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EnergyPlus Run Time Analysis

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Environmental Energy Technologies Division

December 15, 2008

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EnergyPlus Run Time Analysis

Development of EnergyPlus for Use in Title 24 and Support for California Energy Commission Staff Use of EnergyPlus

Deliverable for Task 2.1.2

California PIER Project # 500-07-008

| | |
|--|--|
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Executive Summary

The Simulation Research Group of the Building Technologies Department of the Environmental Energy Technologies Division of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory prepared this report for the California Energy Commission (CEC) under the PIER project contract # 500-07-008. This report is the first deliverable for the Task 2.1.2, EnergyPlus Execution Speed Improvements, of the project.

Overview of EnergyPlus Run Time

EnergyPlus was first released on April 12, 2001 as version 1.0 build 11. Since then, there has been a new release about every six months. The past seven years of continuous new feature development and enhancements has made it possible for EnergyPlus to model new and complex building technologies, which cannot be modeled by other simulation programs but have become more and more important as the building industry moves toward the goal of net zero energy buildings.

EnergyPlus does sub-hourly whole building integrated heat balance calculations in order to simulate new building technologies and provide more accurate results. Therefore EnergyPlus runs significantly slower than DOE-2 which is currently used for Title 24 compliance calculations. The EnergyPlus development team has been making continuous progress in reducing computer run time since the early release of EnergyPlus by fine tuning the FORTRAN compiler settings and code profiling to identify run time bottlenecks. Even so, the longer computer run time has become a major barrier to the effective use of EnergyPlus in the Title 24 code and standard development. It is also a major hurdle for EnergyPlus widespread use by design practitioners to evaluate design alternatives that offer potential energy savings beyond current building energy code and standards.

EnergyPlus run time is a complex issue. The amount of computer execution time required to complete an EnergyPlus simulation run depends on many factors, including major ones as follows:

- The simulation settings users specified in the EnergyPlus model,
- The computer platform used to run the model, including computer hardware and operating system,
- The energy features defined in the EnergyPlus model,
- The version of EnergyPlus source code, and
- The FORTRAN compiler and its settings.

It should be noted that EnergyPlus development team focuses more on code readability, extensibility, and modularity than on speed of code execution. As noted in the section of Code Readability vs. Speed of Execution in the EnergyPlus documentation – Guide for Module Developers:

“Programmers throughout time have had to deal with speed of code execution and it’s an ongoing concern. However, compilers are pretty smart these days and, often, can produce speedier code for the hardware platform than the programmer can when he or she uses “speed up” tips. The EnergyPlus development team would rather the code be more “readable” to all than to try to outwit the compilers for every platform. First and foremost, the code is the true document of what EnergyPlus does – other documents will try to explain algorithms and such but must really take a back seat to the code itself.”

The building simulation community, either researchers or design practitioners, often needs to do parametric analysis which involves hundreds or even more simulation runs. It is crucial for EnergyPlus to be able to complete a large volume of simulation runs in a reasonable amount of computer run time in order to be widely adopted as a routine simulation program by the industry.

CEC has been looking forward to using EnergyPlus for parametric runs to evaluate code proposals in the development of future Title 24 or advanced standards. In the near future, CEC is also looking at the

feasibility of using EnergyPlus for code compliance calculations. To meet CEC's needs, it is critical to identify the bottleneck of EnergyPlus run time, and find solutions to speed up EnergyPlus simulation runs.

Analysis Methodology

EnergyPlus run time is a complex issue and can be analyzed from various perspectives. The methodology is to look at the run time issue from the inside (white box) to the outside (black box) of EnergyPlus, and provide recommendations to improve EnergyPlus execution time. Two closely related approaches are employed to analyze the EnergyPlus run time on typical personal computers (PCs) with Intel 32-bit CPUs and Microsoft Windows operating systems, which are dominant PC platforms used today for building performance simulations. First is to study the run time using EnergyPlus as a black box by performing parametric runs to identify key variables that have significant impact on run time. Next is to study the run time using EnergyPlus as a white box by profiling EnergyPlus code with a few typical simulation runs.

From the outside of EnergyPlus, the following areas will be studied:

- From the historical perspective, what is the trend of EnergyPlus run time? What to expect in future if the historical trend continues?
- From the peer perspective, how does EnergyPlus run time compare with that of DOE-2?
- From the user perspective, what simulation settings should be specified and how they impact the run time? What is the best practice to reduce run time without sacrificing simulation accuracy?
- From the model perspective, what model features are computationally intensive? How to deal with large models?
- From the computer platform perspective, what hardware and software is required to run EnergyPlus and how they impact the run time? What is the recommended computer platform?
- From the EnergyPlus compiler perspective, which FORTRAN compiler should be used? What are compiler settings and how do they impact the run time?

From the inside of EnergyPlus, the following areas will be studied:

- Which FORTRAN subroutines use the greatest amount of time?
- Which FORTRAN subroutines get called most frequently?
- What is the critical path of the run time?

EnergyPlus version 2.2.0.023 is used in most simulation runs, while versions 1.2.1.012, 1.2.2.030, and 2.1.0.023 are used for historical runs only. Most simulation runs are done on a personal desktop computer with Intel Core 2 Duo two CPUs of 3 GHZ and 2 GB of RAM and Microsoft Windows XP SP2. Three other computer platforms are also used for the history runs.

Although not expected to show different behavior of EnergyPlus run time, please note that this run time analysis does not cover EnergyPlus performance on non-Windows operation systems like UNIX, Linux, or Macintosh. Neither does it cover EnergyPlus performance on PCs with 64-bit CPUs.

Summary of Findings

Historical Trend of EnergyPlus run Time

EnergyPlus has been making impressive progress in reducing simulation run time from the history perspective, which is mostly due to the improvement of EnergyPlus code, the newer and better FORTRAN compilers, and the faster computers used to run EnergyPlus simulations. For a typical office building model with 15 zones and one central variable air volume system with water-cooled chillers and hot water boilers, the EnergyPlus run time (annual run) is reduced by a factor of 56 from one hour and 56

minutes with a typical PC in 2000 and EnergyPlus 1.2.2.030 in 2005 to about two minutes with a typical PC in 2007 and EnergyPlus 2.2.0.023 in 2008. The same model took about 11 minutes to run three to four years ago would take only 2 minutes to run in 2008, with the then available typical PCs and EnergyPlus releases. This is a significant reduction in run time by a factor of 5.5 in about 3 to 4 years. However, the trend of EnergyPlus run time improvement has slowed down mainly due to the EnergyPlus code getting larger and more complex, the FORTRAN compilers becoming matured, with less room for additional optimization, and more importantly, the slowdown in the increase of the clock speed of a single CPU.

Run Time Comparisons between EnergyPlus and DOE-2.1E

Compared with DOE-2.1E, EnergyPlus runs much slower. The main reason EnergyPlus runs much slower than DOE-2.1E is that EnergyPlus does the integrated heat balance calculations for loads, systems, and plant at a loads time step normally around 15-minute, while DOE-2.1E does sequential calculations from loads to systems to plant at an hour time step. EnergyPlus performs necessary iterative calculations at a smaller time step (down to 1 minute) for HVAC systems in order to achieve HVAC convergent solutions.

When DOE-2 was first developed in late 1970s, the computer computing power was very limited. Even a 50-zone model could take hours if not days to complete an annual run. With today's PC computing power, the question is not to develop simulation programs that run as fast as DOE-2, but rather to develop programs that can do sub-hourly and more accurate building thermal performance calculations in a reasonable amount of time. For the rather simple modeling runs performed for the comparisons, EnergyPlus in all cases performed faster than 10 seconds per zone. For cases where only monthly and annual energy consumption results are needed, hourly time step may be sufficient. In that case EnergyPlus is in the range of 2 seconds per zone.

Impacts of Simulation Settings and Model Features on EnergyPlus Run Time

Simulation settings are user controllable inputs that can have impacts on EnergyPlus run time and results accuracy. Simulation settings that can have significant impacts on EnergyPlus run time include the length of the run period, the number of loads calculation time steps per hour, the model solution algorithms (envelope heat transfer, solar shading, daylighting, thermal comfort, and natural ventilation with airflow network), the minimum HVAC time step, the maximum HVAC iterations, and the type and frequency of output reports. It must be pointed out that for EnergyPlus, up to version 2.2.0.023, the time steps of the loads and HVAC, and the algorithm of heat transfer can have significant impacts on the accuracy of simulation results. The EnergyPlus development team has investigated and found potential solutions to address why the hourly loads time step and the conduction finite difference (CondFD) algorithm caused large discrepancies in simulation results.

EnergyPlus models with lots of surfaces, lots of windows/skylights, lots of zones, lots of primary and secondary air and water loops would take much longer to run. Models with smaller time steps and higher solution resolution also take much longer to run. Models with complex geometry and shades will take much longer to run if using the most detailed solar shadowing calculation algorithm. Models with the CondFD algorithm for heat transfer or with the airflow network algorithm for natural ventilation calculations also take much longer to run.

Certain simulation settings, such as the loads and system time steps, the CondFD solution algorithm, the detailed or ceiling diffuser inside convection algorithm, and the MoWiTT outside convection algorithm, may have significant impacts on the results of HVAC energy use. The EnergyPlus development team is aware of some of the issues and addressing them.

