

If you've ever walked into a room and found the view dulled by milky streaks inside your double glazed window, you've met the classic symptom of a blown unit. The panes are fine, the frame looks sound, yet there is fog sealed inside where you can't reach it. That moisture tells you the hermetic seal around the glass has failed. A few companies offer a tempting shortcut: drill the glass, inject desiccant beads or fluids, sometimes vent the cavity, and claim the window will clear without replacing the entire unit. I've repaired enough windows, old and new, to say when that works, when it doesn't, and what the real trade-offs look like.

This guide unpacks what "blown" actually means, why misting happens, how desiccant injections and venting systems aim to help, and whether they stack up against proper sealed unit replacement. I'll also cover costs, expected lifespans, and small but important details that make the difference between a fix that holds through winter and one that fogs up again after the first cold snap.

What "blown" really means in a double glazed unit

A double glazed unit is made up of two panes of glass, an insulated spacer bar running around the edge, and a sealant that bonds it together. In decent modern units, that spacer contains desiccant to keep the air or gas in the cavity dry, and the outer seal keeps external moisture out. The cavity is often filled with argon, sometimes krypton, to reduce heat transfer.

A blown unit has lost its airtight integrity. The seal has degraded or pulled away from the glass. Moist outside air enters the cavity, meets cooler glass, and the moisture condenses inside. You can't wipe it off, because it's not on a surface you can reach.

Why do seals fail? Time and temperature cycles, poor manufacturing, UV exposure on south-facing elevations, or a frame that flexes and stresses the edge seals. I see units go at eight to ten years in budget builds, while quality units often reach 15 to 20 years. If the spacer or primary sealant was skimmed on, or the frame lacks drainage and traps water, failure is sooner and more dramatic.

What desiccant injection promises

The pitch sounds simple: rather than replacing the sealed unit, which means measuring, ordering a new glass unit, and refitting it, why not drill tiny holes in the glass, flush out or evaporate the moisture, inject desiccant to keep it dry, and plug the holes? Some systems leave a discreet vent plug to allow the cavity to breathe. Others claim to reseal the unit with special valves that draw moisture out over time.

There are two big appeals here. First, speed. An on-site intervention can take an hour, and you keep the existing glass. Second, cost. A desiccant injection might be priced at a fraction of a new sealed unit, especially for awkward sizes. That's why the idea keeps resurfacing, particularly in markets where material costs have climbed.

But the method fights physics. A sealed unit works because it is sealed. The internal gas fill, the controlled humidity, the warm edge spacer, all depend on an intact perimeter. Once you drill into a pane, you definitely no longer have an airtight cavity. The question becomes: can you ventilate or dry the cavity enough, for long enough, to keep the glass clear and thermally reasonable?



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The types of “misted double glazing repairs” offered

I see three broad flavors in the field, all marketed as Double Glazing Repairs:

- Drill and vent. Tiny holes near the top and bottom corners allow cross-ventilation. Moisture is expected to evaporate out over time. Sometimes the holes are fitted with vent plugs or grommets.
- Drill, flush, and desiccant. The technician drills holes, sprays an alcohol-based solution to wash away mineral deposits, then inserts desiccant beads or a cartridge through the hole, and finally caps it.
- Edge reseal attempts. The fitter removes bead trims, exposes the edge of the unit, and tries to renew perimeter sealant in situ, sometimes adding a vent plug. Rarely is the spacer rebonded; it is more a belt-and-braces moisture management approach than a true reseal.

The first approach banks on airflow. The second bets on absorption. The third tries to mitigate without replacing the unit. They all aim to stop the misted appearance without manufacturing a new sealed unit.

Do desiccant injections fix the problem?

They can reduce or remove visible condensation for a while. In some cases, the clearing is dramatic over a few days, especially after the cavity is flushed and the weather turns dry. Homeowners often feel satisfied initially, because the immediate frustration disappears. But the underlying issue remains: the seals that kept outside moisture from entering have failed.

Without an intact perimeter seal, humidity cycles will continue. Desiccant has a finite capacity. Venting relies on dry external air, which you do not always get in a British winter or a coastal climate. And once you drill the glass, the insulation value changes. You forfeit the inert gas fill entirely, and you risk recurrent condensation during cold spells when warm indoor air and cool glass create a constant dew point within the cavity.

I've revisited dozens of windows treated this way after one to three years. A clear majority showed some return of haze. A few stayed reasonably clear, typically on upper-storey, south-facing windows shielded from prevailing rain, and in homes with excellent ventilation. I have yet to see a drill-and-desiccant repair that restored performance to anything like a brand-new A-rated unit.

When the shortcut makes sense

There are honest cases where a budget-driven, short-term remedy has a place. Rental properties approaching refurbishment, a house going on market soon where disclosure will be made but cost sensitivity exists, or a listed building with difficult leaded lights where full replacement would mean custom manufacture with long lead times. If your priority is to improve appearance for a year or two at minimal cost, desiccant injections can buy time.

