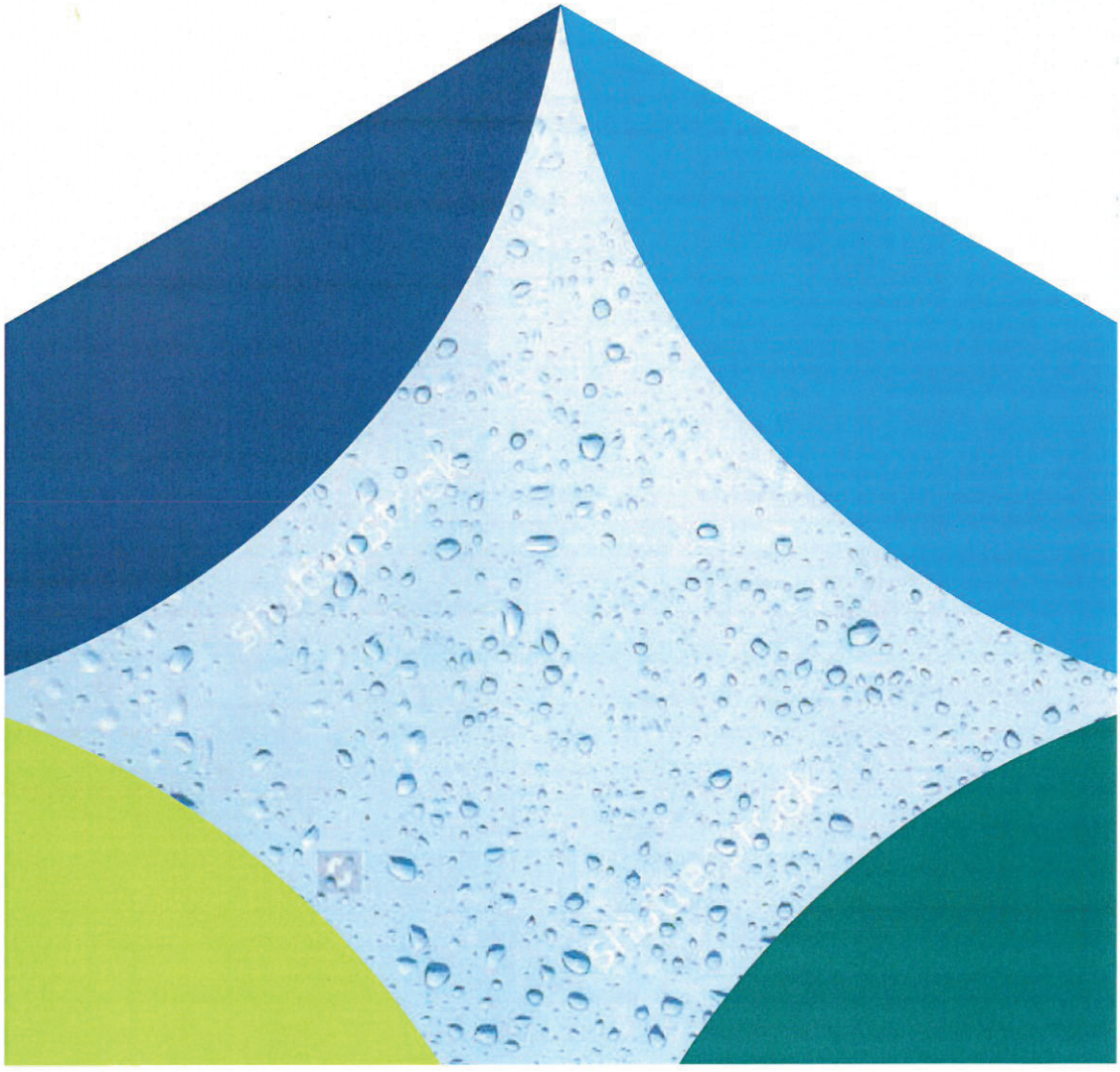
NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures

Condensation

A brief guide for occupiers / tenants



What is condensation?

One of the most common causes of dampness in buildings is condensation. Moisture is always present in the air, even if it cannot be seen.

Warm air holds more moisture than cold air, and when air is cooled it holds less moisture. If cooled far enough the air releases excess moisture and droplets of water are formed on surfaces. This is known as condensation.

Examples of this are when you see your breath in cold weather, or when both the mirrors and the cold tap steam up in a bathroom.

In your home, condensation is often seen on windows, which is usually more noticeable on cold mornings, on external walls or in places where air movement is restricted. This can include corners of rooms, behind items of furniture placed against walls and even in wardrobes.

Its presence is often first indicated by the development of mould growth on walls and ceilings, and sometimes it can even appear on furniture, clothes and on other fabrics. This mould growth could also lead to the rotting of affected timbers such as wooden window frames.

