

North America HVAC News January 2009



International Market Strategy

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USA: USA Heat Pump Report Published

BRG CONSULT has published the first version of its US Heat Pump Report. Products covered include:

- Geothermal Heat Pumps
- Water Loop Heat Pumps
- Air-to-Water Space Heating Heat Pumps
- Water Heating Heat Pumps
- Air-to-Air Heat Pumps

The report analyzes and covers the following:

- Market Trends and Forecasts
- Legislation
- Focus on 2007 and 2008 Markets
- Average Prices and Values
- Product Segmentation
- Distribution Analysis and Sales by End Use Segment
- Manufacturers Market Shares
- Background Information
- Distribution Section
- Manufacturers and Distributor Profiles.

For more information please contact Marie Vermeulen at BRG CONSULT NORTH AMERICA (mvermeulen@brgconsult.com).

Source: BRG CONSULT NORTH AMERICA



USA: RESEARCH PRODUCTS Acquires Geothermal Heat Pump Manufacturer

10 December 2008, MADISON, Wis. — APRILAIRE manufacturer, RESEARCH PRODUCTS CORP., has acquired ECONAR ENERGY SYSTEMS CORP. based in Elk River, Minn. ECONAR is a geothermal heat pump technology provider for residential and business customers.

According to the company, the acquisition is a significant step for RESEARCH PRODUCTS to provide environmentally friendly products for a growing Earth-conscious market. The new entity will be ECONAR GEOSYSTEMS LLC. “There is tremendous growth opportunity for our dealers to provide energy-friendly solutions to the home or business owner,” said Larry Olsen, president of RESEARCH PRODUCTS CORP., explaining one of the main motivations for bringing these two companies together. “Adding ECONAR to the RESEARCH PRODUCTS family moves our company in the right direction to satisfy the growing customer base concerned about the future of our planet.”

The 75 ECONAR employees located in the home office in Elk River and the manufacturing facilities in Appleton, Minn., are expected to see more business due to RESEARCH PRODUCTS’ large dealer and distributor base around the country.

“This is an exciting milestone for our company,” said Del Overholser, president of ECONAR. “Our goal is to improve the environment we live in and leave the world better than it was by reducing our overall carbon footprint. Our geothermal heat pumps do just that. We look forward to further expand our presence in the renewable energy market as a part of RESEARCH PRODUCTS CORP.”

Source: ACHR News



USA: GE Developing New Line of Energy-Efficient Solar Water Heaters

20 November 2008 - GE CONSUMER & INDUSTRIAL, the first U.S. company to meet newly established ENERGY STAR standards for residential water heaters, announced today that it is developing a line of solar water heaters meeting the 2009 ENERGY STAR guidelines.

The water heaters will be the first products to benefit from a new Solar Lab at GE Appliance Park in Louisville, Kentucky: the Innovation Team of GE CONSUMER & INDUSTRIAL has installed a rooftop platform of solar energy collectors that will give scientists and engineers at GE data collection and evaluation tools for creating renewable energy products.

"GE re-entered the water heating business about ten years ago," noted Kevin Nolan, Vice President Technology for GE CONSUMER & INDUSTRIAL. "GE has recently driven changes in water heating technology by developing both tankless gas and hybrid electric water heater products - the first to meet newly established ENERGY STAR standards. Using solar energy to heat water for the home is the logical next step in the evolution of water heaters," he continued.

The solar water heating industry is currently very small. Total deliveries in 2007 were only 12,000 units as compared with 9,000,000 of other types of water heaters, according to statistics from the Solar Rating & Certification Corporation, RHEEM, and the Gas Appliance Manufacturer's Association. There are estimates that 17,000 solar water-heating units will be sold in 2008. Solar thermal water heaters are designed to utilize heat energy collected in rooftop panels to warm water in a separate tank via a heat exchanger. During product development and testing, GE will pair solar-thermal power with a number of backup energy sources and designs to maintain performance on cloudy days - ultimately looking for the optimal mix of energy savings and product performance.

