

Humidity, Condensation, & Your Windows

Clearing the air about window condensation

When cold weather sets in, condensation can appear on the interior side of windows. This condition is the result of high humidity and low temperatures. While it is natural to blame the windows, you shouldn't. Window condensation is simply the result of excess humidity, and the window glass only provides a visible cool surface on which humidity can condense. Regardless of the window manufacturer or whether the window is made of wood, vinyl or aluminum, humidity will condense on any window if conditions are right. The situation is usually temporary and can be handled by making adjustments to reduce interior moisture.

For some lucky building owners, window condensation is just a temporary annoyance. A few weeks after the heating season begins, interior air dries and condensation stops forming on windows. In other buildings, though, condensation continues, becoming a serious problem. Water runs off the windows and damages wood surfaces. Ice may form on windows and frames. Storm windows remained fogged up and icy all winter as water ponds between the frames. This serious condition needs to be addressed before it rots wood, supports mildew growth and damages your building's structure. To solve window condensation problems, you must reduce the invisible moisture in the air of your building and raise the surface temperature of the glass.

Tips to reduce moisture levels in your building

- Open curtains and drapes to increase air circulation around windows.
- Direct warm-air supply ducts toward windows or even use a fan or ceiling fans for increased air circulation.
- Raise the room air temperature by turning up the thermostat.
- If you have a furnace humidifier or other humidifying device in your building, be sure it is adjusted to produce the proper amount of humidity, or turn it off. The humidity produced elsewhere in your building may mean these devices are not needed at this time.



Don't blame the windows

Remember windows aren't the problem. If you have recently replaced your windows and you are now experiencing condensation that did not previously occur, that is because your old drafty windows allowed moisture to escape through inefficient seals and cracks. Windows are just a cool surface delivering the message that excessive moisture is trapped inside a tight building. Your windows tell you when you need to reduce the moisture level in your building. Tighter modern windows do reduce air leaks, which limits ventilation and traps moisture. But tight windows also reduce heating costs and limit air infiltration.