# Thermal Energy Storage in High Performance Buildings



*Twenty-Sixth Westford Symposium on Building Science*

Marc Rosenbaum, PE, CPHC, MA CSL – Energysmiths – West Tisbury, MA

# Why Bother?

#### Grid Stability and Integration of Renewable Energy Sources

#### **SEASONAL LOAD PROFILES ON GRID**

General daily patterns / grid loads are predictable, variability is mostly based on space conditioning loads.



#### Huge Thanks to Lisa White and PHIUS for these slides

#### CA ISO Load



#### CA ISO Renewable Generation



#### CA ISO Load After Renewables



#### ISO-NE

#### **New England ISO - April 2, 2022**



# Emissions Vary

#### Not all kWh's (used and produced) are equal

**Hourly Marginal** Carbon **Emissions will** continue to be dynamic.

**Price to meet** peak grid loads will remain dynamic.



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# Strategies

- Load reduction in buildings, both thermal and electrical
- Grid-interactive control two way grid
- Load shifting in time

#### Energy storage is a load-shifting strategy





# **Solar Net Metering Is Under**<br>Threat All Over The Threat All Over The US

#### **NET METERING UNDER ATTACK (AGAIN)!**

February 21, 2023 | 2 min read



#### Why Bother?

#### Resilience in Grid Outage Events



### Electric Storage Batteries

- Most flexible type of storage
- Provides grid outage resilience
- Provides load shifting and peak shaving
- Boosts % of site-generated energy that is consumed on-site





#### Electric Storage Batteries

- **Expensive**
- Capacity drops over time
- Don't provide the inherent resilience of a superb enclosure with thermal storage
- Best application may be in distributed microgrids
- For many of us as homeowners, V2B is the future

Nation's first Electric CarShare Vehicle-to-Building (V<sub>2</sub>B) Technology!





# Heat is the Biggest Load

Electric usage February 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> 2016 after snowstorm covered the PV system. Superinsulated house with passive solar gain





#### Time Constant



From *On the thermal inertia and time constant of single family houses*, Hedbrant

### Time Constant for Buildings

Thermal Capacity per ˚F change in temperature (BTU/˚F)

Heat loss coefficient, UA (BTU/hr-˚F)

A range of thermal capacity of light frame houses might be 5-7 BTU/sf-˚F

A range of UA of light frame houses might be 0.125 – 0.625 BTU/hr-sf-˚F (2000 sf house 15-75,000 BTU/hr)

Therefore, a range of time constant of light frame houses would be 10-50 hours

A 2018 paper (John et al) analyzed data from over 10,000 Ecobee thermostats and estimated that a majority of time constants were in the 15-55 hour range

#### Time Constant and Cool Down



# 1 Week Heating Resilience

CHICAGO NV Heating Outage Resilience



#### Thanks to Al Mitchell, Graham Wright, and PHIUS for this slide

# A Taxonomy of Thermal Storage



#### Passive Solar Design Handbooks



#### https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/5672634

#### Passive Freestanding





Phase Change pouches over metal ceiling panels



Photos courtesy of Amanda Nickerson and E. Lord – Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests Conservation Center – Banwell Architects

#### Passive Structurally Integrated



Doug Kelbaugh's Trombe (mass) wall house in Princeton NJ 15" concrete with black selective surface Mass walls delay the solar heat delivery (best when unvented)

#### Passive Thermal Storage

The material parameter that matters is *thermal effusivity e*

 $e \neq k^* \rho^* C p$ 

Thermal effusivity is a measure of a material's ability to exchange thermal energy with its environment.

The square root of thermal conductivity (k) times density  $(\rho)$  times specific heat (*Cp)*. Density times specific heat is volumetric heat capacity - how much heat a material holds per degree of temperature change  $(BTU/ft^3 - F)$ .

So, how much energy can penetrate into the surface of a material is dependent on both how well it conducts heat, and how much heat it can hold.