Source: www.findarticles.com



USA: ECR to Consolidate Plant Operations

15 December 2008 -- ECR INTERNATIONAL, a leading manufacturer of innovative heating and cooling products and systems, reaffirmed its commitment to Upstate New York by announcing plans to consolidate production from other locations to its factories in Utica and Dunkirk, N.Y.

“ECR INTERNATIONAL is reinventing itself,” said CEO Mike Paparone. “To begin this transformation, we are expanding and modernizing two of our plants in Upstate New York and investing significantly in research and development.”

Dennis Mullen, EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT president-Upstate, said ECR’s decision to anchor manufacturing in Western New York and the Mohawk Valley “highlights the company’s commitment to Upstate and showcases the fact that here in New York State we are creating an environment where business can grow and prosper.”

Paparone said the company plans to shift production from ECR plants in Rome, N.Y., and Wallaceburg, Ont., to factories in Utica and Dunkirk, resulting in the loss of approximately 100 manufacturing jobs in Wallaceburg, where furnaces are made. ECR will maintain Canadian sales, service and distribution.

The Rome plant, where air-conditioners are made, employs about 80 workers but ECR hopes to move about half of those jobs to Utica, Paparone said. The changes will begin during the first quarter of 2009 and extend through the fourth quarter. All affected employees will be offered career counseling and outplacement services.

“Naturally we regret having to let go of very capable, very loyal and very hardworking ECR employees,” Paparone said. “Consolidating now, however, helps position ECR for a future in which we build more factories and create more jobs.”

Mullen added, “While ECR had to make some tough decisions to remain competitive in the global economy, they have decided to build a stronger foundation here in New York. Renovating and expanding Dunkirk and Utica will allow ECR to better serve their customers with high quality, innovative products and ultimately add more jobs.”

The changes will not impact production of ECR’s new FREEWATT and power system or the company’s joint venture facility in Ningbo, China, where ECR currently manufactures electronic controls.

ECR INTERNATIONAL was formed in 1999 by the merger of THE UTICA COMPANIES and THE DUNKIRK RADIATOR COMPANY, both founded by Earle C. Reed, whose initials give the new company its name. Headquartered in Utica, ECR designs, manufactures and markets heating and cooling equipment for residential, commercial, institutional, and hospitality markets. ECR products – including boilers, hydronic controls, furnaces, ductless air conditioning systems, vertical packaged air-conditioner and heat pumps, and package terminal air conditioners – are sold under 10 brand names including AIRCO, ARGO, EMI, DUNKIRK, OLSEN, ONEIDA ROYAL, PENNCO, RETROAIRE, ULTIMATE and UTICA BOILERS.

Source: The Wholesaler



USA: MAMMOTH Exhibits GREEN Air Conditioning Solutions

Chaska, MN, November 24, 2008 — MAMMOTH revealed new technologies at the Greenbuild International Conference & Expo, November 18-20, at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center in Massachusetts. Visitors saw solutions such as the MAMMOTH high-efficiency water-source/ground-source heat pumps (WSHP), FANWALL TECHNOLOGY® by HUNTAIR®, and VENMAR CES™ vertical unit ventilator with energy recovery and integrated WSHP.

WSHP technology is an affordable, energy-efficient means of providing simultaneous heating and cooling throughout a building. FANWALL TECHNOLOGY offers the advantages of reduced unit footprint, quieter operation, reduced energy use, and reliability through redundancy. Using the right air-to-air energy recovery technology in your building can reduce your energy bill, improve indoor air quality, and exceed the minimum requirements prescribed by most standards and guidelines.

WSHP Benefits to Building Owners:

- Can use earth as a heat source and sink saving on building space and energy use.
- MAMMOTH offers a wide range of WSHP products up to 60-tons, and have DDC control options to ensure a seamless fit into your building control system.
- Ability to accommodate widely varying internal heating and cooling zones.
- Available with environmentally friendly refrigerant 410A

FANWALL TECHNOLOGY Benefits to Building Owners:

- Improve air system reliability through an array of smaller, more efficient fans.
- Lower sound levels can eliminate expensive sound traps, reducing first costs and operating costs.
- Reduced footprint saves valuable real estate.
- Ideal for fan system retrofits as the fan can fit through standard width doorways.