Findings from EnergyPlus Code Profiling

The code profiling results show the input and output subroutines, the string operations, the zone surfaces long wave radiation calculations, and the psychrometric functions get called the greatest number of times and consume the greatest amount of EnergyPlus run time. Proposed actions are to:

1. Investigate why and how the input and output related subroutines, including UPDATEDATAANDREPORT, SETREPORTNOW, and SETMINMAX, get called so many times and consume so much time. Separate functionality of data updates for time step (history) calculations and for output reporting to reduce or avoid unnecessary calls. Identify reasons that reporting subroutines like UPDATETABULARREPORTS get called the same number of times even if no reports are requested. Explore the feasibility and potential of re-writing these subroutines for parallel computing in order to reduce EnergyPlus run time.
2. Reduce psychrometric functions calling times and run time by simplifying the function algorithm and/or using data table lookup and interpolation. In normal building and HVAC operation conditions, many air properties have a limited range of variations.
3. Reduce string operations as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary string operations. Replace string operations with logical or integer type operations, and cache string operation results for later use, which has been adopted by the EnergyPlus development team. Improve string operations by using variable length strings to avoid the use of the trim function. Explore potential of using a string function library written in C or C++ language for better performance.
4. Cache intermediate results to avoid unnecessary time consuming re-calculations. Analyze why input subroutines like GETCURRENTSCHEDULEVALUE get called so many times? Any way to cache the schedule values once and be accessible for faster later use?
5. Explore potential of short-cutting and bypassing loops. Identify idle loops and avoid the call from the upstream calling subroutines. Investigate why the initialization subroutines get called so many times, for example the INITWATERCOIL subroutine? Is every call necessary? Any way to limit the number of calls?
6. Reduce the number of HVAC iterations by developing more intelligent algorithms to automatically adjust the HVAC time step based on system dynamics and history calculation results.
7. Research the consistency of many threshold values used to determine the convergence of iterative calculations. For complex software like EnergyPlus, one or a few calculations with high resolutions may not improve the overall resolution at all!
8. Review EnergyPlus code for possibilities of software architecture improvement and data structure reengineering, with the goal of improving computer execution time.

Computer Platforms

For small EnergyPlus models (with small number of surfaces, zones, and systems), which do not require large amount of computer memory, PCs with faster CPUs are more effective in reducing run time than PCs with more memory. For large models, more and faster computer memory including RAM and internal cache may be more effective in reducing run time. The amount of computer memory only helps to a certain point, it is not "the more, the better". If an energy model run will produce lots of hourly or time step reports, the hard drive access speed also becomes important in reducing run time.

EnergyPlus, as of version 2.2.0.023, is a single thread application running on a single CPU. PCs with multiple CPUs would not benefit more than PCs with one CPU assuming no other time consuming processes occur simultaneously with the EnergyPlus simulation runs. But for a large volume of parametric runs on PCs with multiple CPUs, users can still harness the potential of launching multiple parallel EnergyPlus runs from separate folders with their own copies of the EnergyPlus engine files.

The recent trend of personal computer progress is to embed more CPUs rather than to increase the operating frequency of a single CPU for a PC. This poses a challenge to EnergyPlus as one EnergyPlus simulation only runs on a single CPU.

EnergyPlus is used for building performance simulations which involve a sequential run period and the integrated coupling of building envelope, lighting/daylighting, HVAC, service water heating, and on-site energy generations. The time step correlation of calculations makes it difficult to re-write the EnergyPlus code for parallel computing.

Compiler optimization settings can also have a significant impact on EnergyPlus run time. The official release of EnergyPlus already implemented optimizations for fast speed.

Recommendations to Improve EnergyPlus Run Time

Compared with creating energy models, EnergyPlus run time is normally a small fraction of the total time needed to complete an energy modeling job. Therefore it is very important to build a clean and concise EnergyPlus model up front. Techniques for simplifying large and complex building and systems should be used during the creation of energy models, especially during the early design process when detailed zoning and other information is not available. Producing lots of hourly or sub-hourly reports from EnergyPlus runs can take significant amount of time. Modelers should only request time step reports when necessary. On the other hand, producing summary reports and typical monthly reports take relatively small amount of run time. These reports are valuable references for troubleshooting and model fine tuning.

With powerful personal computers get more and more affordable, EnergyPlus modelers should choose to use current available PCs with 3 or more GHZ and 3 or more GB of RAM. For a large volume of EnergyPlus parametric runs, modelers can launch multiple runs in parallel. In this case, PCs will more CPUs definitely help in reducing total EnergyPlus run time.

For modelers, most time is spent on troubleshooting and fine tuning energy models. During the early modeling process, it is recommended to keep the model as simple as possible and make quick runs to identify problems. Then modify the model to fix problems and re-run the model. This is an iterative process until satisfactory solutions are found. The simulation process can be split into three phases: the diagnostic runs, the preliminary runs, and the final runs. The three phases would use different simulation settings. The diagnostic runs would use a set of simulation settings to speed up the runs with simulation accuracy being set as the second priority. The diagnostic runs will help catch most model problems by running simulations on summer and winter design days. The preliminary runs use a tighter set of simulation settings in order to catch problems missed in the diagnostic runs, and provide better results for quality assurance purpose. The final runs use the EnergyPlus recommended set of simulation settings in order to achieve better accuracy for simulation results ready for review and reporting.

Inside EnergyPlus, code review and enhancements to the critical subroutines, identified in the code profiling section, should be done. This task is ongoing and a separate report will document the findings and results.

Another potential improvement in EnergyPlus run time is to make EnergyPlus capable of parallel computing on current and future PCs, which do not increase CPU clock speed much over the past, but carry more and more CPUs. To make this happen, the EnergyPlus code needs to be parallelized by programmers rather than relying on compiler parallelism settings.

EnergyPlus development was started in late 1990s. The FORTRAN 90/95 language, used by EnergyPlus code, although has some object based features, is not an object oriented computer programming language that fully supports encapsulation, modularity, polymorphism, and inheritance. FORTRAN is especially inefficient in handling string operations which are used intensively in EnergyPlus code. DOE-2 was rewritten twice from scratch in order to have better software architecture, data structure, and better run time performance. Therefore, in the long term, it is worth considering rewriting EnergyPlus in an object oriented language like C++, so that EnergyPlus can better integrate with future computer hardware, software, operating systems, and make it easier to add new features to EnergyPlus and allow EnergyPlus to more effectively interoperate with other simulation programs.

About This Report

This report is organized with the following eight sections:

- Executive Summary
- Historical Trend of EnergyPlus Run Time
- Comparison of Run Time between EnergyPlus and DOE-2
- Impacts of Simulation Settings on EnergyPlus Run Time
- Impacts of Model Features on EnergyPlus Run Time
- EnergyPlus Code Profiling
- Computer Platform
- Recommendations to Improve EnergyPlus Run Time

A separate report, as the second deliverable for the same task, is to test and implement the recommendations identified in the code profiling section of this report, and to make enhancements to EnergyPlus code in order to speed up the simulation runs.

Historical Trend of EnergyPlus Run Time

History always helps humans think about future. With the enhancements to EnergyPlus code made by the development team, the improvements of FORTRAN compilers, and more powerful computers with faster CPUs and more computer memory, EnergyPlus has been making significant progress in reducing the computer run time.

Table 1 shows the computer run time for an annual simulation of the large office building model with four public release versions of EnergyPlus on four computer platforms. The large office building model is included in EnergyPlus release as an example file. It has multiple stories (middle floors modeled as floor multiplier) with a total of 15 thermal zones and one central VAV systems with water-cooled chillers and hot-water boilers. The loads time step is set to 15 minutes, and HVAC autosizing calculations are specified. The Chicago OHare TMY2 weather file is used in the runs.

Table 1 Historical Trend of EnergyPlus Run Time

| Run ID | EnergyPlus Version | PC Platform | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| H1a | 1.2.1.012 | Current Desktop | 400 |
| H1b | 1.2.2.030 | Current Desktop | 265 |
| H1c | 2.1.0.023 | Current Desktop | 107 |
| H1d | 2.2.0.023 | Current Desktop | 124 |
| H2a | 1.2.1.012 | Current Laptop | 578 |
| H2b | 1.2.2.030 | Current Laptop | 418 |
| H2c | 2.1.0.023 | Current Laptop | 242 |
| H2d | 2.2.0.023 | Current Laptop | 250 |
| H3a | 1.2.1.012 | Old Laptop | 992 |
| H3b | 1.2.2.030 | Old Laptop | 645 |
| H3c | 2.1.0.023 | Old Laptop | 424 |
| H3d | 2.2.0.023 | Old Laptop | 461 |
| H4a | 1.2.1.012 | Very Old Desktop | 11136 |
| H4b | 1.2.2.030 | Very Old Desktop | 7007 |
| H4c | 2.1.0.023 | Very Old Desktop | 4472 |
| H4d | 2.2.0.023 | Very Old Desktop | 2211 |

Table 2 Computer Platforms for the History Runs

| Platform ID | Platform Description |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Current Desktop (2007-2008) | Intel Core 2 Duo with two CPUs of 3 GHZ and 2 GB of RAM and Microsoft Windows XP SP2 |
| Current Laptop (2007-2008) | Intel Core 2 Duo with two CPUs of 2 GHZ and 3 GB of RAM and Microsoft Windows Vista Home Premium |
| Old Laptop (2004) | Intel Pentium M Processor with one CPU of 1.5 GHZ and 500 MB of RAM and Microsoft Windows XP SP2 |
| Very Old Desktop (2000) | Intel Pentium III with one CPU of 450 MHZ and 192 MB of RAM and Microsoft Windows 98 2nd Edition |

