



Condensation Advice Notes

Housing Standards receive many complaints about damp and mould growth in rented properties particularly during the colder winter months. It is well known that living in properties that are prone to condensation and mould growth can lead to ill health e.g. asthma, particularly in children under the age of 14. Certain simple steps can be taken to prevent condensation and mould growth in the home. Both the landlords and tenants have a responsibility to ensure that opportunities for condensation are minimised.

Why condensation occurs

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface e.g. a cold single glazed window. The level of condensation is generally dependant upon how moist the air is and how cold the structure is.

In order to prevent condensation there needs to be a good combination of adequate ventilation, adequate heating and good insulation. If a room is damp and cold with inadequate ventilation in all likelihood condensation will occur leading to growth of mould spores.

When condensation occurs

Condensation generally occurs in winter, because the building structure is often cold and because windows are opened less so any moist may become trapped especially if there is no secondary ventilation source.

There are four factors that can minimise opportunities for condensation

These things are particularly important to reduce the possibility of condensation affecting a house:

- To provide adequate controllable and background ventilation to all rooms, so that moist air can escape and to ensure that what is provided is used appropriately by occupants.
- Provide an appropriate means of affordable background heating and also for the occupants to use this properly to heat the house effectively.
- To ensure that the owner/landlord has adequately insulated the property and that the occupants do not interfere with this in any way.
- To ensure sources of moisture production during daily household activities is reduced as far as possible.

This advice contains examples of how to reduce condensation in the home but is by no means exhaustive

Reduce moisture content of room air

- Good ventilation of kitchens and bathrooms is essential. If there is an extractor fan in the kitchen or bathroom, use it where possible, and particularly whenever the windows show any sign of misting. Leave the fan on until misting has cleared.
- In all rooms provide some trickle ventilation. In old houses a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplace flues and draughty windows. In modern flats and houses sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or ventilator is open for a reasonable time each day and for nearly all the time a room is in use.
- Avoid the use of portable paraffin or gas heaters as far as possible. Each litre of fuel used produces the equivalent of about a litre of liquid water in the form of water vapour. If these heaters must be used, make sure the room they are in is well ventilated.
- Landlords should provide suitable and sufficient mechanical extraction to bathrooms and kitchen etc. Ensure that extractors work properly and do not become blocked with dust. The over run should be at least 15 minutes to remove all the moisture. Extractors should ideally be connected to the lighting circuit so they operate when the light comes on.
- Do not permit a property to become overcrowded or over cluttered as the increase of activity and furniture positioned against external walls will reduce air movement and may lead to mould growth

Provide adequate heating

- The space heating provision must be adequate for the size of the property be readily controllable, and occupants should report breakdowns as soon as possible. The heating provision should also be affordable.
- Try to make sure that all rooms are at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms.
- To prevent condensation it is better to have a small amount of heat for a long period than a lot of heat for a short time. Whenever possible, it is best to keep heating on, even if at a low background temperature.

Provide adequate insulation

- Adequately insulate any wall cavities, windows and loft space to improve the thermal performance of the property.
- Occupants must not tamper with this insulation e.g. compressing loft insulation by storing possessions on top of it.