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Controlling Humidity and Condensation

Modern construction methods have resulted in tighter, more energy-efficient homes that require planning for the control of humidity and condensation. Because a Superior Walls wall panel is constructed with a high-performance concrete mix and lined with closed-cell foam insulation, it prevents the free flow of moisture through the wall panel. Though this is a good thing when seeking to keep ground water out of your basement, it also acts to keep moisture vapor inside the house.

In certain conditions of high interior humidity and low exterior temperatures, it is possible that condensation may form on the interior surface of the Superior Walls panel. Condensation can occur anytime moist air contacts a surface that has a temperature less than the dew-point of the air.

Condensation may be controlled in a number of ways:

1. By reducing the amount of moisture in the air:
 - a. Limit moisture-producing sources or activities like non-vented clothes dryers or hot-tubs.
 - b. Use a dehumidifier.
2. By preventing the moisture from reaching the cold wall surface:
 - a. Remove the moist air with an exhaust fan or other ventilation.
3. By increasing the temperature of the room:
 - a. Add heat and the air will hold more moisture.
 - b. Increase the room temperature and you will also increase the temperature of the wall surface.

For additional technical information, please see the Technical Resources section of our website:
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It is usually most effective to use more than one of these methods in order to effectively control condensation.

“Original Equipment” Foam Insulation

Superior Walls products are tested to the UL1715 fire test standard and comply with the requirements of the 2018 International Residential Code - Section R316 (Foam Plastic). No additional thermal barrier is required UNLESS additional foam insulation has been added after the panel was manufactured.

Exterior Maintenance

- **Grade** – Slope the ground away from the home a minimum of 6 inches within the first 10 feet from the wall (additional slope may be required by your local building code). Re-grade if soil settles over time.
- **Gutters and Downspouts** - Keep gutters and downspouts free of leaves and debris. Splash blocks or down spout extensions should be used to divert water away from the foundation.
- **Shrinkage Cracks** - Shrinkage cracks are fairly common in concrete products. Shrinkage cracks pose no threat of structural damage or potential for leakage. This type of crack typically occurs during the curing process, is generally less than 1/16" in width, and is limited to the surface of the wall. This type of crack does not need any type of repair. However, if desired, cosmetic treatments may be performed using a stucco type material or masonry paint.
- **Sealant** - Sealant below the ground level that is not exposed to UV light will not require maintenance. Sealant in panel joints exposed to UV light above the level of the ground may experience surface discoloration or cracking. If UV damage has occurred, joints can be resealed with a quality one-part polyurethane masonry sealant.

Interior Finishing of Superior Walls Panels

- **Corner Studs and Blocking** – Always use preservative-treated lumber for corner studs and nailers placed against the concrete. For areas where there will be objects fastened to the finished walls between existing studs, install appropri-

ate wood blocking. (i.e. For curtain rods, cabinets, doorstops, or electrical and plumbing fixture locations.)

- **Wiring and Plumbing** – Using the pre-cast holes in the studs, install all electrical wiring and small plumbing lines according to local codes. Holes may be drilled through the top bond beam for wiring and plumbing drops.
- **Drywall and Interior Finishes** – After the corner studs and all blocking are in place, the Superior Walls panels are ready for drywall. A minimum ½" drywall is recommended to span the stud spacing. It is best to leave a ½" gap between the concrete floor and the bottom of the drywall to prevent moisture absorption into the drywall. This moisture can cause drywall deterioration and paint finish problems. Attach the drywall using 1" drywall screws (fine thread / sharp point). A solid bead of construction adhesive should be applied to the top bond beam and the face of the stud. The use of paneling or other similar products should still be backed with a layer of drywall.
- **Exterior Holes in Superior Walls Panels** – Any exterior holes that may be required for such things as sanitary soil lines, electrical service entrance cables, or chimney flues, should be made between the studs following these simple procedures:
 1. Mark-out the location and size of the hole required.
 2. Use a masonry hole saw or a hammer drill with a small bit (to drill a series of holes around the perimeter of the hole). With a hammer and chisel start to work the area inside the small holes until the hole is the required size and shape.
 3. After the pipe is installed, completely seal the entire area around it with a flexible sealant to prevent water penetration. A one part urethane or polyurethane sealant, available from your local hardware store, is recommended. (Do not use Acyotoxy-cure silicones.)

Adding Insulation to a Superior Walls Panel

There are two insulation methods that will consistently yield satisfactory results and prohibit condensation from forming within the wall cavity:

- Spray-on 2-part polyurethane foam. This is a closed cell material and completely closes off the cavity from moisture penetration. It can be obtained both professionally and as a DIY kit. Several DIY kits are available on the internet. Foam can be sprayed to the required thickness to achieve the desired R-value.
- Add extruded/expanded polystyrene foam board between the studs, and seal between the foam board and studs with a canned polyurethane foam (like GREAT STUFF™ foam sealant). The polystyrene foam board is closed cell; moisture cannot pass through, and when used in conjunction with the canned foam, completely closes off the cavity from moisture penetration. Foam board is readily available for the DIY market, as is the canned polyurethane foam.

Generally speaking, after adding any type of exposed foam insulation to the interior of a wall assembly, the building code requires that you cover the insulation with a thermal barrier to protect the insulation from fire - see your local building code for details.

When adding other types of insulation to a Superior Walls wall panel, it is important to consider two factors to ensure that water vapor does not condense within the wall cavity:

1. Controlling the moisture content of the air trapped in the cavity while adding the insulation. (Use of a dehumidifier is recommended.)
2. Restricting moisture-laden air from entering the cavity from the living space or from the earth beneath the wall. (This may be accomplished through the use of paints, sealants, and spray foams. Daylight drains require a backwater valve on the drain line to prevent a back-flow of moist air.)

The essential issue is that you must stop moisture from entering the stud cavity.

- Fiberglass batt, cellulose, Icynene®, or other materials may perform satisfactorily if the considerations noted above are properly dealt with.

NOTE: This information is general in nature and may not be applicable in every situation. Your design professional (i.e. builder, architect, engineer, or supplier) can assist you in special conditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance concerning your particular application.

Still have questions? Contact your Superior Walls representative for answers to your questions. Find your local representative at www.superiorwalls.com using the "Find Your Authorized Dealer" link. For more technical information and details, see the Technical Resources section of our website at www.superiorwalls.com/tech_resources.