

BUILDINGENERGY BOSTON

Passive House Ventilation:

Humidity Considerations in Multi-Family Residential

August 13, 2020 · 3:00 pm

Presenter:

**Mike Woolsey, Certified Passive House Designer
(Swegon)**

Course Description

Passive House buildings and their occupants benefit from airtight construction. Infiltration and exfiltration are minimized, directly reducing energy used to ventilate, heat, and cool the building. Occupants benefit from the elimination of drafts and warmer indoor surface temperatures. Airtight construction also hinders airborne indoor moisture from escaping the building through the building skin, or from dry outdoor air infiltrating the building. Multifamily residential projects are at greater risk of moisture buildup due to the way spaces are used. This course examines causes of and solutions to humidity buildup in Passive House buildings.

Learning Objectives

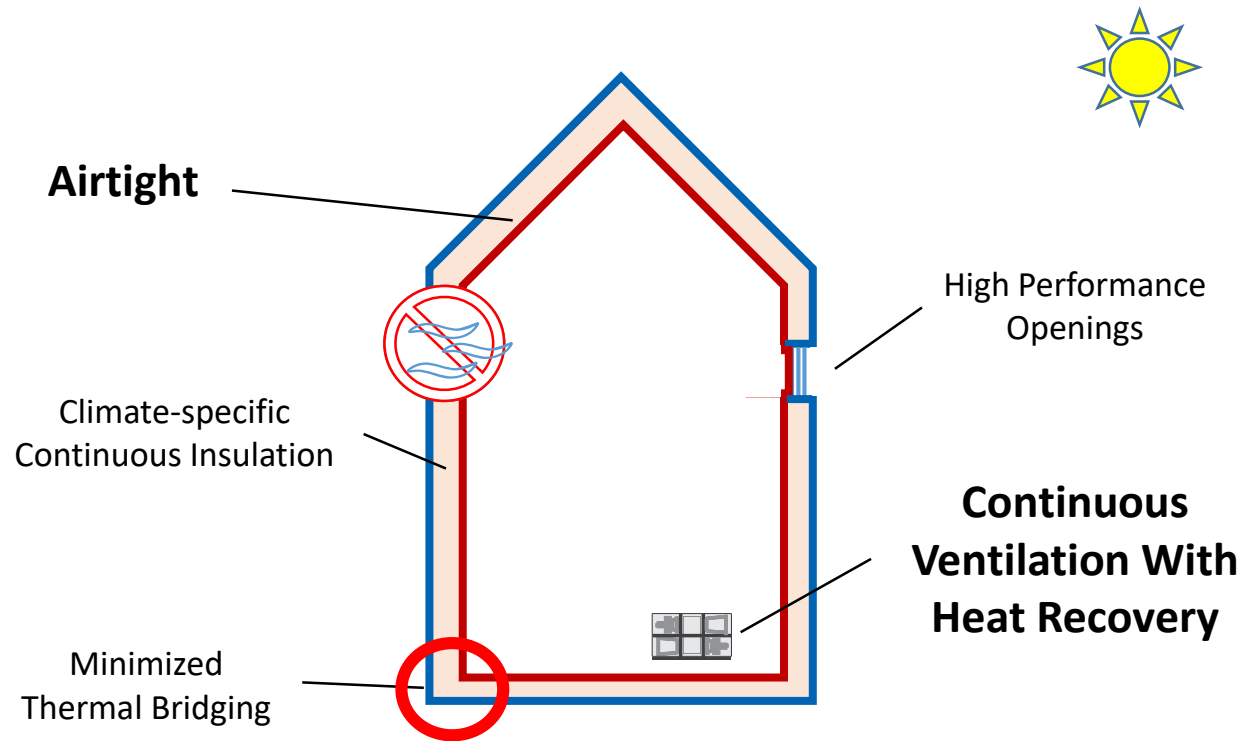
At the end of this program, participants will be able to understand:

1. the impact of airtight construction on moisture control
2. indoor humidity sources and interactions
3. ventilation system influence on indoor humidity
4. tradeoffs between humidity control and energy savings

Air-tight Construction and Indoor Moisture



PASSIVE HOUSE CHARACTERISTICS



AIRTIGHT CONSTRUCTION Saves Energy - Requires Continuous Ventilation

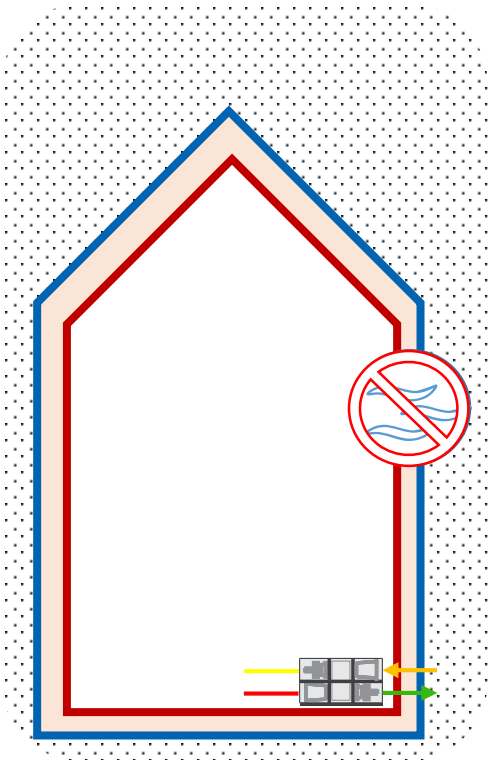


Photo courtesy of Rockwool

Airtight layer

- **saves energy** by minimizing infiltration of unconditioned air, and exfiltration of conditioned air
- **improves comfort** by reducing draftiness, enhancing insulation performance and keeping fine airborne particles outside
- **traps moisture** and contaminants

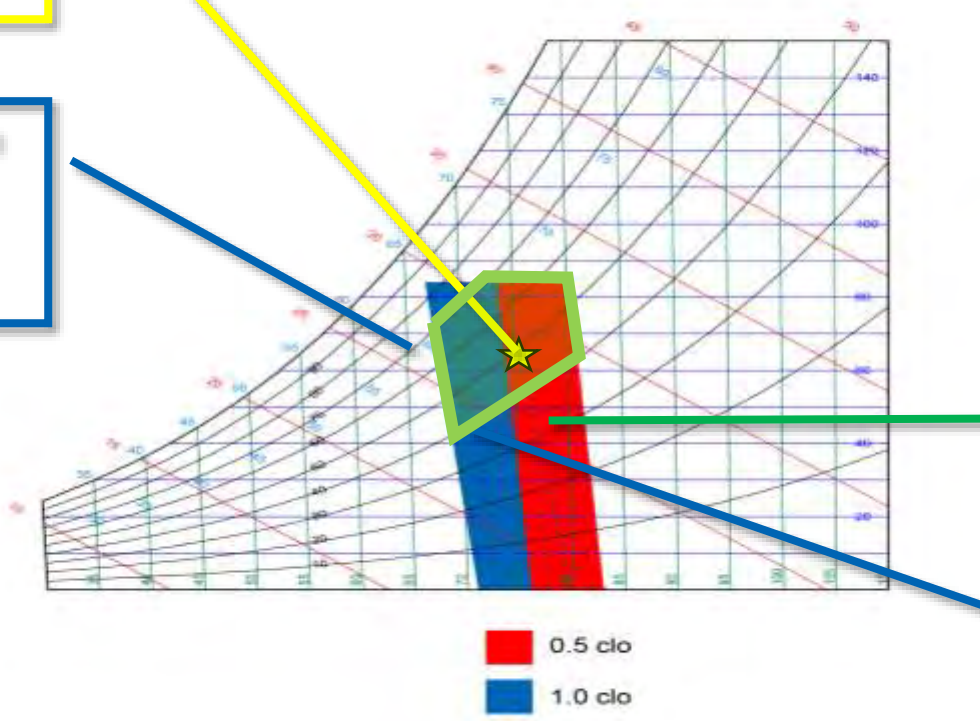
Continuous ventilation

- Replaces moist and contaminated air with **conditioned fresh air**

INDOOR HUMIDITY for comfort, health, resilience

Traditional indoor comfort design target "Setpoint"

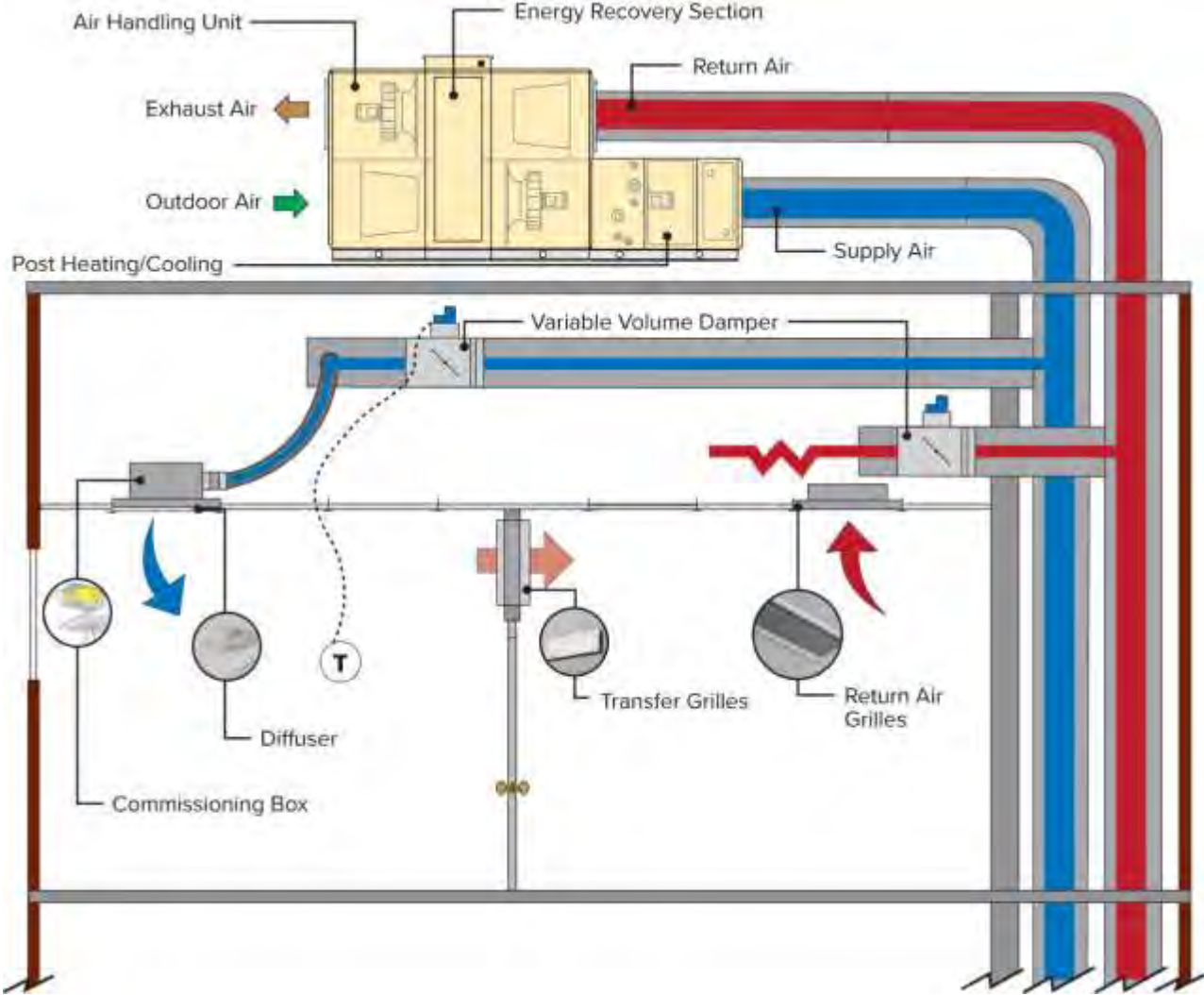
60% Maximum RH Goal for building resilience



ASHRAE 55 Comfort target range

40% Minimum RH Goal of for human health

PASSIVE HOUSE VENTILATION SOLUTION Typical Multifamily Residence - Centralized



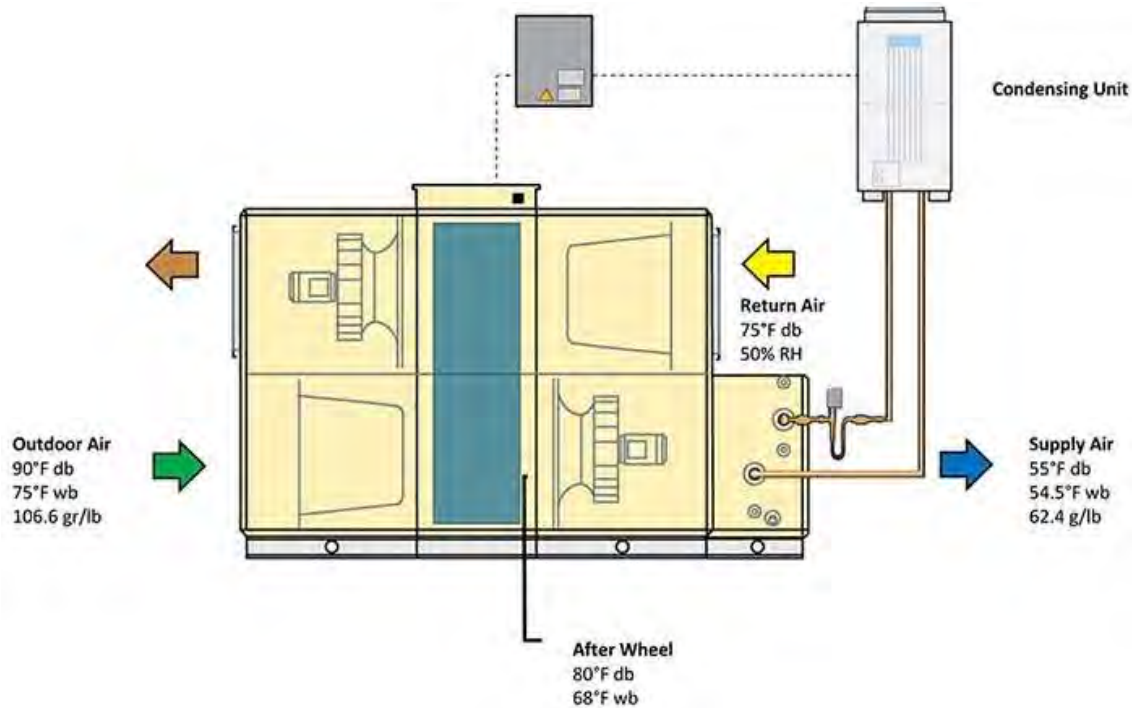
PASSIVE HOUSE VENTILATION SOLUTION

Typical Multifamily Residence – as installed



Photo: ICF Builder Magazine

AIRTIGHT BUILDING Summer – cooling



Summer - High Outside Air Humidity

- ✓ Energy Recovery system rejects outside air moisture
- ✓ Post-cooling system further removes moisture from Supply Air
- ✓ Moist Indoor Air continuously replaced by cool, dry air
- ✓ Indoor surfaces are warm, posing low condensation risk

AIRTIGHT BUILDING

Winter – heating



If the outside temperature is:	Then condensation will occur on the inner glass surface if the interior relative humidity rises above:	
° C (°F)	Double Glazed Windows % of Humidity	Triple Glazed Windows % of Humidity
-40 (-40)	25	36
-34 (-35)	28	39
-28 (-20)	33	44
-23 (-12)	38	48
-18 (0)	44	53
-12 (10)	50	63
-7 (20)	57	67
-1 (30)	63	72

Winter - Low Outside Air Humidity

- ✓ Outside Air contains little moisture
- ☒ RISK: Energy Recovery system may return building moisture to the building
- ☒ PASSIVE HOUSE RISK: Airtightness reduces moisture egress through building leaks and permeance
- ☒ PASSIVE HOUSE RISK: Airtightness prevent infiltration of dry air
- ☒ Surfaces are cool, more likely to condense than summer

Indoor Humidity

Sources and Interactions



INDOOR HUMIDITY Sources*

Liquid moisture	Gaseous moisture	(Solid)
Precipitation	Outdoor Air (summer)	Ice
Construction materials (concrete, mortar, plaster, etc)	Occupant Respiration and Perspiration	
Condensation	Occupant activities (cooking, showering, laundering, etc.)	
Deferred maintenance (pipe leaks, groundwater, envelope leaks)	Occupant possessions (houseplants, pets, firewood)	
*Source: 2017 ASHRAE Fundamentals, Chapter 36 Moisture Management in Buildings ASHRAE, Atlanta GA		

INDOOR HUMIDITY Load Estimating Methods



4.3 Indoor Design Humidity. If the HVAC equipment and controls are included in the design, the intended design indoor humidity shall be used.