# Thermal Effusivity of Materials



*Thin* layers of materials like plaster and wood can store usable amounts of heat when applied over lots of area

### Direct Gain Passive Guidelines

- Up to 7-8% net S glazing/floor area needs no additional storage
- Above that, 5-6 sf of *directly sunlit* thermal storage per 1 sf additional sf of glazing
- Or, 40 sf of indirect (convective) thermal mass connected to the space (here, thin is OK)

#### Plaster and wood



#### Straw Bale and Timber - New Frameworks Natural Building

# Masonry floors, wood structure & decking



#### Kern Center Living Building Hampshire College – Bruner Cott

## Masonry floors, wood structure & decking



#### Winston Underground House – Don Metz Architect

#### Cross-laminated Timber





# Precast Concrete (or other masonry?)





#### Hillside Center for Sustainable Living Hall & Moskow (developers) Moskow Linn Architects

#### Middlebury Bicentennial Hall – Payette Architects



#### Precast Concrete



- Precast concrete on steel beams
- Absorbs daily heat (no A/C)
- Shape reflects uplighting down
- Shape reflects sound onto sound absorption panels

Wessex Water – Bath, England Bennetts Architects Buro Happold Engineers *Integration of design team from conceptual stage*



NERDS

#### Active Thermal Storage

- Storage is (usually) remote
- Storage is dispatchable according to need
- Much higher  $\Delta T$  is possible
- Power is needed to charge/discharge (not always both)

# Masonry Structurally Integrated - Air







- Hollowcore precast planks
- Ventilation air delivered in space conditioning air
- 35,000 sf building, 5 zones
- CMU walls add passive mass
- Highest occupant satisfaction in PROBE Study

# Masonry Structurally Integrated - Hydronic







- PEX tubing in topping slab over precast hollowcore plank
- Both floor and ceilings are thermally active
- Floor dominates in heating; ceilings dominate in cooling
- Latent load removed in ventilation air

Dartmouth McLaughlin Dorms – Moore Rubell Yudell / Bruner Cott Dan Nall – mechanical engineer

# Masonry Structurally Integrated - Hydronic



PEX tubing in topping slab over precast hollowcore plank

#### Fan-forced Rockbed

#### Active storage; passive release



Solar attic above greenhouse charges the air up to 110˚F for more energy stored per CFM in





#### this VT house this VT house  $\frac{1}{2}$  Matick Community Greenhouse – Jon Romig Architect

#### Fan-forced Rockbed



#### Fan-forced Water Containers

#### Active storage; passive release







#### 45˚F min. temp. at -7˚F outdoors



#### Fan-forced Water Containers

#### Active storage; passive release





#### Active Solar Thermal Water Storage









1,200 gallons @ 80˚F ∆T Back-up energy in very low energy solar buildings varies year to year (2:1 here)

 $= 800,000$  BTU

### Active Annual Solar Thermal Water Storage



#### Swiss Federal Statistics Building



- Prototypical Multifamily
- 23,300 sf
- 32 Units
- Phius Enclosure Spec



#### Thanks to Al Mitchell and PHIUS for these slides

















Time of Day

# PV/A-WHP w/ Thermal Water Storage

- 4,500 sf footprint airplane hangar with office space
- Owner wanted maximum onsite consumption of solar energy
- Non-optimal solar orientation and tilt
- A-WHP and hydronic radiant floor slab
- "Brick in a box" Excel hourly model to inform sizing of storage and PV
- Hourly model of PV gain and outdoor temp from PV Watts
- Hourly heating; cooling; DHW; EV; plug and lighting loads
- A-WHP COP vs. outdoor temp varied from manufacturer's data



# Model Inputs and Outputs



#### Model starts September 1st

#### Results: Ten Cases Modeled



# The Winter Trough



1,000 Gallons (98 kWh) of Thermal Storage

![](_page_48_Figure_3.jpeg)

10,000 Gallons (978 kWh) of Thermal Storage

Note that the vertical axis, kWh in storage, is *ten times higher* in the 10,000 gallon case.

Solar availability and high heating loads always produce the winter trough. The same result occurred on the solar thermal house in Hanover, NH – the tank dropped from peak temperature to minimum temperature for 6-8 weeks then bounces back up.

#### Add Electric Batteries

![](_page_49_Picture_14.jpeg)

This is a simplified model on the battery side, likely overestimates the energy stored

# An Off-grid House

- 4,400 sf house on Martha's Vineyard with a heated pool
- 32.4 kW PV; 138 kWh battery storage; propane generator
- Hourly model to optimize systems
- Systems design by Brice Delhougne Energylogik

![](_page_50_Figure_5.jpeg)

![](_page_50_Figure_6.jpeg)

# An Off-grid House

![](_page_51_Figure_1.jpeg)

#### Thank You!

![](_page_52_Picture_1.jpeg)