ATTIC INSULATION

Unless your home was specially constructed for energy efficiency, you can probably reduce your energy bills by adding more insulation. The one thing most older homes have in common is inadequate insulation in their attic. Insulation is like a blanket for your home. The heavier the blanket of insulation is the warmer your home will be. Even adding insulation to a newer home can pay for itself within a few years.

As insulation ages it tends to settle which reduces its efficiency as an insulation barrier. The attic is one of the best places to add insulation not only to improve the comfort of your home but to increase the homes energy efficiency as well.

Benefits of proper insulation:

It's a good idea to check your insulation, and here's why:

- Heating and cooling can account for almost half of your total energy bill.
- Poor insulation requires your heating and cooling system to work harder, which increases your energy bill.
- Proper insulation will save you money on your heating and cooling costs.

Check the attic, walls, and floors adjacent to an unheated space, like a garage or basement. The structural elements are usually exposed in these areas, which makes it easy to see what type of insulation you have and to measure its depth or thickness (inches).

Determining Recommended R-Values:

When you find out the R-values of your insulation either from an energy assessment, the home builder, or your own inspection, you can then use the U.S. Department of Energy's Zip Code Insulation Calculator to determine how much insulation you should add and where you should add it for maximum energy efficiency.

Do You Have Enough Insulation?

Look across your attic and if you see the ceiling joist you should add more insulation. The insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots or bare areas. The recommended level in most attics is to insulate to an R-38 or about 10 to 14 inches, depending on the insulation type.

When adding additional insulation, you do not have to use the same type of insulation that currently exists in your attic. You can add loose fill on top of fiberglass batts or blankets, and vice-versa. If you use fiberglass over loose fill, make sure the fiberglass batt has no paper or foil backing; it needs to be "unfaced."

If you choose to add loose fill, it may be wise to hire a professional, as the application requires the use of a blowing machine, although some home improvement stores offer rentals of this machine

If you're doing the job yourself, blanket-type material is easiest to work with. Be careful not to compress it or it won't be as effective. Roll-on or blanket-type insulation comes as rolls of fiberglass batts, either 15 or 23 inches wide—designed to fit between the widths of typical framing. If your attic already has some insulation in the attic floor, roll out the batts at right angles to insulate over the framing members.

Loose-fill or blown-in insulation requires a machine that shoots a stream of loose-fill cellulose over the existing attic floor framing. This is typically a job for an insulation contractor. The advantage is that loose-fill insulation does a great job of filling in small crevices and other hard-to-reach areas.

You probably think of your ceilings as solid surfaces, but the truth is that ceilings leak air into unfinished attic spaces through gaps and openings, such as around pipes and lighting fixtures.Air leaking into your attic is costing you money - between 30% and 50% of a homes energy cost. Having insulation added to under-insulated areas in your attic is one of the easiest ways to help you lower your energy bill.