

Insulate to lower cooling bills

With the hot summer months approaching, now is the time to add attic insulation so you don't have to crank up the air conditioning unit and break the bank with sky-high electric bills.

Insulation is just as important in the summer as it is in the winter. On warm days, outside heat attempts to move in doors, but insulation slows its transfer. Adequate insulation can help reduce utility bills, save energy and make a home more comfortable - in the summer, and year-round.

Recognizing that inadequate insulation is one of the leading causes of wasted energy in most homes, the U.S. Department of Energy recently increased its R-value recommendations for the first time in 10 years - a change that will help homeowners maximize their home's energy efficiency.

The Department of Energy recommends that homeowners install R-49 insulation

(equivalent to 15 inches of fiber glass) in the attics of most new U.S. homes. Because most homes only have about 6 inches of attic insulation, the majority of homeowners may benefit by adding insulation in their attics. In fact, a recent study found that only 20 percent of the homes built before 1980 have adequate insulation in the attic.

Insulating the attic is also one of the easiest and most cost-effective projects for a homeowner. Today, products are available that make insulating even easier for the do-it-yourselfer, including Miraflex® R-25 insulation (8" inches), a virtually rich-free insulation product manufactured by building materials systems leader Owens Corning.

Before adding insulation to an attic, properly caulk or seal all cracks or openings in the ceiling. It also is recommended that homeowners install attic vents, which help prevent moisture buildup.



Insulation is just as important in the summer as it is in the winter. On warm days, outside heat attempts to move indoors, but insulation slows its transfer. New products on the market, such as Owens Corning's Miraflex insulation, make the job easier for a do-it-yourselfer.

Hospitality

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Possible. However, O'Hanlon and Lidsky say that cabinets in light, warm colors and finishes are popular for busy, informal family kitchens, while rich, dark finishes are often chosen by homeowners who prefer traditional rooms and formal entertaining.

Lidsky adds that many homeowners still love white kitchens.

"In a way, the big white kitchen is akin to the little black dress," he says. "It can be anything you want it to be: dressy, casual, sophisticated, basic... What makes it interesting... besides the accessorizing, of course... are the many new whites. They are gentler and warmer, a far cry from yesterday's glaring whites. And besides, the whites - like any other color or stain - can be picked, antiqued, distressed, weathered, and much more."

Moldings, columns and other architectural features, custom-painted tile murals, stone floors with unusual borders and unique collections are other elements that O'Hanlon and Lidsky often use to make every kitchen highly personal.

"The best kitchens are those where family and guests want to linger," smiles O'Hanlon. "Let us face it, as technology speeds us into the 21st century, a wonderful kitchen with such age-old values as beauty, good food and friends is a great anchor."

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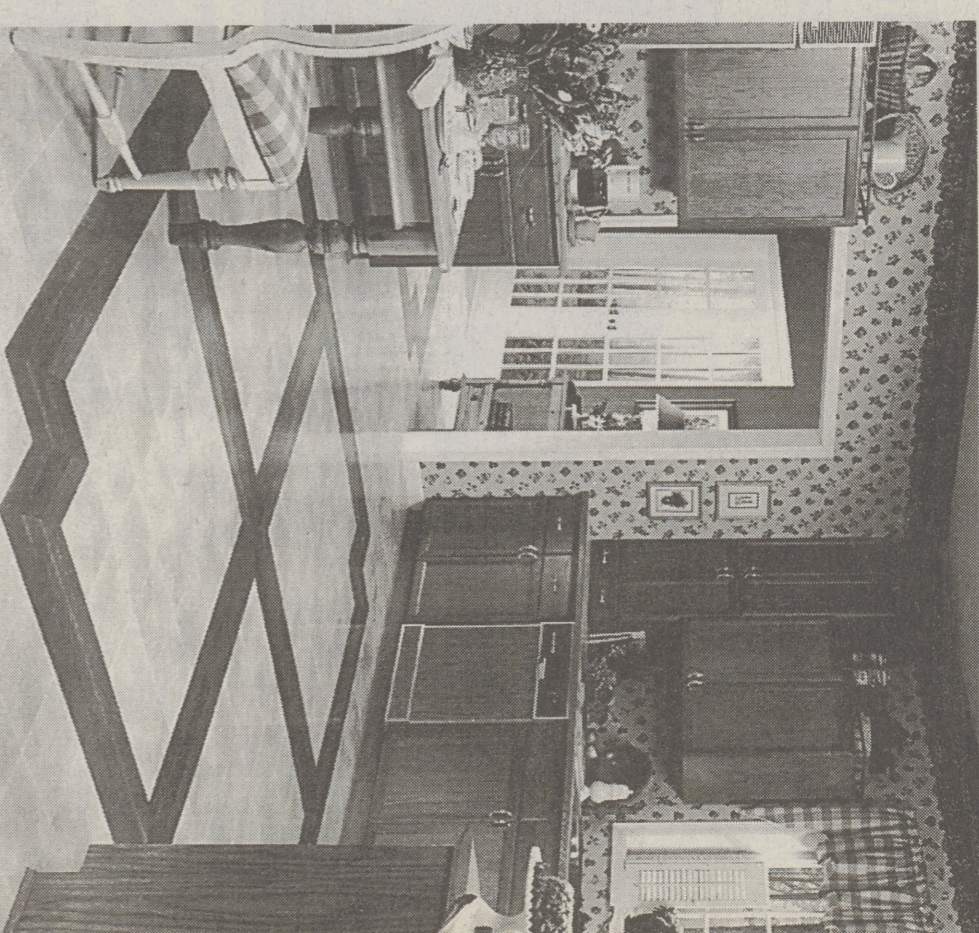
Did you ever walk into a museum and spend more time looking at the floor than at the Monets? A custom flooring installation can be a work of art unto itself that attracts attention and makes you wish you had one at home.

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According to Leonard Ludovico, vice president of product styling and design at Congoleum, a leading resilient flooring manufacturer, customizing with resilient sheet or the flooring creates designs that are oozing with good taste. "Resilient floors replicate natural materials with a stunning realism, allowing for cutting edge, customized designs," he says. "As an added bonus, it has an extraordinary resistance to scuffs, scratches and stains and is easy to install and maintain."

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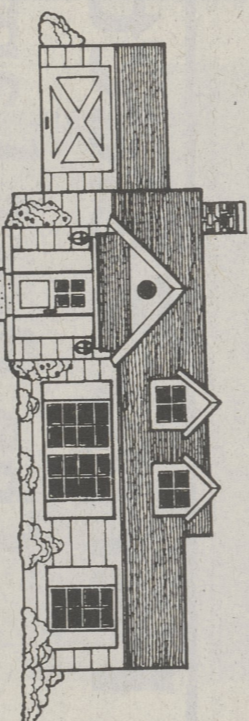
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