

9

Draught Proofing Fact Sheet

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Preventing heat losses and gains

A major source of heat loss during winter, and heat gain during summer, is all the little gaps around doors and windows, wall vents and exhaust fans. When you think about it, all those little gaps that you can barely see can add up to one very big gap that is equivalent to having a hole in the wall.

Another major source of heat loss is open fireplaces, whether or not they are in use. Because they are designed to draw hot air out of the house, that is exactly what they do throughout the entire year, including winter when we really want to keep the heated air inside.

Sealing up these “leaks” is the easiest and cheapest thing you can do to make a building more energy efficient and comfortable.

Neighbourhood Houses, like many home-owners and tenants, have tried conventional weather seals. These are quite lightweight and they work well to solve some draughts. They are terrific if you need a quick and inexpensive solution – ideal if you are renting. But they can be tricky if the gaps are very large, if the building moves a lot in response to changing weather conditions, and they are not long lasting.



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Greener Houses have used *Ecomaster* to install 'professional' grade draught stoppers. These products are often not available through hardware stores. The particular types of EcoMaster seals we found to be useful were:

- the u-beaut perimeter door seals for both internal and external doors – these are great because the seal attached to the architrave so that the door closes against the seal like a fridge door seal, and in a way that doesn't make the door hard to close.
- the door bottom seals that lift as the door opens and drop down as it closes. This is good for external doors with big gaps.

There are concerns about fresh air/ventilation if the leaks are all sealed. The Home Tech Manual puts it nicely – draught sealing allows you to “Control ventilation so that it occurs when and where you want it”

For those of our readers who like facts and diagrams, there are some nice ones in the Home Tech Manual (p 89 & p105 of the hard copy [4th edition] Or on-line go to <http://www.yourhome.gov.au/technical/fs45.html#loss>

For high use areas and long lasting solutions, there are a whole range of 'professional' grade products not generally sold in hardware stores. Our local installer of these products is *Ecomaster*, they provide excellent customer service and do a thorough draught-sealing job with top quality products. Their product range is also available to Refit n' Save members at a discounted price for those of you that feel confident with DIY.



Chimneys: unsealed fireplaces can be a source of heat loss. If the fireplace is never used, it needs to be sealed at the top and bottom to prevent heat loss via the flue.

Vents: older homes were vented as they had to provide for un-vented gas heating and kerosene heaters. Now vents are a significant source of drafts in older homes. It is advisable to seal them, unless a specific room has an old gas heater still in use. They can be permanently filled or covered with a sealed board.

Construction joints: All buildings move over time, leading to cracks and gaps between bricks, around windows and doors, plumbing intrusions and along skirting boards and the roof line. When you've done all the big jobs with your draught proofing it is a good idea to scour your home in all these locations and fill small gaps with an expanding foam product. Choose a polyurethane product that reacts with the moisture in the air as these have a more benign eco-footprint than some of the other products on the market. If you are working in an enclosed space, ensure you wear a breathing mask to avoid inhaling any fumes.

More information on draughts and how to stop them can be found at <http://refitnsave.org.au/products/draught-proof>



For more information call The North East Neighbourhood House Network on 9457 7900, or Jika Jika Community Centre 9482 5100

Greener Houses Growing Greener Neighbourhoods is transforming five Neighbourhood Houses into ecolving demonstration centres. It is a unique collaboration involving community volunteers, six Neighbourhood Houses, five local Governments, and tertiary institutions. The project is supported by the Victorian Government Sustainability Fund, managed by Sustainability Victoria and two Charitable Trusts.

