

Home Solar Furnace

Several years ago an item was circulating on the Internet that warned of the hazards of makeup mirrors in the bathroom. It reported how a serious house fire was ignited in bathroom curtains by a portable magnifying mirror resting on the window sill.

Per my usual 'bebunking' preference, I dismissed the story for several good technical reasons...distance to combustible surfaces was too great for the focal length, and so on.

Yesterday, however, I noticed the sun has changed angle in my bathroom window with the southern exposure. I thought, "Why not give the story another chance?". Not wanting to sacrifice one of Emma's iridescent-peach curtains, I got a piece of tough military canvas and positioned it in a likely place while the sun was at about a 10:00 position. This was inside the screen, and a window bar was blocking about 20% of the light getting to the mirror.

OK, now the test was ready, but before I was in position to observe, the canvas started smoking furiously. I snatched it out of the light beam, but then the screen behind it started to burn! I hadn't even been careful to focus the beam.

All this caused me to IMMEDIATELY relocate the mirror off the window sill, where it has sat for years.

I know it seems far-fetched, but the demonstration showed me the power of the sun and the VERY LIKELY effect on an unwary housekeeper. I know any warning I can give to Emma will have limited effect, so I will repeat the show for her. That may make an impression!

Your neighbor, John Kessler