

Construction unemployment reaches record high

According to a recent *USA Today* article, the construction industry's unemployment rate has risen to 24.7 percent, the highest on record since 1976.

According to the article, the construction industry, which employs 4.3 percent of the U.S.' nonfarm employees, has accounted for almost 25 percent of all job losses during

the past year. The sector has lost about 2 million jobs since the recession started, and Ken Simonson, chief economist for the Associated General Contractors of America, claims the construction industry likely will eliminate 50,000 jobs per month during the first half of 2010.

However, unemployment figures for the manufacturing sector have begun to improve, adding 11,000 jobs in January.

ASHRAE approves proposal to increase minimum R-values

The ASHRAE Standard 90.1 committee recently approved a proposal to increase the minimum required prescriptive R-values for roof and wall insulation levels in the standard's 2010 version.

According to the 2010 version of ASHRAE Standard 90.1, above-deck insulation levels for nonresidential buildings by climate zone are as follows:

- Climate Zone 1 will have a minimum required prescriptive R-value of R-20, a 33 percent increase from the previous level.
- Climate Zones 2 and 3 will have a minimum required prescriptive R-value of R-25, a 20 percent increase from the previous level.
- Climate Zones 4, 5 and 6 will have a minimum required prescriptive R-value of R-30, a 50 percent increase from the previous level.
- Climate Zones 7 and 8 will have a minimum required prescriptive R-value of R-35, a 75 percent increase from the previous level.

"The average commercial building is 25,000 square feet, and the vast majority of those are low-rise where the roof area is dominant," says Jared Blum, president of the Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association. "Clearly these increases in roof thermal performance can have an exponential impact at a time when energy security, economics and efficiency are all critical issues."