Table 3 EnergyPlus Versions for the History Runs

| Version | Release Date | Description |
|-----------|------------------|---|
| 2.2.0.023 | April 22, 2008 | All real variables are changed from 32-bit to 64-bit. Use the compiler settings for release build; The EnergyPlus.exe file size is 11,392 KB. |
| 2.1.0.023 | October 31, 2007 | Use the compiler settings for release build; Improve string handling in EnergyPlus subroutines. The EnergyPlus.exe file size is 10,504 KB. |
| 1.2.2.030 | April 22, 2005 | Use the compiler settings for release build; The EnergyPlus.exe file size is 8,309 KB. |
| 1.2.1.012 | October 1, 2004 | Use the compiler settings for debug build. The EnergyPlus.exe file size is 12,141 KB. |

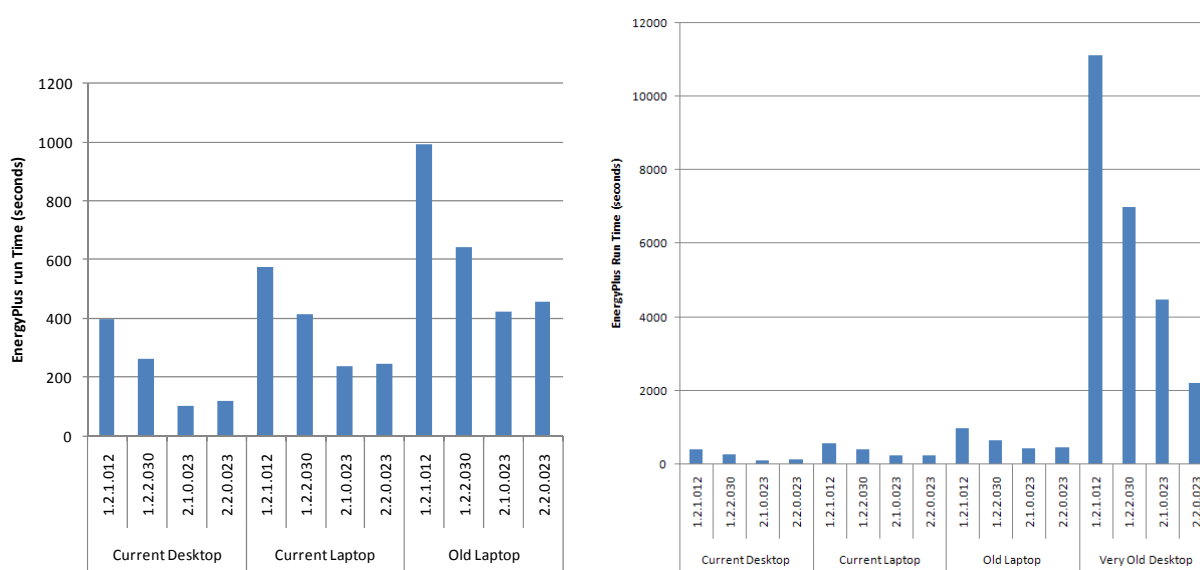


Figure 1 EnergyPlus Run Time - History Runs

Two major trends can be observed from these runs:

- Significant run time reduction is achieved with newer versions of EnergyPlus.

On the current desktop computer, EnergyPlus run time is reduced from 400 seconds (H1a Run) with version 1.2.1.012 to 265 seconds (H1b Run) with version 1.2.2.030, to 107 seconds (H1c Run) with version 2.1.0.023, and to 124 seconds (H1d Run) with version 2.2.0.023. The run time reduction is by a factor of 3.2 (400/124) from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.1.012, and by a factor of 2.1 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.2.030, but run time is increased by about 16% from version 2.1.0.023 to 2.2.0.023.

On the current laptop computer, EnergyPlus run time is reduced from 578 seconds with version 1.2.1.012 to 418 seconds with version 1.2.2.030, to 242 seconds with version 2.1.0.023, and to 250 seconds with version 2.2.0.023. The run time reduction is by a factor of 2.4 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.1.012, and by a factor of 1.7 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.2.030, but run time is increased by about 3% from version 2.1.0.023 to 2.2.0.023.

On the old laptop computer, EnergyPlus run time is reduced from 992 seconds with version 1.2.1.012 to 645 seconds with version 1.2.2.030, to 424 seconds with version 2.1.0.023, and to 461 seconds with version 2.2.0.023. The run time reduction is by a factor of 2.3 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.1.012, and by a factor of 1.4 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.2.030, but run time is increased by about 9% from version 2.1.0.023 to 2.2.0.023.

On the very old desktop computer, EnergyPlus run time is reduced from 11136 seconds with version 1.2.1.012 to 7007 seconds with version 1.2.2.030, to 4472 seconds with version 2.1.0.023, and further to 2211 seconds with version 2.2.0.023. The run time reduction is by a factor of 5.0 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.1.012, by a factor of 3.2 from version 2.2.0.023 to 1.2.2.030, and by a factor of 2.0 from version 2.2.0.023 to 2.1.0.023.

- Significant run time reduction is also achieved with newer faster computers.

With EnergyPlus version 2.2.0.023, the run time is reduced from 2211 seconds on the very old desktop to 461 seconds on the old laptop, to 250 seconds on the current laptop, and to 124 seconds on the current desktop. The run time reduction is by a factor of 4.8, 8.8, and 17.8 respectively.

With EnergyPlus version 2.1.0.023, the run time is reduced from 4472 seconds on the very old desktop to 424 seconds on the old laptop, to 242 seconds on the current laptop, and to 107 seconds on the current desktop. The run time reduction is by a factor of 10.5, 18.5, and 41.8 respectively.

With EnergyPlus version 1.2.2.030, the run time is reduced from 7007 seconds on the very old desktop to 645 seconds on the old laptop, to 418 seconds on the current laptop, and to 265 seconds on the current desktop. The run time reduction is by a factor of 10.9, 16.8, and 26.4 respectively.

With EnergyPlus version 1.2.1.012, the run time is reduced from 11136 seconds on the very old desktop to 992 seconds on the old laptop, to 578 seconds on the current laptop, and to 400 seconds on the current desktop. The run time reduction is by a factor of 11.2, 19.3, and 27.8 respectively.

Several interesting findings are also observed:

- EnergyPlus run time is very close between version 2.2.0.023 and 2.1.0.023, with version 2.2.0.023 slightly slower than version 2.1.0.023, except on the very old desktop computer which has very limited computer memory compared with the other three computers. It is unclear whether this slow down is due to the change of real variables from 32-bit to 64-bit or the additions of new features and modules, or other code changes incorporated in version 2.2.0.023. It would be interesting to see how these runs perform on computers with 64-bit CPUs, and with the EnergyPlus execution file compiled with 64-bit FORTRAN compilers.
- EnergyPlus version 1.2.1.012 is very slow compared with the other three versions. The main reason is that version 1.2.1.012 is a debug version which incorporated full debugging information, while the other three versions are release versions that do not have debugging information built in the EnergyPlus execution file. This might also be derived by comparing the size of the EnergyPlus executive files between version 1.2.1.012 (12,141 KB) and version 1.2.2.030 (8,309 KB) – version 1.2.2.030 adds new features to EnergyPlus version 1.2.1.012, but the exe file is about 50% smaller. In this sense, it is not an apples-to-apples comparison between version 1.2.1.012 and the other three versions. More meaningful run time comparisons should be based on the other three EnergyPlus versions.

From these runs, it can be seen that with the current available computer and current version of EnergyPlus in 2008 (H1d), the EnergyPlus run time can be reduced by a factor of up to 56 (from 7007 to 124 seconds) compared with the computer in 2000 and EnergyPlus in 2005 (H4b). The large office building model took about 11 minutes to run (H3b) three to four years ago would take only 2 minutes to run (H1d) in 2008. This is an impressive progress in reducing EnergyPlus run time by a factor of 5.5 in about 3 to 4 years. Whether this trend will continue is a question hard to answer at the moment. On one hand, there are potential run time improvement changes can be made to EnergyPlus code and data structure to improve the data exchange between modules and subroutines, and new algorithms can be developed to automatically and intelligently adjust the HVAC system time step. On the other hand, EnergyPlus adds more and more modeling features which make the program more complex and the size of the compiled exe file bigger. There are also possible future changes to EnergyPlus to improve calculation accuracy that may require more iterative calculations, which will slow the simulation runs.

The recent trend of progress in personal computer technologies is to incorporate more CPUs rather than to increase the speed of a single CPU, which is getting more and more limited to current silicon chip technologies. EnergyPlus, as of version 2.2, only runs on a single CPU for a simulation run, it does not use the potentials of multiple CPUs in current computers. To make sure the history trend continues or even accelerates, EnergyPlus has to be able to take advantages of multiple CPUs. Either this is done by reengineering EnergyPlus code or using future parallel computer language compilers, is an interesting and challenging question hard to answer at the moment.

Comparison of Run Time between EnergyPlus and DOE-2

With the trend toward energy efficient building designs, energy simulation programs are increasingly employed in the design process to help architects and engineers to determine which design alternatives save energy and are cost effective. DOE-2 is one of the popular programs used by the building simulation community. With today's PC computing power, a DOE-2 energy model normally takes less than a few minutes to complete an annual simulation run. DOE-2's computational efficiency results from its hour-by-hour calculations and the sequential software structure of LOADS-SYSTEMS-PLANT-ECONOMICS which does not solve the building envelope thermal dynamics with the HVAC system operating performance simultaneously. EnergyPlus is a new generation simulation program built upon the best features of DOE-2 and BLAST, and adds new modeling features beyond the two programs. With DOE-2's limitations in modeling emerging technologies, more modelers have begun using EnergyPlus for their simulation needs, especially for LEED green building designs and low or net-zero energy buildings. EnergyPlus does sub-hourly calculations and integrates the load and system dynamic performance into the whole building energy balance calculations which can provide more accurate simulation results.

