

CONDENSATION

Windows may serve as visible areas for moisture to condense, warning you that there is too much moisture inside your home. Windows do not cause condensation.



Of course windows don't manufacture water. If you were out in the desert, you would want a canteen with you, not a window. But people seem to believe that windows do manufacture water. They call up window contractors and say, "My windows are all wet, and it must be the fault of the windows." Well, not quite. Water on windows is condensation, and it can be a problem. However, it's not a window problem, and the solution does not come from the windows.

WHAT IS CONDENSATION?

Condensation is the result of high humidity in the air, that produces a "fog" once it hits a surface that is colder than the air. High humidity is caused by excess water vapor. This is commonly seen in a foggy mirror after a hot shower. Condensation usually occurs first on windows because glass surfaces commonly have the lowest temperature of any of the interior surfaces in the home.

WHAT CAUSES HIGH HUMIDITY?

Humidity comes from excess water vapor in the air. All homes have a certain level of moisture due to household activities. Activities such as cooking, washing laundry and dish washing can add up to five pounds of water vapor into the air daily! Other moisture-producing agents include plants, heating systems and humidifiers.

Seasonal changes, quick changes in temperature, reconstruction and remodeling can also add excess humidity into the air temporarily. During construction, large quantities of water are displaced into the air from building materials such as concrete, plaster, taping, etc. After one season of heating this will commonly dry out and your condensation problems will disappear.

WHY WASN'T IT ALWAYS THERE?

Old drafty windows allow moisture to escape through inefficient seals and cracks. Today's technology produces more energy efficient or "tighter" homes. This is great for keeping your home more comfortable, quieter, and cleaner, BUT by sealing your home tighter you are also keeping moisture in. In today's homes it is very easy to build up extremely high levels of humidity.

CONDENSATION

IS CONDENSATION DETERMINED BY MY WINDOW TYPE?

Sometimes. Recessed windows like bow and bay windows usually experience more condensation than other window styles. This is because air circulated around them is usually more restricted, and since they hang away from the insulated house wall, bays and bows could be a few degrees cooler in temperature. Placing a common electric fan near the window to produce air circulation may also be helpful.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR HOME'S HUMIDITY:

1. Be sure all ventilation to the outside is functional. Use kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans. Consider installing a laundry room exhaust fan. Run exhaust fans while the humidity-producing appliance is operating or the humidity-producing activity is going on, and let them run a while after the activities have ended.
2. Air out your kitchen, bathroom and laundry room during or just after use. As outside air usually contains less water vapor, it will “dilute” the humidity of the inside air. This takes place automatically in older houses through constant infiltration of outside air.
3. The process of heating your home will reduce the relative humidity provided it’s dry heat. It will counter balance most or all of the moisture produced by modern living.
4. If you have a furnace humidifier or other humidifying device in your home, be sure it is adjusted to produce the proper amount of humidity, or turn it off. The humidity produced elsewhere in your home may mean these devices are not needed at this time.
5. Be sure that louvers in attic or basement crawl spaces are open and that they are large enough.
6. Open the fireplace damper to allow an easier escape for moisture.
7. Install ceiling fans to keep air circulating within your home.
8. If troublesome condensation persists, see your heating contractor about an outside air intake for your furnace, venting of gas burning heaters and appliances, or installation of ventilating fans.