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Daylighting Using Roof Skylights

Daylighting is the controlled admission of natural light into a space through roof skylights and windows to reduce or eliminate electric lighting. By providing a direct link to the dynamic and perpetually evolving patterns of outdoor illumination, daylighting helps create a visually stimulating and productive environment for building occupants, while reducing as much as one-third of total building energy costs.

In large measure, the art and science of proper daylighting design is not so much how to provide enough daylight to an occupied space, but how to do so without any undesirable side effects. It involves more than just adding skylights or windows to a space. It is the careful balancing of heat gain and loss, glare control, and variations in daylight availability. Daylighting has the potential to significantly improve life-cycle cost, increase user productivity, reduce emissions, and reduce operating costs:

Improved Life-Cycle Cost: At an estimated incremental first cost increase of from \$0.50 to \$0.75 per square foot of occupied space for dimmable ballasts, fixtures and controls, daylighting has been shown to

save from \$0.05 to \$0.20 per square foot annually.

Increased User Productivity: Daylight enlivens spaces and has been shown to increase user satisfaction and visual comfort leading to improved performance.

Reduced Emissions: By reducing the need for electric consumption for lighting and cooling, the use of daylight reduces greenhouse gases and slows fossil fuel depletion.

Reduced Operating Costs: Electric lighting accounts for 35 to 50 percent of the total electrical energy consumption in commercial buildings. The energy savings from reduced electric lighting through the use of daylighting strategies can directly reduce building cooling energy usage an additional 10 to 20 percent.

As with all energy-efficient design strategies, there are some costs associated with the use of daylighting. Designers must be sure to avoid glare and overheating when placing skylights and windows. More skylights and windows do not automatically result in more daylighting. That is, natural light has to be controlled and distributed properly throughout the workspace.