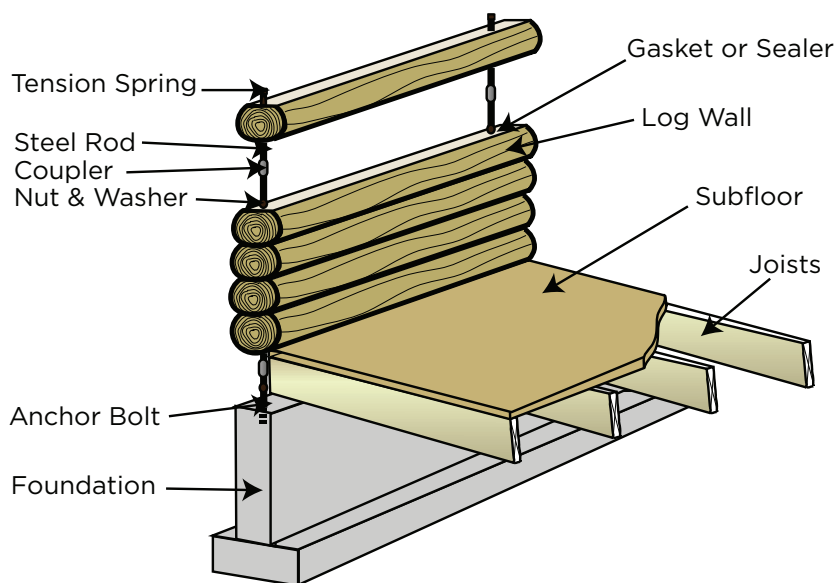


# Log Homes

What's a log home? For some it's a cabin in the woods, for others it's a luxury custom built home. Log home builders would prefer that we don't call these homes log cabins. The term log cabin creates an image of a small, dark, drafty home. This does not adequately describe log homes today. Log homes are energy efficient, bright and spacious. A log home can be any style. It's the construction method not the style that defines a log home. The wall structure is made of logs instead of studs. The logs are secured with spikes or bolts.



There have been many advances that have been incorporated into the construction of log homes such as sealants and gaskets and long-lasting wood preservatives. These advances have made log homes comfortable and easy to maintain. There are over half a million log homes in North America with over 25,000 built each year. Log homes account for nearly 7% of the custom built market today.

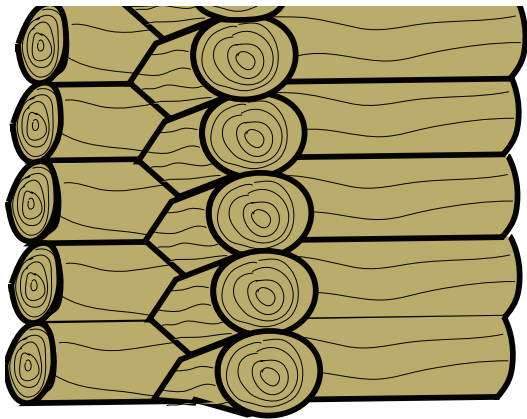
There are two broad categories of log homes, machined log homes and handcrafted log homes. Machined logs are logs that have been shaped in a factory and are uniform in size and are designed to fit together easily. Handcrafted logs may still be shaped and joined either with hand tools or by machine but they retain the non-uniform nature of the logs. There are many opinions on which type of homes qualify as "handcrafted" log homes.

One of the common concerns about log homes is their energy efficiency. Since the entire thickness of the wall structure is log, there is no cavity in which to stuff insulation. Standard wood frame construction with insulation in the wall cavity at first glance should be much more energy efficient because the insulation value is much higher. In actual testing, log homes perform very well. In moderately cold weather and in air conditioning season they do as well or better than insulated homes. During very cold weather, they perform surprisingly well but not as well as a well insulated home. The bottom line is, the year round energy efficiency is about the same as a traditionally insulated home. The reason for the better-than-expected performance is the thermal mass of the logs. Here is an example of thermal mass in action: In a hot climate, the heat of the day may take 8

hours to heat up the logs. You won't feel the heat inside the house until the evening. In response, your air conditioner will turn on. Since it is cooler outside in the evening, your air conditioner will operate much more efficiently than it would have during the day.

## Maintenance of a Log Home

- Roof water runoff: Check roof water runoff when it's raining. Look for water running down the wall of the home and water that splashes from the ground onto the wall. Repair gutters and downspouts.
- Wood-soil contact: Maintain gardens so that the bottom logs are well above grade. Wood-soil contact will cause rot and will encourage insect infestation. Keep shrubbery clipped away from the walls. Repair wood rot promptly.
- Repair joints: Air sealing the home is the key to energy efficiency. If you see damage to the joints between the logs or feel drafts coming through the logs, repairs are needed.
- Recognize signs of insects: Log homes have the advantage that you will likely see evidence of insects because the logs are exposed. Learn to recognize signs of insects such as termite shelter tubes. Deal with infestations promptly.
- Stack firewood away from the house not against the wall.
- Finish treatment: There are many different sealants and treatments for wood. Discuss this with the contractor to identify a product that would be appropriate for the type of wood and the climate.



Saddle Notch Corner