The fact is that compared with DOE-2, EnergyPlus runs much slower. But why and how does EnergyPlus run slower? What is the basis of the comparison? Is the comparison apples-to-apples? It is worth digging into these questions to find out what are the real drivers for a full and clear understanding of computer run time of simulation programs.

Energy models developed from same building prototypes with similar simulation settings should be the basis of runs with different simulation programs for the purpose of comparing computer run time. Modelers should not expect different programs to run at the same speed if these programs have very different modeling capabilities and run at different time steps with different calculation algorithms for different simulation accuracy.

Approach

Metric for Comparing Simulation Run Time

For the automobile industry, MPG (miles per gallon) is the metric or criterion to benchmark the fuel efficiency of vehicles. Unfortunately there is no such de facto metric to compare computer run time of simulation programs. Key factors that have significant impacts on simulation run time include: the calculation algorithm and modeling capabilities of the program, the run period, the simulation time step, the complexity of the energy models, the simulation settings, and the software and hardware configurations of the computer that is used to make the simulation runs. With the complexity involved, it is almost impossible to define a theoretical metric to represent the computing efficiency of a simulation program. Fortunately, in practice, we can use simple metrics such as SPZ (Seconds per Zone) to compare computer run time among simulation programs.

SPZ is defined as the total amount of computer run time (for annual runs) divide by the total number of thermal zones of an energy model with a simulation program. SPZ has a unit of seconds per zone. The less the SPZ, the more efficient computing a simulation program has.

Complexity of Energy Models

It is hard to quantitatively define the complexity of an energy model. What is certain is that the types of energy features and the size of building and HVAC systems, to a great extent, determine the complexity of an energy model. The energy features may include: shading of envelope and windows, daylighting and controls, HVAC system types and configurations, plant equipment types and controls, service water heating systems, and renewable energy productions. The size of building and HVAC systems relates to the number of opaque surfaces, the number of openings (windows, doors, and skylights), the number of

thermal zones, the number and types of HVAC systems, and the number of primary loops and plant equipment.

Even with DOE-2, if there are lots of shading devices and daylighting calculation is turned on, an annual 8760-hour simulation can take much longer to run.

Simulation Settings

For a specific simulation program, user inputs to some of the simulation settings play a significant role in the amount of computer run time needed to complete a simulation run. The simulation settings include the number of simulation time steps per hour, choice of solution algorithm, and convergence resolution.

For DOE-2, users have very limited inputs to control the simulation run time as the computing time step is fixed at an hour and it is almost impossible to change the calculation algorithms. What users can change are the run period, whether to consider the self shading effects of building facades, accuracy of the shading calculations, and which output reports to produce.

For EnergyPlus, users have much more control on run time. Users can choose simulation time step, heat balance solution algorithm, system convergence limits, solar distribution method, shadow calculation interval, and report generation. Details are described in the next section.

Basis of Comparing Computer Run time

As different simulation programs may have different software architecture, use different algorithms to model building and energy systems, and require different user inputs even to describe the same building envelope or HVAC system component; it is not feasible to develop an identical energy model with two simulation programs. To get as close as possible for an apple-to-apple comparison of computer run time of simulation programs, simulation programs must be run on a common basis with:

- The same building and energy systems and their control strategies
- The same simulation run period
- The same physical and temporal resolutions
- The same or as close as possible simulation settings: time step, calculation algorithm, and solver convergence tolerance
- The same computer with same hardware and software configurations

Simulation Runs

To demonstrate the above described approach, several building prototypes with different occupancy types, different number of zones and system types, are used to generate the EnergyPlus and DOE-2 models. These models were originally developed by Joe Huang at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and further modified and enhanced by NREL and PNNL for the DOE commercial building benchmarks. Both DOE-2.1E version 124 and EnergyPlus version 2.1.0 are used to run these models, and computer run times are listed in tables for comparisons.

Description of EnergyPlus and DOE-2 Models

Three building prototypes are used for comparing the simulation run time. Details of these prototypes are documented in score cards developed by Joe Huang at LBNL for the commercial building prototypes (Huang 2007).

The large office building

The large office building has a rectangular shape with twelve floors. The top, bottom and a typical middle floor are modeled explicitly. The middle floor has a floor multiplier of ten to represent other nine middle floors. Each floor has four perimeter and one core zones. The total number of zones is 15. The building is

served by one central variable air volume (VAV) systems with chillers and boilers. Perimeter zones have reheat boxes. The window-wall-ratio is 40% with windows uniformly distributed on four facades.

The secondary school

The secondary school is a campus with 11 buildings. The energy model has a total of 79 thermal zones. The building is served by 11 packaged single zone systems with direct expansion cooling and gas furnace heating. The window-wall-ratio is 33%.

The hospital building

The hospital building has a rectangular shape with five floors. Each floor has different zoning pattern. The total number of zones is 55. The building is served by 7 central VAV systems and 1 constant volume air system. The window-wall-ratio is 20%.

Weather Data

The San Francisco TMY2 weather file is used for all simulation runs.

Run Time Results

Annual runs of these prototype models are performed with both DOE-2 and EnergyPlus on a desktop PC with Intel Core 2 Duo of 2 CPUs of 3 GHZ and 2GB of RAM and Microsoft Windows XP SP2. The DOE-2 runs do not consider any shades. The EnergyPlus runs have default settings of minimal solar shading, 15-minute loads time step, system minimum time step of 6 minutes, 20 system maximum interactions, and conduction transfer function heat balance calculations. HVAC is autosized in all DOE-2 and EnergyPlus runs. All standard summary reports are requested from both DOE-2 and EnergyPlus runs. No daylighting is considered in these runs.

Tables 4 to 6 show EnergyPlus runs at 15-minute time step compared with DOE-2's 60-minute time step.

Table 4 Computer Run Time of the Large Office Building (EnergyPlus 15-minute Time Step)

| Simulation Program | Total Run Time (seconds) | SPZ (seconds/zone) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DOE-2.1E v124 | 0.74 | 0.049 |
| EnergyPlus v2.1.0 | 77 | 5.13 |

Table 5 Computer Run Time of the Secondary School (EnergyPlus 15-minute Time Step)

| Simulation Program | Total Run Time (seconds) | SPZ (seconds/zone) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DOE-2.1E v124 | 5.1 | 0.065 |
| EnergyPlus v2.1.0 | 657 | 8.32 |

Table 6 Computer Run Time of the Hospital Building (EnergyPlus 15-minute Time Step)

| Simulation Program | Total Run Time (seconds) | SPZ (seconds/zone) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DOE-2.1E v124 | 2.6 | 0.047 |
| EnergyPlus v2.1.0 | 499 | 9.24 |

To have a fair comparison, another set of EnergyPlus runs are made at 60-minute loads and system time step with 5 maximum HVAC iterations. Tables 7 to 9 show the results.

Table 7 Computer Run Time of the Large Office Building (EnergyPlus 60-minute Time Step)

| Simulation Program | Total Run Time (seconds) | SPZ (seconds/zone) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DOE-2.1E v124 | 0.74 | 0.049 |
| EnergyPlus v2.1.0 | 18.4 | 1.23 |

Table 8 Computer Run Time of the Secondary School (EnergyPlus 60-minute Time Step)

| Simulation Program | Total Run Time (seconds) | SPZ (seconds/zone) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DOE-2.1E v124 | 5.1 | 0.065 |
| EnergyPlus v2.1.0 | 158 | 2.0 |

Table 9 Computer Run Time of the Hospital Building (EnergyPlus 60-minute Time Step)

| Simulation Program | Total Run Time (seconds) | SPZ (seconds/zone) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| DOE-2.1E v124 | 2.6 | 0.047 |
| EnergyPlus v2.1.0 | 138 | 2.55 |

Run Time Analysis

At 15-minute time step, EnergyPlus runs much slower than DOE-2.1E by a factor of from 105 for the large office building to 196 for the hospital building. At 60-minute time step, EnergyPlus still runs slower than DOE-2.1E by a factor of from 25 for the large office building to 54 for the hospital building, but EnergyPlus computer run time improves by a factor of about 4 which corresponds to the reduction of number of time steps per hour from 4 to 1.

The main reason EnergyPlus runs much slower than DOE-2.1E is that EnergyPlus does the integrated heat balance calculations for loads, systems, and plant at a given time step while DOE-2 does sequential calculations from loads to systems to plant with no feedbacks from plant to systems or from systems to loads. This means EnergyPlus may need a few iterations within a time step in order to reach a convergent solution. A comparison of the modeling features of DOE-2 and EnergyPlus can be found in the article (Crawley et al. 2005).

When DOE-2 was first developed in late 1970s, the computer computing power was very limited. Even an annual run of a 50-zone model could take hours if not days to run. With today's PC computing power, the question is not to develop simulation programs that run as fast as DOE-2, but rather to develop programs that can do sub-hourly and more accurate building thermal performance calculations in a reasonable amount of time. If EnergyPlus can reach 10 seconds per zone, a typical 50-zone 5-system model would need about 10 minutes to complete an annual run with currently available PCs (3 GHz CPU and 2 GB of RAM). Note that for the rather simple modeling runs performed for the comparisons, EnergyPlus in all cases performed faster than 10 seconds per zone. For cases where only monthly and annual energy consumption results are needed, hourly time step may be sufficient. In that case EnergyPlus is in the range of 2 seconds per zone.

