Advisors Toolkit
Factsheet No 3.b

Tank & Pipe Insulation

Both tank and pipe insulation keep water hotter for longer by reducing the amount of heat that escapes.

The most common type of water heater blanket (jacket) is fibreglass insulation with a vinyl film on the outside. The insulation is wrapped around the tank and the ends are taped together. It is important that the blanket be the right size for the tank and not block air flow or cover safety and drainage valves, the controls, or block airflow through the exhaust vent, if any.

Insulating a hot water cylinder is one of the simplest and easiest ways to save energy and money.

Fitting a jacket around a cylinder will cut heat loss by over 75%. The Energy Saving Trust estimates that a well-fitted hot water cylinder jacket on a previously uninsulated cylinder can lead to savings of between £40 per year. A jacket costs around £18. Fitting a jacket to a hot water cylinder is a straightforward DIY job.

Pipe insulation is used to prevent heat loss and gain from pipes, to save energy and improve effectiveness of thermal systems. In addition to reducing costs and environmental impacts of energy consumption, the benefits include:

- reducing or eliminating condensation on cold pipes
- protection from dangerous pipe temperatures
- In domestic hot-water systems, the water temperature at the point of use can be closer to the temperature at the water heater, and wait time for hot water can be reduced
- control of noise
- reduction of unwanted heat gain to air-conditioned spaces

Insulation for hot water pipes will cost around £20 and can save around £10 a year.

Fitting insulation to pipes is easy if the pipes are accessible, but professional help may be required to fit insulation to harder-to-reach pipework, which would incur extra cost.