

Stay warm with energy efficient windows

Written by BBB

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Many consumers strive to winterize their homes and save money through better energy efficiency. The Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota (BBB) and the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) advise consumers to balance cost effectiveness with energy efficiency, as more efficient windows, doors and skylights can make a big difference in energy consumption over time.

According to the Energy Information Administration, home heating costs this winter are expected to rise by 10.2 percent for homeowners who rely on heating oil. Luckily, homeowners can fend off some of the rising energy costs by winterizing their home before the harshest weather takes hold.

Consumers in northern climates concerned about indoor comfort in the winter should pay special attention to U-factor ratings to determine which products are better at keeping heat in. The lower the U-factor, the better the product will perform.

The BBB and NFRC recommend the following checklist for consumers to consult when preparing their windows and skylights for the cold months ahead:

Start by looking for products that carry the NFRC Energy Performance Ratings label. This label can help determine how well a product will perform its key functions - keeping your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, keeping out wind, and resisting condensation. By using the information contained on this label, builders and consumers can reliably compare one product with another and make informed decisions.

As with any home improvement project, make sure you are dealing with a reputable contractor and reputable materials. The BBB encourages consumers to consult with their home contractor to see that all energy performance materials carry this label. Check out bbb.org to find a home contractor you can trust.

If you are looking for a well insulated room, check the window's U-Factor. U-Factor ratings generally fall between 0.20 and 1.20. The lower the U-value, the greater a window's resistance to heat flow and the better its insulating value.

Is your room sunny and bright? The Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC) rates how much solar radiation is admitted through the window. SHGC is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. The lower a window's solar heat gain coefficient, the less solar heat it transmits in the house.

Are you looking for a well-lit room or one that's on the dimmer side? Visible Transmittance is an optical property that indicates the amount of visible light transmitted through the window. VT is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. The higher the VT, the more visible light is transmitted.

Check window seals. Heat loss and gain occur by Air Leakage through cracks in the window assembly. The lower the AL, the less air will pass through cracks in the window assembly.

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Check to see how well your window will resist condensation. The higher the Condensation Resistance (CR) rating, the better that product is at resisting condensation formation. While this rating cannot predict condensation, it can provide a credible method of comparing the potential of various products for condensation formation. CR is expressed as a number between 1 and 100.

Look for ENERGY STAR® products before making a purchase. ENERGY STAR helps consumers to easily identify products with superior energy performance. Since the energy efficiency performance of windows can vary by climate, ENERGY STAR's performance criteria vary by climate zones, so that you can choose products that are best suited for where you live.

For more information of NFRC's Energy Performance Ratings label, visit www.nfrc.org/label.aspx. For more consumer tips this holiday season in both English and Spanish, visit bbb.org.

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