Vertical Unit Ventilator Benefits to Building Owners:

- Easy, low cost, installation against an exterior wall with airflow above kids.
- Fits through doorways and is perfect for retrofit applications.
- Quick access to all major components for ease of service and maintenance.
- Powered exhaust fan and economizer cycle gives the capability to reduce operating cost during cooling periods.

MAMMOTH is a leader in customizing HVAC products to satisfy the requirements of any retrofit or new construction project.

Source: www.mammoth-inc.com



USA: MCQUAY and AMERINET Announce Strategic Partnership

22 December 2008, Minneapolis, MN -- MCQUAY INTERNATIONAL, a member of DAIKIN group and a leading supplier of HVAC products and services, and AMERINET, a leading national group purchasing organization for health care providers, have signed an agreement to supply DAIKIN and MCQUAY products and services to AMERINET members.

AMERINET, through its Construction Solutions, offers its members services including real estate services, design/build, construction, equipment planning, and capital acquisition. "AMERINET's comprehensive program is designed to meet all requirements for a construction project," said Mike Reid, AMERINET senior director, Construction, Capital and Facility Services, "and we are happy to partner with MCQUAY to provide our members preferred access to these products and services to help lower the total cost of operating their health care facilities nationwide."

"DAIKIN and MCQUAY have the expertise and experience to understand the unique HVAC requirements of health care facilities around the world," said Keith Glasch, MCQUAY vice president, National Accounts. "Our products and services align with health care facility operators who focus on patient and employee comfort, energy reduction, and more recently, LEED certification. We are excited to bring these benefits to AMERINET and its members."

Source: achrnews.com



USA: BUILDINGGREEN Announces 2008 Top-10 Green Building Products

Dec. 1, 2008 -- BUILDINGGREEN, LLC, publisher of the GreenSpec Directory and Environmental Building News, today announced the 2008 Top-10 Green Building Products. This seventh annual award, announced at the U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild Conference in Boston, recognizes the most exciting products drawn from additions to the GreenSpec Directory and coverage in Environmental Building News.

"Our selections of the Top-10 Green Building Products represent a wide range of product types in many different application areas," noted BUILDINGGREEN president Alex Wilson. There are a particularly large number of interior products in this year's group of winners: the first FSC-certified and formaldehyde-free bamboo flooring; doors made with wheat-straw particleboard; a line of zero-VOC paint; a transparent finish produced from a byproduct of cheese making; and a line of organic fabrics.

Three of the products this year save energy, including a low-cost, solar water-heating system; a combination heating, water heating, and heat-recovery ventilation system; and a system for monitoring real-time energy (and water) use in buildings. Water saving products are represented by a line of rainwater storage tanks - the first rainwater storage equipment ever recognized in our Top-10 lists.

Fully half of the products this year are green in part because they are made from natural, rapidly renewable, or agricultural waste materials; natural materials often require significantly less energy to manufacture. A new compressed-earth masonry block is particularly noteworthy in this regard. "Most of the Top-10 products this year have multiple environmental attributes," said Wilson.

BUILDINGGREEN's Top-10 product selections, as in previous years, are drawn from new additions to the company's GreenSpec product directory. More than 200 product listings have been added to the GreenSpec database during the past year. "New products seem to be appearing all the time, making it a challenge for our staff to keep up," said Wilson. The GreenSpec database the company maintains now includes more than 2,000 product listings.

A big driver in the development of green products continues to be the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Rating System (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which awards points for the use of certain product types, such as certified wood, or for the energy or water savings that green products can achieve. "Designers of LEED buildings are looking for green products, and manufacturers are responding," said Wilson. In the online version of GreenSpec, users can find products organized by LEED credits.