Required ERV Design Input Values

- Outside Air Temperature
- Outside Air Humidity
- Supply Air Temperature
- Supply Air Humidity
- Return Air Temperature*
- Return Air Humidity*

*Return Air conditions represent occupied zone conditions, are often assumed based on tradition and commercial buildings, and therefore deserve close review for Passive House projects

INDOOR HUMIDITY Load Estimating Methods

Table 15.1 *Moisture production due to occupant breathing and sweating*

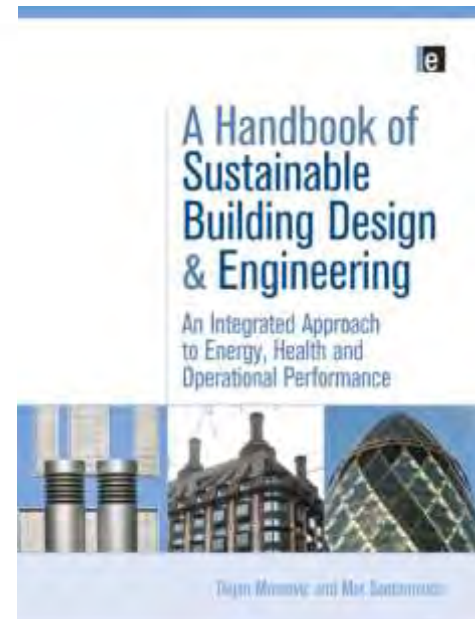
Author	Moisture production rate per person
BS5250	Asleep (40g/h) Awake (55g/h)
Annex 27	Adult asleep (30g/h) Adult awake (55g/h) Child asleep (12.5g/h) Child awake (40g/h)
HMSO (1970)	0.625kg/day
Finbow (1982)	0.752kg/day
BRE (1985)	Person asleep (0.25–0.5kg/day) Person active (0.7–1.5kg/day)
CTBSE (1986)	0.96–2.4kg/day
CTBSE (1999)	40–100g/h
Boyd et al (1988)	0.7425kg/day
Angeli and Olson (1988)	1.26kg/day
Sturm (1992)	1.44kg/day
Latibarek (1993)	65g/h
Hansen (2002)	180g/h
Treschu	
Roussel	

Table 15.2 *Moisture due to cooking*

Author	Moisture production rate per person
BS5250	Gas (3 kg/day) Electricity (2 kg/day)
Annex 27 (includes dishwasher)	Breakfast (50g/h) Lunch (130g/h) Dinner (300g/h)
HMSO (1970)	0.525kg/day
Finbow (1982)	0.6kg/day
BRE (1985)	0.5–1kg/day
CTBSE (1986, 1999)	0.9–3 kg/day
Boyd et al (1988)	Gas (3kg/day) Electricity (2kg/day)
Angeli and Olson (1988)	Gas (1.35kg/day) Electricity (1.0kg/day)
Latibarek (1993)	Breakfast gas/electricity (520/200g/day) Lunch gas/electricity (300/680g/day)
Hansen (2002)	
Treschu (2001)	
Roussel (1984)	
Prelove (2000)	

Table 15.3 *Moisture due to washing clothes*

Author	Moisture production rate per dwelling
BS5250	0.5kg/day
Annex 27	0.2kg/day
HMSO (1970)	2.0kg/day
Finbow (1982)	1.0kg/day
BRE (1985)	0.5–1.0kg/day
CTBSE (1986, 1999)	0.5–1.8kg/day
Meyringer (1985)	0.15kg/day
Boyd et al (1988)	0.5kg/day
Sturm (1992)	0.65kg/day
Hansen (2002)	1.96kg/day
Prelove (2000)	0.5kg/day



HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

Apartment Humidity Loads

Source	Pints	Grains
5 Minute Shower	0.5	3650
Indoor drying of cloths	4-6 per load	29225-43840 per load
5-7 house plants	1/day	7300/day
Washing Dishes (Dinner, family of 4)	0.7	5100
Cooking (Dinner, Family of 4)	1.2 (1.5 with gas cooktop)	8770 (10950 with gas cooktop)
Respiration/Perspiration	0.4/hr	3040/hr
Evaporation, New Construction Materials	10+/day	73000+/day
1 Cord Green Firewood, stored indoors for 6 mo	400-800	2.9M-5.8M

*Source: Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota

INDOOR HUMIDITY interactions*

Outside conditions	Inside conditions	Envelope	HVAC
Temperature	INTERIOR SOURCES	Heat flow	Heating/cooling
RELATIVE HUMIDITY	Temperature	AIR FLOW	DE- /HUMIDIFICATION
Solar Radiation	Relative Humidity	LIQUID/VAPOR FLOW	(De)Pressurization
WIND	Air pressure		VENTILATION
Vapor Pressure	Vapor pressure		
Precipitation			
*2017 ASHRAE Fundamentals, Chapter 36 Moisture Management in Buildings ASHRAE, Atlanta GA			

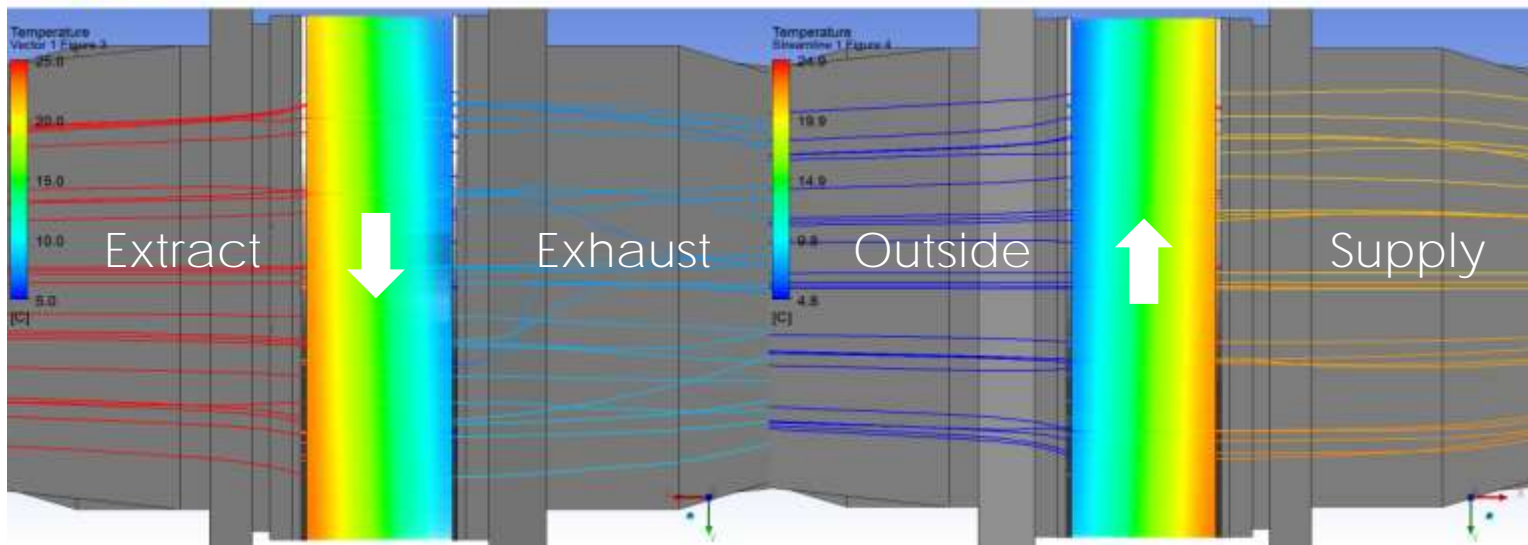
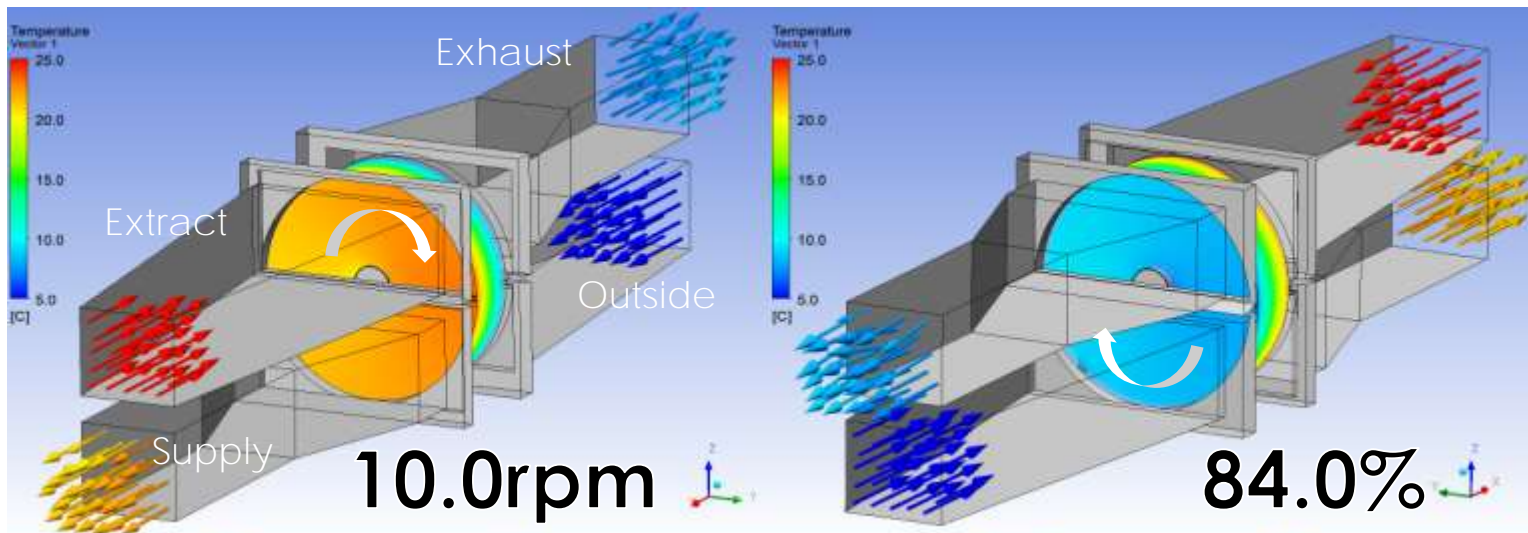
Ventilation System

Design for Humidity Control



SYSTEM DESIGN

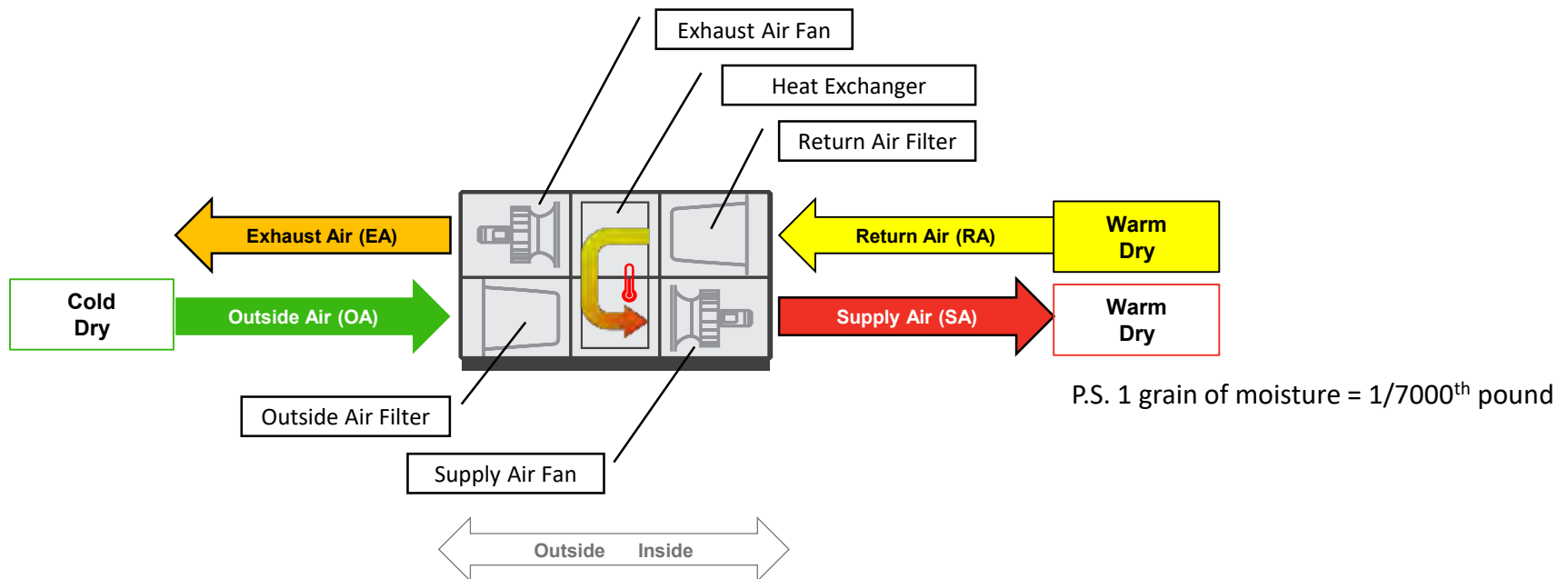
Heat or Energy Recovery?



SYSTEM DESIGN - HEAT RECOVERY VENTILATOR (HRV)

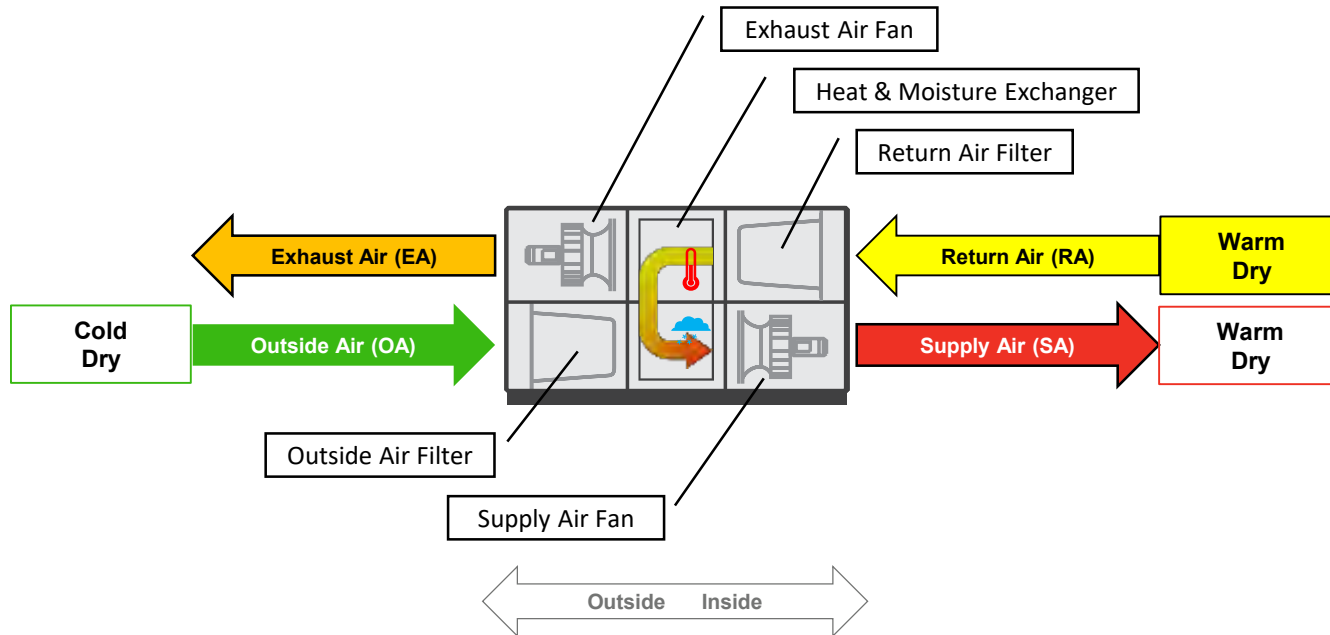
Winter Operation – dry indoor air

Function	Result
Continuous Ventilation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe and comfortable indoor air
Heat recovered from Return Air	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heating costs reduced <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> new energy use reduced
Moisture in Return Air is exhausted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drying effect when Outside Air is drier than Return Air <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Possibility of over-drying <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Summer heat-rejection benefit is lost



SYSTEM DESIGN - ENERGY RECOVERY VENTILATOR (ERV) Winter Operation – dry indoor air

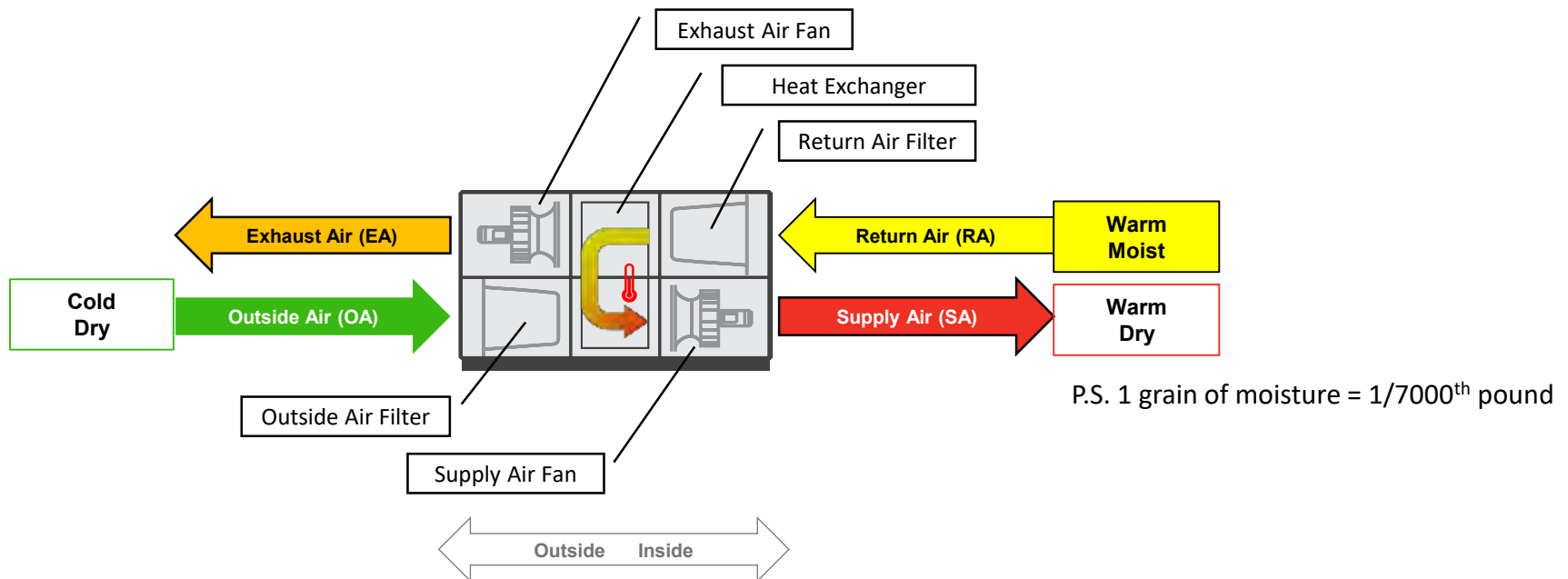
Function	Result
Continuous Ventilation	☑ Safe and comfortable indoor air
Heat recovered from Return Air	☑ Heating costs reduced ☑ new energy use reduced
Moisture recovered from Return Air	☑ Increased comfort