Impacts of Simulation Settings on EnergyPlus Run Time

For a simulation program, user inputs to the simulation settings can play a significant role in the amount of computer run time needed to complete a simulation run. Major simulation settings of EnergyPlus include the length of the run period, the number of calculation time steps per hour, the choice of solution algorithms, the convergence resolutions, and output reports.

Simulation Settings of EnergyPlus Runs

Users can change the simulation settings of EnergyPlus models with a few EnergyPlus IDD objects to control the run time:

- Length of the run period. Users can choose from a whole year, to one or more months, to one or more weeks, and even to one or more days.
- Number of time steps per hour for loads calculations. Users can choose from one time step (60 minutes) to 60 time steps (1 minute) per hour.
- Heat balance solution algorithm. Users can choose either the CTF (Conduction Transfer Function) or the CondFD (Conduction Finite Difference) method. The CondFD method could handle material properties that depend on temperature including PCMs (phase change material). If moisture absorption and storage effect of zone inside surfaces is to be considered, the EMPD (Empirical Moisture Penetration Depth) method should be used.
- Solar distribution and reflection calculation algorithm. Users can choose among MinimalShadowing, FullExterior, FullInteriorAndExterior, FullExteriorWithReflections, and FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections.

The MinimalShadowing option requires the least amount of calculations. There is no exterior shadowing except from window and door reveals. All beam solar radiation entering the zone is assumed to fall on the floor, where it is absorbed according to the floor's solar absorptance. Any reflected by the floor is added to the transmitted diffuse radiation, which is assumed to be uniformly distributed on all interior surfaces.

For FullExterior and FullExteriorWithReflections, shadow patterns on exterior surfaces caused by detached shading, wings, overhangs, and exterior surfaces of all zones are computed. Shadowing by window and door reveals is also calculated. Beam solar radiation entering the zone is treated as for MinimalShadowing.

FullInteriorAndExterior and FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections are the same as FullExterior except that instead of assuming all transmitted beam solar falls on the floor the program calculates the amount of beam radiation falling on each surface in the zone, including floor, walls and windows, by projecting the sun's rays through the exterior windows, taking into account the effect of exterior shadowing surfaces and window shading devices.

- System convergence limits. Choices of minimum system time step (from 1 to 60 minutes) and maximum HVAC iterations (from 5 to 200 or more). In EnergyPlus, HVAC system calculations are started at the loads time step and adjusted downward during iterations as necessary to reach convergence solutions based on loads and temperature criteria.
- Shadow calculation interval. Choices of from one day to three weeks, or to whatever is appropriate for the application. This can have significant impact on run time if the energy model has complex building shapes with lots of shading and the activation of daylighting calculations.
- Length of the warm up runs. Users can set the maximum number of days and the loads and temperature convergence criteria for the warm up runs. Buildings with heavy thermal mass need longer warm up runs.

- Amount and frequency of output reports to be generated during runs. Whether to produce summary reports, monthly reports, and hourly or sub-hourly reports.

Table 10 summarizes the relevant EnergyPlus IDD objects and fields that users can input to control the run time of an EnergyPlus model. Full details of these IDD objects and their fields can be found in the EnergyPlus Input Output Reference and Engineering Reference manuals which are available on EnergyPlus web site www.EnergyPlus.gov.

Table 10 EnergyPlus IDD Objects and Fields Related to Simulation Settings

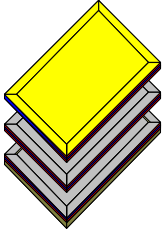
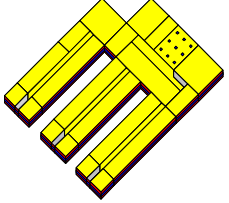
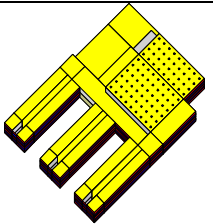
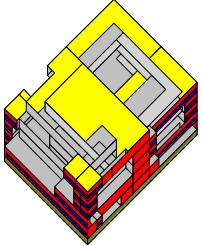
| Category of Settings | IDD Object | IDD Field(s) | Description |
|---|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Length of Run Period | Run Period | Begin Month, Begin Day Of Month, End Month, End Day Of Month, Day Of Week For Start Day, Number of times Run Period to be done | This defines the beginning and end of the run period. The run period can be repeated by the specified times. |
| LOADS Time Step | TimeStep In Hour | Time Step in Hour | Number of time steps in an hour, used in the heat balance calculations. Value ranges from 1 to 60. |
| System Convergence Limits | System Convergence Limits | Minimum System Time Step | Minimum time step in HVAC system calculations. Value ranges from 1 to 15 minutes. |
| | System Convergence Limits | Maximum HVAC Iterations | Maximum number of iterations in HVAC system calculations. Value ranges from 5 to 200. |
| Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | Solution Algorithm | SolutionAlgo | This specifies what type of heat and moisture transfer algorithm to use for the building envelope. Three choices: CTF, EMPD, CondFD. |
| Solar Distribution and Reflection Algorithm | Building | Solar Distribution | This determines how EnergyPlus treats beam solar radiation and reflectance from exterior surfaces that strike the building and, ultimately, enter the zone. Five choices: MinimalShadowing, FullExterior and FullInteriorAndExterior, FullExteriorWithReflections, FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections. |
| | Shadow Calculations | PeriodForCalculations | Number of days to recalculate shadow. Value of 0 means periodic calculations. Value ranges from 0 to 20. |
| Shadow Calculations | Shadow Calculations | MaxFiguresShadowOverlap | Number of allowable figures in shadow overlap calculations. Value ranges from 200 to 15000 and more |
| | Building | Loads Convergence Tolerance Value | Maximum loads difference to reach warmup convergence. Value ranges from 0.01 to 0.05 representing 1 to 5%. |
| Length of Warmup Period | Building | Temperature Convergence Tolerance Value | Maximum temperature difference to reach warmup convergence. Value ranges from 0.1 to 0.5°C. |
| | Building | Maximum Number of Warmup Days | Maximum number of days to run in order to reach convergence for the first simulation day. Value ranges from 7 to 25 or more. |
| | Run Control | Do the zone sizing calculation | Whether to do the zone autosizing calculations. Two choices: Yes, No. |
| Autosizing Calculations | Run Control | Do the system sizing calculation | Whether to do the system autosizing calculations. Two choices: Yes, No. |
| | Run Control | Do the plant sizing calculation | Whether to do the plant autosizing calculations. Two choices: Yes, No. |
| | Run Control | Do the design day simulation | Whether to do the design day simulation runs. Two choices: Yes, No. |
| Weather File Runs | Run Control | Do the weather file simulation | Whether to do the weather file simulation runs. Two choices: Yes, No. |
| Convection Algorithm | Inside Convection Algorithm | Algorithm | This specifies which algorithm to use in calculating the |

| Category of Settings | IDD Object | IDD Field(s) | Description |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| | | | convection heat transfer of inside surfaces. Three choices: Simple, Detailed, CeilingDiffuser. |
| | Outside Convection Algorithm | Algorithm | This specifies which algorithm to use in calculating the convection heat transfer of outside surfaces. Three choices: Simple, Detailed, BLAST, TARP, DOE-2, MoWITT. |
| Debugging Information | Debug Output | YesNo | Whether to output debugging information in the eplusout.dbg file. Value of 1 means yes. |
| | Debug Output | EvenDuringWarmup | Whether to output debugging information during warmup runs. Value of 1 means yes. |
| Output Reports | Report | Type_of_Report | Variable Dictionary, Surfaces, Construction, Schedules, Materials. |
| | Report:Table:Predefined | ReportName | Choice of tabular summary reports: ABUPS, IVRS, Climate Summary, Equipment Summary, Envelope Summary, Surface Shadowing Summary, Shading Summary, Lighting Summary, HVAC Sizing Summary, System Summary, Component Sizing Summary, Outside Air Summary, All Summary. |
| | Report:Table:TimeBins | | Define bin reports for variables |
| | Report:Table:Monthly | | Define monthly reports for variables |
| | Report Variable | Key_Value, Variable_Name | Define the variable to report |
| | Report Variable | Reporting_Frequency | Define the report frequency. Choices are: detailed (for every HVAC time step), timestep (loads/zone time step), hourly, daily, monthly, runperiod/annual. |
| | Report Meter | Meter_Name, Reporting_Frequency | Define meter name and report frequency. Choices are: timestep (loads/zone time step), hourly, daily, monthly, runperiod/annual. |
| | Report Cumulative Meter | Meter_Name, Reporting_Frequency | Define meter name and report frequency. Choices are: timestep (loads/zone time step), hourly, daily, monthly, runperiod/annual. |
| | Report Environmental Impact Factors | Reporting_Frequency | Define the report frequency. Choices are: timestep, hourly, daily, monthly, runperiod. |
| | Report Variable Dictionary | | Output all available report variables in the rdd file. |

EnergyPlus Models

Four EnergyPlus models are chosen from Version 2 of the DOE commercial building benchmarks for the run time analysis. These are representative new commercial constructions for the US based on the 2003 CBECS database. The performance of these models is set to meet the prescriptive requirements of ASHRAE Standard 90.1-2004. Table 11 summarizes the four models. Details of these models are documented in the NREL/LBNL/PNNL report - DOE Commercial Building Research Benchmarks for Commercial Buildings.