The 2008 Top-10 Green Building Products are listed below:

Integrity Block

Safe 'N Sound Emerald doors from MASONITE

FSC-certified Plyboo Pure bamboo flooring from SMITH & FONG

Natura Paint from BENJAMIN MOORE

PolyWhey Floor Finish from VERMONT NATURAL COATINGS

O Ecotextiles Natural-Fiber Fabrics

Matrix Total Home System from NTI



SunCache solar water heating system from HARPIRIS ENERGY
Agilewaves Resource Monitor
Rainwater H2OG storage tanks

About GreenSpec

GreenSpec is the leading national directory of green building products. Products are selected by editors of Environmental Building News (EBN) based on criteria developed over the past 15 years. Manufacturers do not pay to be listed in GreenSpec, and neither GreenSpec nor Environmental Building News carries advertising. "Our policy of not accepting money from manufacturers allows us to be objective in our review of products," said Wilson. The GreenSpec product database is also available online as part of BUILDINGGREEN Suite. Environmental Building News, founded in 1992, is the oldest and most widely respected newsletter in the green building field. BUILDINGGREEN, LLC., celebrates its 23rd year in business this year. For information on BUILDINGGREEN resources, visit www.BuildingGreen.com or call 800-861-0954.

Source: BuildingGreen.com

USA: Sentovich To Lead RAYPAK

12 December 2008 -- RHEEM has appointed Michael Sentovich to vice president and general manager of RAYPAK. A veteran of the home improvement and building materials industry, Sentovich replaces Peter Reynolds who was recently promoted to vice president and general manager of RHEEM WATER HEATING.

In his new role, Sentovich will oversee RAYPAK's growth in several critical areas including: residential and commercial sales, product development and marketing, engineering and quality assurance, information technology, manufacturing, and customer service operations.

According to Chris Peel, senior vice president and COO of RHEEM, Sentovich will be responsible for leveraging the technological strengths of RAYPAK, RHEEM Water Heating, and RHEEM Heating & Cooling. This includes an aggressive product development plan and overall business expansion in the commercial boiler/water heater and pool/spa segments.

Prior to joining RAYPAK, Sentovich served as president of DO+ABLE PRODUCTS INC. and executive vice president of CLOSETMAID CORP., both divisions of EMERSON ELECTRIC. He has also held senior management positions with JAMES HARDIE BUILDING PRODUCTS.

Source: Radiant & Hydronics



USA: JOHNSTONE Reports Strong Sales in 2008

26 November 2008 - JOHNSTONE SUPPLY INC., a national leader in HVACR distribution, held its 2008 Annual Meeting held in Atlanta this fall. The meeting theme was “Full Steam Ahead,” in part reflecting the cooperative’s strong moves forward in implementing strategic initiatives to achieve its goal of reaching \$2 billion in total sales by 2010. This year’s Annual Meeting took note of the continuing strong growth of the cooperative in adding new stores and new members, the completion of its robust national distribution network, and sales figures that for yet another consecutive year were over twice the industry average.

Nearly 1,200 people attended this year’s event, and the week’s highlights included the popular vendor trade show with 150 vendor booths, JOHNSTONE awards banquet, and business-focused seminars for cooperative members focusing on products, marketing and operations.

Recapping achievements from the past year, JOHNSTONE noted many accomplishments including the completion of its five-facility regional Distribution Center network. This means the company now provides approximately 87% of its stores with the ability to receive orders next day — greatly enhancing customer service and responsiveness, along with stocking more localized products fitting regional weather and contractor needs.

The cooperative reported strong sales in spite of rough national economic indicators, with sales figures again far outstripping the industry. It also marked the 7th consecutive year that JOHNSTONE has at least doubled the sales growth of the industry overall. JOHNSTONE also continues to expand its national store network, with the addition of 22 new stores opening since just January 2008 for a total of 338 to date.