SYSTEM DESIGN - HEAT RECOVERY VENTILATOR (HRV)

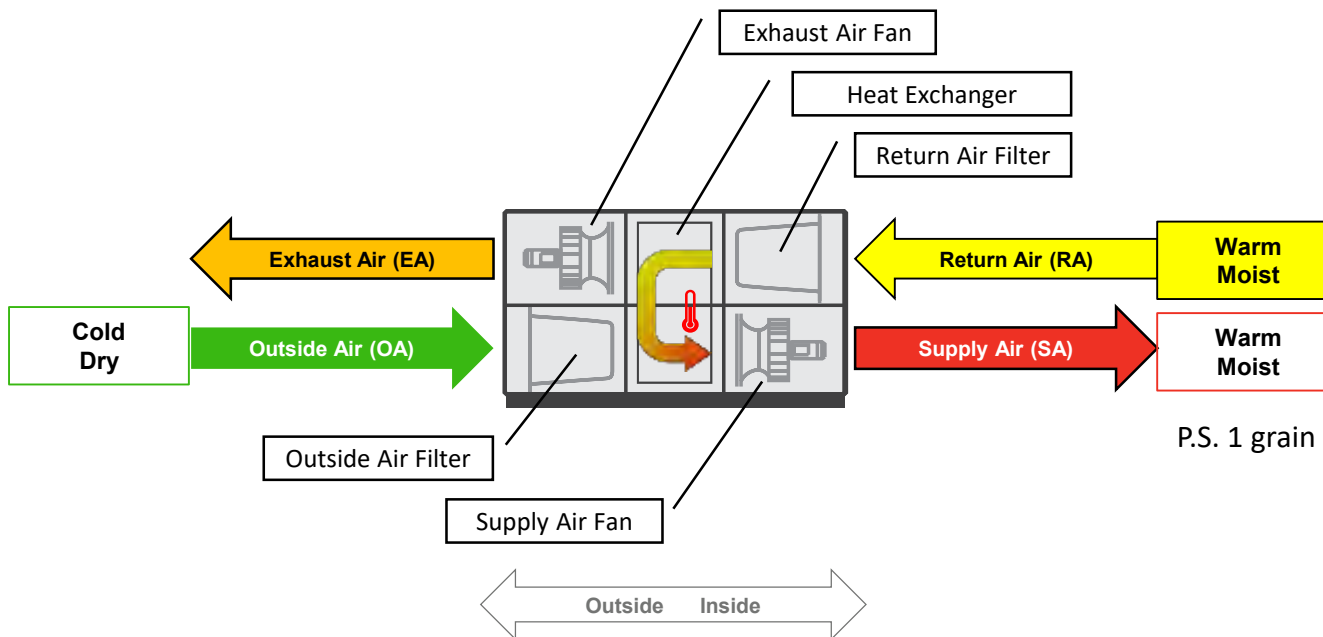
Winter Operation – moist indoor air

Function	Result
Continuous Ventilation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe and comfortable indoor air
Heat recovered from Return Air	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heating costs reduced <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> new energy use reduced
Moisture in Return Air is exhausted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drying effect when Outside Air is drier than Return Air <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Possibility of over-drying <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Summer heat-rejection benefit is lost



SYSTEM DESIGN - ENERGY RECOVERY VENTILATOR (ERV) Winter Operation – moist indoor air

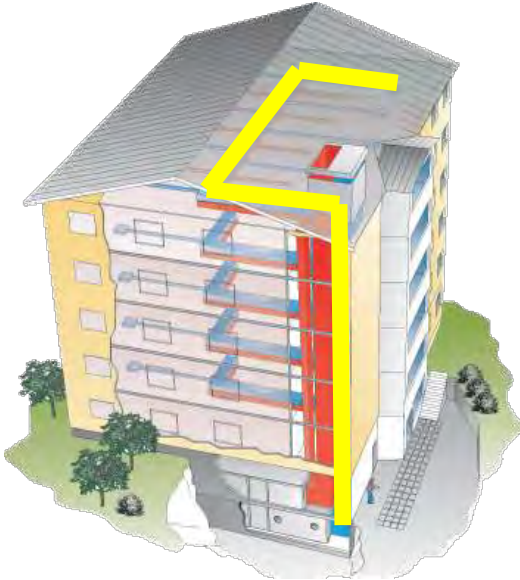
Function	Result
Continuous Ventilation	☑ Safe and comfortable indoor air
Heat recovered from Return Air	☑ Heating costs reduced ☑ new energy use reduced
Moisture in Return Air is returned to building	☒ Risk of contributing to moisture buildup



P.S. 1 grain of moisture = 1/7000th pound

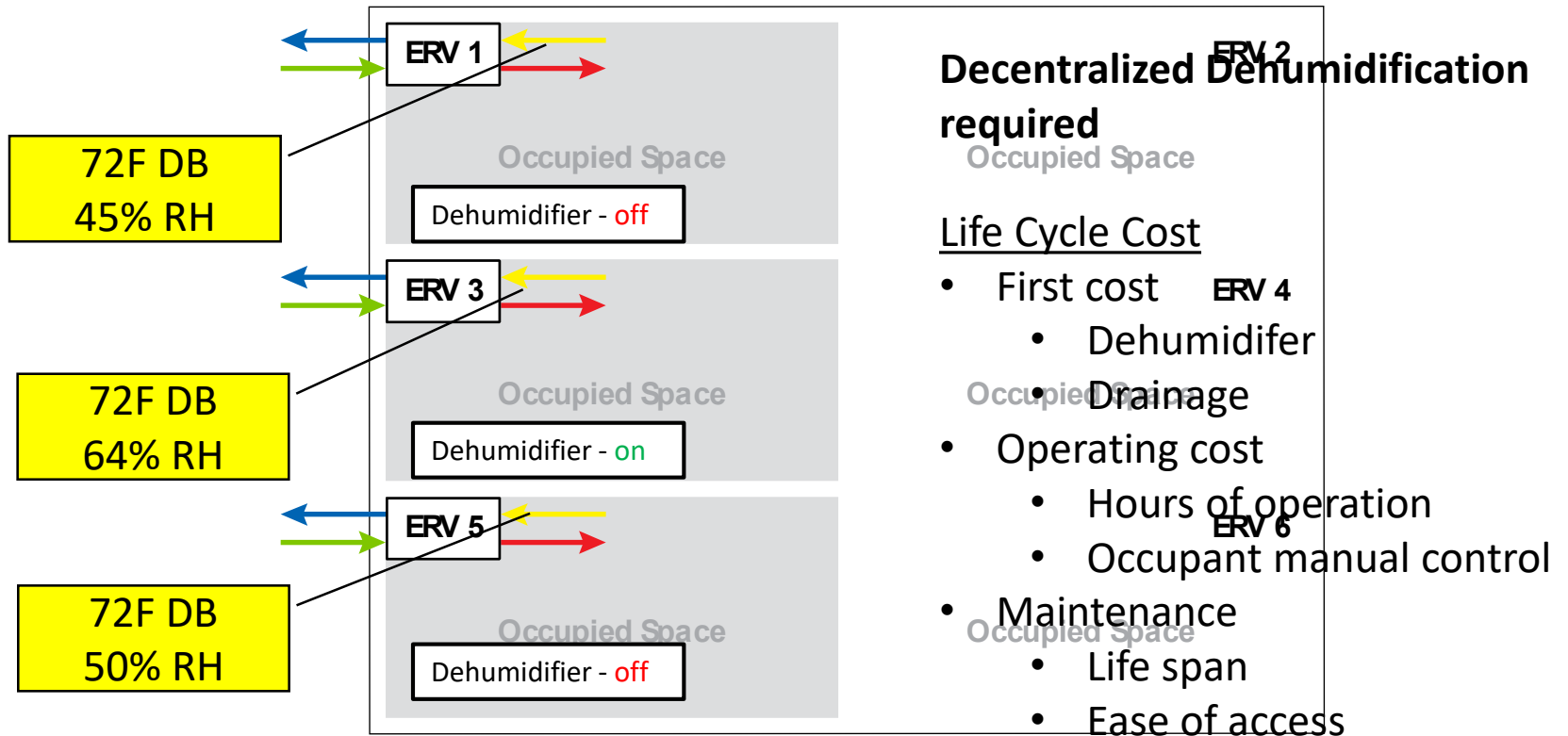
SYSTEM DESIGN

Centralized or Decentralized?



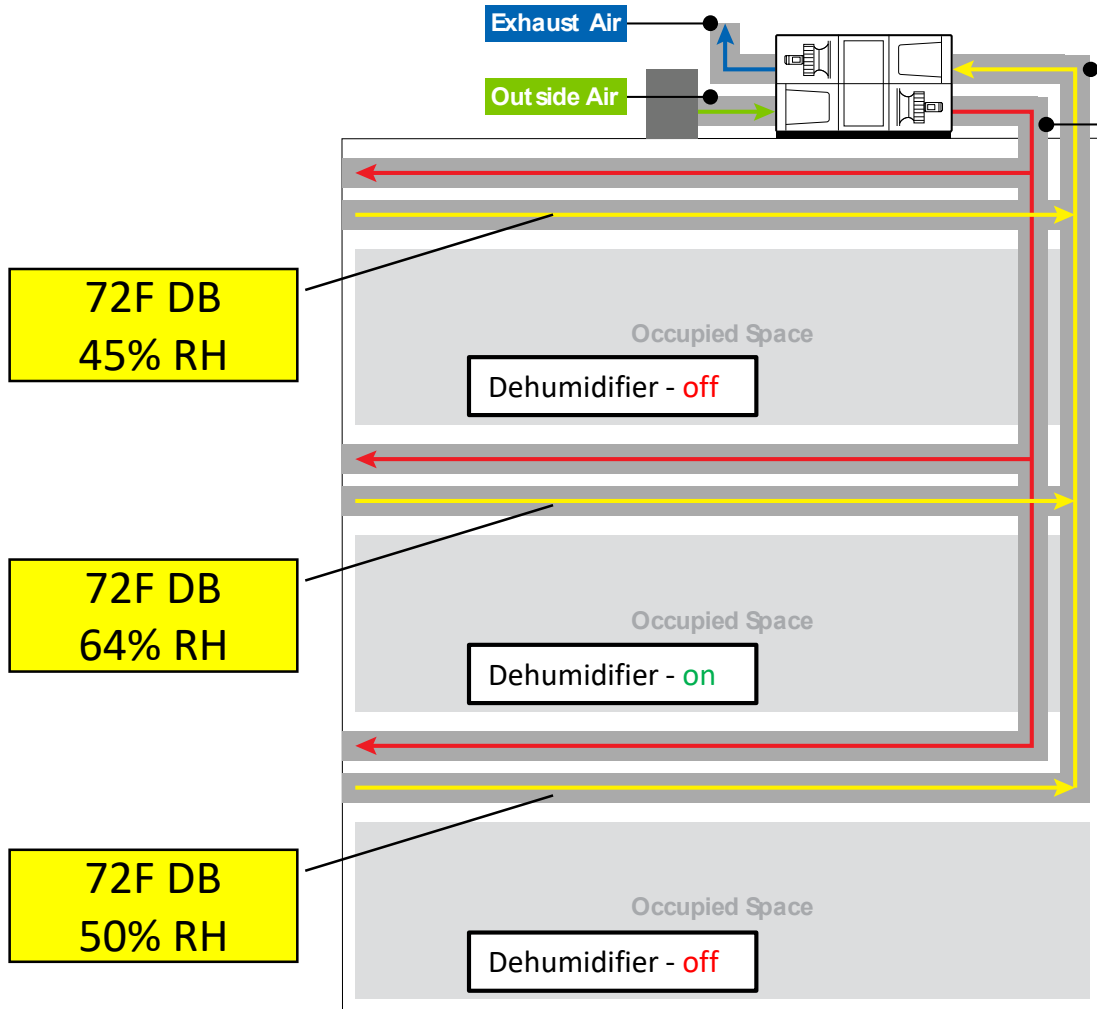
SYSTEM DESIGN

Decentralized Ventilation + Decentralized dehumidifier



SYSTEM DESIGN

Centralized Ventilation – decentralized dehumidification

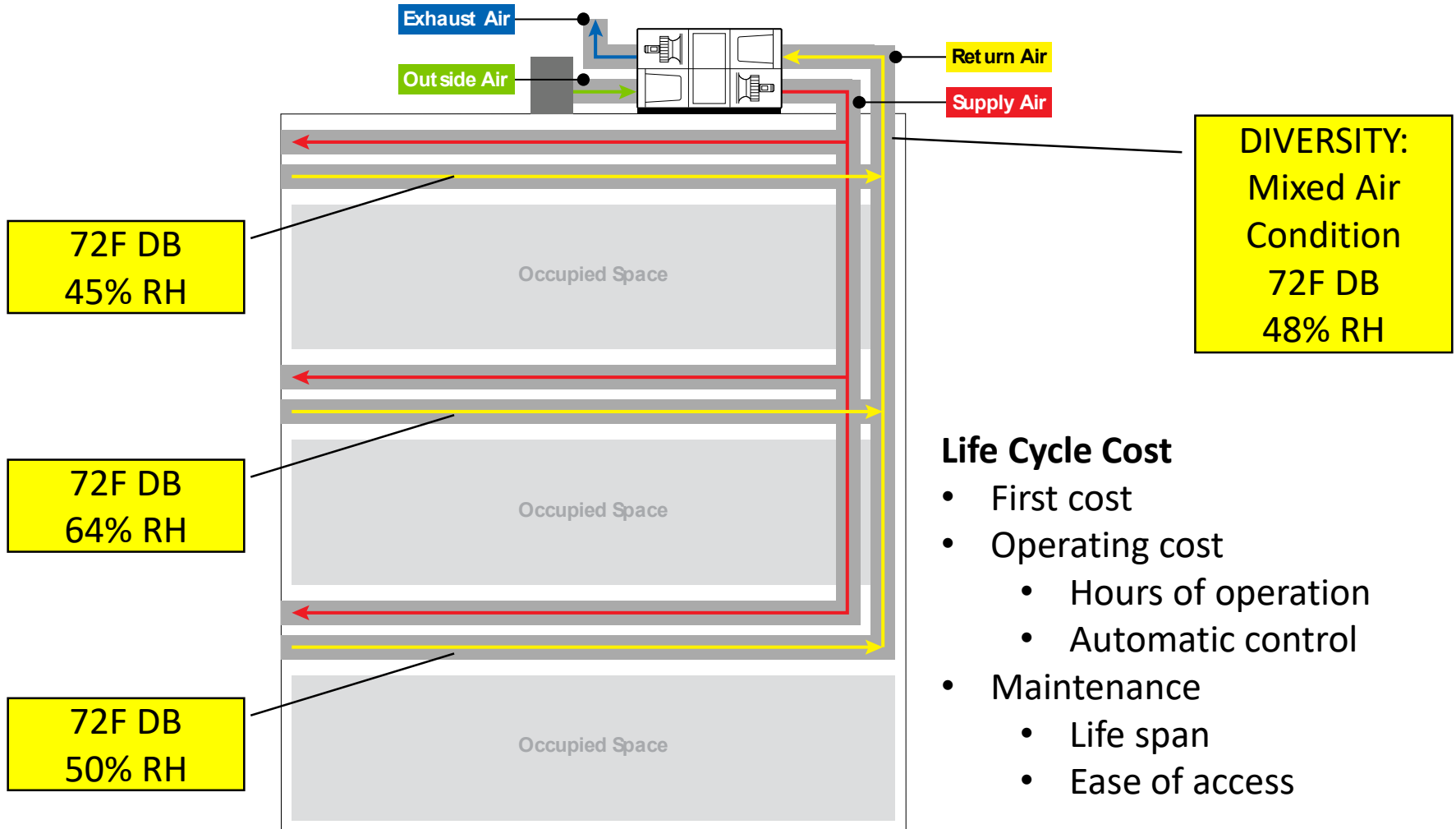


Life Cycle Cost

- First cost
 - Dehumidifier
 - Drainage
- Operating cost
 - Hours of operation
 - Occupant manual control
- Maintenance
 - Life span
 - Ease of access