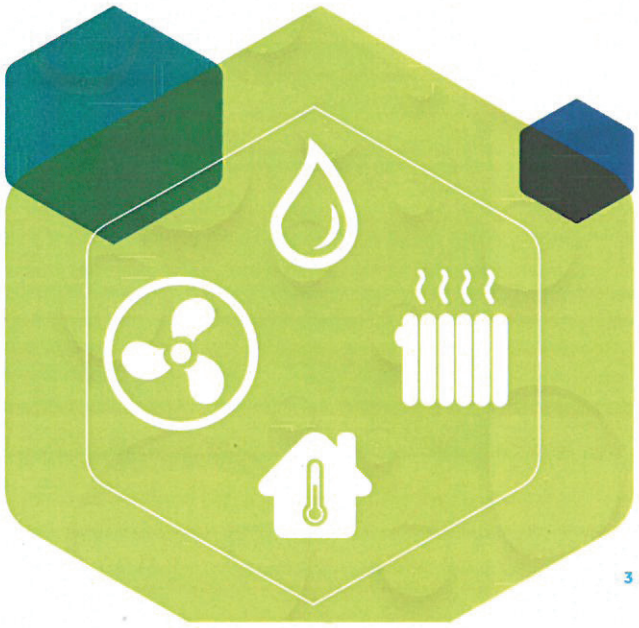
Condensation usually occurs during the colder, winter months and October - April is generally acknowledged as 'Condensation Season.'

Typical causes of condensation

In your home, condensation can be related to modern living standards, economic pressure and change in building design.

The following are the major factors that contribute to condensation:

- **Generation of too much water**
- **Lack of ventilation**
- **Inadequate heating**
- **Poor insulation**



How to avoid condensation

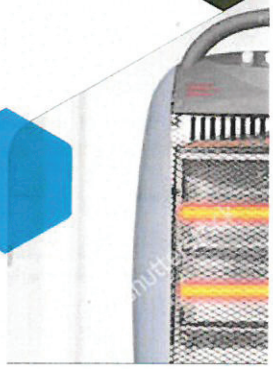
Reduce the amount of water being produced

Cooking
- Cover pans
- Don't leave kettles boiling
- Keep kitchen doors closed and open windows instead
- Use an extractor fan if fitted

Bathing
- Keep bathroom doors closed and open the windows instead
- When filling the bath, run the cold water first and then add hot water, this will greatly reduce the amount of steam
- Use an extractor fan if fitted

Washing / drying
- Dry washing outside if possible
- If drying washing inside, then do so in a closed, heated and well ventilated room
- If a tumble dryer is used it must be ventilated directly to the outside air
- Remember, placing damp clothes on or near a radiator will dry them but will release the moisture straight into your room

Portable fuel-less heaters
- These produce a lot of moisture - approximately every litre of fuel produced a litre of moisture
- These heaters are not recommended, but if you do use one make sure you do so in a closed, heated and well ventilated room



Provide adequate ventilation

- In your home some ventilation is required all of the time. This can help reduce condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air. This can be achieved by the following:
- Keep trickle vents in window frames open.
- Open windows, even if only slightly and on the security setting.
- Ideally, cross ventilate by opening a window upstairs and downstairs, and on opposite sides of the property. At the same time open interior doors to allow air to circulate.
- Open windows wider during cooking, washing, drying clothes, bathing etc.
- Use extractor fans if fitted.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes, this can be done by providing breather holes in false backs.
- Do not overfill cupboards and wardrobes, and use slatted shelves if possible.
- Leave sufficient space to allow air circulation between furniture and walls.
- Place furniture on blocks / feet to allow air to circulate beneath.
- Avoid standing furniture against external walls.

Note: make sure that opening windows will not cause a security risk. Remember to close and lock them when you leave the property.

Provide adequate heating

- The best way to heat your home effectively is to have more constant but low background heat. This will enable, both the air and the building fabric to be warmed, therefore creating warmer surfaces.
- Eliminate cold spots
- Insulation will reduce heating costs and help to prevent condensation by eliminating cold spots.
- Double glazed windows will reduce heat loss, but you must ensure there is sufficient ventilation (i.e. keep trickle vents open).
- Where draught proofing is to be installed, please observe the following:
- Do not draught proof rooms with a condensation problem, or where there is a heater or cooker than burns gas or solid fuel.
- Do not block or close permanent vents or air-bricks, particularly those installed for heating appliances.
- Do not draught proof bathroom, shower room or kitchen windows.

Treating mould in your home

The development of mould in affected areas is often the first indication of condensation.

What should I do if I find mould in my home?

- Do not brush or vacuum the mould as this can release spores into the air
- Remove non wipe-able / washable coatings and loose material
- Repair any surface defects
- Wash down with an appropriate fungicidal solution. Then apply a second fungicidal wash, cleaning the affected areas and allow to dry.
- Redecorate using an appropriate fungicidal paint

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