Table 11 Summary of the Four DOE Commercial Building Benchmarks

| Building Benchmark | Building Description | Number of HVAC Systems | HVAC System Description | Number of Zones | 3D View |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|---|---|
| The large office building | 12 stories, each story 5 zones, use floor multipliers for the middle story | 1 | 1 central VAV with water-cooled chillers and hot-water boilers | 15 conditioned zones and 1 unconditioned zone |  |
| The elementary school buildings | 1 story | 5 | 4 packaged VAV systems with hot water boiler and 1 PSZ system with gas furnace | 25 conditioned zones |  |
| The high school buildings | 2 stories | 7 | 3 PSZ systems with gas furnace and 4 central VAV water-cooled chillers and hot-water boilers | 46 conditioned zones and 1 unconditioned zone |  |
| The hospital buildings | 5 stories | 2 | 2 central VAV with water-cooled chillers and hot-water boilers | 54 conditioned zones and 1 unconditioned zone |  |

These represent typical EnergyPlus models with the number of zones from 16 to 55, number of systems from 1 to 7, and HVAC system types from packaged single zone (PSZ) to packaged VAV (PVAV), and to central built-up VAV systems. Plant equipment varies from none to hot-water boilers and/or water-cooled chillers with cooling towers. HVAC equipment is autosized to meet peak loads.

Parametric Runs

The four base case runs are based on the four commercial building benchmarks with simulation settings listed in Table 12.

Table 12 Simulation Settings for the Base Case Runs

| Parameter | Value |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Run Period | Annual |
| Loads Time Step | 4 (15 minutes) |
| Maximum Number of HVAC Iterations | 20 |
| Minimum HVAC Time Step | 5 minutes |
| Solar Distribution Algorithm | MinimalShadowing |
| Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CTF |
| Warmup Loads Convergence Limit | 0.04 (4%) |
| Warmup Temperature Convergence Limit | 0.2°C |
| Inside Convection Algorithm | Simple |
| Outside Convection Algorithm | Simple |
| Reports | Monthly (56 selected variables) |

The parametric runs are done with EnergyPlus version 2.2.0.023 on the current desktop computer specified in the history runs section. For each parametric run, only the parametric variable is different from the base case. The San Francisco TMY2 weather file is used in the simulation runs.

Table 13 Parametric Runs for Different Simulation Settings of the Large Office Building Model

| Run ID | Parametric Variable | Variable Value | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| S1 | The large office base case | | 89 |
| S1a1 | Run Period | One month: July only | 14 |
| S1a2 | Run Period | Three Months: May to July | 27 |
| S1a3 | Run Period | Six Months: January to June | 47 |
| S1a4 | Run Period | Nine Months: January to September | 69 |
| S1b1 | Loads Time Step | 1 (60 minutes) | 73 |
| S1b2 | Loads Time Step | 2 (30 minutes) | 72 |
| S1b3 | Loads Time Step | 3 (20 minutes) | 80 |
| S1b4 | Loads Time Step | 6 (10 minutes) | 120 |
| S1b5 | Loads Time Step | 12 (5 minutes) | 221 |
| S1c1 | Maximum Number of HVAC Iterations | 5 | 88 |
| S1c2 | Maximum Number of HVAC iterations | 50 | 88 |
| S1d1 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 2 minutes | 94 |
| S1d2 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 10 minutes | 85 |
| S1d3 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 20 minutes (also for Loads time step) | 65 |
| S1d4 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 60 minutes (also for Loads time step) | 28 |
| S1e1 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExterior | 88 |
| S1e2 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExterior | 90 |
| S1e3 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExteriorWithReflections | 88 |
| S1e4 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections | 88 |
| S1f1 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CTF with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 368 |
| S1f2 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CondFD with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 980 |
| S1g1 | Warmup Loads Convergence Limit | 0.02 (2%) | 88 |

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| S1g2 | Warmup Temperature Convergence Limit | 0.1°C | 88 |
| S1h1 | Inside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 92 |
| S1h2 | Inside Convection Algorithm | CeilingDiffuser | 88 |
| S1i1 | Outside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 90 |
| S1i2 | Outside Convection Algorithm | BLAST | 92 |
| S1i3 | Outside Convection Algorithm | TARP | 91 |
| S1i4 | Outside Convection Algorithm | DOE-2 | 91 |
| S1i5 | Outside Convection Algorithm | MoWITT | 90 |
| S1j1 | Reports | None | 82 |
| S1j2 | Reports | Summary | 82 |
| S1j3 | Reports | Daily | 137 |
| S1j4 | Reports | Hourly | 251 |
| S1j5 | Reports | TimeStep | 649 |

Table 14 Parametric Runs for Different Simulation Settings of the Elementary School Model

| Run ID | Parametric Variable | Variable Value | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| S2 | The elementary school base case | | 285 |
| S2a1 | Run Period | One month: July only | 38 |
| S2a2 | Run Period | Three Months: May to July | 86 |
| S2a3 | Run Period | Six Months: January to June | 148 |
| S2a4 | Run Period | Nine Months: January to September | 209 |
| S2b1 | Loads Time Step | 1 (60 minutes) | 177 |
| S2b2 | Loads Time Step | 2 (30 minutes) | 198 |
| S2b3 | Loads Time Step | 3 (20 minutes) | 234 |
| S2b4 | Loads Time Step | 6 (10 minutes) | 356 |
| S2b5 | Loads Time Step | 12 (5 minutes) | 601 |
| S2c1 | Maximum Number of HVAC Iterations | 5 | 274 |
| S2c2 | Maximum Number of HVAC iterations | 50 | 274 |
| S2d1 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 2 minutes | 350 |
| S2d2 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 10 minutes | 251 |
| S2d3 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 20 minutes | 167 |
| S2d4 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 60 minutes | 71 |
| S2e1 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExterior | 274 |
| S2e2 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExterior | 274 |
| S2e3 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExteriorWithReflections | 278 |
| S2e4 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections | 278 |
| S2f1 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CTF with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 986 |
| S2f2 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CondFD with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 3853 |
| S2g1 | Warmup Loads Convergence Limit | 0.02 (2%) | 274 |
| S2g2 | Warmup Temperature Convergence Limit | 0.1°C | 275 |
| S2h1 | Inside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 289 |
| S2h2 | Inside Convection Algorithm | CeilingDiffuser | 279 |

| | | | |
|------|------------------------------|----------|-----|
| S2i1 | Outside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 275 |
| S2i2 | Outside Convection Algorithm | BLAST | 275 |
| S2i3 | Outside Convection Algorithm | TARP | 275 |
| S2i4 | Outside Convection Algorithm | DOE-2 | 275 |
| S2i5 | Outside Convection Algorithm | MoWITT | 276 |
| S2j1 | Reports | None | 260 |
| S2j2 | Reports | Summary | 261 |

Table 15 Parametric Runs for Different Simulation Settings of the High School Model

| Run ID | Parametric Variable | Variable Value | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| S3 | The high school base case | | 778 |
| S3a1 | Run Period | One month: July only | 105 |
| S3a2 | Run Period | Three Months: May to July | 229 |
| S3a3 | Run Period | Six Months: January to June | 412 |
| S3a4 | Run Period | Nine Months: January to September | 593 |
| S3b1 | Loads Time Step | 1 (60 minutes) | 478 |
| S3b2 | Loads Time Step | 2 (30 minutes) | 567 |
| S3b3 | Loads Time Step | 3 (20 minutes) | 674 |
| S3b4 | Loads Time Step | 6 (10 minutes) | 1001 |
| S3b5 | Loads Time Step | 12 (5 minutes) | 1639 |
| S3c1 | Maximum Number of HVAC Iterations | 5 | 778 |
| S3c2 | Maximum Number of HVAC iterations | 50 | 778 |
| S3d1 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 2 minutes | 1108 |
| S3d2 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 10 minutes | 714 |
| S3d3 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 20 minutes | 479 |
| S3d4 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 60 minutes | 215 |
| S3e1 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExterior | 780 |
| S3e2 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExterior | 781 |
| S3e3 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExteriorWithReflections | 797 |
| S3e4 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections | 800 |
| S3f1 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CTF with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 2613 |
| S3f2 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CondFD with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 6033 |
| S3g1 | Warmup Loads Convergence Limit | 0.02 (2%) | 779 |
| S3g2 | Warmup Temperature Convergence Limit | 0.1°C | 779 |
| S3h1 | Inside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 787 |
| S3h2 | Inside Convection Algorithm | CeilingDiffuser | 750 |
| S3i1 | Outside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 778 |
| S3i2 | Outside Convection Algorithm | BLAST | 777 |
| S3i3 | Outside Convection Algorithm | TARP | 778 |
| S3i4 | Outside Convection Algorithm | DOE-2 | 779 |
| S3i5 | Outside Convection Algorithm | MoWITT | 777 |
| S3j1 | Reports | None | 744 |

| | | | |
|------|---------|---------|-----|
| S3j2 | Reports | Summary | 741 |
|------|---------|---------|-----|