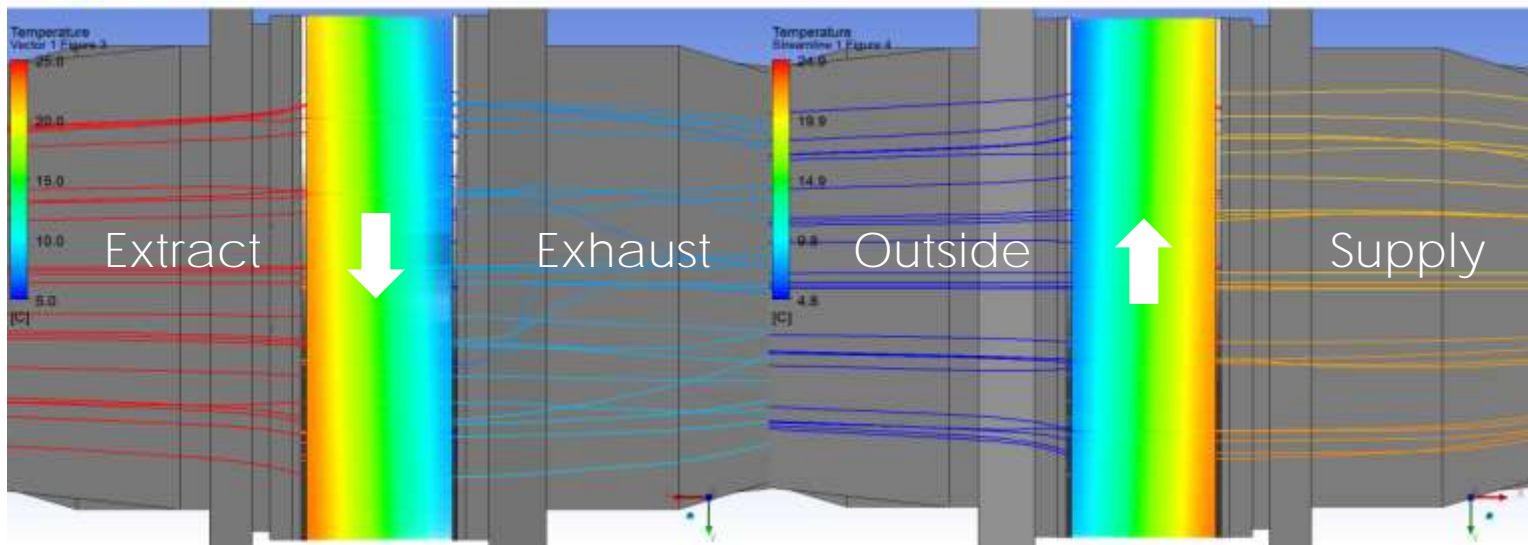
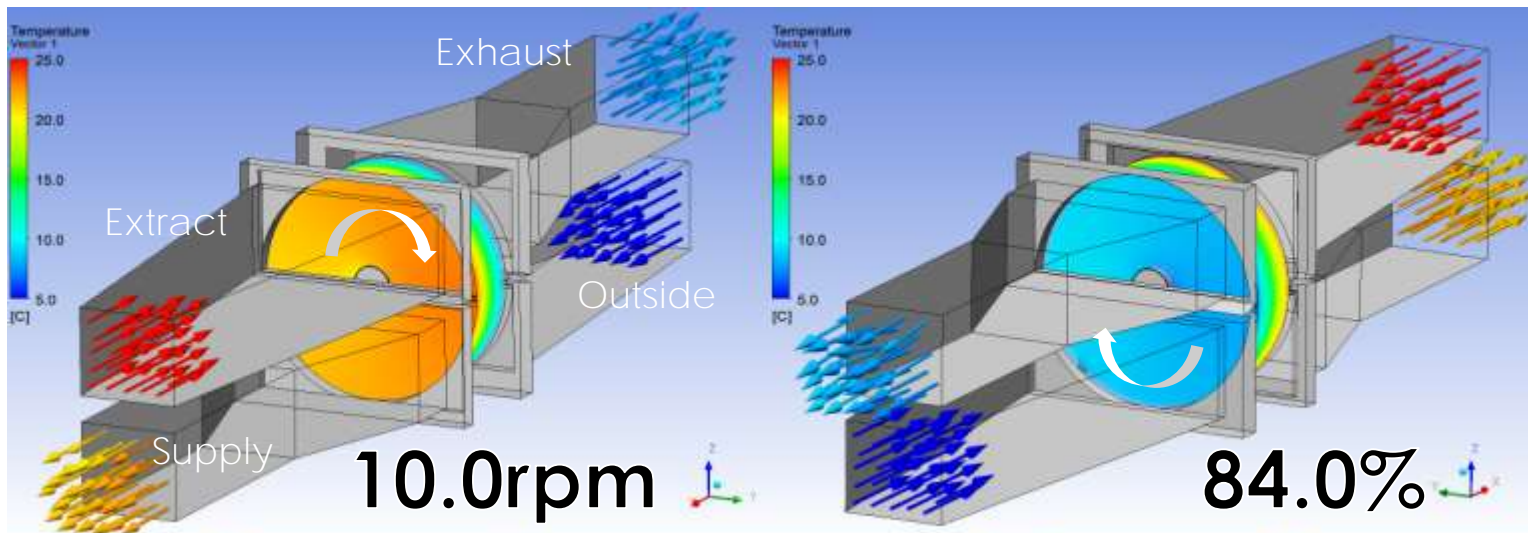
SYSTEM DESIGN

Centralized Ventilation – centralized dehumidification



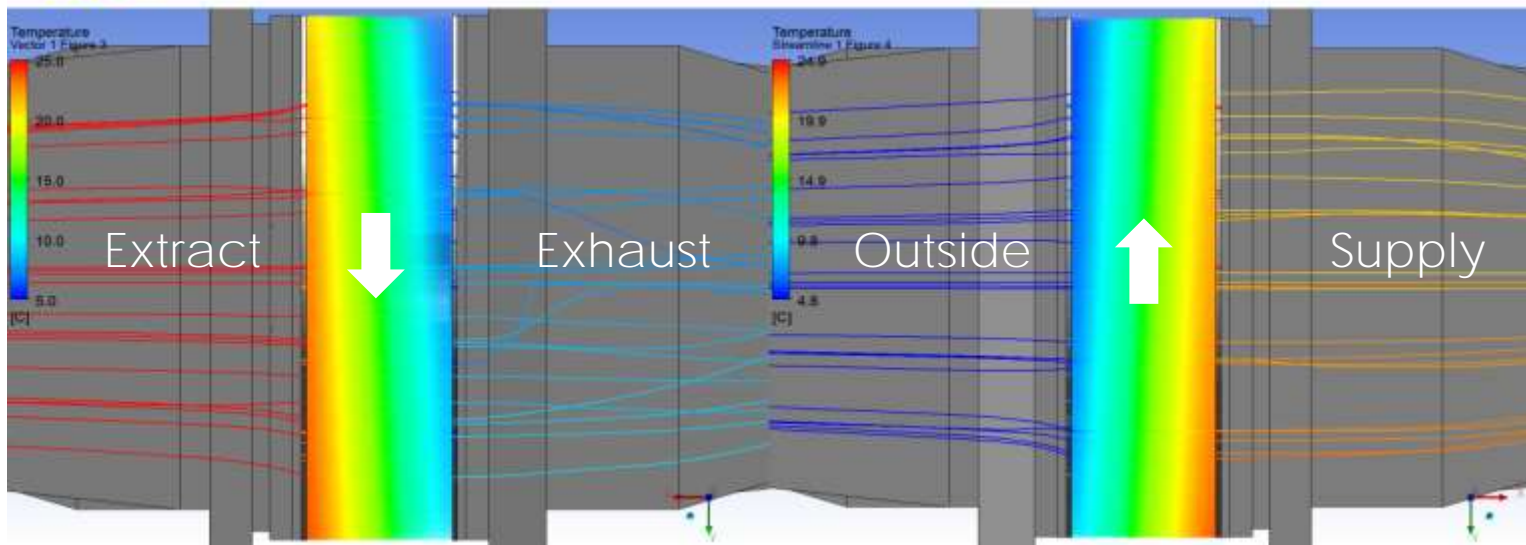
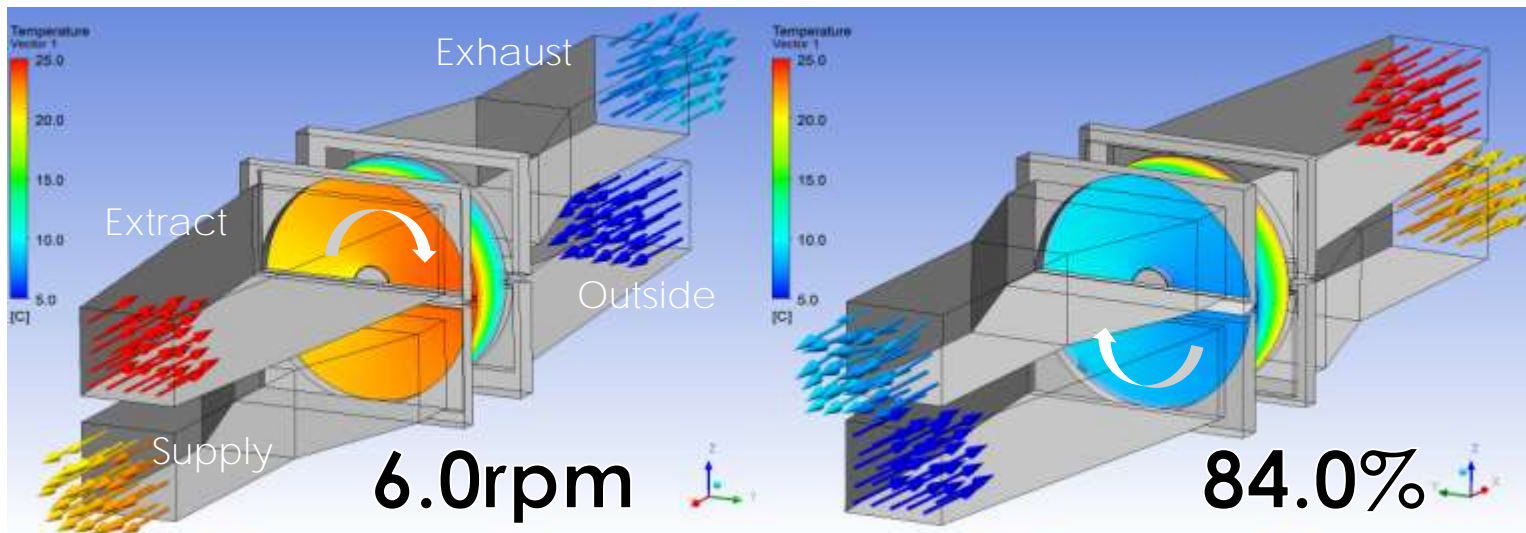
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



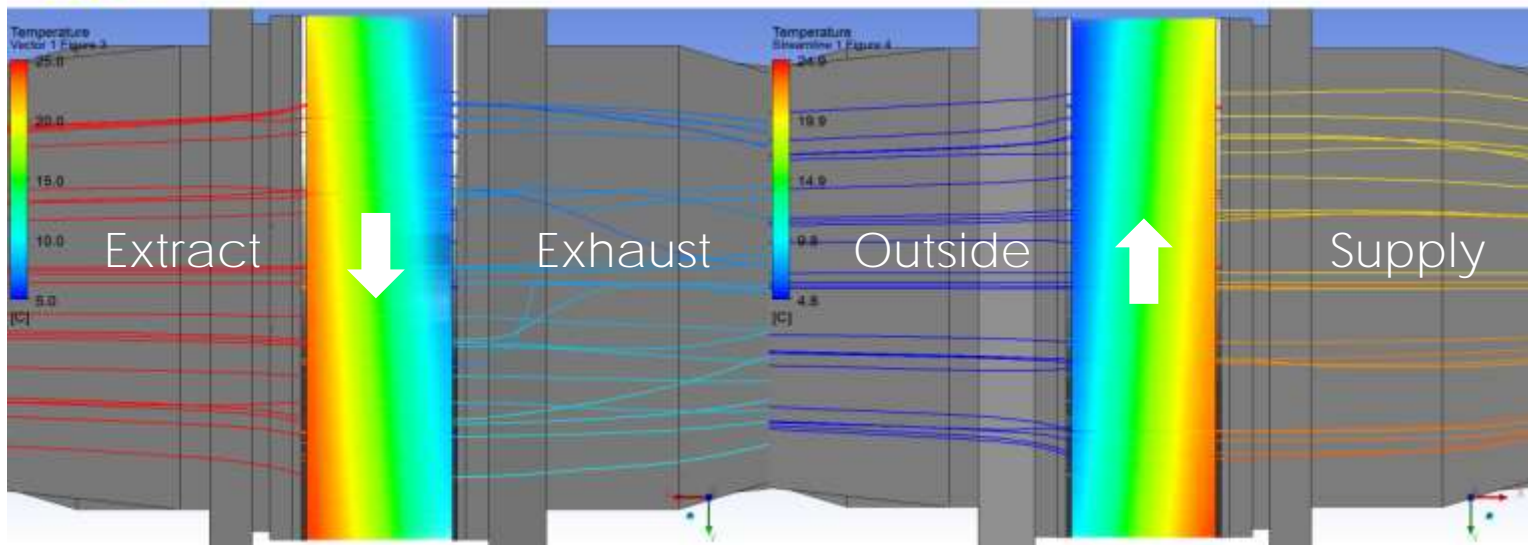
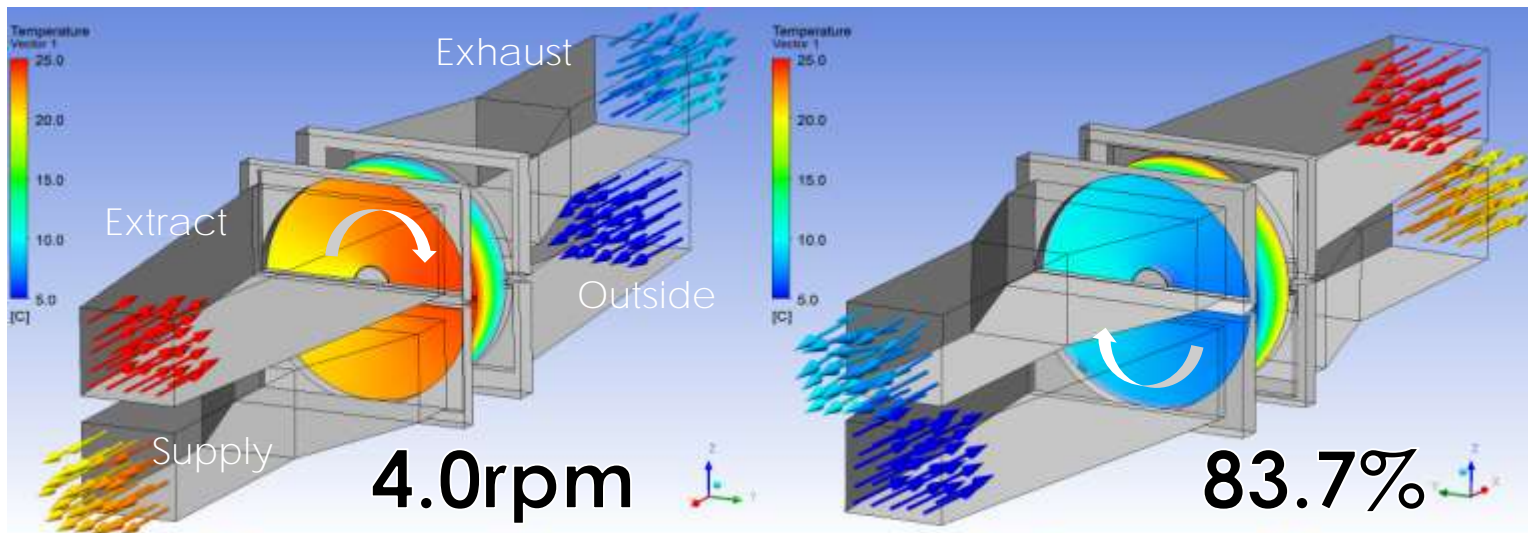
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



