

PRESS RELEASE

The right frame of mind

Selecting the right window frames for your home is a crucial decision – Cobus Lourens from leading window and door supplier, Swartland, offers homeowners some tips on how to go about selecting windows that will give you the biggest bang for your buck, without delivering a blow to your bottom line.

27 November 2015, Johannesburg: Gone are the days when you selected windows purely on their aesthetic attributes. With the ever increasing cost of electricity, increasingly more energy-conscious homeowners are looking for ways to minimise the costs of heating and cooling their homes, and selecting the right windows is a critical step.

Says Cobus Lourens from leading window and door manufacturer, Swartland: “Windows provide our homes with light, warmth and ventilation, but they can also negatively impact on a home’s energy efficiency. Choosing energy efficient windows can go a long way to reducing your monthly utility bills. Swartland has a few solutions in their range that will certainly make the difference.”

However, Cobus notes that with such a variety of windows on the market, it is not always that easy to know what to look for. To this end, he offers the following pointers to help homeowners understand what to look out for when they are making their purchase decision:

The frame:

Take a look at what the window frame is made from – there is a variety of materials currently on the market, including vinyl, steel, aluminium and wood – each with its own set of positive and negative aspects. Two of the most popular materials for energy efficient window frames include wood and aluminium.

Timber windows, such as Swartland’s timber window frames for example, offer the best insulative value and the highest cradle-to-grave environmentally friendly credentials, however, they also require comparatively a little more upkeep than other materials. Aluminium windows, such as Swartland’s KENZO range for example, may not be the top performing material in terms of heat transfer and loss, however aluminium is a very strong material that does not require much maintenance. Also, remember that you can alter the performance of the window in question by your glazing selection.

The glazing:

Glazing is the term used to refer to the glass in the window frame. You can choose windows with different layers – namely single-, double- or even triple-glazed windows. Generally speaking, the more layers a window has, the better temperature and noise insulation it provides. An independent test by the South African Fenestration and Insulating Energy Rating Association (SAFIERA)

showed that Swartland's double-glazed Cape Culture range of timber windows for example, are probably the most energy efficient windows in South Africa.

Glazing coatings can also substantially improve the insulative qualities of glazing. For example, Low-E glazing, or low emissivity glass, is coated with a thin metallic substance that increases the window's ability to reflect, rather than absorb heat. Apart from insulation, glazing can also come with coatings that offer other desirable qualities, such as protection, safety, security, solar and sound control, UV-protection, and decoration.

The installation:

It is important not to overlook the way a window is installed. Even the most expensive and energy-efficient window will not perform effectively if it is not installed correctly. As such, it is essential that professionals install your windows, and if possible, they ought to use a subframe system to ensure only the best build quality. Briefly explained, subframe systems are typically used in masonry openings so that windows can be anchored into the opening.

Swartland's subframe system is made from PVC-U, and they have been designed to ensure the simple and accurate fitting of all Swartland's windows, which not only ensures that the windows are perfectly installed, but it will also ensure better insulation, as the subframe itself is insulated with polystyrene. This helps prevent energy flow through the wall, ensuring better thermal performance of the fenestration installation. It also helps with acoustic insulation and acts as a barrier against condensation and mould growth.

The law:

In South Africa, the SANS 10400 National Building Regulations have been amended in the form of the XA appendices, in order to further enforce and regulate energy efficient practices in the built environment, with the long-term benefit of reducing overall energy consumption and CO2 emissions. It is imperative that the windows you choose are SANS 10400-XA-compliant, as a new build without compliant windows will not pass the building regulations and will be deemed unfit and hence, illegal.

Swartland for example, continuously tests its products to ensure that they are compliant with the National Building Regulations. In order to ensure that its windows are compliant with the SANS 613 and 204 (Fenestration Products) Mechanical Performance Criteria, all its windows for example, are tested for deflection, structural strength, water-resistance, air-tightness, operating forces, and the best possible energy efficiency. As a result, they have unique mechanical property values, from A1 to A4, assigned to them.

With regards to glazing, make sure that your windows conforms to the safety regulations contained in the SANS 10137 Code of Practice, and that the Toughened Safety Glass and Safety Glass you purchase conform to the guidelines contained in SANS 1263. Swartland's new pre-sealed and pre-glazed Ready-2-Fit

range of windows and doors for example, meet all the minimum safety criterion and come in a variety of configurations to suit virtually any architectural style.

Whether you are renovating or building from scratch, installing energy efficient windows, such as those from Swartland, will ensure that the energy savings that they offer will mean that the windows will end up paying for themselves in the long run. Says Cobus: “By choosing wisely from the onset and investing in windows from a trusted and energy efficient manufacturer, such as Swartland, will mean you will be reaping the financial benefits in the long term.”

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