Table 16 Parametric Runs for Different Simulation Settings of the Hospital Model

| Run ID | Parametric Variable | Variable Value | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| S4 | The hospital base case | | 508 |
| S4a1 | Run Period | One month: July only | 85 |
| S4a2 | Run Period | Three Months: May to July | 160 |
| S4a3 | Run Period | Six Months: January to June | 276 |
| S4a4 | Run Period | Nine Months: January to September | 391 |
| S4b1 | Loads Time Step | 1 (60 minutes) | 327 |
| S4b2 | Loads Time Step | 2 (30 minutes) | 343 |
| S4b3 | Loads Time Step | 3 (20 minutes) | 413 |
| S4b4 | Loads Time Step | 6 (10 minutes) | 712 |
| S4b5 | Loads Time Step | 12 (5 minutes) | 1362 |
| S4c1 | Maximum Number of HVAC Iterations | 5 | 509 |
| S4c2 | Maximum Number of HVAC iterations | 50 | 509 |
| S4d1 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 2 minutes | 520 |
| S4d2 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 10 minutes | 522 |
| S4d3 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 20 minutes | 418 |
| S4d4 | Minimum HVAC Time Step | 60 minutes | 188 |
| S4e1 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExterior | 534 |
| S4e2 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExterior | 527 |
| S4e3 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullExteriorWithReflections | 529 |
| S4e4 | Solar Distribution Algorithm | FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections | 531 |
| S4f1 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CTF with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 2250 |
| S4f2 | Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CondFD with Loads and System time step set to 3 minutes | 3953 |
| S4g1 | Warmup Loads Convergence Limit | 0.02 (2%) | 510 |
| S4g2 | Warmup Temperature Convergence Limit | 0.1 °C | 510 |
| S4h1 | Inside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 519 |
| S4h2 | Inside Convection Algorithm | CeilingDiffuser | 505 |
| S4i1 | Outside Convection Algorithm | Detailed | 510 |
| S4i2 | Outside Convection Algorithm | BLAST | 510 |
| S4i3 | Outside Convection Algorithm | TARP | 511 |
| S4i4 | Outside Convection Algorithm | DOE-2 | 511 |
| S4i5 | Outside Convection Algorithm | MoWITT | 511 |
| S4j1 | Reports | None | 468 |
| S4j2 | Reports | Summary | 470 |

Run Time Analysis

From the above 135 EnergyPlus simulation runs, the following can be observed:

- As expected, the length of run period has a significant impact on run time. The longer the run period, the longer the EnergyPlus run time. The annual run time of the four models (S1, S2, S3 and S4) are 89, 285, 778, and 508 seconds respectively, while the monthly run times (S1a1, S2a1, S3a1, S4a1) are 14, 38, 105, and 85 seconds respectively. The run time is a linear function of run period in term of number of days as shown in Figure 2 with linear trend lines. The trend lines do not extend to cross the origin. The intercepts at the run time vertical axis represent the one-time simulation overheads that are independent of the length of run period: the number of warm up runs, the reading and parsing of the IDD and IDF file, and the preparation of output reports. For the high school case, the intercept is about 44 seconds which is equivalent to the run time of a 22-day simulation run as one day of simulation consumes about 2 seconds. The actual number of days for the warmup runs in this case is 3 days, therefore the other run time overheads are equivalent to the run time of a 19-day simulation run without overheads.

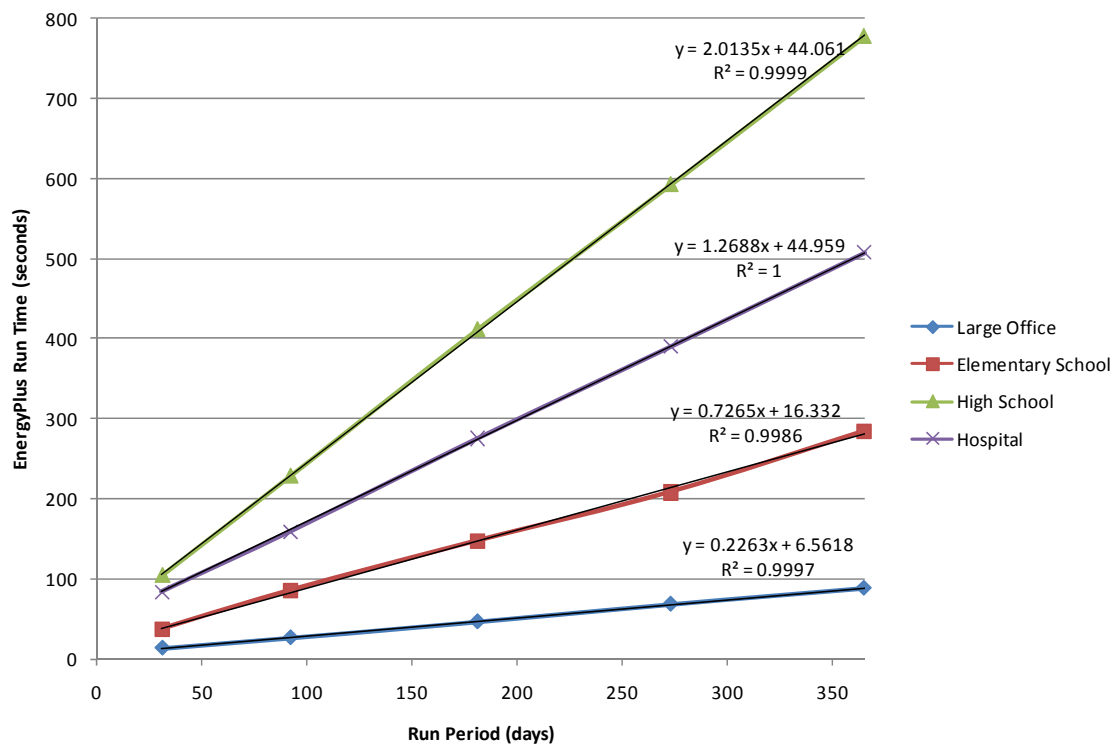


Figure 2 Run Period vs EnergyPlus Run Time

- The loads time step has a significant impact on run time. The shorter the loads time step, the longer the EnergyPlus run time. The 60-minute time step runs (S1b1, S2b1, S3b1, S4b1) consume 73, 177, 478, and 327 seconds respectively, while the 5-minute time step runs (S1b5, S2b5, S3b5, S4b5) consume 221, 601, 1639, and 1362 seconds respectively. The run time increases are by a factor of between 3 and 4, which is not proportional to the reduction of the interval of the loads time step. This is mainly due to the minimum system time step (5 minutes) is set independently of the loads time step.

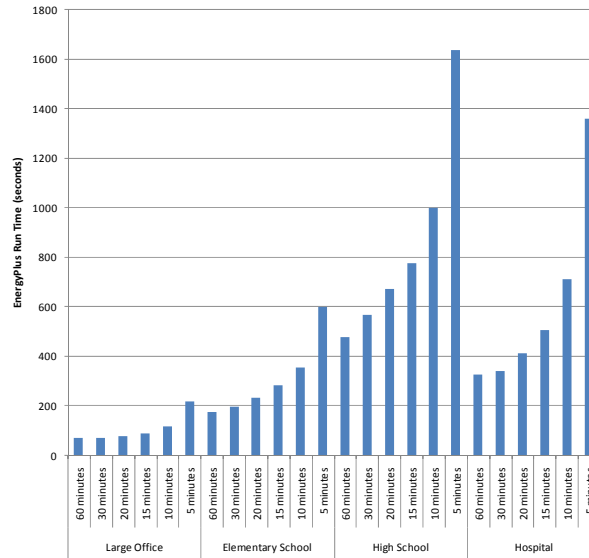


Figure 3 Loads Time Step vs EnergyPlus Run Time

- The maximum HVAC iterations (the c series runs - S1c1, S1c2, S2c1, S2c2, S3c1, S3c2, S4c1, and S4c2) do not have noticeable impact on run time. This implies that the HVAC calculations need no more than 5 iterations for the four models. For more complex HVAC system configurations and control strategies, the maximum HVAC iterations will definitely have a noticeable impact on EnergyPlus run time.
- The minimum HVAC time step has significant impact on EnergyPlus run time as can be seen in the d series runs (S1d1 to S1d4, S2d1 to S2d4, S3d1 to S3d4, and S4d1 to S4d4) listed in tables 13 to 16. For the large office and hospital models, the run time starts to drop when minimum system time step is increased from 10 minutes to 60 minutes. The variations of run times of the 2, 5, and 10 minutes system time step are within the 5% range. This implies that for these two models, the system iterative calculations converge around the time step of 10 minutes – less than 10 minutes of minimum HVAC time step does not increase run time. For the elementary and high school models, the run time drops when minimum system time step is increased from 2 minutes to 60 minutes. This implies that for these two models, the system iterative calculations converge around the time step of 2 minutes.

The reduction of EnergyPlus run time by increasing the minimum system time step from 2 minutes to 60 minutes is by a factor of 3.4, 4.9, 5.2, and 2.8 for the four models respectively.