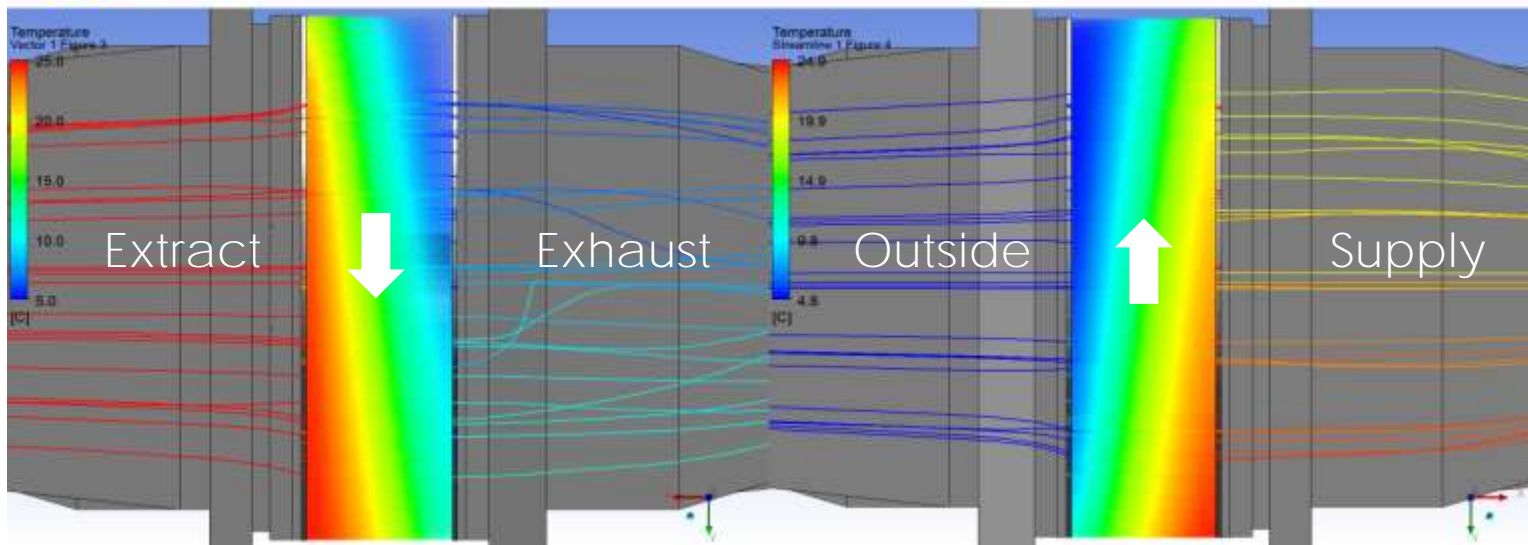
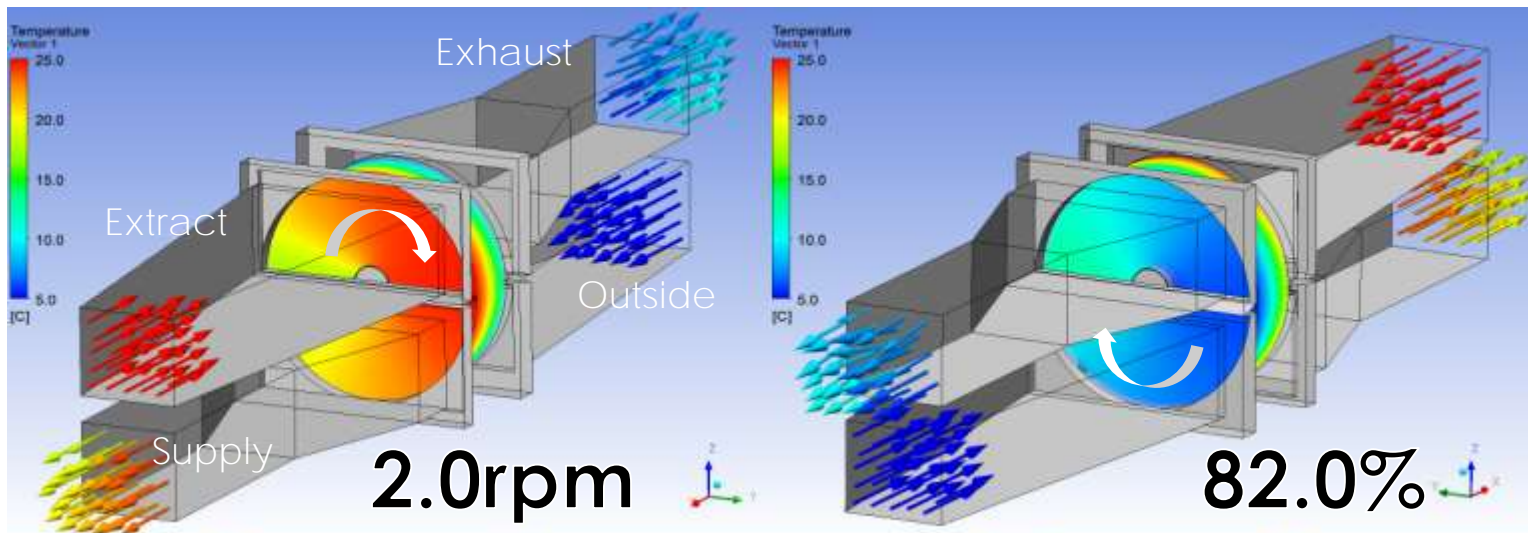
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



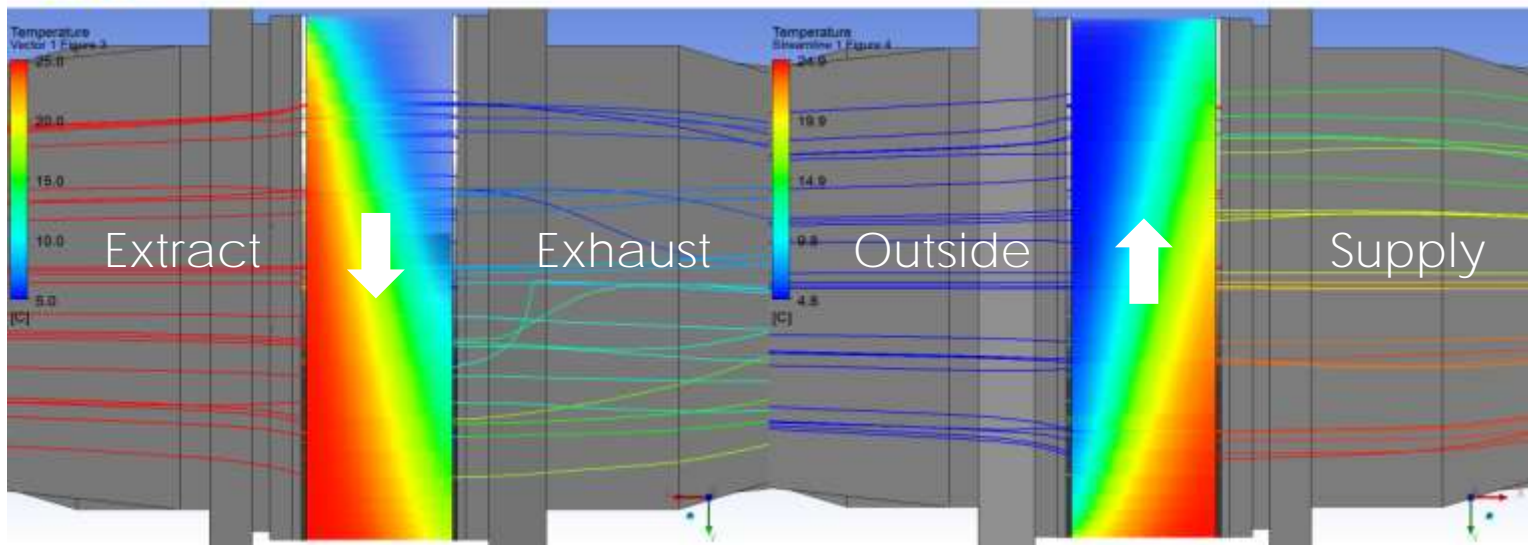
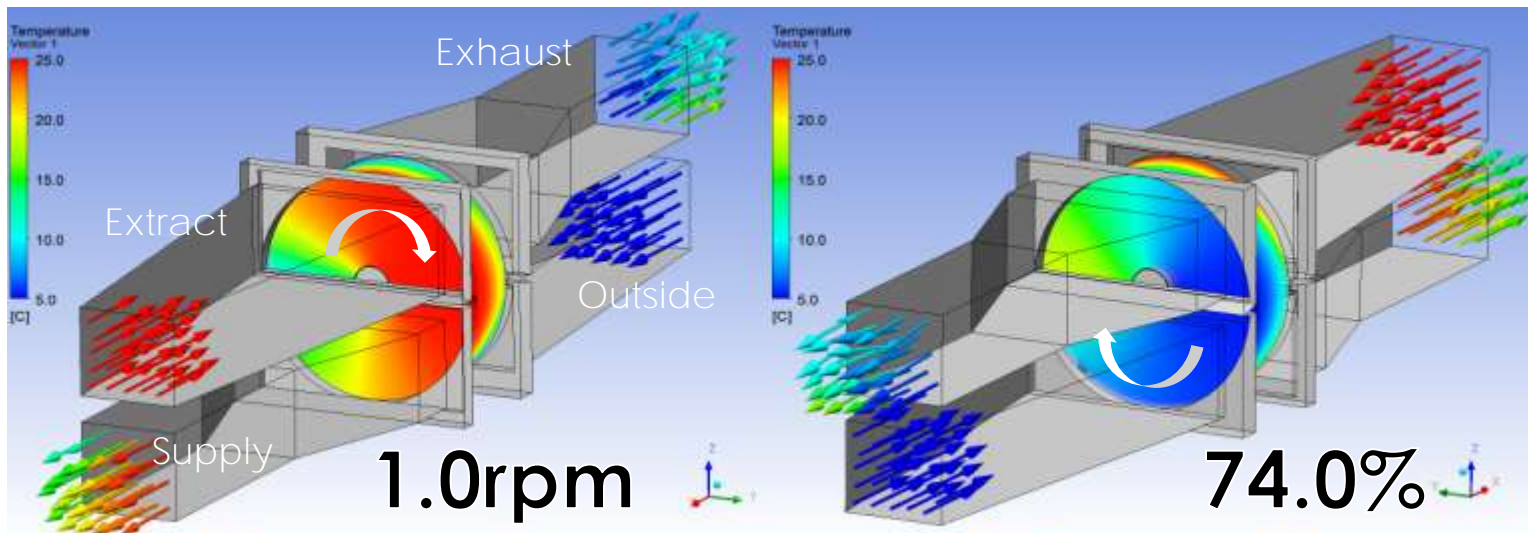
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



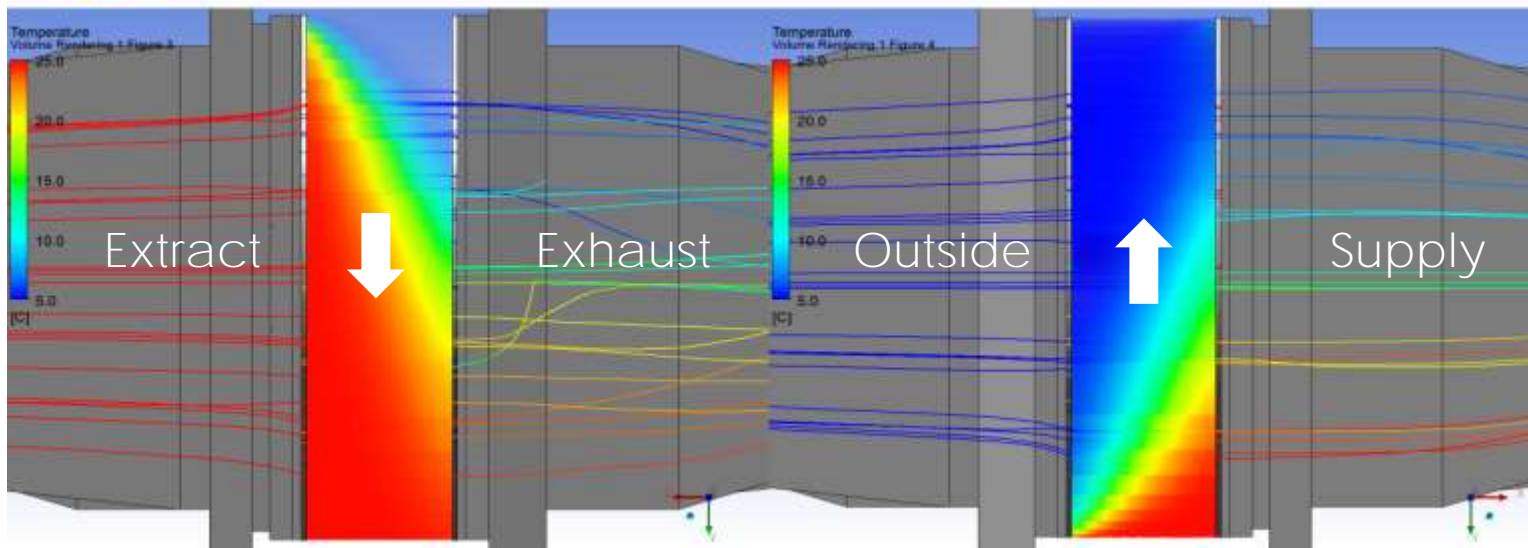
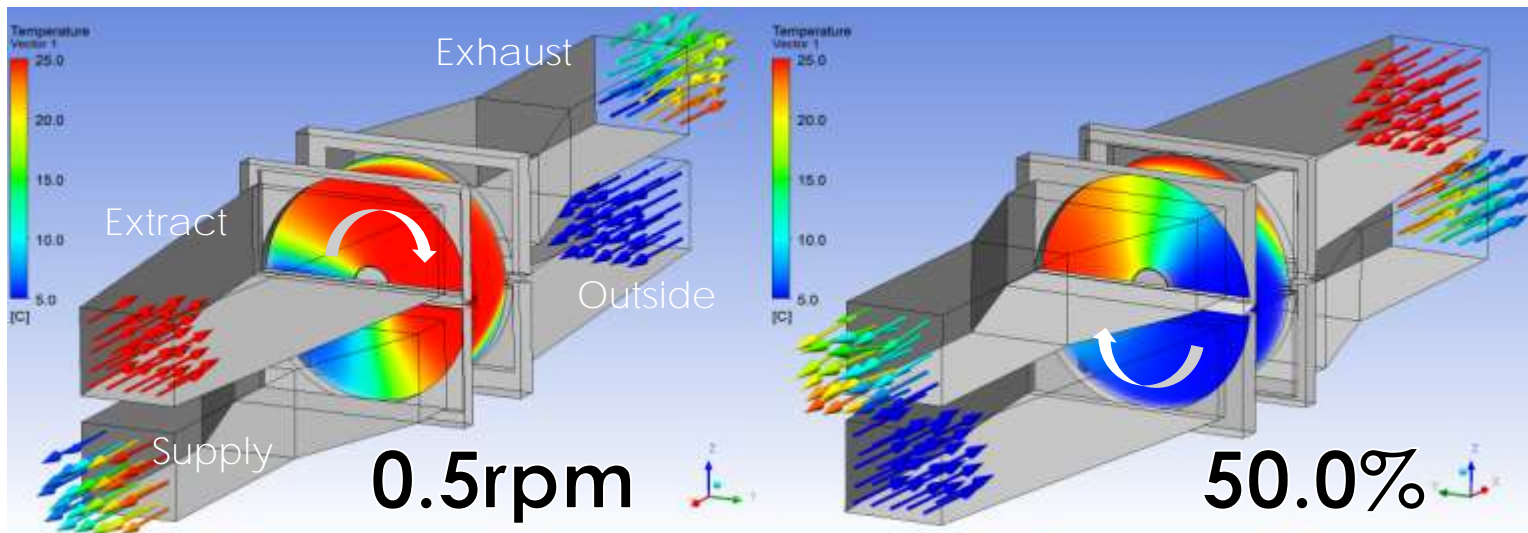
SYSTEM DESIGN

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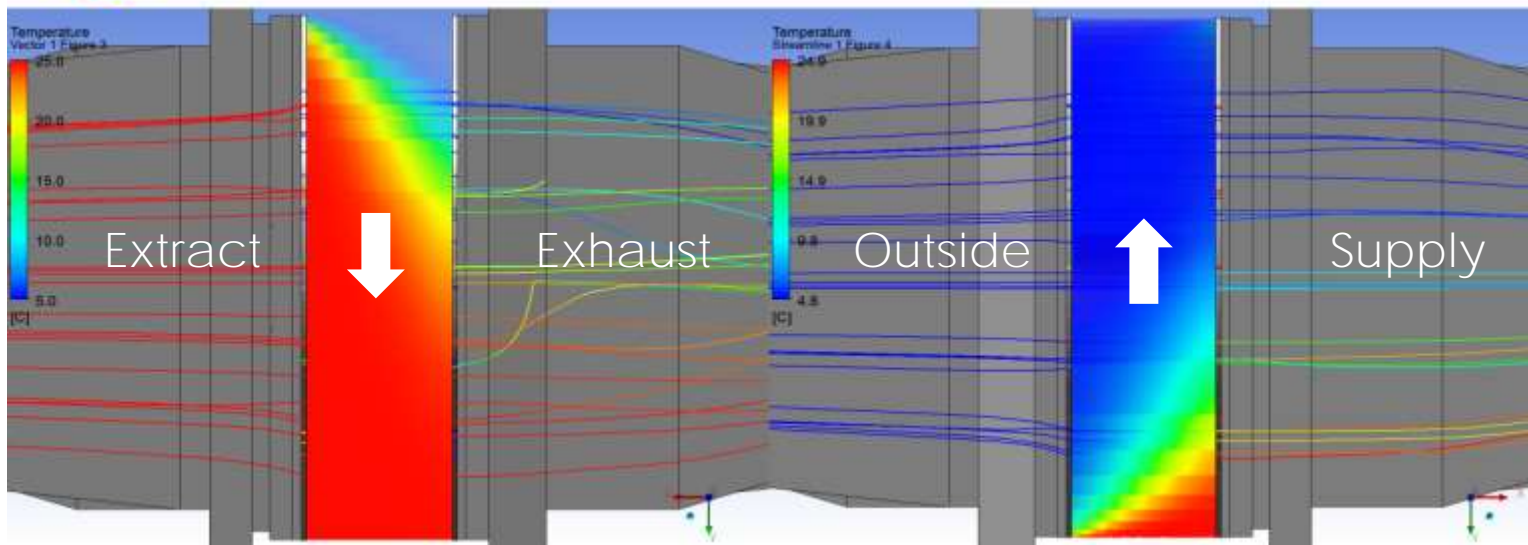
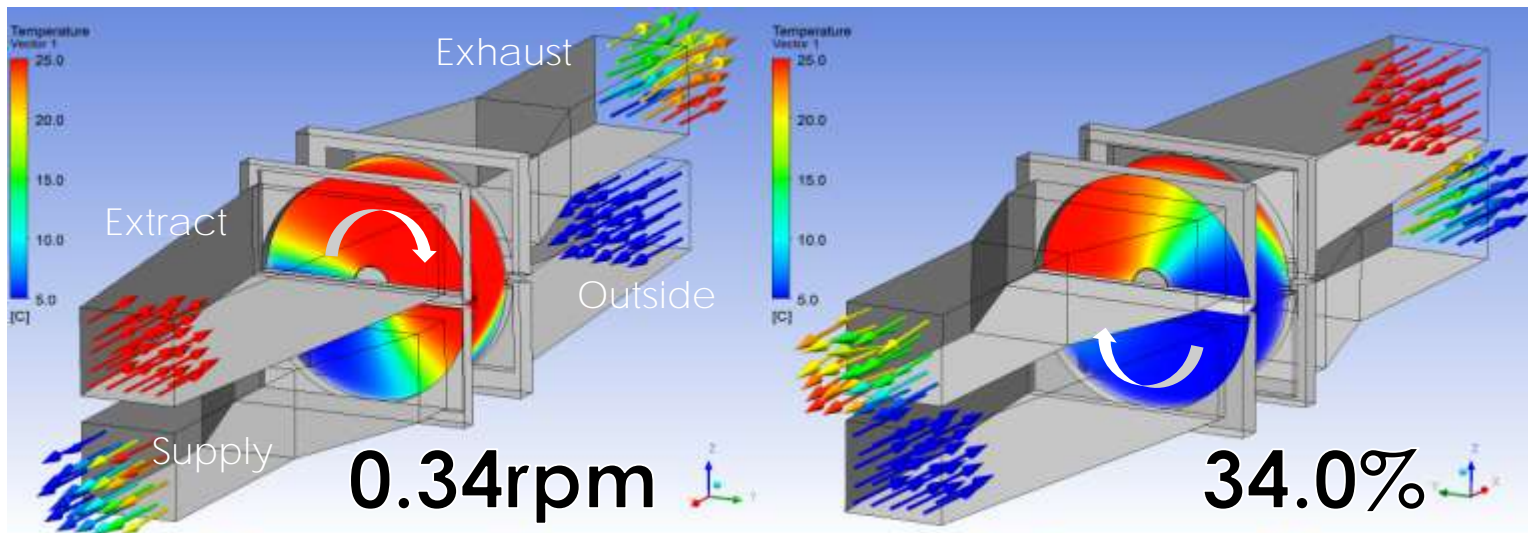
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



