

Myths and Frequently Asked Questions

The following are some of the main myths and frequently asked questions about making homes more energy efficient.

Does cavity wall insulation (CWI) cause dampness? Several decades ago there were some bad cavity wall insulation jobs done by some unqualified and accredited installers and also some poor products were used. Because of these problems in the past, CWI companies now have to meet very strict criteria and also only the most appropriate insulation products are now used. All companies doing CWI provide a 25 year guarantee.

This measure still could indeed cause dampness in a small percentage of walls but the vast majority of cavity walls are suitable. The insulation company always tests walls for suitability for this measure before proceeding and if there could be a problem the work does not proceed.

I don't want to overdo the insulation as the house needs ventilation? Insulation companies take into account ventilation requirements

I had my flat roof replaced recently. Can I assume this is insulated? Unlikely. Building regulations do not yet apply to repairs/replacements and contractors like to offer as cheap a price as possible to get the work.

How can I insulate my non-standard loft? The loft is floored and/or there are rooms in roof. Refer to relevant HOW TO guide on loft insulation for floored lofts. Also seek professional information and advice from DIY stores and commercial suppliers/installers. .

How do I insulate my floor? Refer to relevant HOW TO guide on floor insulation. Also seek professional information and advice from DIY stores and commercial suppliers/installers.

How do I insulate on top of my downlights as these are hot? Refer to HOW TO guide for insulating non standard roofs.

Isn't it more efficient to leave my heating on all the time? Not for radiator systems generally, otherwise nobody would make programmers. Only leave your heating on all the time when/if the weather is extremely cold, but turn it down at night.

But if I switch off my immersion heater the tank just needs heated up again so that's a waste? That's why tanks are insulated. Hot water stays hot in a tank when it is not being heated. It drops slightly in temperature but this would not be noticed. Most people have their water heating on for far longer than required, especially as most modern washing machines and dishwashers are cold fill.

But I like my airing cupboard warm – won't a tank jacket stop it being warm? Even with the best tank jackets airing cupboards are warm enough to air or dry clothes. This is because insulation does not stop heat escaping it just slows it down a lot.

But isn't it good to have a cold bedroom? - Air temperature of 55 °F or below is dangerous for the elderly especially first thing in the morning. This would increase the chances of cold related diseases such as heart and chest problems.

Low energy lights are ugly and take ages to light up. The technology has advanced a lot in recent years and there is a large choice of bulb types. DIY stores and online retailers have a good selection including lights that look like standard bulbs and LED lights which can replace halogen. The lights now light up quicker and they last much longer than standard bulbs.

Isn't there a problem with mercury and low energy lights? Low energy lights do have mercury in them but just small quantities. The generation of electricity produces mercury (in coal fired power stations) and the amount of mercury in a low energy bulb is less than the mercury produced by the electricity which would have been needed had a standard tungsten bulb been used for its lifetime. There are now disposal facilities for spent low energy bulbs which provide safe removal of the mercury.

How do I find an installer for a heating system? CORGI registered installers (now called Gas safe) are guaranteed only to be able to do installations safely. The best approach is word of mouth. Scottish Gas tends to rely on its past reputation and they generally charge more and often sub contract the work. This could mean if there is a problem it could be difficult to get resolved. Some companies also do boiler servicing and are agents for specific brands and types of boilers. Before you ask for

quotes, be clear about what you want so that you have directly comparable quotes. Most heating installers won't offer better heating controls with a boiler upgrade unless specifically asked to include this. Unless this has been done recently it is worth asking for a power flush of the heating system prior to having a new boiler installed. This improves efficiency by removing sediment etc in the pipes.