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TECHNICAL BULLETIN
LOCATING AND INSTALLING
THE VAPOR RETARDER
IN A STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION:

This discussion relates only to those instances in which a vapor retarder is being installed separately from thermal insulation on site. It does not address vapor retarders that are part of a composite insulation product. Consult with the insulation manufacturer for proper usage and installation of insulation products.

LOCATING THE VAPOR RETARDER:

The vapor retarder must always be placed toward the side of the insulation which will be the predominantly higher vapor pressure side over the course of the year. As such, in predominantly heating northern climates, it is installed facing the conditioned area. In predominantly cooling southern climates, it is installed facing the outside of the structure. In regions that present a fairly equal mix of heating and cooling during the year, the vapor retarder is typically installed facing the conditioned area.

See our technical bulletin for further discussion of moisture vapor transfer and control. The ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air conditioning Engineers) Volume of Fundamentals may offer further assistance in understanding the vapor retarder function and placement, as may other technical documents.

INSTALLING THE VAPOR RETARDER:

Typically, with all-wood structures, stapling to the structure is the preferred method of attachment. Various types of adhesives can be used as well, such as “liquid nails” or spray adhesives. Double-sided tapes may not be the best choice due to possible high moisture content of wood.

In steel construction, double-sided tapes can be used, but adequate care must be taken to assure that the steel is clean and dry. As with wood, adhesives can be used. If appearance is not a consideration, screws and furring strips can be utilized.

The vapor retarder should be overlapped an inch or more, and matching pressure sensitive tape applied over the seams and mechanical fasteners to maintain vapor retarder integrity.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Contact our technical service manager at 1-877-5COMPAC (1-877-526-6722) for further information or with specific application questions.

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