



# better humidity control = greater year-round comfort

Humidity in the home is often unnoticed, until it becomes too high or too low.

While these extreme conditions tend to occur at the height of summer and in the depth of winter, humidity control can be a year-round challenge in homes without an adequate system to maintain consistent humidity levels. The result can cause personal discomfort and even illness, as well as damage to home furnishings. When ignored for too long, humidity can eventually result in the deterioration of a building's structure. Fortunately, there are simple ways to monitor and correct humidity imbalances and prevent the effects of humidity from damaging your home.

## **understanding humidity**

Most of us know that humidity is the presence of moisture in the air. We require humidity to be comfortable in our homes, but too much can cause problems. Moisture in the form of steam from cooking, cleaning, laundering, bathing, showering and even our own body perspiration can contribute to dampness in the home. Excessive dampness is most common during wet or wintry weather, when air circulation is reduced due to closed doors and windows. The resulting high humidity can create ideal conditions for mold, mildew, fungi and dust mites, which are unpleasant for most of us but extremely difficult for those inflicted with asthma or related allergies. In addition, household humidity can also cause drywall to soften and crumble, and fabrics and wood to rot.

On the other hand, too little humidity can cause dry skin, chapped lips, sore breathing passages, and static electricity "sparks", all of which are most common during the winter when cold dry winds blow, and furnaces, fireplaces and heaters rob the air of its available moisture. The solution, of course, is to find the right balance of humidity. Yet, surprisingly few people know how much humidity is too much, or how much is too little.

## **what happens when humidity is out of control?**

Kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms tend to be sources of extremely high humidity levels, due to the frequent and confined use of moisture. Even if these rooms are finished with tile or waterproof panels to withstand heavy moisture for a short period of time, such concentrations of moisture are too high for comfort and healthy living. That's why it is essential that exhaust fans are used to expel the air, even on a cold winter day. Otherwise, mold is sure to form on windows, between tiles and under sinks, causing untold damage to materials and immeasurable discomfort to people.

## **humidity solutions for year round comfort**

Unless you live in an arid or cool weather climate, you are likely to encounter extreme humidity at some point over the summer. Air conditioning (AC) is the popular choice for relief, because AC works by removing humidity from the air, in order to make a room or home more comfortable. Just as higher humidity allows for greater comfort under slightly lower thermostat settings in the winter, lower humidity allows for greater comfort under slightly higher temperatures in the summer. Using this information, you can rely less on your furnace or AC unit and more on humidity control to improve comfort and save energy.

The good thing about relative humidity is that it can be managed and is an essential part of healthy and comfortable living, as well as a basic part of home maintenance procedures needed to protect your possessions. If you believe you may have humidity problems in your home, you should look into ways to identify and alleviate the situation before it worsens. Often a mere adjustment of equipment or a slight change in habits can make your home considerably more comfortable.