

Water barrier sheeting material good for making clothing too

Q. We weatherproofed our new home with Tyvek, a breathable air and water barrier sheeting material. My wife noticed that Tyvek looks like a sheer fabric and asked if it could be used to make low-cost clothing. Do you know? - R.W. La Grande.

A. As a matter of fact, you can buy jackets and overalls made of two types of Tyvek that stop wind and rain. They're sold as disposable garments that can withstand limited laundering. Garments made of Tyvek 16 are lightweight, comfortable, and let perspiration evaporate. Garments made of Tyvek 14, on the other hand, don't permit the free passage of air that lets perspiration evaporate.

Tyvek isn't as durable as most clothing fabrics. It degrades slowly in sunlight and eventually will tear with use.

Whether Tyvek could be bonded successfully to more-durable clothing material and keep its weather proofing qualities, we don't know. If any reader knows, we'd like to hear about it.

Q. The fireplace in my home has a couple of bricks with no mortar between them. It was built this way to leave a small opening to the outside so combustion air could get to the fire. Now I've installed a fireplace insert and wonder if these openings to the outside take away some of the heat from the insert. Should I fill in the openings with mortar? - R.K., Springfield.

A. Building codes require outside combustion air be supplied for all wood stoves, including fireplace inserts.

You could fill in the openings if you have another adequate source of outside air. If not, you might modify the existing openings so they can be tightly closed when you're not using the stove.

To help you know if your source of outside air meets the code requirements, here's part of what a booklet put out by the State Fire Marshall and Building Codes Division says:

"Each solid-fuel burning appliance shall be equipped with an inlet to assure a sufficient supply of outside air for proper fuel combustion. The inlet shall be capable of providing all combustion air from the exterior of the building, a crawl space, an attic or other approved

vented space. The inlet shall be within 24 inches of the appliance and may enter through the floor or through a wall near the floor. Some appliances may be equipped with the inlet entering directly into the fire box. The inlet shall be closable from the building exterior and must be designed to prevent burning material from dropping into concealed space.

"Combustion air ducts shall be constructed of noncombustible material and have a minimum cross sectional dimension of three inches. Combustion air ducts located in air-conditioned spaces shall be insulated and protected with a vapor barrier to prevent condensation.

"Combustion air shall not be obtained from a hazardous location or from any areas in which objectionable quantities of flammable vapor, lint or dust are present. Combustion air shall not be taken from the garage. Combustion air shall not be taken from space where the operation of a fan may adversely affect the flow of the combustion air."

Q. We are seeing television and newspaper ads for energy-saving new homes, but some are called "Good Cents" homes and some are called "Super Good Cents." Could you explain the difference? - V.H., Portland.

A. Both "Good Cents" and "Super Good Cents" are programs that offer incentives and assistance to people who build energy-efficient, comfortable electrically-heated new homes. Both programs are offered through electric utilities.

The incentives include assistance with planning and designing the home, on-site visits to ensure that energy features are installed correctly, certification of the home as energy-efficient, and help for builders with marketing the homes.

"Super Good Cents" is offered by many public utilities working with

the Bonneville Power Administration. "Good Cents" is a similar program offered by private investor-owned utilities such as Portland General Electric and Pacific Power and Light Co.

"Super Good Cents" homes are somewhat more energy-efficient, but both programs ensure a new home that will be inexpensive to heat and comfortable to live in. The main difference is that a "Super Good Cents" home must meet a higher level of energy efficiency than a "Good Cents" home. This usually means that a "Super Good Cents" home will include at least two additional energy efficiency features than a comparable "Good Cents" home. For example, a "Super Good Cents" home might require R30 instead of R19 floor insulation and triple instead of double glazing compared to a similar "Good Cents" home. Your electric utility can provide details.

Q. We have a full basement under our well-insulated home. The basement stays between 50 and 60 degrees all year. If we insulate the basement walls and floor will our furnace, which is in the basement be warmer? - D.B., Rogue River.

A. Basically, the answer to both of your questions is "yes." However, to effectively reduce heat loss from your basement, you'll need to do more than just insulate. Before you insulate, it is critical to caulk or otherwise seal gaps leading outdoors via windows, doors, band joist, and the space between the top of the foundation wall and the wooden framing. Homes lose a lot of heat through all these places.

If you rarely use the basement, you may save more energy at lower investment by insulating the heating ducts and the floor above as well as the joints in the duct work.

If you decide to insulate the basement walls, be sure to carry the insulation all the way to the floor above, covering the band joist between the top of the foundation wall and the floor above. We recommend R11 basement wall insulation or R30 floor insulation with R11 duct work.

Insulating the basement floor probably would not be cost-effective

since most heat is lost through the basement walls.

For information on how to insulate basement walls, get a copy of "Do-It-Yourself Home Weatherization Guide" from the Oregon State University Extension energy agent serving your part of the state. Readers who don't know the name and location of their Extension

energy agent may learn it by writing to Energy Answers, OSU, Corvallis, OR 97331.

OSU Extension energy agents and specialists will answer energy questions of interest to readers. Send your questions to Energy Answers, OSU, Corvallis, OR 97331. Include your name, address, and phone number.



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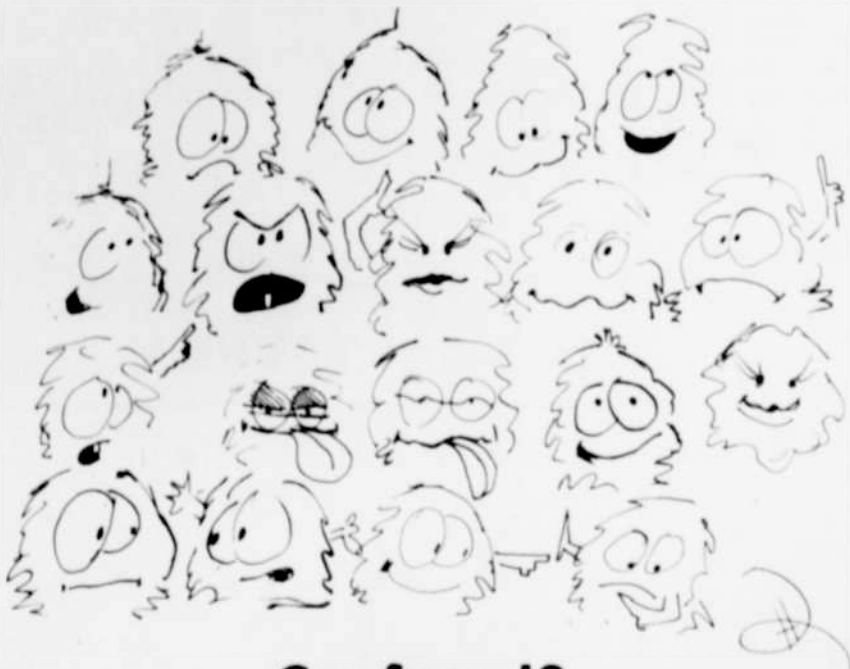
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