

LFO/ldo/03/11/08

BEST 1/2

Energy Saving Features

USE THE BEST YOU CAN AFFORD IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Some Insulation Materials Save More Energy

In improving the energy efficiency of your home it is wise to carefully consider the various options. Millions of homes have been insulated with either the insulation in the least favourable place, or to an inferior thickness, or using insulation materials less efficient than available alternatives. This is partially because it can be a complex decision, but largely because Government-inspired schemes encourage mass insulation at low cost, for simplicity.

Homeowners therefore need to take charge of the decision making. There are occasions when insulation should occur on the outside of the house, rather than in the cavities. For instance, where external walls need renovation.

Use of polyurethane injected cavity wall insulation will be preferable in housing where walls ties have weakened – a not uncommon problem. Polyurethane is a very high performance and more costly insulator that also assists in stabilising cavity walls. It should be the insulant of choice, where affordable externally or internally on external walls and within cavities.

Structural, rigid polyurethane foam has been used for over 30 years to solve the problems of wall-tie failure coupled with poor levels of insulation. Studies made in conjunction with the Building Research Establishment concluded that there are millions of dwellings at risk.

Due to the expanding properties of the foam, air leakage, draughts and cold spots are eliminated, providing superior energy-saving insulation that greatly reduces the risk of internal condensation. An added bonus - due to the sealing qualities of the foam - is the reduction of airborne sound penetrating the property. Humidity levels and condensation are also better controlled providing better air quality within the home.

Polyurethane in its closed cell form resists water penetration and achieves an exceptional level of air tightness. The ability to spray the material allows the sealing of gaps which otherwise leak expensive warmed air from heated buildings.

Sprayed polyurethane can be used for roof and loft insulation also as the high efficiency insulant of choice. Used under sound roof tiling where fixings have deteriorated can avoid the far more expensive job of re-roofing. As a loft insulant, just one layer of polyurethane foam can allow the continued use of the loft area for storage, a requirement of many households.

Therefore, if you have a choice, think about where and how you improve energy efficiency, taking the whole building into account – and aim for a superior standard where affordable. Expect prices for either cavity wall or roof insulation to be from £1500 and upwards.

Retrofitting of uninsulated or poorly insulated properties provides the biggest contribution to carbon dioxide savings, with an impact both on the local environment and globally. Some 150,000 properties have been treated to polyurethane foam insulation in the UK.

The system has British Board of Agrément approval for use in existing and new build applications and can show compliance to Building Regulations. Where more than 25% of existing walls or roofs are to be renovated, there is a legal obligation to conform with the thermal improvements required by Building Regulations.

Members of the British Urethane Foam Contractors Association agree to abide by the Association's Code of Professional Practice. To find a local BUFCA member contact the Association at P O Box 12, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 3AH; on tel: 01428 654011; fax: 01428 651401; e-mail: info@bufca.co.uk; web: www.bufca.co.uk.

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