

Insulating your house will help lessen energy waste

Homeowners have become painfully aware of the cost of energy. With utility and fuel costs rising between 10 and 15 percent annually, homes that were once "toasty warm" during the winter now often settle for "livable."

Although the cost of energy will continue to rise in the years ahead, there are ways homeowners can take the defensive. The National Home Improvement Council advises consumers to lower thermostats and hot water heater settings, add storm doors and windows, and use electrical appliances and lights only when necessary.

All can help keep energy waste in check. NHIC also recommends insulating your

home to today's standards: at least R-30 for attic floors; R-15 for sidewalls.

NHIC, the largest professional association devoted exclusively to home improvement, estimates that as many as eight out of 10 homes in this country may be wasting energy because of inadequate insulation.

The association suggests the following ways to find out if your home needs insulation:

- Look for insulation between floor joists and rafters in the attic and over unheated areas such as crawl spaces, garages and basements.

Installing the right kind of insulation in ceilings, walls and floors, according to energy ex-

perts, can mean savings of up to 50 percent in fuel consumption.

- To check wall insulation turn off the electricity. Remove a light switch plate from the inside of an exterior wall. Shine a flashlight into the wall cavity to determine if there is any insulation.

Another way of checking insulation is feeling the inside surface of an exterior wall. If it feels quite a bit cooler, insulation is needed.

If you find inadequate insulation, call in a professional contractor to conduct a thorough check on your home. He will be able to suggest the best type of insulation, determine the amount necessary, and give you an estimate on the cost.

New siding: a wise investment that yields wide range of benefits

New siding can rejuvenate a home's aging exterior. But, it should offer more than a quick "facelift." It should reduce maintenance and upkeep costs, provide protection against the elements, and add to a home's curb appeal.

Today's popular sidings include aluminum, solid vinyl, prefinished mineral fiber, hardboard, factory finished steel, and any of several wood sidings.

With the wide variety of sidings on the market, finding one that suits your needs and fits your budget shouldn't be a problem.

Since siding plays a vital role in a home's overall exterior appearance, select the style that best enhances its architecture.

Depending on the choice of color, texture and style, siding

can impart a modern or rustic look to your home, or even make it appear taller or wider. Be sure the color you select is one you're willing to live with for many years.

When deciding to install new siding, the National Home Improvement Council advises homeowners to consider insulating the walls.

NHIC notes that the cost of insulation can be reduced considerably if done in conjunction with siding. Discuss this option with your contractor.

Unless you're a competent handyman, the job of residing might better be left in the hands of a professional contractor. Most chapters of the National Home Improvement Council, listed in the telephone book, will provide names of reliable contractors.

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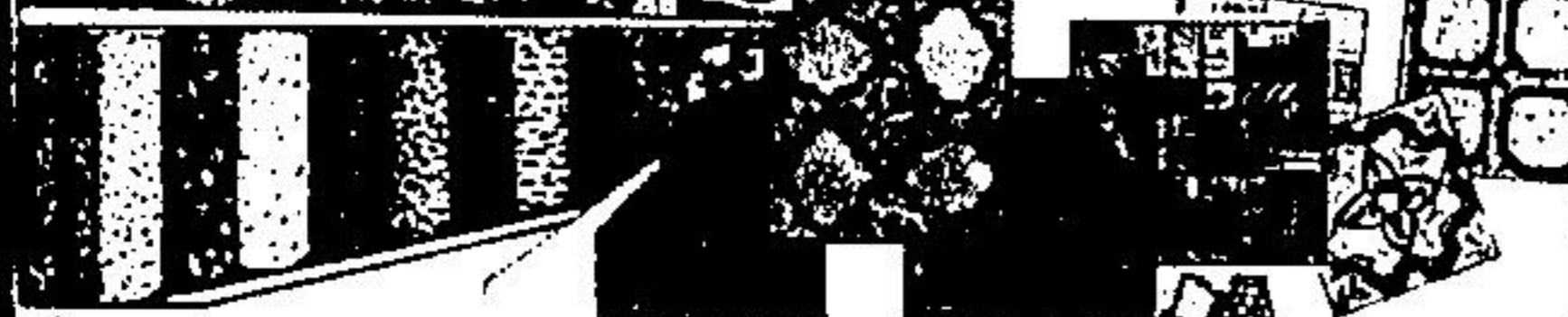


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