

# Keep Your Energy Costs From Going Up! Up! And Away!

BY GARY TALBOTT

**H**ERE WE GO AGAIN! YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING, AND DREADING, GASOLINE prices skyrocketing. However, you may not have realized yet that when gasoline prices go up, home energy costs seem to follow. With a Sacramento summer headed your way, you're going to need more of that expensive energy to keep your home comfortable.

The question is how to deflate the rising energy cost before it can deflate your wallet.

If your home was built before 1990, you can make a significant impact on your heating and cooling costs by simply starting at the top. In other words, start at the ceiling, or if you have one, in the attic.

Attic insulation has been required in homes for many years but the level of resistance-R-value required (the higher the number, the greater the resistance) was always minimum at best. A simple inspection of your current insulation can be quite revealing. If you have an attic space (no vaulted ceilings), there should be an access hole (generally in a closet) that will allow you to check and see how much insulation is already in place. Most Professional Insulation Contractors provide an inspection service for free and will be glad to tell you if the current level of insulation is adequate for controlling the temperature in your home.

Today, the recommended levels of insulation are two to three times what they were in the 1950s. The California Energy Commission recommends an insulation resistance value of R-38 as the most cost effective solution for ceilings in the Central Valley.

Adding additional insulation to existing to reach this level is a common and acceptable practice.

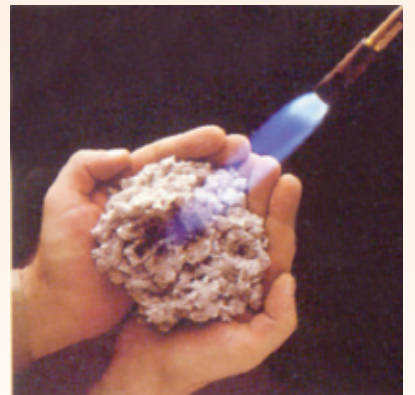
Generally speaking there are two types of insulation – Fiberglass Batt (preformed) and Blown-In. Either type can be added to existing insulation.

Batt style insulation can be a do-it-yourself project, as the product is easy to install, but there are often areas that are virtually impossible to get at, meaning that you may leave gaps and voids in the insulation. These gaps and voids can have a dramatic impact on performance — a 4% void can decrease the insulation's effectiveness by as much as 50% in some cases.



Blown-In insulation is free of the problems of Batt insulation, but should be installed by a licensed Insulation Contractor. It covers all those hard to get areas and leaves no gaps or voids — making it twice as effective even though it carries the same stated R-value. No matter which product you decide to use, you will find that your energy cost will be much lower than that of your neighbor's uninsulated home.

So don't just stand there watching those dollars fly away. Check your attic and save!



For more information, call Gary Talbott at Five Star Performance Insulation, which specializes in High Performance Cellulose Insulation. In the Insulation industry for over 30 years, Gary has appeared on *This Old House* and has been featured in numerous magazines, including "Builder". Gary can be reached at (916) 383-7590. 