

5.3.5 Future Directions

It is evident that radiant barriers can result in substantial energy savings in the South, but continued DOE support is essential to determine the efficiency of radiant barriers in cold and moist climates. DOE could also facilitate the commercialization of radiant barriers by providing rough price and performance guidelines. Such a move would go a long way in guarding the public against fraud.

One spinoff from research has been that the use of radiant barriers in conjunction with loose fill insulation can result in prevention of heat loss due to convection. An interesting alternative to aluminum foil may be the use of tinsel as radiant barriers (Karnitz, 1988).

Existing energy analysis software programs for buildings, such as DOE-2, are incapable of adequately evaluating the effectiveness of radiant barriers. Research needs to be conducted so that these programs are capable of testing radiant barriers. This non-sophistication and cost effectiveness of the technology makes it very promising at least in the regions where it has been tested. The non-sophistication of the product is not without its costs, however, in that no firm can patent the technology and thereby protect its investment. Firms are less willing to promote a technology when their rivals will benefit from their promotional activities.

5.3.6 Sources of Information

Interviews

Roy Akers, Reflective Insulation Manufacturers Association, Irwindale, California, April and May 1988.