

New energy-efficient doors

Are you losing valuable energy through your doorways? If you are, and you're thinking of replacing them, be sure that the new ones will be energy savers. The things you should look for in a new door are stability, thermal resistance, cost, appearance and security.

Stability and thermal resistance go hand in hand. Look at the weatherstripping — it should be strong, secure, resilient and easily replaceable since it will be under a lot of stress from movement and traffic. Because all doors can warp or change shape, try to find weatherstripping that can be adjusted, particularly if it is attached to the surface of the door. Make sure

there is weatherstripping on the hinged side of the door as this is often overlooked.

Insulated doors are the most energy efficient. They are filled with a high RSI material and are a substantial improvement over regular uninsulated doors. But because RSI values depend on type of material and thickness, check the door's actual insulating value with the manufacturer or distributor.

Boyd Hodgins of Ottawa Door Consultants says that doors vary substantially in price. The average cost of an uninsulated wooden door is about \$200 to \$300, while the average cost of an insulated metal or wooden

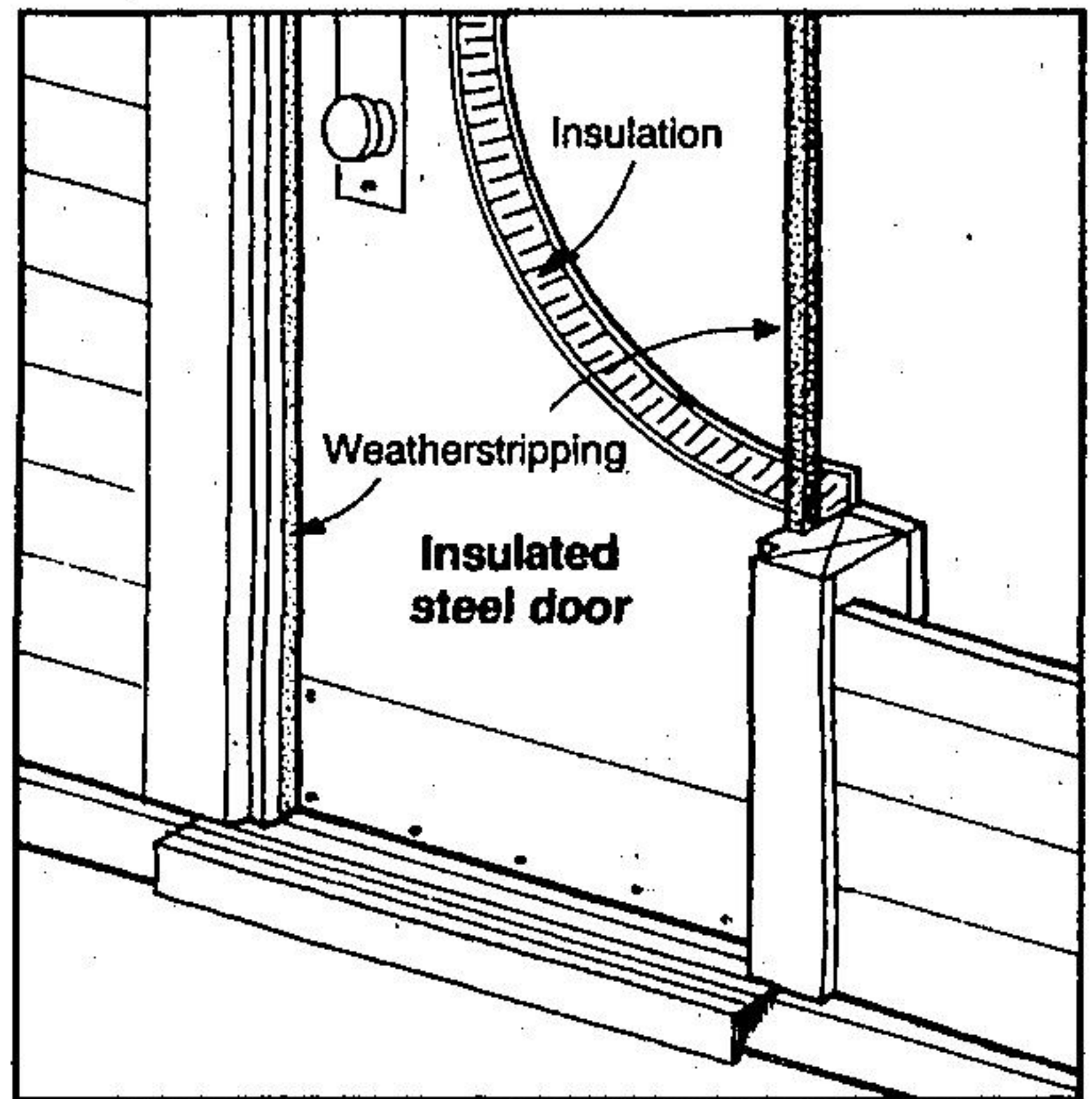
door ranges from \$300 to \$500. A wooden door with double glazing would be even more expensive, the bottom of the line ranging from \$300 to \$500.