Presentations made at the Annual Meeting included a range of Member awards, Store awards and Vendor awards, all of which reflected the company’s record sales and expanding market share. The John M. Shank Award is given to an owner who has been a Member for less than five years and best demonstrates the entrepreneurial spirit of Cooperative founder John Shank. This year’s Shank Award was presented to Bruce Eckenberg, owner of the Paducah, KY., store.

Another prestigious and rarely presented honor, JOHNSTONE’s Leadership Award recognizes the unselfish dedication, guidance and cooperative service of remarkable members of the JOHNSTONE family. It was presented to long-time store group owner, Board member and six-year Board chairman Greg Popma.

Vendor awards paid tribute to the manufacturing partners who play such a vital role in JOHNSTONE’s success. Awards were handed out honoring excellence in areas such as Customer Service (Jessie Spence, COLEMAN HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING) and Marketing (RINNAI). JOHNSTONE’s most prestigious vendor honor, the Supplier of the Year Award, was presented to Arkema, which has partnered with JOHNSTONE for over 35 years. The Supplier of the Year award recognizes the highest level of partnership and excellence in logistics, product development, marketing programs and store support.

JOHNSTONE SUPPLY is a leading cooperative wholesale distributor in the HVACR industry, with over \$1 billion in annual sales and more than 335 independently owned store locations across America.



Source: www.thewholesaler.com

USA: Good News For Green Building

19 December 2008 -- Green building, or sustainable construction, is getting a lot of good press lately. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) recently released the first comprehensive report by a federal agency regarding acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining sustainable buildings.

“Sustainability Matters” (www.gsa.gov/sustainable/design) is a collection of case studies and industry best practices that address GSA’s sustainability initiatives and strategies at all stages of a building’s lifecycle.

“We want to be part of transforming the building industry so that ‘green’ is the only way of doing business,” said GSA’s Commissioner of Public Buildings David L. Winstead.

The GSA demonstrates how to create sustainable buildings by integrating energy-efficient and environmentally sound decisions and technologies into building designs. It uses the U.S. Green Buildings Council’s LEED rating system as a tool to evaluate and measure its achievement in sustainable design. The goals are to conserve resources and create more productive and healthier workplaces.

Green Growth

According to McGraw-Hill Construction’s “Green Outlook 2009: Trends Driving Change” report, the U. S. green building market is accelerating at a dramatic rate — the value of green building construction starts was up five-fold from 2005 to 2008 (from \$10 billion to \$36-\$49 billion), and could triple by 2013, reaching \$96-\$140 billion. Drivers are growing public awareness, an increase in government regulations and recognition of bottom-line advantages.

“The business opportunities afforded by green building, even in the midst of a global economic crisis, are real and recognized by industry players,” said Harvey M. Bernstein, vice president of industry analytics, alliances and strategic initiatives, MCGRAW-HILL CONSTRUCTION. “Furthermore, green building has great potential to help tackle unemployment through green jobs, and can address other societal issues, such as creating healthier places where we live and work.”

U.S. Green Building Council members report green building to be less affected by the down market compared to non-green building, and homebuyers are willing to pay more for a green home. Perceived economic benefits are driving green building, including higher revenues, lower lifecycle costs and lower operating costs, but builders and buyers are also motivated by health benefits, new government regulation and pressure from global competition.

Source: Plumbing & Mechanical



USA: United States Sees Major Decline In Oil Demand

16 December 2008 -- High oil prices earlier this year and a slumping fourth-quarter economy will contribute to a 5.4% drop in demand for petroleum products in 2008, or about 1.1 million barrels per day below the 2007 average, according to the Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration (EIA). The decline is expected to continue in 2009, with petroleum demand dropping another 1.3%.

Source: Radiant & Hydronics

USA: Energy Prices To Stay Low Through 2009

10 December 2008, WASHINGTON -- The "increasing likelihood of a prolonged global economic downturn" has caused energy prices to decrease, according to a new report by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). DOE's Energy Information Administration (EIA) says that oil prices will average the current \$50 per barrel cost throughout 2009. Residential heating oil prices are projected to average 24% less during this heating season compared to last year, and propane prices are expected to be 14% lower than last year. Natural gas prices are expected to be about 32% lower next year.

