CHANNELS
Business
Design/Architecture
Product Information
How-To
Sponsors & Web sites
Conferences/Contests/ Trade Shows

GREATEST HITS
2000-2001 Cost Vs. Value Report
Find-A-Pro
Guide to Building Products
HomeTech
residential architect
Spotlight Collection
Tools of the Trade Buyer's Guide
Virtual Remodeling Tour

CBUILD SITES
BUILDER Online
TOOLS OF THE TRADE Online
OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL Online
WORLD OF CONCRETE Online
eplans.com
cbuild.com
Advertising Info

TODAY'S HOT LIST
A Message from REMODELING's Paul Deffenbaugh
ihousing Conference, June 12-13, 2001
ihousing Weekly Newsletter

Home / VR Tours

Remodeling

REMODELING

Remodeling How-To's

The Ways of Weather Stripping

Carpenter Jesse Amar installs a bottom sweep that hides in a channel to seal a major weather gap. This weather strip is almost invisible on old-house doors.

Weather stripping exterior doors and windows may not sound like the most dramatic old-house improvement you'll ever tackle, but it could be the best way to reduce fuel costs, both heating and cooling, and increase comfort. The scores of weather strip types and designs all have the same job: to seal slight gaps where rain, snow, and air infiltrate.

However, many are made for today's close-tolerance factory-fitted assemblies. They can't fill the needs of doors and windows that have settled, shrunk, and worn a bit with time, or were hung on-site by carpenters decades ago. Here we'll run down a few of the materials and methods best adapted to retrofitting old houses and tightening up traditional drafts.

Weather Stripping Doors

If your doors have any original weather stripping, it is likely to be spring or V-bronze. Since this material has been in production for decades and lasts for years, it is still ideal for old houses. Self-adhesive rolls of foam or plastic are inexpensive and easy to use, but not particularly durable or historic.

Nail-on strips such as felt must be installed along the jamb and against the perimeter of the door, detracting from its beauty. However, weather strips that combine a seal (often a rubber bulb or foam gasket) and wooden stop moulding often work well on old houses because they incorporate modern technology with traditional millwork.

Before conducting a thorough weather stripping campaign, take the opportunity to repair any major door, window, or trim defects. Weather strips alone aren't intended to rectify cracks more than 1/8" wide. Each type and manufacturer of weather strip has its own recommendations, but some general practices add to any installation.

You can make a stop and seal combination by kerfing stop moulding, then adding a barbed seal. Install so the seal is compressed 20% to 30%.

Metal weather strips are attached to the jamb with nails. Typically, spring bronze is installed with the nailing edge facing away from the door stop; with V-bronze, the nailing strip runs next to the stop. Measure from the threshold to the upper corner where the jamb meets the head. This will be the length of both side runs.

Cut the strips to length and nail them in place every 8" or so. Most metal strips require cutting the flanges at 45 degrees in the corners at the top of the door. The other details to finesse are joints where metal meets the threshold (you can buy pads manufactured for this purpose) and door latchplates in the jamb (see Bronze Basics).

Rubber bulbs and seals are effective for sash window bottoms, but may require power tools to cut the kerf that holds the barbed flange.

Stop and seal combinations are lengths of metal or wood moulding fitted with a weather strip designed for attachment to a door jamb in place (or on top) of the existing stop moulding. Wood versions look best on old houses, and can be purchased as stock units or custom made using kerf-in seals. Either way, make sure you select a product of sufficient size and resilience to create an effective, year-round seal on your door.

Typically these weather strips are installed similar to standard door (or window) stops, mitering at corners and scribing at the threshold according to the existing trim. A good way to position the seal is to: **1)** close the door tightly against the bolt, **2)** mark the jamb with the width of stop and seal, measuring back from door; **3)** position the stop just inside this line. This procedure will yield a better seal than just squashing the stop into the door. If you install with screws, your stop will be adjustable.

Weather Stripping Windows

Windows can be weather stripped with many of the same products used for doors. Spring bronze is still one of the best strips for retrofitting double-hung sash windows.

It can be installed without disassembling the sash, and it's hidden when the window is closed. Nail-on foam and felt types will work on double-hung windows but, since the strips must be applied where sash and trim meet, they are obvious.

To install spring metal strips, first make sure both sashes move to their open positions. Should the sash be painted shut, try scoring the joint with a knife. Then, with the touch of a heart surgeon, nudge the sash around its edges with a thin prybar. If the sash doesn't pop open, it's time to break out a heat gun.

Carefully soften the paint by aiming the heat where the sash meets the window frame or stop, well away from the glass. Use a putty knife to scrape away paint build-up. Once the window is open, use the same tools to remove all excess paint from sash.

With both sashes moving normally, leave the upper sash fully closed and open the bottom sash halfway. Measure up the sash channel, from its bottom to the top of the lower rail of the upper sash, and cut two strips this length, using tin snips. Now open the bottom sash all the way, and insert one end of a strip into the sash channel, between the window frame and lower sash, with the nailing edge snugly along the inside edge of the sash channel.

Tack the strip along this edge, nailing every 3". Then pry out the free side of the metal strip a bit so it springs nicely against the edge of the sash. Repeat for the other side. Install strips on the upper sash in this same fashion. However, carefully maneuver the strip into place around sash cords, and trim the metal where it passes the sash cord pulleys.

To install top and bottom strips, simply measure these horizontal lengths, cut strips to size, and nail them in place with the nailing edge facing the room.

Finally, with the upper sash lowered and the lower sash raised above it, cut a third horizontal strip and nail it in place along the outside face of the lower sash meeting rail. Orient this strip with the nailing edge down so that it pulls against its mate and is hidden from inside view when the window is open. This process is simple. In fact, installing weather strips takes less time than getting an old window open in the first place.

If your old house has wooden casement windows, use spring bronze weather stripping and install much like you would a door. Assuming the window opens outward, orient the nailing edge of the strip toward the outer edge, so the window pulls snugly into the spring. If your casement windows are steel, look into vinyl gasket strips made with a groove that allows them to slip over the frame edge. Corners are cut with a razor knife and secured with adhesive. When the window closes, it pulls into this strip, creating a good seal.

< Previous Page Next Page >