

## Managing Home Energy Costs

# Avoid Moisture, Mold and Mildew Problems

Excess moisture in your home can lead to mold, mildew, wood decay, water damage and other problems.

### Symptoms of excess indoor moisture

- Allergic Reactions: fungi that cause mold, mildew, and dry rot can also cause respiratory problems.
- Stains: mold and mildew can cause unsightly discoloration and damage to walls, ceilings and floors.
- Odors: excess indoor moisture can result in a persistent "musty smell."
- Discomfort: overly humid indoor air can create an uncomfortable living environment.

### How excess moisture gets into your home

- Leaks in roof, foundation or plumbing.
- Condensation can occur in a poorly insulated home where moist air may condense on cold exterior walls, inside the walls, on windows, or other cold surfaces.
- Wet or moist crawl space.

### Steps to control indoor moisture

- Repair leaks in a roof, foundation or in plumbing immediately.
- Make sure that gutter downspouts or rooflines discharge water away from home and foundation.
- Weatherize by adding recommended insulation, caulking, weather stripping, and ventilation.
- Install ground cover if your home has a crawl space. Cover exposed earth with a six mil black plastic vapor barrier.
- Use kitchen and bath exhaust fans. Choose low-noise fans (the quietest are rated 1.0 sones or less) with backdraft dampers. A kitchen exhaust fan should expel at least 120 cubic feet per minute (CFM) of air. A bath fan should expel a minimum 80 CFM. Keep fan exhaust ducts short and straight.

Vent kitchen, bath, and other exhaust fans to the exterior of the house. Do not vent them into the attic, crawl space, garage or anywhere moisture could be a problem.

- Venting clothes dryers into the home in an attempt to help heat the home introduces a great amount of moisture into the home, and contributes to mold and mildew issues.
- Control indoor moisture sources by reducing time taking showers, boiling water, decorative fountains, etc. Cover aquariums.
- Measure indoor humidity. In winter, 40-60 percent indoor humidity is best.
- A dehumidifier can remove up to 40 pints of water a day from indoor air! Regularly empty the humidifier drain basin, or plumb the humidifier drain to the outside.
- Don't store unseasoned firewood or hang clothes to dry indoors.



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