



Mechanical insulation: The right thing to do

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“There’s something happening here, but what it is ain’t exactly clear... Hey, what’s that sound? Everybody look, what’s going down?” These lyrics are from Buffalo Springfield’s 1966 song titled “For What It’s Worth,” written by musician Stephen Stills. Stills said in an interview that the name of the song came about when he presented it to record company executives and said, “I have this song here, for what it’s worth, if you want it.” I’ve referenced this song before, and it comes into play again as a backdrop to a growing body of opinion that is calling for a truce in chasing net-zero emissions and how properly insulated mechanical systems are still relevant.

In just the last few months, the EPA announced a proposal seeking to rescind the 2009 Endangerment Finding that allows the agency to regulate GHG. If finalized, it could result in the removal of GHG emissions from vehicles. U.S. emissions have been down 20% since 2005 and are not on track to meet our original 2030 Paris Agreement target, which the U.S. will formally withdraw from in January 2026, of a 50-52% emissions reduction from 2005

levels. Meeting the 2030 target requires an average emissions reduction of 7.6% every year from 2025 through 2030. This is highly unlikely given our recent track record for the past three years. Critics say that typical air on our planet is 78% Nitrogen, 21% Oxygen and only .04% CO₂, so why all the emphasis on CO₂? Although 2025 is not expected to be the hottest year on record, it is on track to be the second or third warmest year ever recorded, just behind 2024 and likely rivaling 2023.

No energy use = no emissions, no cost

While there will always be debate on climate change and emissions realities and how to mitigate them — readily available technology such as mechanical insulation will always be relevant in the debate. Why? The cheapest energy is energy that is never used, and correspondingly, the easiest way to remove greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere is to not emit them in the first place. Mechanical insulation does both. Correctly installing mechanical insulation can address both elements while providing a high return on investment.

Mechanical insulation — the real superhero

Even if the race to net zero and reduced emissions does decline in the future due to societal, political or shifting consumer reasons, insulation is the right thing to do to be sustainable. There are many other benefits by improving insulation levels in buildings and processes. It is easier to control process systems that are well insulated, and improved efficiency lowers the strain on system components, like the boiler, reducing maintenance needs and improving the lifespan.

Insulation can curb noise transmissions, think about the doctor’s office where you can hear the conversation next door. It also provides a safety measure by reducing surface temperatures on hot pipes that could be touched accidentally, lowering the potential for burns. Insulation provides protection from increasingly common severe weather events, such as the Great Texas Freeze of 2021, which caused over \$1 billion worth of damage. More elaborate uses for mechanical insulation are LNG pool fire suppression,

grease ducts at restaurants and high-rise building perimeter fire containment.

When looking to improve the carbon footprint of a facility or to limit the GHG emissions tied to a building or simply save on energy expenses, a simple way is to have an insulation system appraisal done of the site and to make the suggested repairs or additions to the insulation used. Another point to consider when evaluating the utility of insulation to reduce facility costs and emissions is that 10% to 30% of industrial insulation in current facilities has been found to be damaged or missing.

Find NIA Certified Insulation Energy Appraisers™ and Certified Thermal Insulation Inspectors™ to evaluate your needs. There could be “something happening here” after all to your facilities and it will be good to your pocketbook and the environment — whether the U.S. drops out of the Paris Accord or not.

For more information, visit insulationappraisers.com, insulationinspectors.com or insulation.org.



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