Hodgins says the most cost-efficient and popular door installation today is a steel insulated door, because it is energy efficient and comes with its own frame and weatherstripping. With a wooden door, you often have to purchase the frame and weatherstripping components separately. The installation of a pre-hung wood or steel insulated door is easier and cheaper, involving less labour because most of the work is already done.

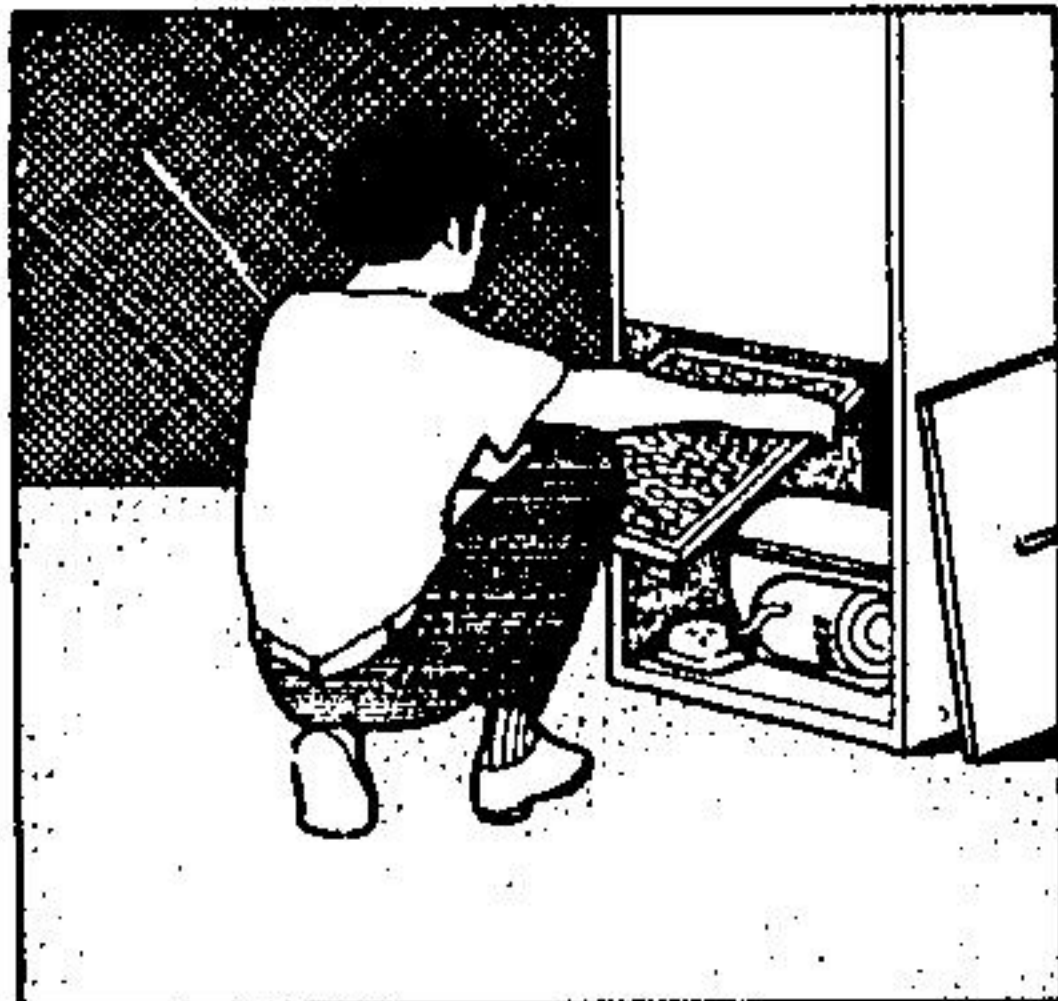
Appearance and security are not as compli-

cated. Appearance is simply a matter of personal choice. Choosing a secure door just requires common sense — you need a solid door with a proper strike plate, hinges on the inside and a reliable lock.

