

COZY HOME CORNER

By the Zerodraft House Doctor

Stop drafts, keep warm and save money!

Welcome to our new weekly column. Over the next few months the Zerodraft House Doctor will share some great ideas about how to make your home more comfortable and reduce heating bills during our long winter. Many of the measures will be pretty straightforward for DIY types, and for those trickier tasks, you can call or write the author to find out where best to go for help. This week's column takes a look at cold drafts.

They say it's an ill wind that blows no good. But I don't know what's good about the cold draft that runs down my neck while I'm sitting in my friend's rec room lazyboy watching TV. Now I'm not about to blame my friend for his house having a draft, after all, most people have one or two. I'd just like to make sure you, and he, know how easy it is to fix them.

Three things make cold air blow around in a house.

First, warm air rises; that means the space that it leaves below itself can only be filled by air from somewhere else. Think of a chimney and you'll get the idea. If you have air at different temperatures in the house, this effect will cause a continuous circulation of air...otherwise known as a draft.

Second, wind blowing on the outside creates a pressure that tries to suck everything toward the lee or far side of the house. This includes air, which, when it moves, you've got it, is called a draft.

Third, if you have forced air heating or air conditioning, you're blowing it around on purpose. If this air is not as warm as you want it to be it will feel like a cold draft.

To stop all of them you first have to limit the amount of air traveling in and out and around your home. Check and replace if necessary the weatherstripping around the windows and doors. Run a bead of sealant under the windowsills and around the frame. Put gaskets behind electrical outlets. Squirt foam behind the baseboards. You'll also want to check insulation both in your basement, if you have one, and on the floor of your attic. Remember, insulation by itself will not stop drafts, especially if it's glass fiber. If you've got heating ducts in the attic, you'll need to insulate them for sure.

During the next few weeks, we'll be covering each of these comfort improvement ideas in detail and describing the materials you'll need. You can look forward to a more comfortable home plus lower fuel bills.