

Doug Rye *says ...*



More on insulation

The response from last month's column has been amazing. I did not expect so many calls from folks who said that their house had no insulation in the walls. Well, we are thrilled when we learn that the columns are giving you solutions to your energy efficiency problems. My favorite call was from a lady in south central Arkansas. She asked who she could call to get the RetroFoam insulation for her house. Well, since I only knew one company in Arkansas that installed RetroFoam, I gave her the phone number of the one who helped us with the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas' home makeover last year. Because she lives far from the company, I told her that I didn't know if that company would be able to assist her. She said, "They have to because they have the answer to my problem. My walls are wet every winter and have been that way for years." I asked her several questions about the house and I am convinced that insulating the walls would solve her problem.

I feel certain that every person reading this column believes that insulation is important, but you may have questions about which kind to use, how much it costs and how much do you need. So let's take a closer look. First, I want you to know that all insulation does not perform equally when the temperature is hot or cold outside the house. So, you immediately think to yourself, "That is when you need insulation" and you are exactly right.

For many years I've been extolling the virtues of cellulose insulation and it remains a favorite of mine. I first learned about cellulose insulation, which is made from recycled newspapers, in the 1970s when I was working for the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), overseeing construction of energy-efficient housing for low- and

moderate-income families and senior citizens. I learned about it from a builder in Mountain Home who was using it to soundproof apartments. I decided to use it to soundproof FmHA-financed apartments and that's when I found that it was also great for air insulation. By metering many of the apartments and houses we built, I saw that the utility bills were always at least 20 percent less on structures insulated with cellulose. Because it works so well and is affordable, the use of cellulose insulation has mushroomed in recent years.

So, how do you use it? For existing homes, it may be feasible to spray dry cellulose in your walls. This can be done by simply drilling two-inch holes in the walls (sometimes interior, sometimes exterior) and spraying the cellulose through those holes, which can be easily patched when you are done. As for your attic, it is totally feasible in most cases to add cellulose insulation to any existing insulation you may have.

My rule of thumb is that when you are finished, you should have a minimum of 12 inches total of attic insulation. For example, if you have six inches now, add six more inches.

If your house is pier and beam with a crawl space, you can spray cellulose or foam insulation on the interior of the perimeter foundation wall. This will prevent pipes from freezing, loss of ductwork heat and the floors of your home will stay warmer in the winter.

Insulation is a very important part of energy efficiency and because it will still be hot when you receive the next *Rural Arkansas*, and cold weather will be just around the corner, I will complete the Insulation Course 101 in September. In that issue, we will take a greater look at foam insulation.

Until then, stay cool.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video or ask energy efficiency-related questions, call Doug at 1-501-653-7931. More energy-efficiency tips, as well as Doug's columns, can also be found at www.ecark.org