WINDOW CONDENSATION IN NEW HOMES: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Fixing Foggy Windows Protects Your Home

The weather is changing, temperatures are dropping, and you suddenly notice that the windows in your new home look foggy. What gives? Windows can develop condensation on the interior or exterior glass surface if the conditions are right. It's important to understand what causes window condensation, how you can prevent it, and what it means for the condition of your home.

What Is Window Condensation, Anyway?

That fog you noticed is condensation, a thin layer of moisture that clings to the glass in your windows and patio doors. It's just like the fog you'd see hovering over the ground outside or the sweat on a cold drink in summertime. It might block your view of your backyard, drip on your floor, or even freeze on the glass. It's an annoyance, but noticing and fixing condensation can protect the rest of your home.
The most important thing to know is that your windows aren't to blame! In fact, condensation is a sign that your windows are properly sealed against the elements.

Why Does Window Condensation Happen in My House?'

Condensation on the inside of your windows is the result of excessive humidity in your home's interior. All air contains moisture, and this moisture increases from activities like cooking, showering, watering plants, doing laundry, and using your furnace. The more moisture there is in the air, the higher your home's humidity will be.

Condensation is what happens when humidity meets a cold surface. Glass surfaces have some of the lowest temperatures of anywhere in your home. When warm, moist air circulating inside your house comes in contact with cool glass, the moisture visibly condenses. A greater difference between the inside and outside temperature makes condensation even more likely, which is why Wisconsin homeowners will notice foggy windows most often during cold winters. Quick temperature changes and the beginning of heating season also contribute to the condensation issue.

For new homeowners, it's important to know that condensation is more likely in new construction homes. That's because the materials used to build your house like lumber, plaster, and cement contain lots of moisture that takes about a year to dissipate. In addition, new homes incorporate energy-efficient materials and practices that are great at keeping cold air out, but also trap humid air inside. Condensation is most common in the first year after a home's construction but can continue after the one-year mark if the home's humidity is not properly controlled.

It's worth noting that "reverse condensation" can also occur when moisture collects on the outside surface of glass windows and doors. This is essentially the same as the dew on your grass. Reverse condensation is harmless and indicates that your windows are properly insulating your home.

How Can I Fix or Prevent Condensation on My Home's Windows?

Condensation on windows and doors is a warning sign that your home's humidity level is too high. Foggy glass might be annoying, but it's less trouble than other issues caused by moisture: peeling paint, rotting wood, mold, mildew, damaged insulation, and more. The EPA recommends an indoor humidity level of 30-50%, but this may still be too high for homes in extremely cold temperatures like the ones we see during Wisconsin's winter months. When you notice condensation, it's time to take action and bring your home's humidity down.

Here are a few easy ways to reduce your home's humidity level:

- Control sources of moisture if possible, like limiting the length of showers.
- Ensure that gas burners, clothes dryers, bathrooms, and other moisture creators vent to your home's exteriors. Turn on exhaust fans during and after cooking and bathing. Make sure attic vents are open and unobstructed.
- If you have a large number of houseplants, try concentrating them in one room and avoid over-watering.
- Run a dehumidifier if necessary, especially in moisture-prone rooms.
- If you have heavy drapes or window shades, try opening them up to allow free airflow.
- Open windows slightly around the house for a few minutes each day. This will allow humid air to escape and fresh, dry air to enter. It may help to open windows wider or longer in rooms that trap humid air, like bathrooms.

At Demlang, we do our part to keep humidity down. Your home is designed with proper ventilation and exhaust systems, as well as a moisture-sealed basement and efficient storm windows.

With these simple steps, your home will be protected from the damaging effects of too much humidity–not just condensation!