Source: The HVAC&R Industry



USA: Housing Starts Plunge 18.9% to Record Low

16 December 2008 - Single-family building permits fall 12.3% in November, setting 27-year low.

WASHINGTON -- U.S. home builders threw in the towel in November, slashing construction of new dwellings far below the worst levels seen in 50 years, according to Commerce Department data released Tuesday.

New starts dropped an eye-popping 18.9% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 625,000, the lowest since the Commerce Department began keeping records in 1959. According to similar records kept elsewhere, it's the slowest pace of construction in the post-World War II period.

Starts were far lower than the 740,000 that economists surveyed by MarketWatch had been looking for. The monthly percentage drop was the most since a 26% decline in March 1984.

"This is bad news for the economy, of course, but it is best viewed as good news because what is sorely needed in the housing market is a decrease in supply, which now looks extremely likely in 2009," wrote Tony Crescenzi, chief bond market strategist for Miller Tabak & Co.

"The markets need to clear," said Mike Schenk, economist for the Credit Union National Association. "But this is bad news; it'll be a painful process and many more people will be out of work."

In a separate report Tuesday, the Labor Department said the consumer price index fell a seasonally adjusted 1.7% in November, the lowest since the government first reported seasonally adjusted CPI in 1947. In non-adjusted terms, the 1.9% drop was the largest decline since January 1932.

Housing starts for September and October were revised lower. In October, starts were revised to a record-low annual rate of 771,000, down from 791,000 previously.

Building permits -- a separate, less-volatile measure of new construction -- fell 15.6% last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 616,000, also a record low.

And permits for single-family homes, considered by many analysts to be the key number in the report, fell 12.3% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 412,000, marking a 27-year low.

Starts of single-family homes dropped 16.9% to an annual rate of 441,000, also a record low.

Housing starts have now fallen 47% in the past year and 73% from the peak. Building permits are down 48% in the past year and down 72% from the peak.

Builders are frantically cutting back their production of new homes, trying to work off a mammoth glut of unsold inventory. The more builders cut production, the sooner the market can recover.

The number of homes completed in November rose to an annual rate of 1.08 million units, up 3.3%. The number of homes under construction fell 2.7%, to an annual rate of 857,000.

The report shows new construction has been battered again by the credit squeeze in capital markets, which has dried up financing just as the economic downturn accelerated and pushed demand lower. Moreover, rising numbers of foreclosures of existing homes are competing against new construction



for the few buyers remaining.

Indeed, the National Association of Home Builders said Monday that its builder sentiment index remained at a record low level in December, signaling continued weakness in construction.

The government cautions that its monthly housing data are volatile and subject to large sampling and other statistical errors. In most months, the government can't be sure whether starts increased or decreased.

In November, the standard error for starts was plus or minus 8.9%. Large revisions are common.

It can take four months for a new trend in housing starts to emerge from the data. In the past four months, housing starts have averaged 769,000 on an annualized basis, down from a pace of 1.27 million in the four months through last November.

In all of 2007, 1.355 million homes were started.

Source: MarketWatch



Canada: Canadian Housing Starts Moderate in November 2008

10 December 2008 -- The seasonally adjusted annual rate of housing starts was 172,000 units in November, down from 211,800 units in October, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

“The decrease in November housing starts can be attributed in part to the volatile multiple starts segment,” said Bob Dugan, Chief Economist at CMHC’s Market Analysis Centre. “Still, housing starts in November remain consistent with our forecast which calls for more moderate activity of 212,000 units this year and 178,000 units next year.”

“Note that at the beginning of the new millennium, Canada posted strong housing start levels given a pent-up demand that existed then. Over the last few years, this excess demand gradually decreased and our forecast for 2008 and 2009 reflects this new reality with housing starts, more aligned with long run demographic demand.”

The seasonally adjusted annual rate of urban starts decreased 21.6% to 144,800 units in November. Urban multiple starts moderated 29.1% to 81,700 units, while urban single starts eased 9.0% to 63,100 units in November.

