The Extension Connection

By Megan Vig

NDSU Extension Service has many helpful publications on home insulation and maintaining a healthy home. Do you ever notice cold spots in your house? Or areas where condensation builds up? You likely have an insulation issue. To check if you do, contact the Griggs County Extension Office to check out the infrared thermometer. The infrared thermometer is a tool to detect where heat is being lost in the house. With this thermometer, you can measure the difference between interior (both sides are heated) and exterior (one side is indoors and one is outdoors) wall surface temperatures and outside air temperatures. By comparing the difference between wall temperatures with the outside air temperature, you can get an estimate of the insulation value of the surface measured. It is important to check all your rooms of your house. Problem areas in the house include areas where insulation has settled in the corners of walls and ceilings, and around recessed light fixtures and attic access doors in the ceiling. Making sure you have the appropriate amount of insulation provides a comfortable living space and reduces the chance of condensation on cold surfaces. Condensation creates areas of high humidity and these areas can lead to mold growth.

Indoor air quality dictates the health of your home during the winter months. Everyone's health is affected by indoor air quality, especially children and the elderly who are at higher risk of adverse effects. Additionally, they spend most of their time indoors. Exposure to mold can cause respiratory problems and trigger asthma attacks. Exposure to air pollutants, such as carbon monoxide can be life-threatening. Preventing mold and pollutants from occurring in your home is key. However at times, prevention is not achievable and we must rely on diluting these factors from our home through ventilation. Natural air infiltration occurs through doors and windows, providing some air exchange. A heat-recovery ventilator (heat exchanger) is an energy-efficient method of obtaining the recommended air exchange. Also important is the use of exhaust fans in the bathroom and kitchen, venting clothes dryers outdoors, and making sure there is adequate ventilation in the roofs and beneath basements in our homes. With proper ventilation, moisture levels can be controlled to prevent the development of mold, microorganisms, and dust mites. Ventilation also minimizes the risk of carbon monoxide from combustion heating, and radon buildup beneath our basements. By the way, here is a friendly reminder to check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.