't eat what grows in chlordane. And chlordane is forever.

Now that I know what's for dessert, I better get that termite man back and find out what's for dinner.

Copyright © 2023 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

POWERED BY Newspapers™