

Wind chill or sun factor

Even though on average February is our coldest month, January usually delivers the coldest spell.

It's very common during January for us to get a call from a customer, telling us that their stove or fireplace was working perfectly up until now, but lately it just doesn't seem to throw heat. This is very scientifically simple to figure out. With an outside temperature of 20C/68F, no heating is required. Even at 15C/59F on a sunny day no heat is required. Drop the temp down to 0C/32F and we need heat. But if it dips to -15c/5F it takes twice as much fuel to heat your home.

For homes that are heated with oil, gas/LP, or electric, equipped with a thermostat, you won't notice much difference other than a bigger bill next month. For those that burn wood, there is a huge difference, because you are tied closer to the process. Feeding twice the normal amount of wood into the stove is noticeable. Because we generally size woodstoves for the average winter temperatures they may lack a bit during very cold weather. Having said all this, why do people continue to do this?

Light jacket

Enter the topic of radiance. Let's say that during the summer you set the air conditioning at 20C/68F and you feel perfectly comfortable. But in the dead of winter, that same temperature may feel quite cool and you may need a sweater or light jacket. The reason for this is that even though the air temperature in the house is the same, the outer walls and windows are actually radiating cold and we need to bump the thermostat up a couple of degrees to compensate.

Electric blanket

Not to sound chauvinistic, but if you are a man, your wife will likely never agree on this subject no mater how you broach it. And since I don't have to live with her you can blame it on me. This reminds me of our first house that actually had no heat in the master bedroom. My wife would turn on an electric blanket and wear flannel PJs and I was warm enough no problem. But, by morning I had the covers snugged up around my neck and she had them thrown off with her leg on top. At some moment during the night we must have been compatible. I guess

BY
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Rooftops

that's how we ended up with 4 children. Since she normally doesn't read this, I likely will still be married next month.

Where was I? Oh ya, radiance, that's why people love wood heating, it's the radiant heat, heats like the sun. Just the same way that you feel nice, just wearing a golf shirt on a sunny day when it's only 15C/59F outside, you could have a room quite cool but still feel comfortable if it was heated by a woodstove.

I find it quite intriguing, that the weather forecasters factor in a wind chill but never talk about the "Sun Factor". It just seems pessimistic rather than optimistic to me.



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