

COZY HOME CORNER

By the Zerodraft House Doctor

Seal Electrical Receptacles to Stop Drafts!

In our last column, we discussed how and why air travels in a house to create drafts. This time, we'll look at sealing electrical receptacles to improve comfort and save energy in your home.

Almost everyone has experienced the discomfort of a cold draft around the ankles. That chilly air that attacks your toes can make you feel cold all over, and of course, any time you have to turn up the heat in your house to stay warm, you're spending more money on energy too.

Sealing electrical receptacles on both the interior and exterior walls of your house can help reduce drafts and air leakage, as well as the risk of condensation and mould formation within the walls. It also helps to childproof the receptacle by preventing small fingers from poking around inside.

It's a relatively simple project suitable for even a beginner Do-It-Yourselfer. You'll need a flat-head screwdriver, a caulking gun, some paper towels and thin rubber or plastic work gloves. For materials, you'll need energy saver gaskets and childproofing safety inserts. You'll also need clear, low residual odour, paintable caulking like siliconized latex.

Before you start, make sure the power is switched OFF.

Once the power is off, your first step is to remove the cover plate from the receptacle. Apply a thin bead of caulking to the back of the gasket, then stick or embed the gasket on the wall over the receptacle or switch. Make sure that the caulk seals the flanges at the top and bottom of the receptacle, then wipe away any excess caulking with a paper towel and re-install the cover plate. Make sure you save the punch-outs from the gaskets, because you're going to use them later on.

For rectangular shaped switches and receptacles, you'll need to use a switch gasket and cut it to fit using a utility knife. For multiple or over-size switches, you'll need to overlay the gaskets, cut off the excess with your utility knife and seal the join with caulk to make it airtight.

Remember the punch-outs from your energy saving receptacle gaskets? Use these as plug gaskets to cover the ground pin holes in the receptacles by installing them on the prongs of the childproofing safety inserts. They can also be installed directly onto the prongs of any two-pin plugs that are always plugged in.

Once you have your gaskets caulked into place and your punch-outs installed, the last step is to turn the power back on.

This simple, quick and low-cost comfort improvement project can help make your home cozier and safer. It can also help you save money on energy bills and woolen socks.

