

Weatherizing Your Home; Caulking

Warmed air mixes with outside air through gaps in your home's thermal envelope—exterior walls, windows, doors, the roof, and floors. Such air leaks can waste large amounts of energy. Most experts agree that caulking any gaps will pay for itself within one year in energy savings. Caulking can also alleviate drafts and help your home feel warmer when it's cold outside. However, caulking techniques can't replace the need for proper insulation throughout your home.

You can use a caulking compound to seal leaks in a variety of places throughout your home, including around windows and doorframes. Caulk forms a flexible seal for cracks, gaps, or joints less than 1 quarter-inch wide. Most caulking compounds come in disposable cartridges that fit in half-barrel caulking guns (if possible, purchase one with an automatic release to reduce waste and cleaning). When deciding how much caulking to purchase, consider that you'll probably need a half-cartridge per window or door and four cartridges for the foundation sill. Caulking compounds can also be found in aerosol cans, squeeze tubes, and ropes for small jobs or special applications. Water-based caulk can be cleaned with water, while solvent-based compounds require a solvent for cleanup. Caulking compounds also vary in strength, properties and prices.



Applying Caulk

Although not a high-tech operation, caulking can be tricky. Read and follow the instructions on the compound cartridge. And save yourself some trouble by remembering a few important tips:

- Clean all areas to be caulked for good adhesion. Remove any old caulk and paint, using a putty knife or a large screwdriver. Make sure the area is dry so you won't seal in moisture.
- Hold the gun at a consistent angle. Forty-five degrees is best for getting deep into the crack. You know you've got the right angle when the caulk is immediately forced into the crack as it comes out of the tube.
- Caulk in one straight continuous stream, if possible. Avoid stops and starts.
- Send caulk to the bottom of an opening to avoid bubbles.
- Make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of a crack or seam.
- Release the trigger before pulling the gun away to avoid applying too much caulking compound. A caulking gun with an automatic release makes this so much easier.
- If caulk oozes out of a crack, use a putty knife to push it back in.
- Don't skimp. If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to form a smooth bead that will seal the crack completely.

If you would like additional energy savings tips, please see our energy efficiency section at www.vectren.com or contact us by e-mail at marketinginfo@vectren.com.