Stopping air leaks should not affect indoor air quality

Uncontrolled air leakage in a home can cold, dry air in. Fletcher says the worst account for up to 40 per cent of the heating leakage in typical older homes is in the bill, and may eventually result in structural basement, around the sill plates where the damage to the house. But some home- concrete foundation meets the wood framowners worry that sealing the house too much may result in poor indoor air quality.

Lesley Fletcher, Program Specialist for Ontario Hydro, says, "Unless you've had the home professionally air sealed, it's unlikely you will ever seal it tight enough to be a real concern," And even if there are serious problems, modern solutions are available.

"Many quality builders are now installing heat recovery ventilation units in new homes," she says. "The units provide a continuous source of fresh air, exhaust the stale air, and eliminate problems like condensation build-up on windows." In older houses, kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans generally eliminate problems caused by humidity.

Indoor air concerns should not discourage homeowners from plugging the leaks that waste energy and cost them up to a third of their heating bills, says Fletcher.

Crakes in the thermal envelope of a house allow warm, moist air to leak out and let ing. These areas should be well-sealed with caulking or polyurethane foam insulation.

"Another area that is bad for air leakage is around windows. If you install a window and just put a little insulation between the window frame and the frame of the house, all you've really done is put a filter in the space. You should remove the moulding from around the window and do a good air sealing job."

In older homes, there are many other areas



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of air leakage. "If you were to remove the baseboards on a north or northwest outside wall, especially on a windy day, you would probably be amazed at the strong draft coming in," says Fletcher. "Sometimes the draft is hidden by a bit of broadloom, but that doesn't mean it's not there." Ideally, the baseboards should be removed and caulking or foam insulation applied.

If that's a bigger job than the homeowner wants to tackle, the seams could be caulked with the baseboard still on, then repainted. Or, "Many older houses have quarter round - so you could at least remove the quarter round and foam or caulk behind that."

Any area where air can leak into the house should be sealed with caulking. A smoke pencil or incense stick will detect drafts. Typical air leakage areas include: around electrical outlets and switches; around pipes and plumbing stacks; and where telephone and cable wires come through walls.

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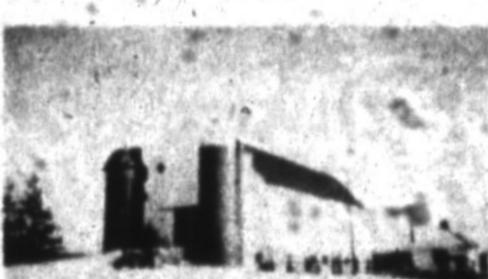


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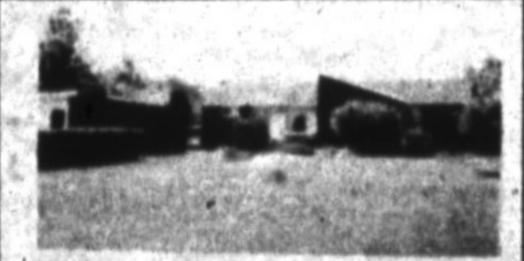


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