Ravensby Glass
Fowler Road, West Pitkerro Industrial Estate, Broughty Ferry, Dundee, DD5 3RU
Tel: 01382 480842 Fax: 01382 480323 Email: info@ravensbyglass.co.uk

Why have I got external condensation on my windows?

We receive a lot of enquiries about the appearance of external condensation particularly in the spring and autumn. Whilst we state in our literature that fitting modern low glazing increases the chances of external condensation, it does seem to surprise many customers. Firstly we need to say that the appearance of external condensation is not a fault in the glass or the windows. The phenomenon is a natural and predictable event caused by the outer pane of the glazing being colder that the glass that it replaced. With single glazing and older style double glazing a larger proportion of heat was lost to the outside through the glass. With modern low e glass products more of the heat is kept inside and the outer pane is not heated as much. Moisture condenses out of the air onto a cold surface that is said to be below the dew point. The dew point varies with the air temperature and the amount of moisture it contains. In spring and autumn in particular the glass temperature can fall to a low level during the night and the dew point can be comparatively high in these seasons. The glass is more often likely to be below the dew point in these conditions and the moisture condenses onto the surface

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We are all obliged to fit more thermally efficient windows in our homes to comply with the building regulations. There are only a few exceptions to the regulations and they tend to apply to unheated spaces that would suffer external condensation to the same extent anyway. The trend is to use glass that has lower U values over time and the lower the U value the lower the outer pane temperature is likely to be and the bigger the risk of condensation on the external surface

There is not much that can be done to avoid the risk of condensation to the outside. Heating the room more would have an effect but this understandably is not a good option. In many cases the condensation does not last long. A little heat from the sun warms the outer glass enough to evaporate the moisture and a gentle breeze or wind will do the same job.