

ID'ing top performers in radiant barrier insulation

RADIANT BARRIER insulation can save homeowners big money—if they choose the best products for the right job.

Although installing radiant barriers in attics can lower utility bills by as much as 17%, not all products are cost effective or suited for such applications. Some use non-code materials, according to Luke Rogers, technical director for Innovative Insulation, Arlington, Tx.

“Product safety testing standards used by ASTM International, a global standards development organization, should guide consumer buying decisions,” Rogers advises.

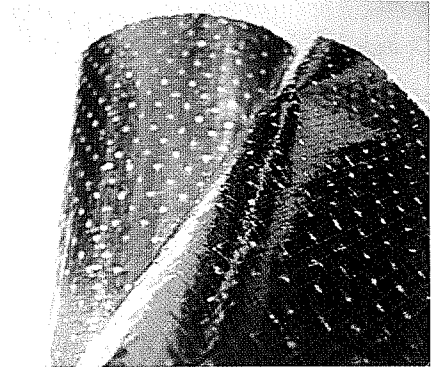
But first, buyers and sellers must become familiar with how different types of insulation work. Products such as batts, foam and blown-in fiberglass absorb heat, while radiant barrier materials reflect it. Heat-absorbing products typically are thick,

while reflective products are paper-thin.

Innovative Insulation offers a five-point checklist to help dealers steer consumers to top-performing products:

1. Know the Fire Rating. Rogers says that, for the best performance, look for products certified to ATSM Standards E84 and E2599. No radiant barrier product with aluminum foil on both sides passed these ASTM fire spreading tests, while metalized plastic film products did.

2. Not All Perforations Are Created Equal. Radiant barriers must be able to “breathe” to let moisture pass through. Not all products do this well. Rogers suggests looking for products certified to ASTM C1313, which requires a minimum rating of 5 perms for any material intended to



transmit moisture.

3. Provide Fact Sheets. Some companies sell products not made to ASTM standards, and which are not safety tested. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission requires anyone selling insulation products to the public to provide fact sheets that spell out insulation values.

4. Reflective Insulation Is Not for Attics. Reflective insulation has a thin layer—about a quarter of an inch—of foam, bubble-pack, or fiberglass sandwiched between two layers of reflective material. It is for applications such as walls, floors and basements where some R-value is needed, but space is limited. It is more expensive than radiant barrier film and adds less R-value than additional blown-in or foam insulation would provide.

5. Paint Does Not Meet the Definition. Radiant barrier materials, as defined by ASTM, must be at least 90% reflective. The Reflective Insulation Manufacturers Association says the reflectivity of “radiant barrier paints” ranges from 10% to 75%. Rogers advises to look for Energy Star insulation labels on radiant products—you won’t find them on paint.

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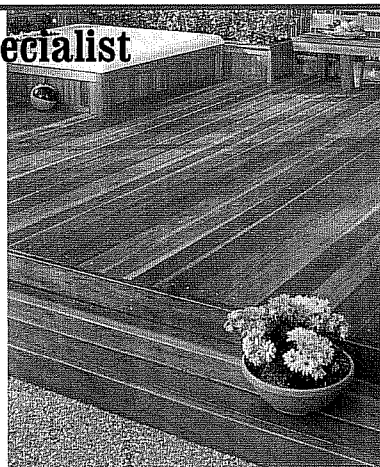
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