On very large panes where a replacement sealed unit costs several hundred pounds, someone might prefer to defer replacement until a bigger project is underway. I've also seen holiday lets opt for vent-and-dry on beach-facing windows where they accept regular maintenance, because salt air and wind load are harsh on seals and frames anyway.

Think of it as a cosmetic and interim fix. If the expectation is long-term performance, reduced heat loss, and a stable cavity, replacement wins almost every time.

Energy performance and the hidden cost

A blown unit loses more than clarity. You lose gas fill and airtight insulation. Even before you see fog, a minor seal leak allows convection inside the cavity, which increases heat loss. On a typical 1.2 m by 1.2 m unit, you won't feel a draught, but the pane will be colder to the touch on chilly mornings. That affects room comfort and heating bills.

Desiccant injection cannot restore the gas fill or the controlled cavity conditions that give you the advertised U-values. If you're holding your house to an energy standard, or you notice cold downdrafts near the glass, then time spent on a half-fix is time you're living with a colder window. Over a winter or two, the energy penalty starts to nibble at the money saved.

The staining problem

One detail homeowners often miss: misting leaves behind mineral deposits on the inner faces. When the moisture dries, it can leave white arcs, spots, and dullness etched into the glass. If a technician flushes the cavity with alcohol and detergent, some of this lifts. If the deposits have etched chemically into the surface, you will still see ghostly patterns in certain light.

I've had customers call back saying the window cleared but looks dirty in the sun. They aren't wrong. The clarity isn't just about moisture; it's about the legacy of that moisture. A new sealed unit has clean internal faces. An injected and vented one might stay dry yet never look pristine.

How a proper replacement works

Replacing a sealed unit, when done well, remains straightforward. Measure visible glass size and add for the edge cover, note spacer thickness and any coatings or patterns, and order a like-for-like or upgraded unit from a reputable glass processor. If you move from a 16 mm cavity to a 20 mm warm edge spacer with low-e and argon, you'll feel the difference on winter mornings.

The installer removes glazing beads, lifts out the failed unit, checks packers and drainage routes in the frame, and seats the new unit square and level. The beads go back, the gaskets are checked, and the drainage holes are confirmed clear. If you're paying for the unit anyway, a good fitter will clean up [Double Glazing Repairs Oakham](#) the frame, reseal any perimeters that need it, and give you a true reset.

Costs vary by region, but for a typical 600 by 900 mm window, you might see figures from £80 to £150 for standard double glazed replacement in the UK, more with laminated or toughened safety glass, or with coated low-e upgrades. Larger doors and floor-to-ceiling windows rise quickly. For comparison, desiccant or vent treatments are often quoted at £40 to £80 per pane. The price gap narrows as the unit size shrinks, and widens for oversized sheets.



Warranty, resale, and peace of mind

It's rare to get a meaningful warranty on a drilled and desiccant-treated unit beyond a year. Most firms frame it as a service with no guarantee against recurrence. A replacement sealed unit normally carries a five to ten-year warranty from the manufacturer, with some installers offering their own workmanship coverage on top.

If you plan to sell, buyers increasingly notice misted double glazing. Surveyors flag it. When you can produce invoices showing proper replacement under warranty, the issue fades. When a buyer learns that you drilled the [Double Glazing Repairs](#) panes and vented them, some shrug, others ask for a discount. I've sat through those conversations with sellers and agents; paperwork matters.

Edge cases that challenge both approaches

Not every situation is a straightforward go or no-go.

- Decorative or leaded double glazing. Encapsulated lead or stained units add weight and cost. Replacement is possible but more expensive. Desiccant may be used as a stopgap where maintaining the original pattern is critical and the budget is tight, but you'll likely revisit the issue later.
- Timber frames with water ingress. If the timber frame funnels rainwater to the unit edge, any sealed unit will struggle. Without addressing drainage and capillary traps, even a brand-new unit can fail early. In these cases, I fix the frame first. No desiccant trick will outwork a soggy rebate.
- Very old units with 6 mm spacers. Thin cavities, especially pre-1990s units, don't insulate well even when sound. Replacing with a modern warm edge spacer and low-e glass is a major performance upgrade. Injecting

desiccant into an antique unit not only fails to fix efficiency, it prolongs a subpar state.

- Coastal and high-UV exposures. South and west elevations on the coast get hammered. If you desiccant-fix such a window, expect short reprieve. Use premium seals and warm edge spacers for replacements in these settings, and keep drain channels spotless.

The matter of safety glass

Drilling into toughened safety glass is its own risk. Toughened units are heat-treated to create internal stresses. If you chip or nick the edge while drilling, the pane can shatter instantly into small cubes. Laminated glass behaves differently, but drilling laminated panes can introduce edge delamination or water ingress into the interlayer if not handled correctly. I've [Cat Flap Installation](#) seen two attempts end in a shower of glass and an emergency board-up call. If your unit is marked as toughened (often a small stamp in a corner), think twice before allowing anyone to drill it.

