

Proper attic insulation is critical to your home's energy efficiency. A well-insulated attic keeps warm air out during summers and inside during winters.

Fortunately, attics are one of the easiest places in the house to insulate.

There are two types of attic insulation: loose-fill and batt. Costs vary, but loose-fill insulation generally is less expensive to install than batt, and when installed properly, loose-fill insulation also tends to provide better coverage.

If loose-fill insulation is chosen, make sure it is distributed evenly as any gaps will decrease its effectiveness. The goal in Tennessee is to achieve an R-38. This can be reached with loose-fill insulation by applying 12 inches of blown cellulose or 17 inches of blown fiberglass.

If batts are installed, use a utility knife to cut pieces to size and lay them between the joists. If installing R-19 batts, place a second unfaced layer of R-19 batts on top of the first layer at right angles to achieve coverage of the ceiling joists. This will bring the insulation level to R-38.

Prepare Your Attic Beforehand

Before installing any type of attic insulation, do the following.

- ◆ Seal any attic air leaks. Check the spaces around duct exhaust fans, chimneys, interior walls and openings such as dropped ceilings, soffits and bulkheads.

- ◆ To prevent fires, install metal flashing around heat-producing equipment such as flues, chimneys, exhaust fans and light fixtures. If your lighting fixtures are IC – or “insulation-contact” – rated, they can be covered with insulation.
- ◆ To allow for proper ventilation, never cover attic vents, and leave at least 1 inch of airflow between the insulation and the roof. If your home has no attic vents, be sure to add several before installing the insulation.

Federal housing officials recommend one square foot of attic ventilation (both intake and exhaust) for every 300 square feet of attic space. For example, if your attic is 900 square feet, you need a total of 3 square feet of ventilation. This amount is usually evenly divided between intake and exhaust.

Nearly all homeowners can realize great gains in energy efficiency by having a properly insulated attic.

(see illustration on back)

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