

CONDENSATION

Guidance notes on how to prevent serious condensation



Reduce Moisture Content of Room Air:

- a) Good ventilation of kitchens when washing or drying clothes or cooking is essential. If there is an electric extractor fan always use it when cooking or washing clothes and particularly whenever the windows show any sign of misting. Leave the fan on until the misting has cleared. Consider opening windows as well.
- b) If there is no extractor fan, open the kitchen windows but keep the door closed as much as possible.
- c) After bathing/showering, keep the bathroom window open and shut the door for long enough to dry off the room. If there is an electric extractor fan always use it. The fan should stay on for at least long enough for misting on windows / mirrors to clear.
- d) In other rooms provide some ventilation. In old houses, a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplace flues and draughty windows. In modern flats and houses ventilation does not occur unless a window or ventilator is opened for a reasonable time each day and for nearly all the time that a room is in use. Too much ventilation in cold weather is uncomfortable and wastes heat. Usually all that is needed is a very slightly opened window or ventilator. Where there is a choice, open the upper part such as a top hung window. About a 10mm opening will usually be sufficient.
- e) Avoid the use of portable paraffin or flueless gas heaters as far as possible. Each litre of oil used produces the equivalent of approximately a litre of liquid water in the form of water vapour. If these heaters must be used, make sure that the room they are in is well ventilated.

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- f) If condensation occurs in a room which has a gas, oil or solid fuel heating appliance with a flue, the heating installation should be checked as the condensation may have appeared because the appliance flues had become blocked.
- g) Do not use unventilated airing cupboards for clothes drying.
- h) If washing is put out to dry for example in a bathroom or kitchen, open a window or turn on the extractor fan enough to ventilate the room. Do not leave the door open as moist air will spread to other rooms where it may cause problems.

Provide Reasonable Heating:

- a) Try to make sure that all rooms are at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms.
- b) To prevent condensation the heat has to keep room surfaces reasonably warm. It takes a long time for a cold building structure to warm up, so it is better to have a small amount of heat for a long period of time rather than a lot of heat for a short time.
- c) Houses and flats left unoccupied and unheated during the day get very cold. Whenever possible it is best to keep the heating on even if it is at a low level.
- d) In houses, the rooms above a heated living room benefit some extent from heat rising through the floor. In bungalows and most flats, this does not occur. Some rooms are especially cold because they have a lot of outside walls or loose heat through a roof as well as the walls. Such rooms are most likely to have condensation and some heating is therefore necessary. Even in a well insulated house and with reasonable ventilation, it is likely to be necessary, during cold weather, to maintain all rooms at not less than 10°C in order to avoid condensation. When living rooms are in use their temperature should be raised to about 20°C.



Mould Growth:

Any sign of mould growth is an indication of the presence of moisture and, if caused by condensation, gives warning that heating, structural insulation or ventilation or all three may require improvement.

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Useful Checklist



- Dry all windows, windowsills, and any other surfaces that have become wet. Ensure you wring out the cloth thoroughly; do not dry on the radiator!
- Leave some background heating on all day in cold weather.
- If possible, always hang your washing outside. If this is not possible, you could hang it in the bathroom, with the door closed, and window slightly open for ventilation. Do NOT dry washing on radiators as this will substantially add to the moisture already in the air.
- Ensure that all extractor fans are kept clean and are working efficiently. (If an extractor cannot hold a postcard to the vent when switched on it is not efficient enough.)
- If you use a tumble dryer, ensure it is well ventilated to the outside, or that it is the new condensing type.
- Try to ventilate your kitchen when in use, either by opening a window slightly, or using the extractor fan, or both. If possible, keep lids on saucepans. Try to ventilate both kitchens and bathrooms for at least twenty minutes after use.
- If your property is prone to condensation then daily use of a dehumidifier unit can be very beneficial. These come in all shapes and sizes, cost very little to run and draw out the excess moisture from the air helping to keep the condensation under control.
- Keep the bathroom door shut when you are having a bath or shower.
- Do not block air vents of airbricks.
- If your windows are fitted with trickle or 'night' vents, try to keep these open all of the time, or as much as possible.