



Keep your indoor air warm and moist this winter

BY ROY GREEN

When winter arrives, many Ontarians prefer to take their lead from bears and other hibernating animals, opting for indoor pursuits and leaving the snow and ice for the winter sports enthusiasts.

But cold outdoor air can sometimes lead to low humidity in our homes, producing the dry upper airway passages, runny nose, congestion, and the electric 'shocks' we feel when walking across the carpet.

Winter doesn't have to mean uncomfortable indoor air that can leave you feeling dry, itchy and congested. Installing a humidifier on your duct system is an easy way to help counteract the effects of dry, harsh air by adding essential moisture to any room.

Without proper moisture levels, hardwood floors could shrink or crack and humidified air also gives an increased feeling of warmth at lower ambient temperatures.

Central or 'whole-home' humidifiers are integrated into the forced-air heating system and water used by the device is pumped from the household plumbing, unlike portable humidifiers, which require the user to periodically supply water to the device.

Unfortunately, there are still many older

homes with drum-type humidifiers tacked onto the furnace, with a rotating drum picking up water.

"There are still lots of them around and with some of them, the mechanism has failed, but they still have water in them," said Chris Cumming of Cumming Home Heating & Cooling in Aurora. "If you have one, you should be very cautious about maintenance and you might want to put anti-microbial drops in the water."

With drum humidifiers, the filter pad inevitably loses its evaporative efficiency, especially in the presence of hard water minerals and the water can stagnate, creating a breeding ground for mould, bacteria and other contaminants which are then blown into your duct system.

The most common form of humidifier is a flow-through model that uses a solenoid valve to control water flow over a media pad/filter and automatically feeds fresh water into the system as needed.

"There are models that cycle on and with the heat and others that work independently of the furnace and come on when they sense moisture is required," said Hossein Forouzan of Aire One North in Newmarket. "There are also models that recycle the water."

But be cautious – while humidifiers are useful, they can actually make you sick if they aren't maintained properly or if humidity levels rise too high.

"If the filter pad becomes clogged with scale and mineral deposits, it will restrict the

airflow through the pad," said Arnold Perea of Best Climate Heating & Air Conditioning in Aurora. "The filter should be cleaned at least once per season. You should also make sure the drain hasn't become plugged up."



Whole home humidifiers help you cope with dry winter air.

"I don't need a bag that lasts 1,000 years."

York Region is asking residents to make the switch from plastic bags to compostable bags to line the Green Bin or kitchen container.

It is part of a phased approach to move towards a more sustainable, environmentally-friendly process.

As we continue this mandatory program over the next year, Green Bin waste will not be left behind. Program participation will be reviewed throughout the year. Enforcement needs, if any, will be determined at a later date.

Residents are encouraged to use compostable bags to reduce the amount of plastic sent to landfill. Plastic bag liners are removed from the final composted product and sent for disposal. In contrast, compostable bags are made of plant-based materials that break down naturally into compost.

Compostable bags are available at most grocery and hardware stores throughout York Region. Many different brands are available. Be sure to look for certified compostable bags with this logo:



Make the switch to certified compostable or paper bags in your Green Bin.

For more information, please visit www.york.ca/waste or call 1-866-665-6752