Choosing between repair and replacement

You can decide by weighing a few practical questions.

- What matters most: appearance for now or long-term performance? If it's purely cosmetic for a short period, a vent-and-dry may serve, with the risks understood.
- How critical is energy efficiency in this room? Bedrooms and lounges benefit from warmer glass and fewer downdrafts. Kitchens and utility rooms tolerate a bit more compromise.
- What is the size and safety classification of the glass? Larger or safety-critical areas (doors, low-level glazing) tilt the calculation toward proper replacement.
- Are there signs of frame or drainage failure? Fix the cause while you fix the symptom, or you will repeat the cycle.
- Are you budgeting for a phased upgrade? If you plan to upgrade all windows in two years, a low-cost cosmetic repair now might be practical triage.

What “good” looks like if you do choose desiccant injection

If you decide to try an injection or vent treatment, a careful method gives you the best shot at decent results.

- The technician should assess the frame, check drainage, and confirm which panes are safe to drill. If it's toughened, they should explain the shatter risk and alternatives.
- Holes should be tiny, clean, and positioned where plugs are discreet, typically the top and bottom corners on the outside pane to avoid indoor drafts.
- The cavity should be gently flushed with a volatile cleaner, with care to avoid streaking residue. Excess fluid should be allowed to evaporate fully before capping.
- Desiccant quantity should match cavity depth. Overfilling can rattle or slump, underfilling does little. Ask what type is used, and how it is contained.
- The caps or vents should be UV-stable and sit flush, with a neat finish. A sloppy plug invites water, dirt, and complaints.

Even with best practice, set your expectations: clearing can take a few days, and some staining may remain. Plan for possible re-misting in damp seasons.

The role of ventilation inside the home

People blame the window for everything, but indoor humidity can bury even sound units in condensation on the inner surface. That is different from misting inside the cavity, yet it confuses the picture. If you dry laundry indoors without extraction, cook without using the hood, or keep trickle vents closed through winter, you raise humidity and risk condensation on the inner pane. This is not a blown unit, it is a ventilation issue.

I keep a cheap hygrometer in the toolkit and advise targets of 40 to 55 percent relative humidity in winter. If you're sitting consistently at 65 percent, even good windows can bead on the inside. It's worth improving extraction and airflow before blaming every bead of water on failed glazing.

The economics over five to ten years

Take a mid-sized pane where a new sealed unit costs £120 fitted and a desiccant treatment costs £60. If you choose desiccant now and repeat in two years when mist returns, you'll likely spend the same or more over a five-year span as a single proper replacement, and you still won't have the energy savings or warranty. On very large units where replacement is £350 to £600, you might justify one interim desiccant treatment to spread costs, but it's a pause, not a solution.



I've watched landlords with multiple properties flip from desiccant to replacement after tracking call-backs. The hassle of returning to the same windows, tenant complaints in winter, and the paperwork overhead tipped the scales. For owner-occupiers, the calculus is comfort and pride as much as money. A clear, warm window makes a room feel right.

How to avoid a repeat failure

Whether you repair or replace, basic maintenance helps. Keep drain holes in frames open. Clear debris from sills and the bottom of sliding tracks. If you're painting timber, seal the glazing rebates properly and avoid blocking drainage. On uPVC, check that trickle vents open and close freely. On aluminium, confirm thermal breaks aren't bridged by poorly placed packers.

When replacing, ask for warm edge spacers and low-e coatings if they're not standard. They are not gimmicks; they meaningfully reduce edge-of-glass condensation and improve comfort. Insist on manufacturer marks and paperwork, and keep the invoice somewhere you can find it when selling.

A straight answer to the headline

Can you fix blown double glazing with desiccant injections? You can often make it look better for a while. You cannot restore the sealed unit's original performance, and you cannot guarantee long-term clarity. If you understand it as a temporary, appearance-driven measure, and you pick an experienced technician who works neatly, it can be a pragmatic stopgap.

If what you want is durable clarity, better insulation, and a warranty-backed remedy, replacement of the sealed unit is the honest route. In the trade, most of us treat desiccant and venting as triage, not cure. It has its place, just not as a like-for-like alternative.

Practical next steps

If you're weighing options, get two quotes: one for a desiccant or vent treatment, and one for a new sealed unit. Ask the fitter to check frame drainage and note any safety glass. Query lead times, warranties, and whether you can upgrade to low-e and warm edge if you replace. If the cost difference is modest, go with the new unit. If the gap is large and timing is tight, a desiccant treatment can buy time while you plan a proper upgrade.

If you need a phrase to search locally, look for Misted Double Glazing Repairs and compare providers who also install replacement units. Companies that do both tend to give more balanced advice. The good ones will ask about which rooms feel cold, how the house ventilates, and whether you're living with the window for years or staging for sale. That context steers you to the right choice, and saves you from chasing fog around a pane that has told you, quite plainly, its seal has run its course.