November’s seasonally adjusted annual rate of urban starts moderated in all regions of Canada. Urban starts declined to 17,900 units in British Columbia, 23,500 units in the Prairies, 54,700 units in Ontario, 41,100 units in Quebec, and 7,600 units in the Atlantic region.

Rural starts were estimated at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 27,200 units in November.

For the first 11 months of 2008, actual starts in rural and urban areas combined moderated by an estimated 7.6 per cent, compared to the same period last year. Year-to-date actual starts in urban areas have decreased by an estimated 3.9% over the same period in 2007.

Actual urban single starts for the January to November period of 2008 were 18.4% lower than they were a year earlier while urban multiple starts were up by 8.6% over the same period.

Note: All starts figures in this release, other than actual starts, are seasonally adjusted annual rates (SAAR) – that is, monthly figures adjusted to remove normal seasonal variation and multiplied by 12 to reflect annual levels.

Source: Journal of Commerce



Canada: Alberta Leads the Charge Toward Solar Energy Innovation

24 November 2008 -- Canmore, Alberta uses the sun to make ice for its arena, which is just one of the municipality's solar-powered projects. Hot water makes better ice and the hotter the better. So, Canmore installed a solar system to heat more than 500 litres of water needed by the Zamboni each time it cleans the ice.

The system works very simply. When the sun is shining, even in the dead of winter, there is more than enough energy to heat a glycol mixture pumped to solar panels on the roof. The glycol then passes through a heat exchanger to heat the water and this is stored in large, insulated tanks.

The idea works especially well in Alberta because it is one of the sunniest provinces in Canada. "Solar is part of any sustainable solution," said Geoff Domenico, president of KCP ENERGY that installs such systems. Alberta, he added, has half again as much potential solar energy as the world's leaders in solar energy implementation, Germany and Japan. The solar initiatives were discussed at Construct Calgary on November 5, 2008. Another solar project of interest was the installation of a second solar-electric system (PhotoVoltaic) in Alberta on the Biosphere Institute of Bow Valley in late 2007. This small one kilowatt installation was designed to educate the public and to knock down bureaucratic barriers.

When Canmore committed to greening the community in 2004, regulations and service providers made it impossible to receive a benefit for any excess power that was put into the power grid. Soon after the installation of Canmore's solar electric system, the Government of Alberta, bowing to growing pressure, issued the Micro Generation Regulation in early 2008 to allow credit for power sent from these small units into the grid. However, such solar energy systems aren't a total substitute for conventional energy. If there isn't enough sun, a conventional system is on standby to ensure energy needs are met.

Lloyd Smith, Canmore's facility operations supervisor, said a number of lessons have already been learned from these projects. First, look for installers certified by the Canadian Solar Industries Association (CanSIA) because they will have the requisite training. Second, beware of roof load limitations. A structure must be able to support the added weight of the installation. If necessary, a structural engineer should be consulted. Third, be aware that any roof penetrations on a retrofit may interfere with a builder's warranty or insurance. They must be made by a qualified professional roofer. With these lessons in mind, Smith said a number of solar energy projects are planned for Canmore in 2009, including a seniors' centre, public works building and even individual homes.

Civic planners are encouraging all forms of sustainable techniques, including LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. The town's civic centre is already rated LEED Silver. Solar electric doesn't yet make a lot of economic sense for smaller systems, but Smith said he thinks the breakeven point will come by 2015. Solar hot water already makes economic sense. In addition, he believes that provisions for both will be part of a builder's rough-in within ten years.

Domenico is even more enthusiastic about the future of residential and commercial solar energy, especially for solar hot water. Events of the past 18 months demonstrate that savings of 20 to 50 per cent in energy operating costs are possible. In addition, solar electric, hot water and air (space heating) systems reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The solar hot water that the Zamboni uses will save 140 tonnes of GHG emissions over 20 years compared to using a natural gas boiler.



Source: Journal of Commerce