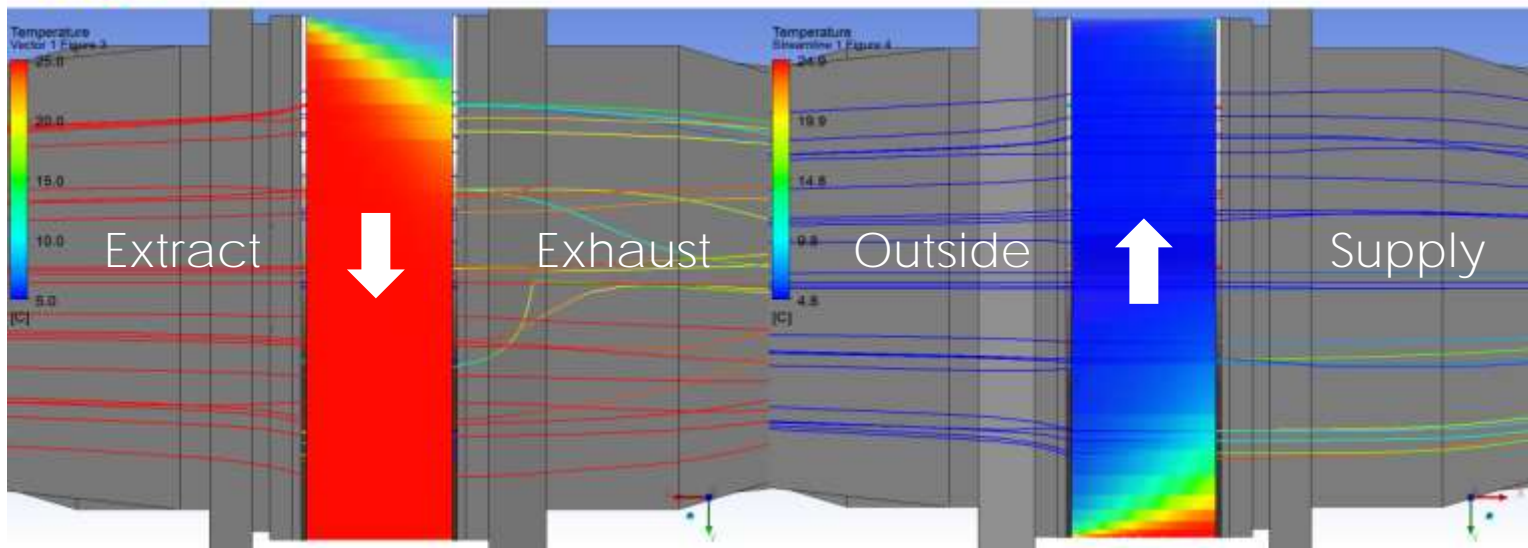
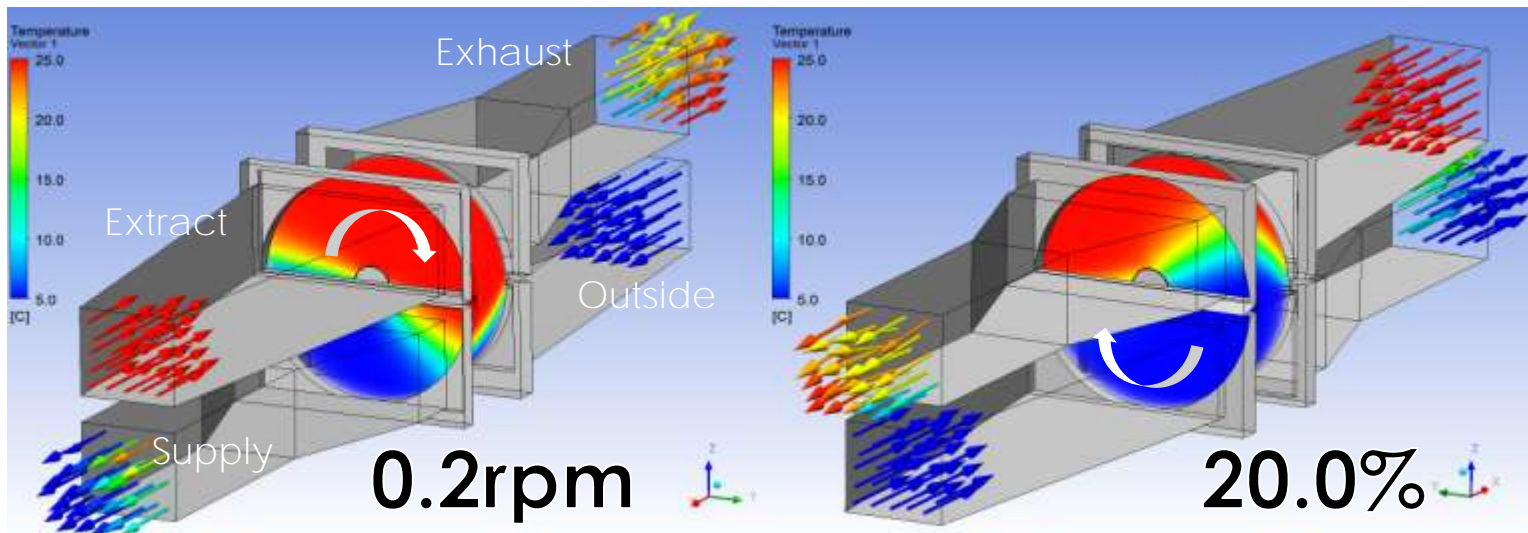
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Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



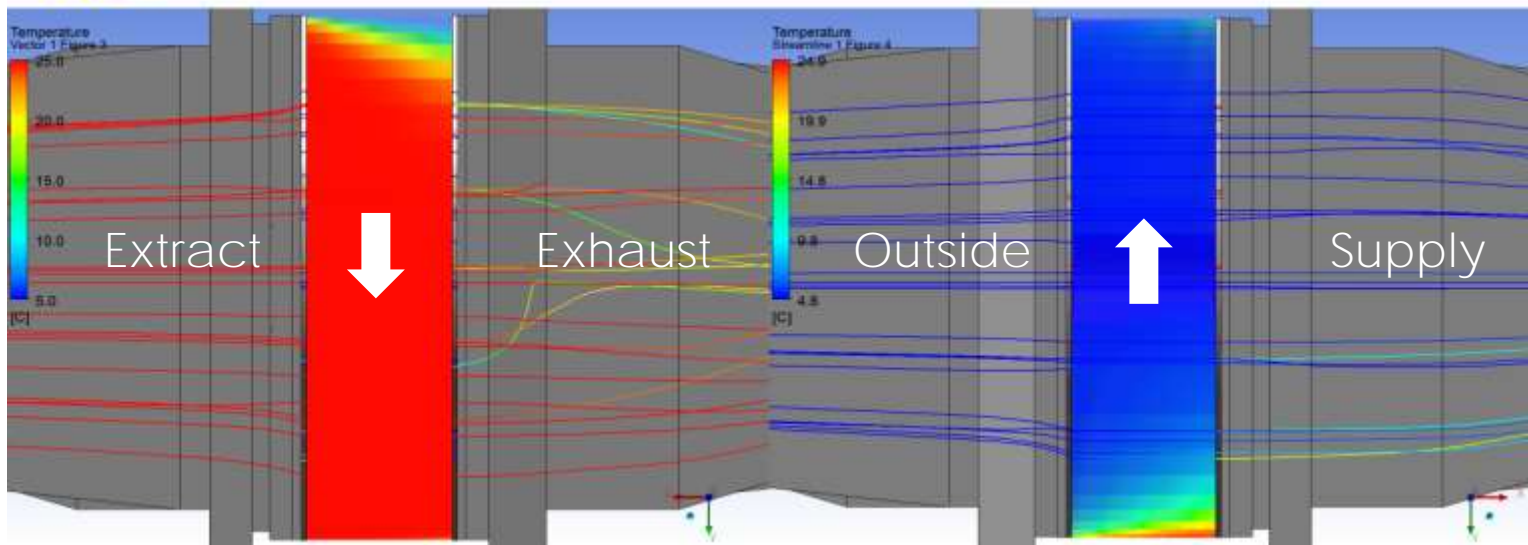
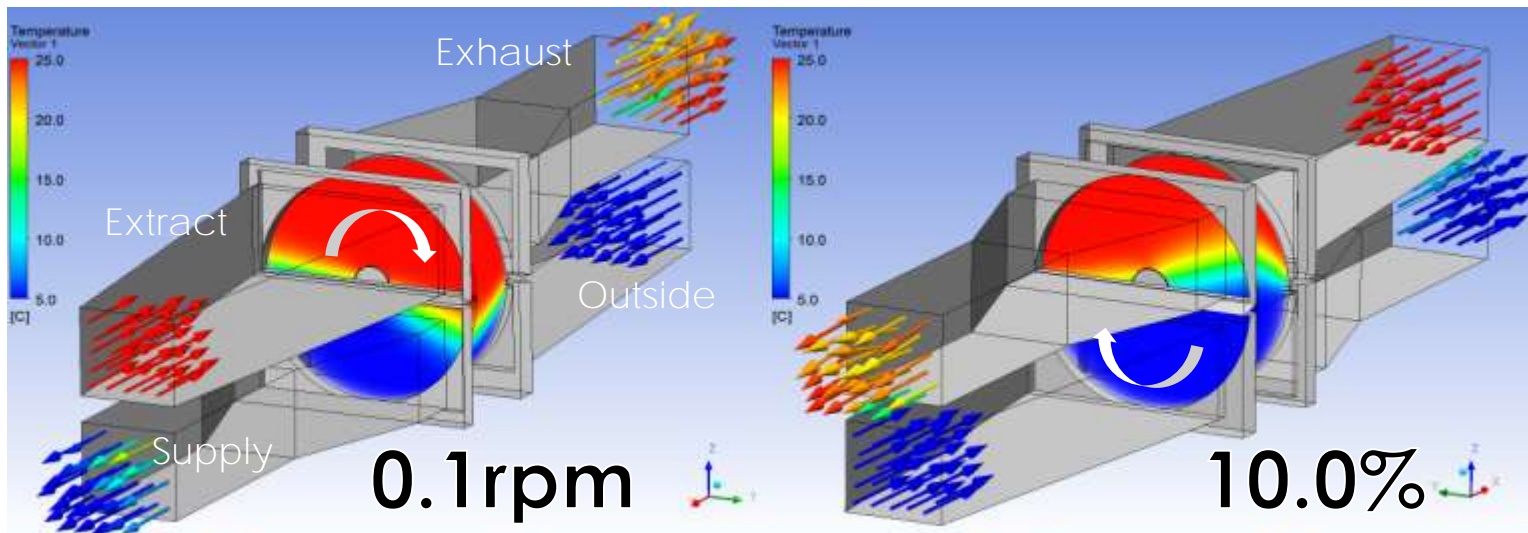
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Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



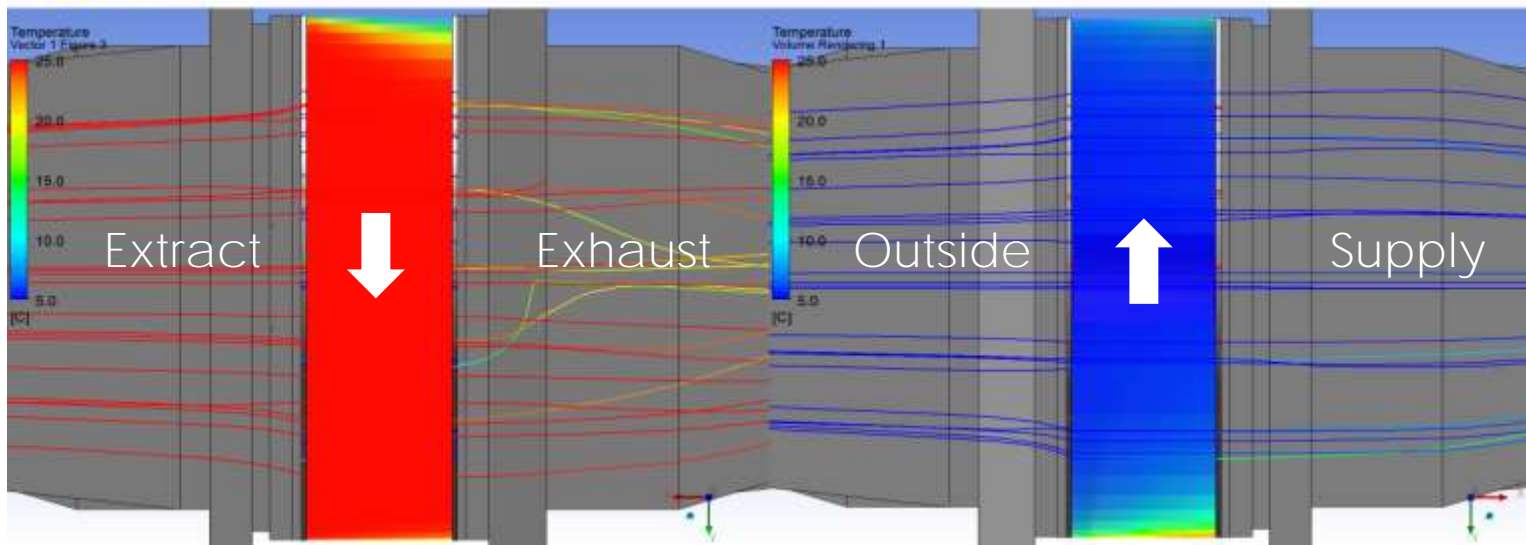
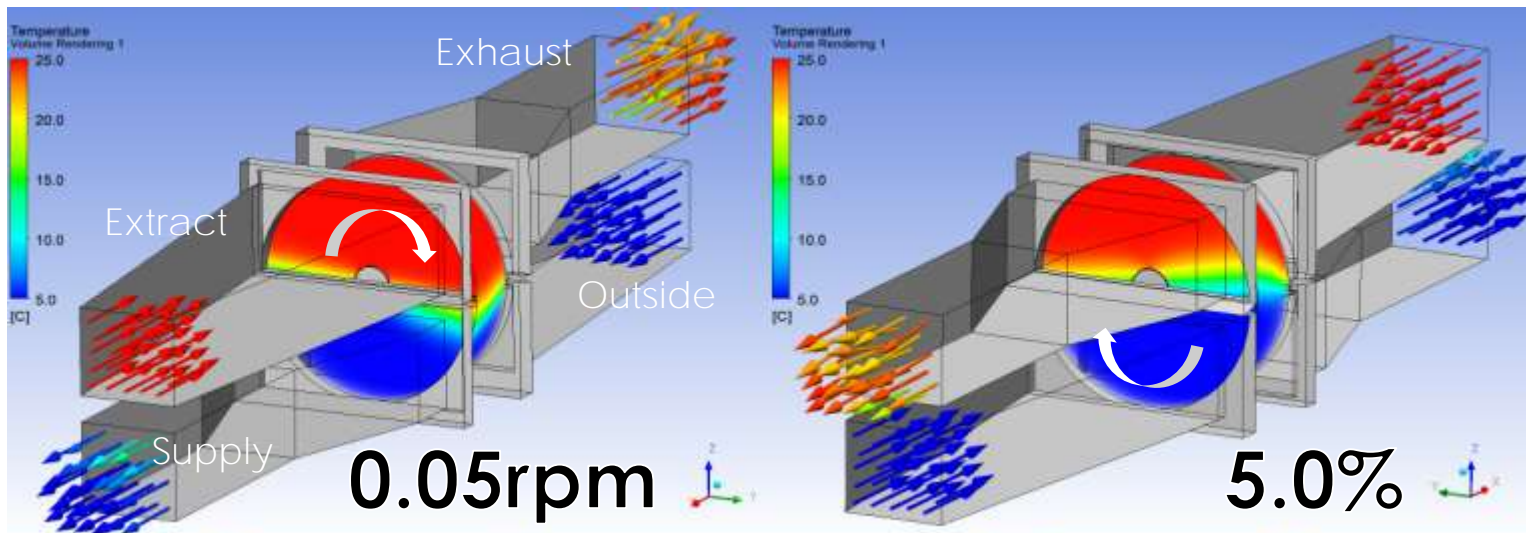
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