With garage doors the rules are pretty well the same. Make sure the door is airtight, because even an unheated garage can limit heat loss from the house if it is well sealed. Weatherstripping must be of the heavy duty type since garage doors are very heavy. Hodgins says there are a number of insulated garage doors on the market, and they have proved to be quite energy efficient.



Oil heat maintenance



Just like a car, or any other major mechanical device, your oil furnace needs to be checked regularly. A knowledgeable heating professional should clean and service your furnace at least once a year to ensure safety, reliability and efficiency.

A thorough cleaning and tuning operation will take one to two hours and involve the partial disassembly of your furnace and oil burner. The internal heat exchanger, flue pipe and lower chimney surfaces should be brushed and vacuumed to remove soot and debris. Corroded or damaged flue pipes should be replaced immediately.

Moving parts such as dampers need to be lubricated and belts should be tightened. All safety controls must be cleaned and tested. The entire system, from the fuel tank oil filter to the nozzle should be inspected, cleaned, adjusted and, where necessary, parts should be replaced. Your serviceman

should use replacement nozzles certified by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Make sure that the oil spray pattern and oil flow, measured in gallons per hour, are compatible with the rating described on the name plate of the furnace.

The condition of the ductwork can affect furnace efficiency. Recirculating air needs a clear path for its return to the furnace for reheating. The duct system should allow for adequate circulation, and registers should never be obstructed. An open or loose panel on the furnace casing will draw cool basement air into the system, and may even be a safety hazard. Warm air ducts should be insulated, especially where they pass through unheated spaces or into exterior walls. The joints in the ductwork can be taped with special duct tape to reduce the loss of warm air, but remember to wash them first, otherwise the tape won't stick.

Hot water dollars

The water heater is the second largest energy-consuming appliance in the average house. Some steps can be taken, however, to reduce the amount of energy used for heating water — and many of them will cost little more than a bit of your own time and effort.

Lowering the temperature setting on the tank will result in immediate savings at no cost. A temperature of 50°C will provide water hot enough for most household uses. If you have a dishwasher without a booster heater, the water heater temperature should be set at 60°C. The power supply to an electric water heater should be turned off before any thermostat adjustments are made. Draining about 5 litres of water every month from the hot water tank will remove sediment and reduce scaling; this lets heating elements work more efficiently and will prolong the life of the system.

You can install flow restrictors and aerators on faucets and showerheads. The water pressure should still be more than adequate for all household purposes.

Leaky faucets should be fixed promptly. One drop per second from the hot water tap will waste 720 litres of hot water per month — enough for about 16 hot baths.

An insulation kit for your water heater can be purchased from hardware stores; follow all installation instructions that accompany the kit. Make

sure there is an opening for the drain valve, thermostat and other controls. If your water heater is fired by oil or gas take great care not to plug the draft hood or the air intakes. You should also contact either the manufacturer or your local utility for details before installing an insulating blanket.

If a new hot water heater is installed in your home, keep heat loss from the pipes to a minimum by putting the tank as close as possible to the kitchen or the bathroom, thereby reducing the length of pipes through which the water must pass to reach the faucets. A 'heat trap' can reduce heat loss from convection of hot water in the pipes; have a contractor include a heat trap with new hot water tank installations.

Watch for these important features when selecting a new water tank: tanks that have 75 mm of glass fibre or thick foam insulation are widely available; make sure the bottom is insulated. An accessible on-off switch on or near the tank will enable you to turn the heater off when it will not be used for extended periods. An on-off switch is not part of an electric hot water heater system, but a switch can be installed or the appropriate fuses removed or circuit breakers switched off.

Whether you're installing a new hot water tank or taking a closer look at your present one, hot water bills can easily be trimmed in any home.



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