

Six Things Dealers Should Tell Builders About Insulation



Properly installed insulation can save a homeowner a bundle on energy bills, keep a house more comfortable, and make the pro who installed it a hero. Improperly installed, however, that same product will do nothing to improve the comfort or energy efficiency of a home-and can create complaints about the material, the installer, and the dealer who sold the insulation.

So the message about the proper use of insulation should come from the dealer.

Here are six things your pro customers should hear from you when they buy insulation for a residential job:

- 1. Most homes don't need more insulation.** Instead, what they already have might need re-installing. Insulation failures typically result either because the installer did not attach the product to a hard surface like wood or drywall, or because properly installed material has fallen or been knocked out of place. Reattaching the insulation to the tops of joists-as well as to the floors, ceilings, and walls that it's meant to protect-could solve homeowner problems ranging from drafts to uneven temperatures to high energy bills.
- 2. Insulation doesn't last forever.** Over time, insulation can settle, disintegrate, and separate, creating gaps that allow heat into the building. An older home that once had four or five inches of attic insulation, for example, might only have one or two left.
- 3. Building codes demand thicker insulation today.** Even if a builder installed the required amount of insulation 10 or 20 years ago, chances are that older home could benefit from an upgrade. Lots of older Sun Belt homes and mid-20th century homes don't have any insulation at all.
- 4. Not every builder installs insulation correctly.** It's worth it for a homeowner-or the pro who's working on the house-to look in the attic for insulation that is stuffed into cavities in a home's framing, hung near an air leak, or simply draped over a rafter. If the product doesn't touch the surface it's meant to protect, it's not performing as it should. Improperly installed insulation will filter the hot air as it comes into the house, but it won't keep it out.
- 5. It's possible to over-insulate an attic.** The greater the R-value, the greater the product's insulating power. Yet there's a point of diminishing returns when installing an R-value that's too high for



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your region of the country; you actually can make an attic hotter. So if the recommended R-value for attic insulation in your region is R-38, installing insulation to achieve R-60 is overkill.

6. Re-attaching or adding insulation could save a homeowner from replacing the HVAC.

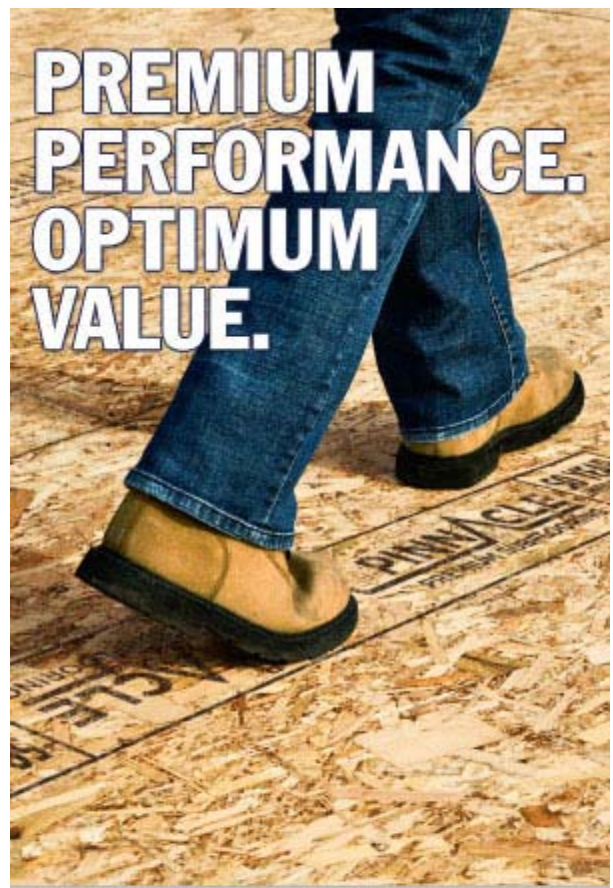
The systems approach to building science has revealed that changing one thing in a house almost always affects another. So the decision to install a higher-efficiency air conditioning unit, better windows, or even solar panels should come after upgrading or reinstalling the insulation. Correcting an insulation failure could make the home so much more comfortable and efficient that those expensive products aren't needed.



Homeowners have lots of choices for insulation, ranging from traditional favorites like cellulose and fiberglass to easy-to-apply spray foam to "green products" made from cotton or without formaldehyde. Yet most homeowners don't have enough product knowledge to make the best selection for their region, roof type, and lifestyle.

The more dealers educate their pro customers about insulation, the better those contractors can help their clients who complain that their houses are too hot or too cold.

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ProSales Business Update Special Reports: an occasional e-mail newsletter with industry insights for America's pro-focused building materials dealers, published by Hanley Wood, LLC. One Thomas Circle NW, Suite 600, Washington DC 20005

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