



ASK MARIA

By Maria Bartolotti

CONDO CONDENSATION

How to deal with condensation in your townhome

Q: Maria, I live in a Bare-land Condominium just west of the City and believe I may have an issue with condensation in my attic. Do you have any helpful tips that I can use to combat this concern?

A: It's no secret that Calgary is experiencing extreme weather instability, some say, more so this year than we've had in the last two. Brrrrrr, is all I have to say!

With the fluctuation between -25 in the weather and the sudden drop to -7 it's no wonder that we're seeing more calls about water dripping from the bathroom fans or signs of stained ceilings or water streaming from windows are often indications of excessive water vapour in the air.

This is most likely caused by condensation inside the duct. In the winter, the warm moist air from the bathroom hits cool air in the attic or outside and it condenses, sending drips back down the ductwork. This can also be seen during the summer time when the air is saturated with humidity; the excess amount of humidity will start to condensate (i.e., transforms itself back into water). This can create numerous problems inside your unit if not properly addressed.

So, what to do, well, I spoke with **Tyrone Mellon**, from Mellon Real Estate Inspections. Tyrone and his company come across

this very issue all the time. Here's what Tyrone has to say:

"It's important to increase the flow of air inside your unit to supply fresh air, which is necessary to vent off water vapour. Here are a few helpful tips to help you address some of the basic concerns with condensation."

VENTILATION SYSTEM

"First and foremost-check the attic inside your unit and ensure you have an adequate and a properly installed ventilation system. This is essential to allow the moisture to escape from the property before it turns into condensation. Once a year it's of value to peak into the attic to see what's going on, simple checks with a flashlight looking to see that the Bathroom exhaust vent hoses are still attached to the underside of the roof sheathing.



WINDOWS

It's important to periodically open your windows to allow fresh air to enter your unit. Not only, is it healthy for you; it's the most efficient way to solve your moisture problem. Of course we DO NOT recommend leaving windows open during a cold snap or over night during the winter season, as it can cause an array of problems.

INSULATION

Tyrone says, is it important to ensure that you have proper insulation around the ventilation pipes and attic inside your unit.

"Depending on the year of construction, the attic will have different levels and types of insulation. Insulation will compress over time, with older properties 6 inches of insulation would be deemed a minimum level. Brand new homes today require R-50 levels for insulation in the attic space this would be equivalent to approximately 18 inches of loose fill fiberglass."

EXHAUST FANS

Yes, this can be a pain when you have to remember to turn them on; but, very important to use them when you are taking a shower, bath or cooking. The use of fans helps remove moisture from the air. Run the fan for 15-20 minutes is sufficient after your shower, bathe or cook. A simple recommendation: install a timer switch for the bathroom fan versus a manual on/off switch. The key is to remember to use them, I cannot stress how important it is to run the fan or keep the timer on for at least 15 minutes after you have finished using the bathroom, cooking or laundry to properly expel the humidity from these areas.

Until next time... **CL**

This article was shortened for space considerations, for the full text, visit www.calgaryhomeliving.com

Editor's note: Maria Bartolotti is a board member of the Canadian Condominium Institute - Southern Alberta chapter (CCI-SA). CCI represents all participants in the condominium community.