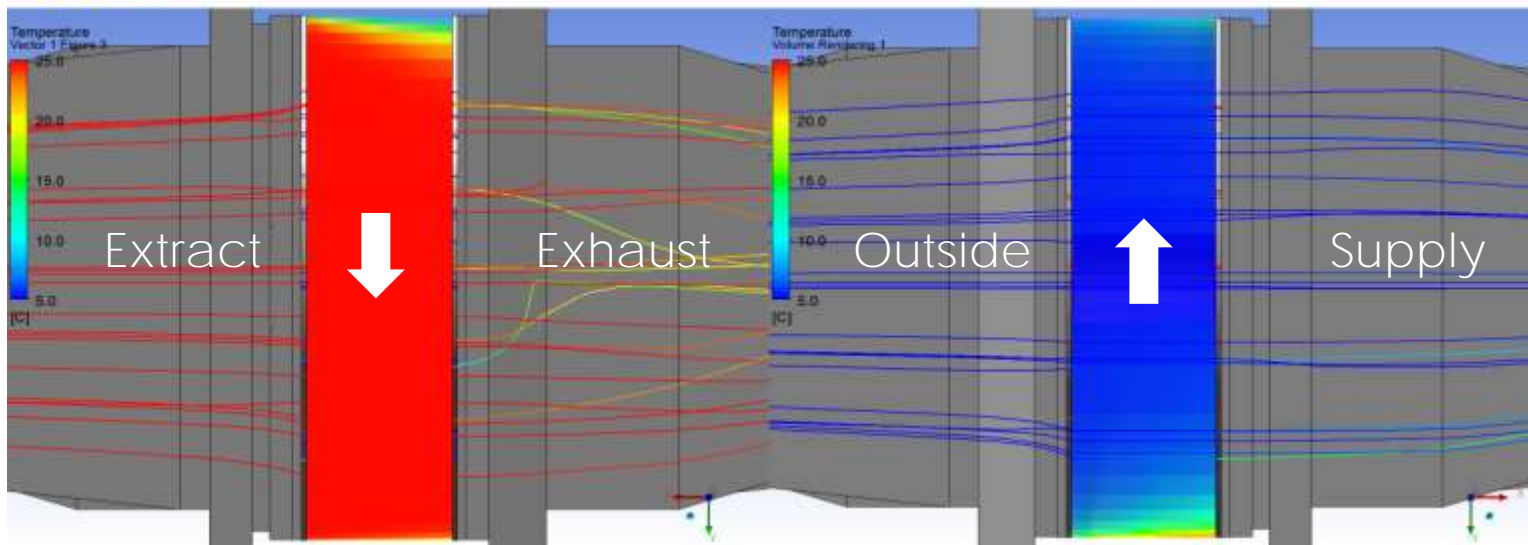
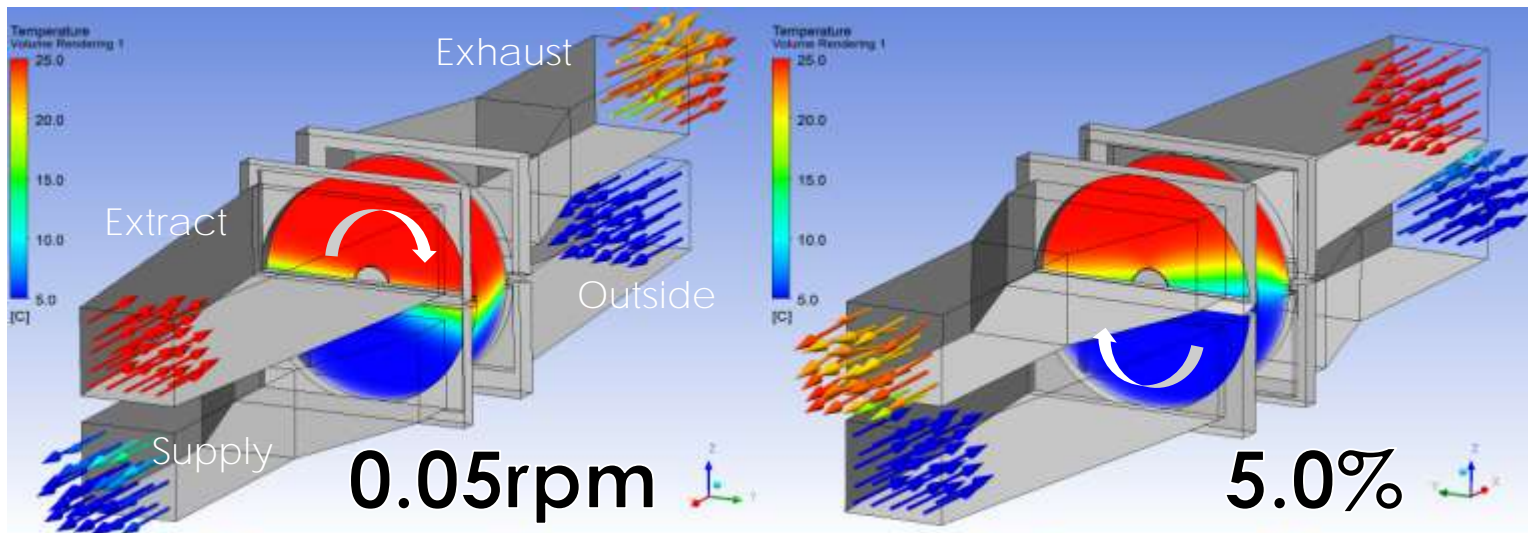
SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate



SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls - Reduce energy recovery rate

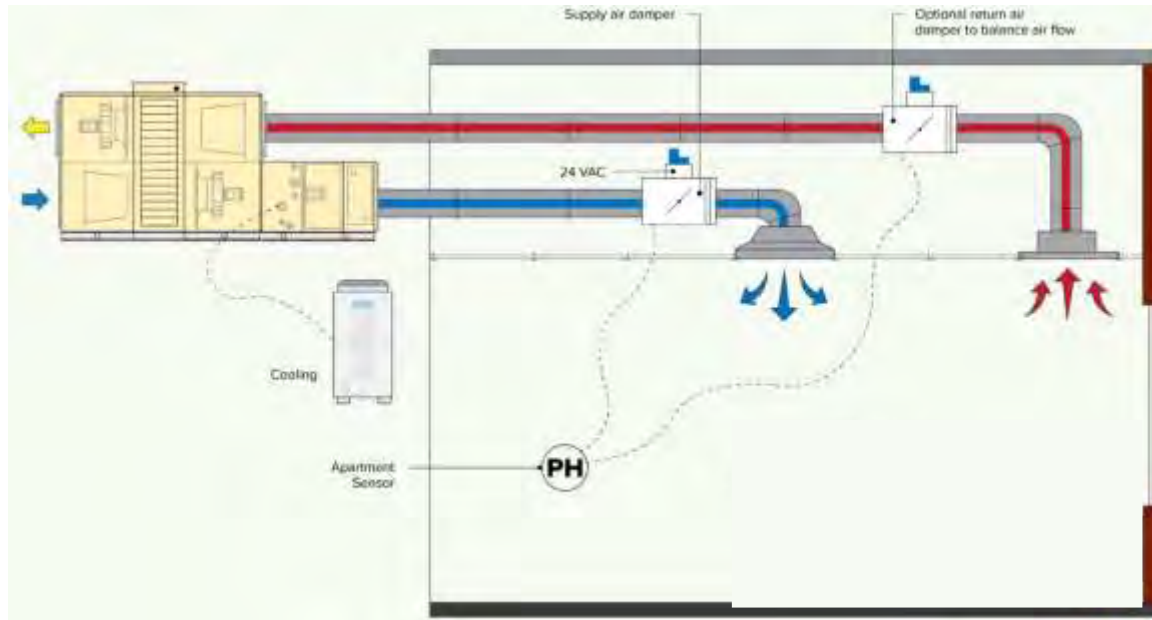
Wheel Speed	Recovery rate
10	84%
6	84%
4	83.7%
2	82%
1	74%
0.5	50%
0.34	34%
0.2	20%
0.1	10%
0.05	5%

Slowing the wheel rotation

- Reduces humidity transfer
- Reduces heat transfer
- Requires ability to precisely control wheel speed

SYSTEM DESIGN

Controls – Incorporate Boost Mode



Boost (Increase) Supply and Return Air flowrate

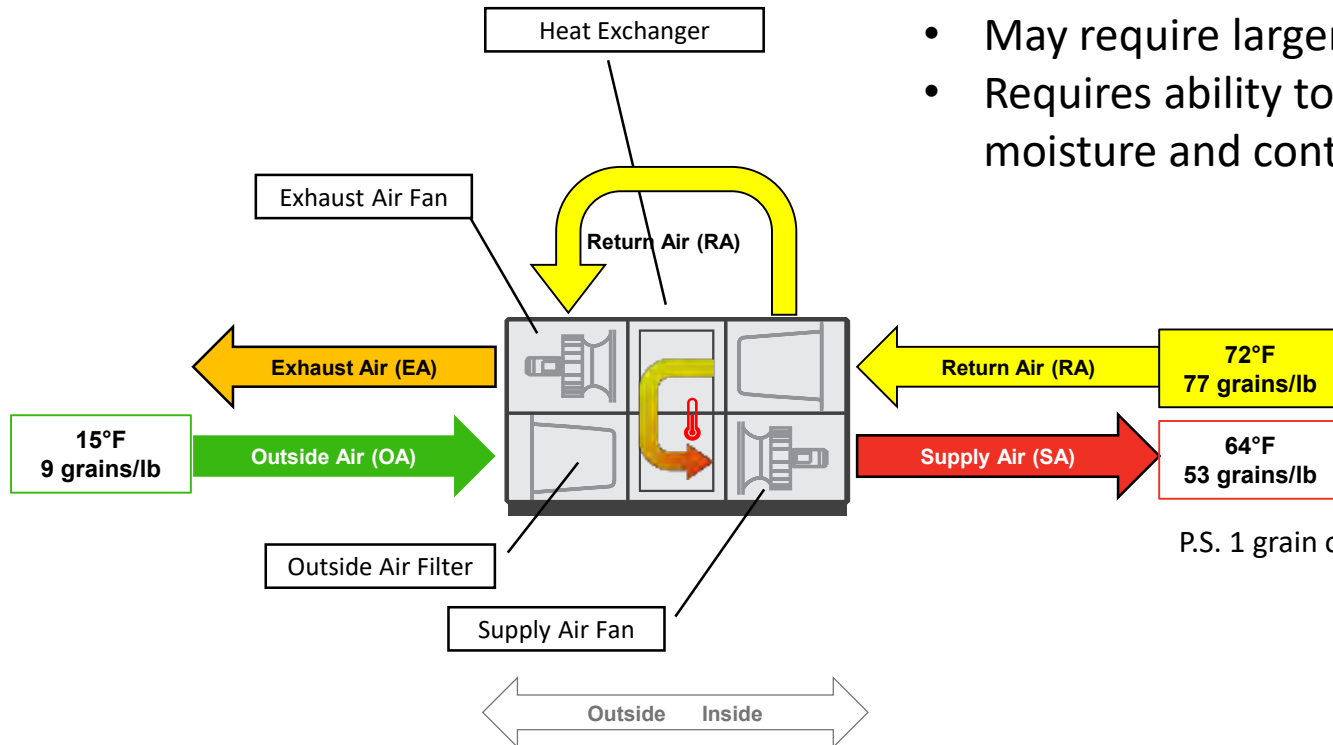
- ERV Increases extraction rate of moist air
- ERV Increases rate of dry air flushing
- DAMPERS provide variable flow control
- Boost also useful for adding occupant comfort control

SYSTEM DESIGN

Reduce energy recovery rate – core bypass

Route humid Return Air around the wheel

- Reduces humidity transfer
- Reduces heat transfer
- May require larger ERU footprint
- Requires ability to measure Return Air moisture and control a damper



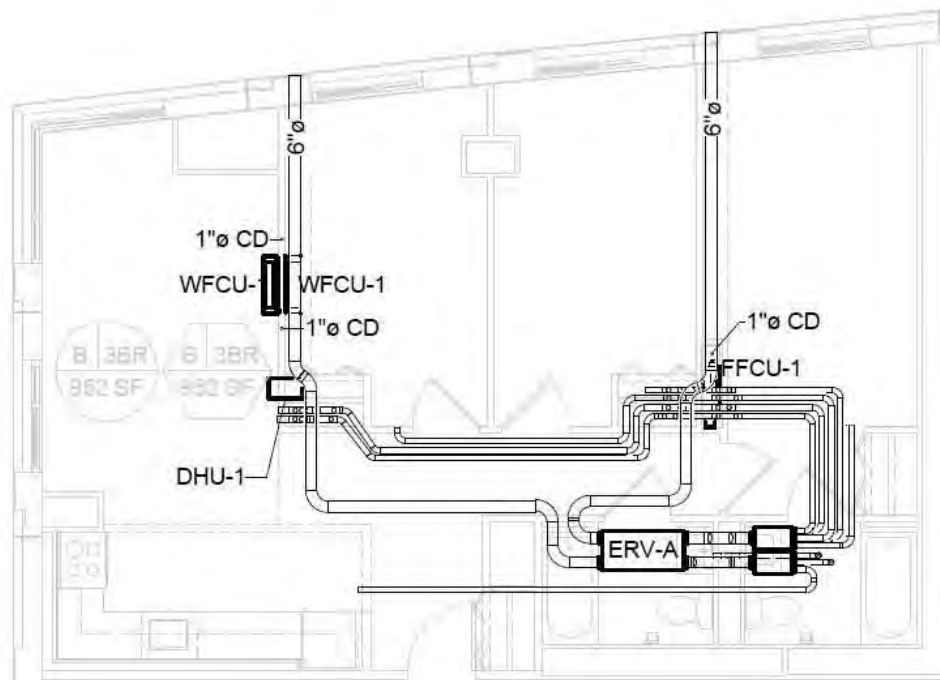
P.S. 1 grain of moisture = 1/7000th pound

Humidity Control Example - Winter



HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

High Density Apartment

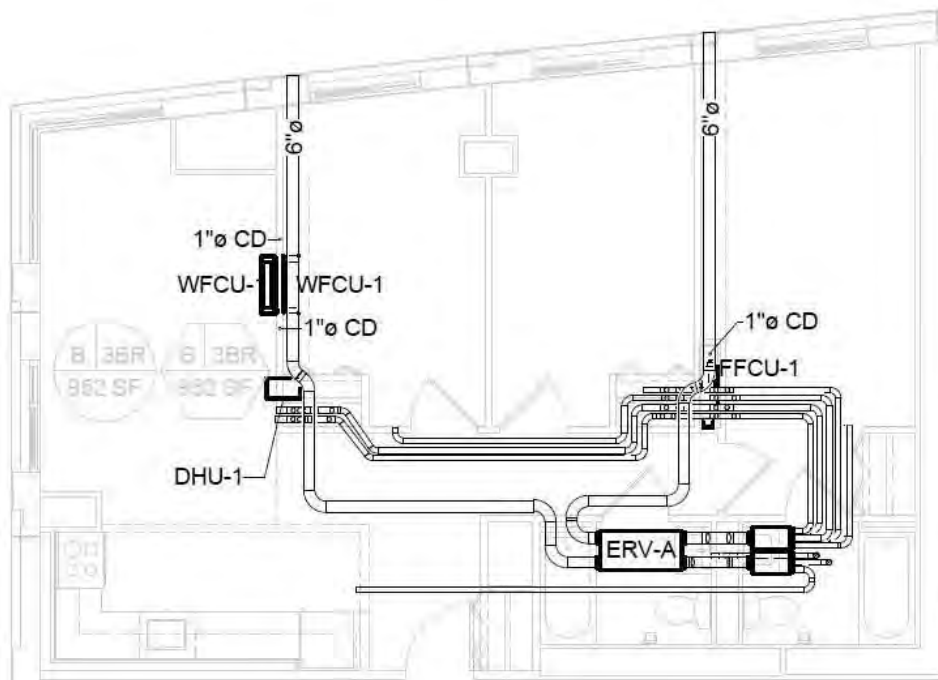


DESIGN

- > Area: 952 ft²
- > Ceiling: 8 ft
- > 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom
- > Design Occupancy: 4
- > Laundry in common area
- > Room setpoint: 72 degF
- > Outside Air:
 - > 15.4 degF Dry Bulb
 - > 14.3 degF Wet Bulb
- > Ventilation rate 85 cfm

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

High Density Apartment



EVALUATION

1-hour extreme moisture generation

Cooking

Dishwashing

2 showers

4 occupants

Centralized v. Decentralized
HRV v ERV

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

COMPARISON #1: *Decentralized Ventilation – HRV vs ERV*



HRV - Sensible Energy Recovery (heat)					
Airtightness	Humidity Gain (+)	Dehumidification		Result after 1 hour	
		Infiltration (-)	HRV Supply Air (-)	Humidity Ratio, at 72F	Relative Humidity, at 72F
	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/lb	%
ASHRAE Std 90.1	33330	6240	7367	58	50.5
Passive House	33330	1733 (72% less)	7367	66	56.5

ERV - Total Energy Recovery (heat & moisture)					
Airtightness	Humidity Gain (+)	Dehumidification		Result after 1 hour	
		Infiltration (-)	ERV Supply Air (-)	Humidity Ratio, at 72F	Relative Humidity, at 72F
	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/lb	%
ASHRAE Std 90.1	33330	6240	1473 (80% less)	69	59
Passive House	33330	1733	1473 (80% less)	77	65.7

