



THE GREEN HOME GUIDE

From Green Building Resources
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How to Create a More Comfortable Home

Happy New Year everyone! As I am writing this newsletter it is 19 degrees outside and it looks like we'll have these unseasonal conditions for the next several days - happy and 19 degrees don't seem to go together!

During this cold blast, there are a lot of complaints from homeowners about cold rooms and high energy bills. If it's any consolation, most homes in Atlanta are not built to withstand this kind of cold weather. They are built to keep the heat - not the cold - out.

Unfortunately, some people are lead to believe that there is a "silver bullet" to solve their "cold home" and high energy cost problems. But in most cases, there is no single solution. Most homes in the Atlanta area were built prior to new building codes that demand more rigorous sealing and insulation of the home along with the installation of energy savings components. Homes are magnificent structures but as they say "the devil is in the details" - and there are probably several problems that contribute to the challenges you may be facing with this cold snap.

Listed to the right are solutions to the most common problems that contribute to cold rooms and high energy bills - BTW, when I mention the "building envelope" I am referring to the area of your home that is supplied with heat (or air conditioning) and is usually a "finished room":



- Common Solutions to Cold Rooms and High Energy Bills
- Eliminate air leaks around windows, doors and holes in the building envelope with caulking/weatherstripping
 - Add more insulation to the attic (up to R-49 if possible) and consider upgrading to spray foam insulation
 - Add insulation to floors and walls that are adjacent to unconditioned space (garages, crawl spaces, etc)
 - Seal leaks in the duct work of your heating system
 - Replace single pane windows or add good quality storm windows
 - Upgrade to a higher efficiency HVAC system

The list is prioritized from the least costly solution to the most expensive. The best way to attack uncomfortable rooms is to start with the cheapest solutions first, then make you way up to the more expensive ones. This way you'll get your money back on the less expensive investments and set the stage for faster payback on the more expensive investments.

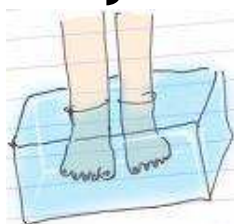
Remember each of these fixes are incremental and probably won't solve your uncomfortable room or reduce your energy bills on their own. If you need help, please give us a call. We'd be happy to review these suggestions with you and help you decide which ones would work best for your home.

By the way...

Don't forget to take your tax credits for any home improvements you had made to your home this year that improved its energy efficiency. For most improvements, the credit is 30% of the product cost up to a total tax credit of \$1,500. If you installed alternative energy products such as solar panels, the tax credit is 30% with no cap. Contact us for more information on federal and state tax credits.



“Why are my feet cold?”



Having cold feet is usually associated with a groom just before saying “I do”. But this winter in Atlanta, plenty of folks are experiencing cold feet in their homes. Why does this happen? One of the factors contributing to this condition (there are a few) is related to windows. When warm air inside your house comes in contact with single pane window glass that has been cooled by outdoor air, it sinks (since cold air is heavier) to the floor and stays there while the warm, vibrant air moves upward. Cold windows are not just cold to the touch, they create a constant supply of cold air in your home!

Technological Marvels

I want to take a brief timeout from green home renovation and discuss the marvels of new technology that seem to be coming at us at warp speed. Social Media, iPhones, GPS navigation systems, automatic braking (not just anti-lock braking) systems for cars, even remote access to your house to turn off appliances/circuits. Obviously, these technological advancements are setting the stage for bigger and better inventions in the near future. Let’s take the GPS navigations system. I was fortunate enough to get a Garmin GPS device this Christmas and I took it out for a test ride with my daughter the other day. Once programmed with our destination, it told us what turns to take and when the turn was coming up - “turn left in 100 yards onto Shallowford Rd”. It even rerouted us when we intentionally went past a designated turn. But what really amazed me is that the Garmin knew how fast I was going!! This got me to wonder how long it will be before we put coordinates into a system and get into a vehicle which will drive us to our destination – without the need for a person to drive! If you think this sounds far fetched, take a look at the technology development video clip at the website below. In the spirit of New Year’s, I urge all of you to spend a few minutes and see what cooking in the high-tech R&D world and make your own predictions on what might come next!

http://www.ted.com/talks/pattie_maes_demos_the_sixth_sense.html

Product Reviews

This is a new section of the newsletter that will be devoted to Green Product reviews. As you may recall, I sent out an email just before Christmas to see if some folks would like to test some green products and give us some feedback on the benefits of the products. So far, the only feedback I have is on the odor eliminating CFL lightbulb – the Sanibulb. One of the product testers said the bulb burn out shortly after installing it. Turns out this CFL and others like it CANNOT be used in a 3-way light socket! This may be why other CFLs you may have tried have burned out as well! More info on the test products next month....

Best Wishes for a
safe and
prosperous 2010 –
Happy New Year!



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