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Window tinting: Getting rid of glare

By **SHEILA GARRETT**
Special to the Record-Eagle

Robert and Janie Neuharth enjoy the view from their Leland home. They like being able to watch the street, and to see their neighbors passing by. The afternoon sun, though, was beginning to fade their furniture and flooring. Installing drapes would destroy the open look they prefer. Blinds would be very expensive for the amount of work required, particularly for the family room, which has three-panel Anderson casements, although they do have blinds in the bedrooms and the computer room.

The Neuharths considered window tinting as an alternative. They spoke to an Elk Rapids homeowner, who reported good results from window tinting after three or four years. A few weeks ago, they had their windows done.

"You can see, ever so slightly, a gray film," Janie Neuharth said. In the daytime, she explained, it does not block your view at all. And at night, people can't see in as clearly.

On a recent sunny Saturday, she said, they noticed that even in

spring the heat coming through the window was less intense.

Neuharth had the windows tinted in about half their house, including the bay windows in their living room, plus their family room and kitchen. The installation took about five hours, Neuharth said.

Rick Gamble of Solar Solutions in Traverse City, commented, "People, especially those on the lakes, pay thousands of dollars for the view, then find they can't sit in their living rooms."

He recalled a car dealership in Kalkaska, where glare from the windows was so intense salesmen had to work wearing sunglasses. In another northern Michigan business with large windows, employees were forced to run the air conditioners in February.

Gamble, who does residential and commercial windows plus some cars, said he believes Northern Michigan residents are becoming more aware of window tinting from their holidays in the south, where there is more advertising and people are more aware of the process.

Gamble pointed out that window tinting makes a big difference in protecting windows from shattering. Locally, birds flying into large windows are less apt to shatter the glass. In some cities, jewelry stores have installed window tinting as protection against smash and grab crimes, he said. Car jackers trying to smash car windows have also been foiled.

Paul LaRocque, of All Seasons Window Tinting, has been in business serving Northern Michigan from Traverse City and Cadillac. His business, is 40 percent commercial and the rest residential.

LaRocque agrees that heat and glare are serious problems. In terms of furnishings, the amount of damage depends on what the sun is hitting, for example, the color and kind of fabric. "In houses, particularly those along the water, flooring and walls can fade in one year," he said. Window film is intended to preserve the color and brilliance of furnishings, fabrics and carpets, as well as to help protect fine woods, antiques and art from discoloration and fading.

Window film is described by the manufacturer as a laminate of polyester and metallized coatings combined with a clear, distortion free adhesive system and a scratch resistant face coating. Styles range, LaRocque explained, from invisible to highly reflective, depending on what is required. The SpectraSelect film is completely invisible. "It's expensive, but it cannot be seen," he explained.

He is able to supply a couple of different shades of bronze film, he said. "I have it myself, at home," he said. "It's so subtle that you can hardly see it."

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Controlling Ants

What do you do when a parade of ants is having a field day on your countertop? You probably grab the ant spray and give these pests a blast or two. It's all-out war and when it's over, you wind up throwing food away and cleaning up a toxic, smelly mess. But there are other weapons that ants hate and you'll love — because they're clean, nontoxic and safe. Try using soapy water in a spray bottle. Set your dog's dish in a pie pan of soapy water, too. Also: instead of poison powders and toxic sprays, use spice-rack chili powder. It's safe, inexpensive, nontoxic, and ants avoid it like the plague. Wage a safe nontoxic war on ants with weapons that blast them, not you.



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell

Above, Rick Gamble, owner of Traverse City's Solar Solutions, hand-washes each window before cutting each piece of window film to custom-fit the panes. Below, a fitted piece is pressed onto an upper window pane. Notice the difference between the upper, treated window and the lower pane, which has yet to be fitted with the treatment.



have the bronze film.

The Masonic offices in Traverse City have completely invisible film on their windows. The owner wanted to retain the old style façade, LaRocque explained, but computer glare was presenting a problem. Blinds being raised and lowered to different heights at different windows was distracting from the uniform appearance of the building. "Now that the windows have been done, no one uses their blinds anymore," LaRocque said.

There is a designer line of films that features different patterns, designs and colors that are intended to be seen for internal use in buildings, LaRocque pointed out. "This kind of film is not usually chosen for residences," LaRocque said.

At an area trust company, people were running into glass partitions because they could not see them. Frosted film was used to solve that problem. Black film was used at the Mongolian Barbecue in Traverse City. The restaurant had a common opening with MC Sports. The inside windows were blacked in so that passersby could not see in, and diners could enjoy their meal in privacy, he said.

An office building across from Meijers in Traverse City now has reflecting bronze film on the windows. The color harmonizes with the brick exterior, and allows those inside to work privacy, without having to close blinds said LaRocque, adding that the same kind of one-way viewing is used in jails.

He also recommended retro fit of window film to existing buildings with safety glass to prevent glass from being smashed.

"Film will hold a broken window together," he said, adding that in disasters such as hurricanes, most injuries are caused by flying pieces of glass. Manufacturers explain

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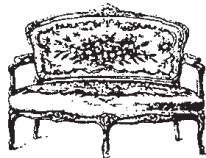
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