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

COMPARISON #1: *Decentralized Ventilation – HRV vs ERV*

- Passive House: 72% less drying effect from infiltration than code building
- ERV: 80% less drying effect than HRV
- After one hour of extreme conditions assumed, ERV with inadequate humidity control capabilities returns too much moisture to the space
- Decentralized ERV system involves condensation risk



HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

COMPARISON #2: *Centralized Ventilation – HRV vs ERV*



HRV - Sensible Energy Recovery (heat)					
Airtightness	Humidity Gain (+)	Dehumidification		Result after 1 hour	
		Infiltration (-)	HRV Supply Air (-)	Humidity Ratio, at 72F	Relative Humidity, at 72F
	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/lb	%
ASHRAE Std 90.1	33330	6240	7367	58	50.5
Passive House	33330	1733 (72% less)	7367	66	56.5

ERV - Total Energy Recovery (heat & moisture)					
Airtightness	Humidity Gain (+)	Dehumidification		Result after 1 hour	
		Infiltration (-)	ERV Supply Air (-)	Humidity Ratio, at 72F	Relative Humidity, at 72F
	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/hr	gr/lb	%
ASHRAE Std 90.1	33330	6240	2947 (60% less)	66	56.5
Passive House	33330	1733	2947 (60% less)	74	63.6

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE COMPARISON #2: Centralized Ventilation – HRV vs ERV

- ERV: 60% less drying effect than HRV (20 percentage points better than decentralized system)
- After one hour of extreme conditions assumed, ERV with inadequate humidity control capabilities returns *marginally* too much moisture to the space
- Decentralized ERV system involves marginal condensation risk



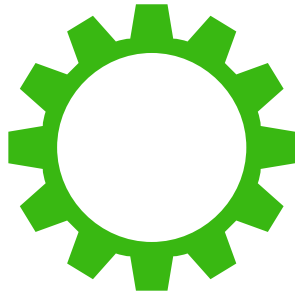
HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

Summary

Ventilation	Std.	Type	New Rel. Hum. At 72F (%)
DECENTRALIZED	90.1	Heat Recovery	50.5
		Energy Recovery	59
	PH	Heat Recovery	56.5
		Energy Recovery	65.7
CENTRALIZED	90.1	Heat Recovery	50.5
		Energy Recovery	59.0
	PH	Heat Recovery	56.5
		Energy Recovery	63.6

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

Summary



Tight Passive House construction impacts indoor humidity

Ultra low leakage rates can cause humidity to build up in apartments especially high density apartments



Decentralized Total Energy Recovery Ventilation has greater risk

Humidity recovery causes humidity to build up to unacceptable levels. It may not be an issue in low density apartments



Centralized Ventilation units can help

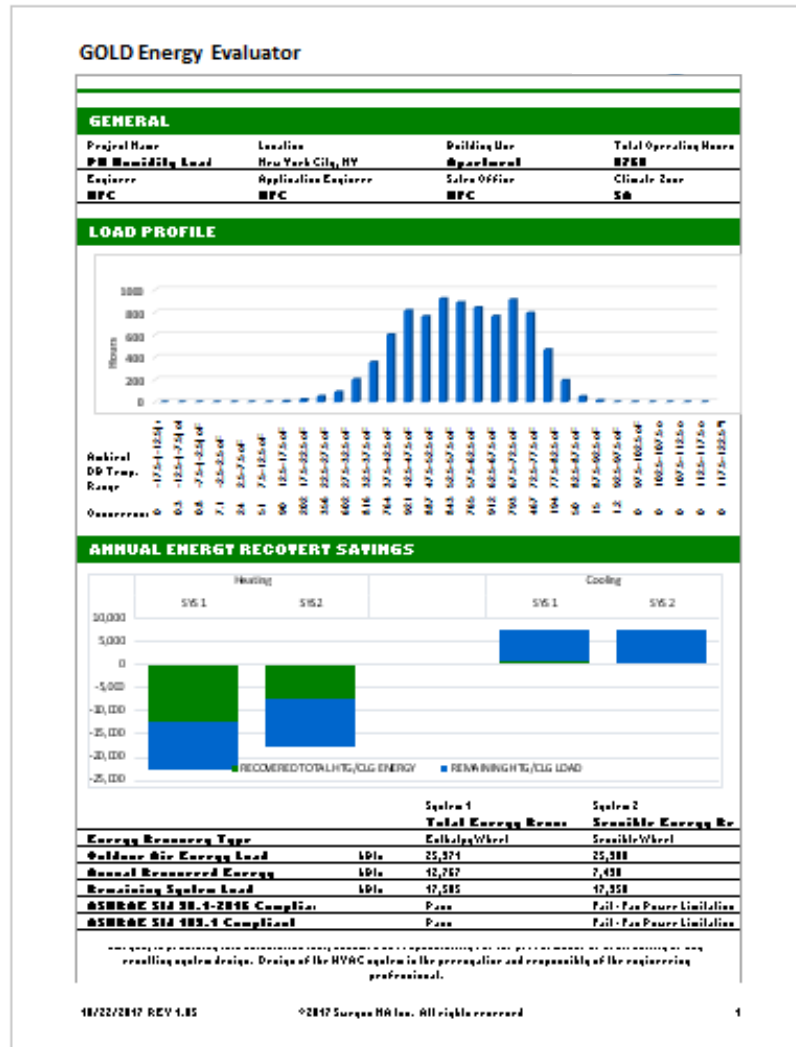
The diversity from connecting to multiple apartments can reduce humidity build up and allow additional savings from total energy recovery

ENERGY TRADEOFF



HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

HRV / ERV energy tradeoff



ENERGY MODELLING

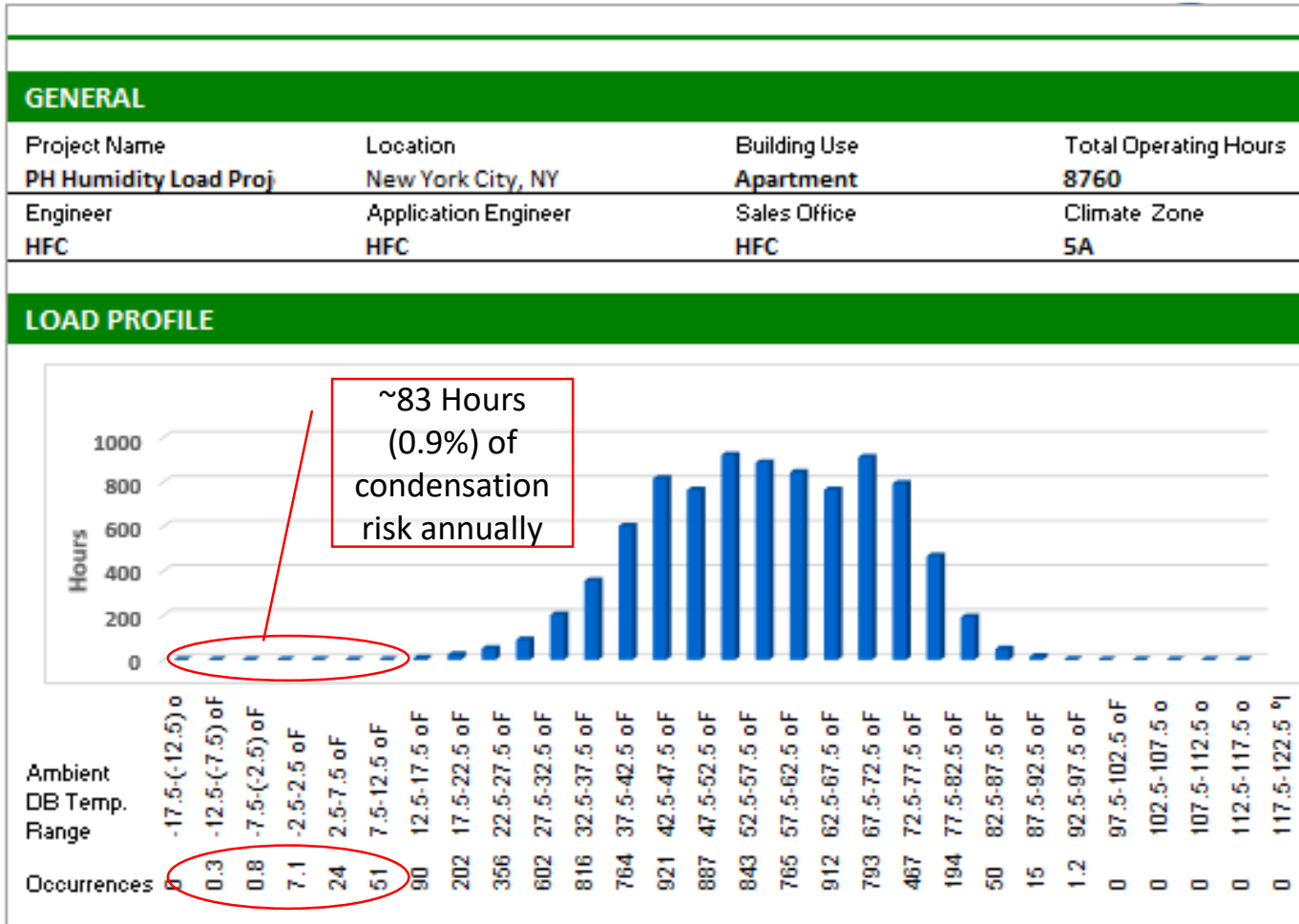
Example systems above compared

- > Enthalpy Wheel vs. sensible wheel
- > Scenario 1 – No cooling, hot water post-heating
- > Scenario 2 - VRF DX cooling w/ reheat and heat pump heating
- > Defrost cycle included in analysis

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

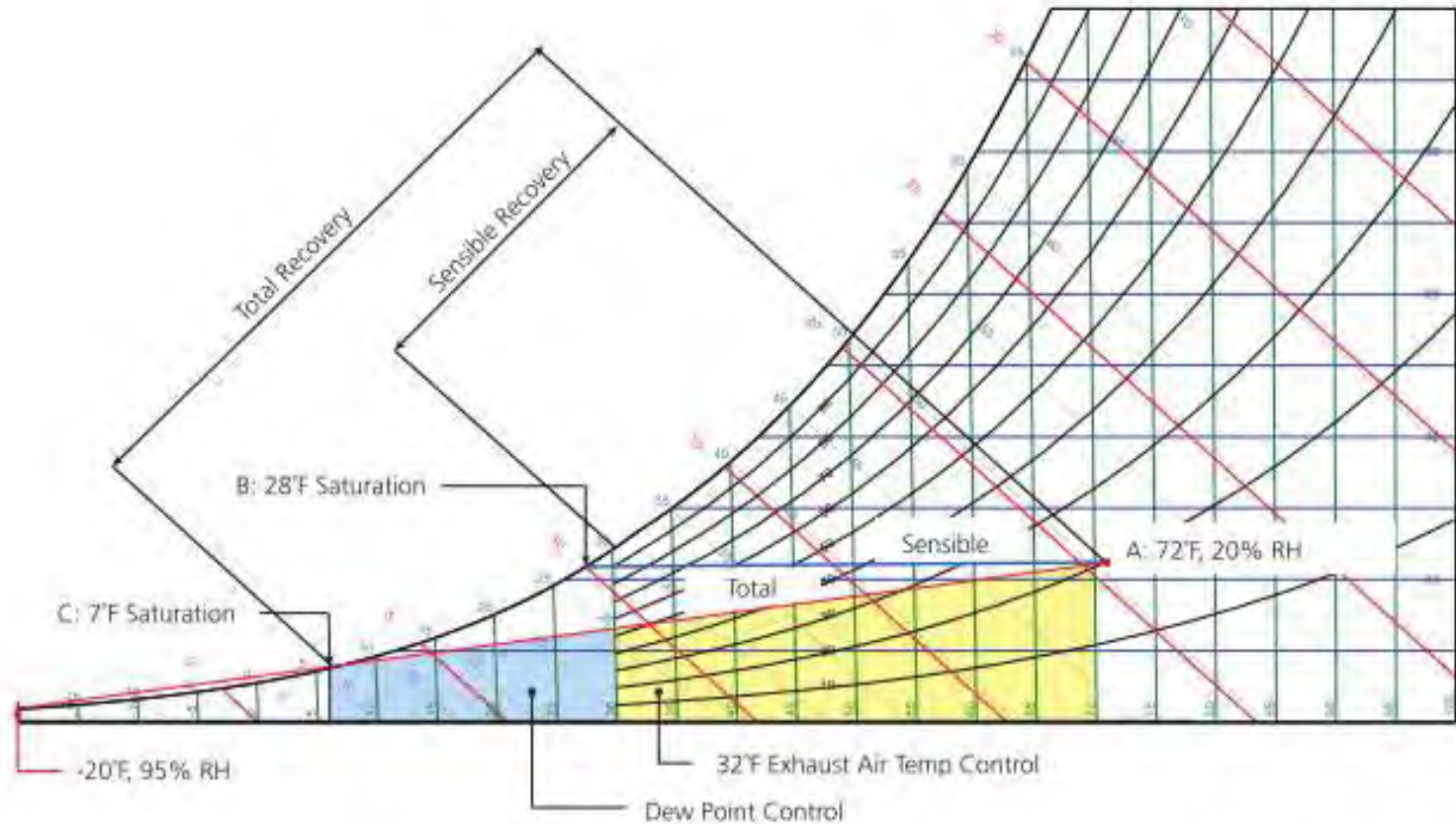
HRV / ERV energy tradeoff

GOLD Energy Evaluator



HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

HRV / ERV energy tradeoff – wheel frost control



Total recovery much greater than sensible
due to lower frost point
Almost twice winter energy recovery

Wheel speed vs. energy transfer not linear
Must slow wheel down to a few rpm to get
capacity reduction

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

Scenario #1: post-heating only

Energy Recovery Savings				
	System 1 Name	Total Energy Recovery	System 2 Name	Sensible Energy Recovery
Energy Recovery Type		Enthalpy Wheel		Sensible Wheel
Outdoor Air Energy Load	kBtu	21,238		21,238
Annual Recovered Energy	kBtu	18,977		15,662
Remaining System Load	kBtu	2,261		5,576
ASHRAE Std 90.1-2016 Compliant		Pass		Fail- ER Effectiveness
ASHRAE Std 189.1 Compliant		Pass		Fail - Fan Power Limitation

ERV: 17.5% more recovery due to defrost control

ERV: 59.5% less load remaining

Financial				
	System 1 Name	Total Energy Recovery	System 2 Name	Sensible Energy Recovery
Design Cooling Load	Tons	0.5		0.5
Required Cooling Capacity	Tons	0.0		0.0
Design Heating Load	kBtu/h	7.7		7.7
Required Heater Capacity	kBtu/h	2.0		4
Design Humidifier Load	lb/h	N/A		N/A
Req'd Humidifier Capacity	lb/h	N/A		N/A
Capital Investment	\$	2,000		1,980
Simple Payback	yrs	1.6		
Internal Rate of Return	%	66%		

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

Scenario #2: VRF post-cooling & post-heating

Energy Recovery Savings		System 1 Name	Total Energy Recovery	System 2 Name	Sensible Energy Recovery
Energy Recovery Type			Enthalpy Wheel		Sensible Wheel
Outdoor Air Energy Load	kBtu		27,774		27,774
Annual Recovered Energy	kBtu		16,179		12,664
Remaining System Load	kBtu		11,595		15,110
ASHRAE Std 90.1-2016 Compliant			Pass		Fail- ER Effectiveness
ASHRAE Std 189.1 Compliant			Pass		Fail - Fan Power Limitation

ERV: 27.8% more recovery due to defrost control

ERV: 23.5% less load remaining

Financial		System 1 Name	Total Energy Recovery	System 2 Name	Sensible Energy Recovery
Design Cooling Load	Tons		0.5		0.5
Required Cooling Capacity	Tons		0.3		0.4
Design Heating Load	kBtu/h		7.7		7.7
Required Heater Capacity	kBtu/h		2.0		4
Design Humidifier Load	lb/h		N/A		N/A
Req'd Humidifier Capacity	lb/h		N/A		N/A
Capital Investment	\$		2,000		1,980
Simple Payback	yrs		0.5		
Internal Rate of Return	%		189%		

ERV: 25% less cooling capacity required

HUMIDITY CONTROL EXAMPLE

HRV / ERV energy trade-off summary



Evaluate airtight high-density apartments for winter humidity risks

Be especially careful with high density apartments and decentralized total energy recovery. Centralized total energy recovery should be okay. Always check humidity loads expected. Evaluate necessary humidity control measures.



Consider frequency of condensation risk

The hours of winter condensation risk are low. If the hours occur consecutively, mold growth risk increases. Humidity control measures can be specified to prevent condensation.



Total Energy Recovery saves energy and reduces operating cost

ERV

- recover more sensible energy in winter
- maintain indoor humidity for comfort and health
- Also dehumidifies in summer
- Reduces size of cooling equipment

Continue Learning

Martello, Dylan. “Establishing Moisture Control in Multifamily Buildings - Party Walls Blog.” *Party Walls - Steven Winter Associates*, Steven Winter Associates, 23 July 2019, www.swinter.com/party-walls/establishing-moisture-control-in-multifamily-buildings/.

Bednarova, Petra Vladykova. “What Is Airtightness? Or Is It Air Tightness...?” *Swegon Air Academy*, Swegon Air Academy, 16 Nov. 2018, www.swegonairacademy.com/2018/11/16/what-is-airtightness-or-is-it-air-tightness/.

Abdul Hamid, A, et al. “Moisture supply Set Point for avoidance of moisture damage in Swedish multifamily houses”, 6th International Building Physics Conference, IBPC Turin, Italy, 2015 .

This concludes the presentation.

Please contact me for more
information.

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The Swegon logo is displayed in white text on a black rectangular background. The word "Swegon" is written in a bold, sans-serif font, with a small leaf-like icon above the letter 'n'.