

Alaska HomeWise: Ask a Builder
By Cold Climate Housing Research Center Staff

The "Ask a Builder" series is dedicated to answering some of the many questions Fairbanks residents have about building, energy and the many other parts of home life.

I have a wood stove, can I burn coal in it too?

Unless a wood stove has been specifically designed to burn coal too, I would not burn coal in it. For starters, coal has the ability to burn much, much hotter than wood so it can damage the stove, or heat it up so much that it can be a fire hazard to nearby objects. Also, burning coal in a stove that isn't air tight or specifically designed for coal can be dangerous because there is no way to shut down the air supply if the fire gets too hot. Add that to the fact that a coal fire takes a lot longer to go out, and you're asking for trouble.

What is a low e-coating?

The low e-coating is a metallic finish on one side of a window pane. This finish will reflect radiant heat energy. Radiant heat is heat that passes through electromagnetic waves, like sunlight. If you have a multiple pane window with multiple coatings, the coating on the outside of the glass will reflect summer heat away from the building to keep it cool, and the coating on the inside of the glass will reflect indoor heat back into the house to keep it warm in the winter. Here in Alaska we typically favor coatings that will reflect heat inside while also choosing a pane that has a high solar heat gain coefficient. That means a window that allows more heat to pass through into the house, rather than reflect it.

Is it worth the energy savings to put my computer to sleep, or to just shut it off every time I'm not using it?

That depends on how frequently you are using your computer. If you go back and forth to your computer with hours in between, then putting it to sleep is more beneficial. However, if you only use your computer once per day, such as when you're at work, or when you're at home in the evening, then turning your computer off is more energy efficient. Remember, keeping your computer on all day, even in sleep or standby mode, uses power that you have to pay for.

Also remember that computers, like cars and people, need a break from time to time. Turning your computer off will give it a rest and it will function better in the long run.

Alaska HomeWise articles promote awareness of home-related issues. If you have a question, e-mail the Cold Climate Housing Research Center at akhomewise@cchrc.org. You can also call the CCHRC at (907) 457-3454