

ASHRAE Standard 90.1-2019: Air Curtains Allowed as Vestibule Substitute

Good news for building owners, engineers/architects, and HVAC contractors who can now save energy, construction costs, and space in commercial facilities with this latest approved code addition.

Doorway air curtains were approved June 25, 2019 as alternatives to vestibules on most commercial building entries in the upcoming ASHRAE Standard 90.1-2019 "Energy Standard for Buildings Except Low Rise Residential Buildings." The professional association's approved addition requires that the air curtain performance be tested in accordance with ANSI/AMCA Standard 220 to ensure it provides a minimum 400-ft/min. airstream velocity at the floor.

This is good news for retail, restaurants, healthcare, hotels, office, and other facility owners, because they can now opt to forego the expense of vestibules in new construction, or repurpose significant square footage for more productive uses by retrofitting existing vestibules. Consulting engineers and architects, who previously were hesitant to replace vestibules with air curtains due to inconsistent code language, now have the support of ASHRAE Standard 90.1-2019 which will be published this fall. Furthermore, HVAC contractors will see a spike in air curtain installations to accommodate facilities looking to **prevent energy loss through their main entries and meet building codes**. Air curtains also protect against the infiltration of outdoor air, fumes, flying insects, wind, and dust through open doorways, and contribute to occupant air comfort.

**On average, air curtain-protected doorways
were proven to save total building energy usage
by a factor of 0.3-2.2% more over that of vestibules.**

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The addition's "Air Curtain Effectiveness" task force was sponsored by AMCA (Air Movement and Control Association-International), an Arlington Heights, Ill.-based trade association dedicated to certifying manufacturers' air performance statistics.

"This is the most significant recognition of air curtains as an effective energy conservation device since the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) approved air curtains as vestibule substitutes in 2015."

– David Johnson, president of AMCA, and director of engineering for air curtain manufacturer, Berner International, New Castle, Pa

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