

Insulation usually not necessary over garage

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Q: We recently had insulation blown into our 30-year-old ranch. My husband decided to have it blown over the garage area also. Now it seems that our garage is hotter than before. Was this a bad idea?

— **Kelly, Snellville**

A: Installing insulation over the garage will not allow the heat in the garage to escape into the attic. This will naturally make the garage hotter. As long as the walls between your garage and house are insulated, the garage being hotter is not a problem. If the garage/house walls are not insulated, the hotter garage air may have a negative effect on the energy efficiency of your heating and cooling systems.

Furnace filter

Q: In your July 29 edition, you advise on how a furnace filter should be installed. You say it should point toward the furnace. My upright furnace has a motor in the bottom compartment with the filter on the side of the compartment facing outward toward the vent where the airflow comes in. The dust comes through that vent into the filter. Should the filter arrow face the motor or the source of the airflow? I have always had it facing away from the motor toward the source of the airflow. My wife is convinced that we have been wrong and that the arrow should face the motor.

— **Lee Wynn**

A: Your wife was correct on this one. The arrow on the edge of the furnace filter should point in the direction of the airflow through the furnace. In your case the duct into which you are installing the filter is the return duct, meaning air flows into the furnace from this duct. The arrow on the filter should point at the furnace.

Settling woes

Q: When our home was built four-and-a-half years ago, a straight basement wall was poured across the front of the house. Then the excavation in front was filled and compacted. Two footings were poured to accommodate bay windows on both sides of the front entrance. When the house was closed in, the exterior was bricked. Now, apparently because of all the rain, those footings are settling. The brick has pulled away from the bay window walls causing the mortar to crack and exposing a gap between the brick and the bottom of the window frames of as much as an inch. While the roof is overhung by about a foot, I am afraid that these gaps may allow moisture and insects to gain access to the framing, eventually lead to hidden damage.

I've heard of a procedure called "power grouting" that may reinforce the footings. I am worried that simply replacing the brick and mortar may be in vain because of future settling. What do you suggest as a permanent and reliable solution?

— **Cam and Mary Harlan**

A: It sounds like the footings for your brick veneer siding were installed improperly. The footings for the brick should be an extension of the footings for the bay windows, meaning they should have been done in a single concrete pour. The portion of the footing for the brick is called a "brick ledge."

If done correctly, the brick and the bay window structure would move (settle) together, not separately. It also sounds like the soil bearing the weight of the brick was not properly compacted. Unless you have an excessive amount of water collecting around the bay windows, the brick should not be moving in the way you describe.

There are a couple of possible solutions to your problem. I think the process you are referring to is "pressure grouting." This is one solution, and it involves returning the brick to its original position by injecting a concrete material with small aggregate (grout) under the brick. Other methods involve the installation of jacking systems under the brick. There are several companies that do this kind of work, and they can be found in the Yellow Pages under "foundation repair." Choose contractors that are licensed and insured.

Send home repair questions to Ask the Inspector at H&G@ajc.com. Because of the volume of mail, not all questions can be answered. Our expert, Bill Garwood, spent 15 years as a building contractor before becoming a home inspector in 1990. He is part owner of a residential inspection firm and a company providing training in building inspection and codes.