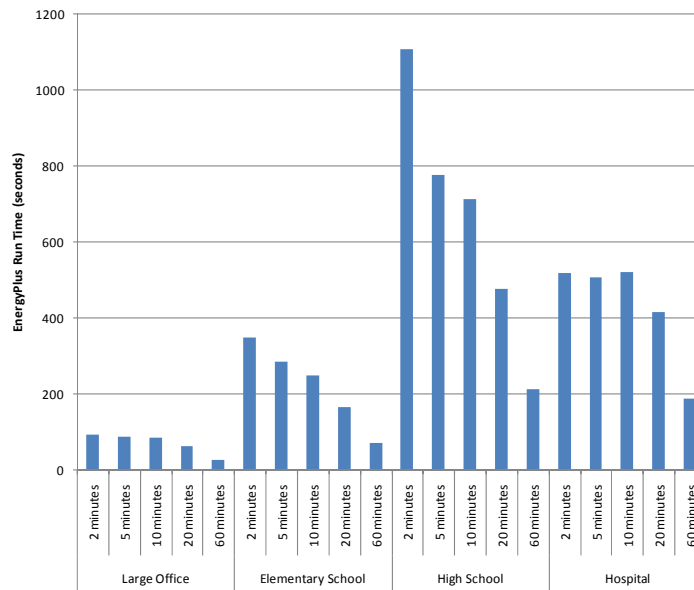


Figure 4 Minimum System Time Step vs EnergyPlus Run Time

- The impact of solar distribution algorithm on EnergyPlus run time is marginal partly because the four models have rather simple building geometry and without daylighting features. The high school model shows an increase of run time by about 3% if solar distribution algorithm is changed from the simplest MinimalShadowing in the base case to the most detailed FullInteriorAndExteriorWithReflections; for the hospital model, the run time increase is about 5%. It is unclear though why EnergyPlus run time is reduced in the large office and the elementary school models when solar distribution algorithm gets more detailed and complex.

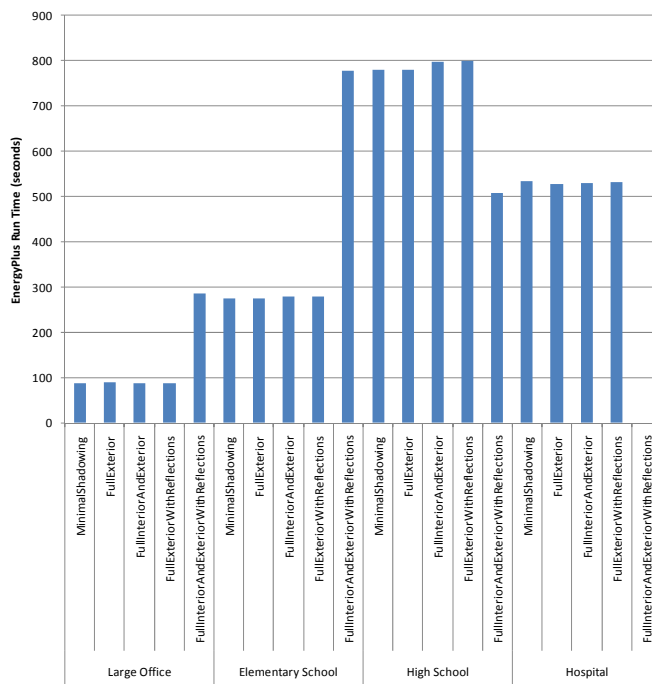


Figure 5 Solar Distribution Algorithm vs EnergyPlus Run Time

- The choice of heat balance solution algorithm has a significant impact on EnergyPlus run time as can be seen from Figure 6. EnergyPlus recommends loads and systems time step of 3 minutes

for the CondFD algorithm. In order to compare with the CTF algorithm, new runs are created with the CTF and the same 3 minutes time step for loads and systems. It can be seen that even with the same time steps for CTF and CondFD, the CondFD runs take much longer to complete. The run time increases by a factor of 1.8 for the hospital model and up to 3.9 for the elementary school model. Therefore, unless the building material properties have strong dependency on temperature, the CondFD should be used with the awareness of long run time. The third choice of EMPD is used for situations when the moisture absorption and release of zone inside surfaces is to be considered. EMPD method does not simulate moisture transfer across surfaces. Further investigations need to be done to look at how EMPD will impact the simulation run time.

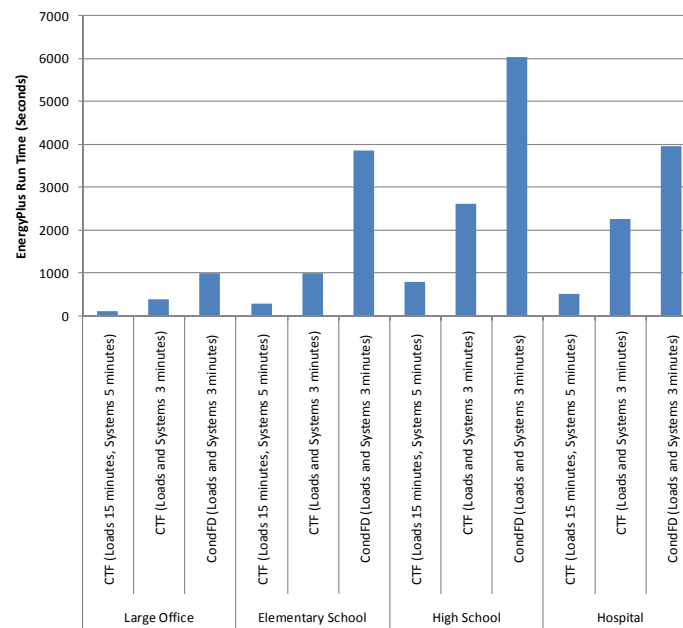


Figure 6 Heat Balance Solution Algorithm vs EnergyPlus Run Time

- Only the elementary school g series runs (S2g1 and S2g2) show a marginal about 4% difference of run time compared with the base case. It is interesting though that, in these two runs, the run time reduces when the convergence limits tighten. EnergyPlus calculates the differences between the minimum and maximum zone temperatures and minimum and maximum zone cooling and heating loads on the current and previous day; if the differences are not greater than the convergence limits, the warmup runs will stop. The warmup runs will stop if the number of warmup runs reaches the maximum number of warmup runs defined in the Building object.

It should be noted that the loads and temperature convergence limits defined in the Building object are only used to determine when to stop the warmup runs, they do not have impact on normal runs. Buildings with heavy thermal mass will need more warmup runs to reach the convergence state.

- Different inside convection algorithms have small impact on run time based on the h series runs (S1h1, S1h2, S2h1, S2h2, S3h1, S3h2, S4h1, and S4h2). The maximum difference of run time is less than 3.6% for the high school model. Three choices are: Simple, Detailed, and CeilingDiffuser. The Simple is for the constant natural convection (ASHRAE); the Detailed is for variable natural convection based on temperature difference (ASHRAE); and the CeilingDiffuser is for ACH based forced and mixed convection correlations for ceiling diffuser configuration with simple natural convection limit.
- Different outside convection algorithms have small impact on run time based on the i series runs (S1i1 to S1i5, S2i1 to S2i5, S3i1 to S3i5, and S4i1 to S4i5). The maximum difference of run time is less than 3.5% for the elementary school model. Six exterior convection models are available in EnergyPlus. In the simple convection model, heat transfer coefficients depend on the roughness

of surface and wind speed. The combined heat transfer coefficient includes radiation to sky, ground, and air. In all other convection models, heat transfer coefficients depend on the roughness, wind speed, and terrain of the building's location. These are convection only heat transfer coefficients; radiation heat transfer coefficients are calculated automatically by the program.

- The j series runs are to look at the impact of output reports on EnergyPlus run time. The base cases have monthly reports for the selected 56 report variables (most are for all types of end use and their peak demands). Five choices can be made for output reports:
 - None – no reports are produced (removed all report objects in the IDF files)
 - Summary – all predefined summary reports are produced
 - Daily – daily reports are produced for all available variables in the rdd file
 - Hourly - hourly reports are produced for all available variables in the rdd file
 - TimeStep – detailed time step (sub hourly) reports are produced for all available variables in the rdd file

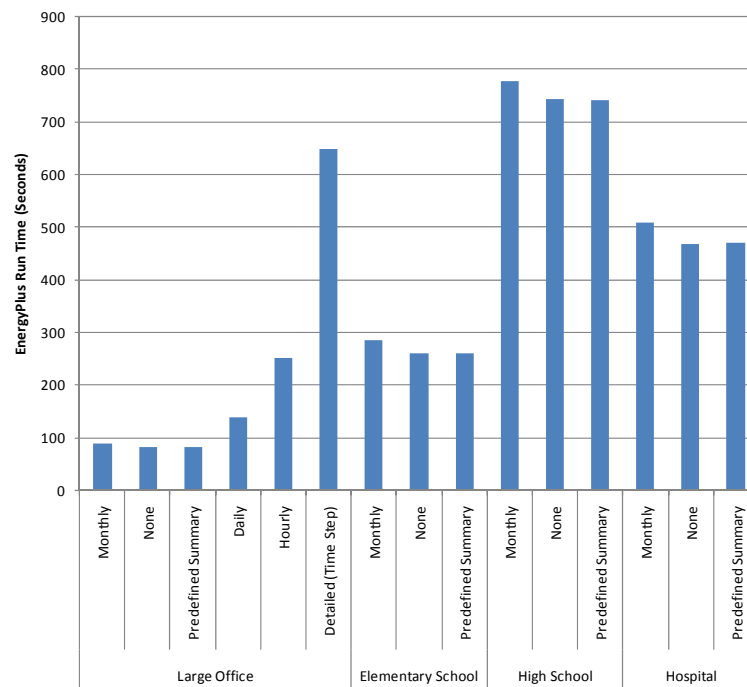


Figure 7 Output Reports vs EnergyPlus Run Time

The large office model is run for all five choices while the other three models are run for only two choices. Three important findings are: 1) producing all predefined summary reports does not take more run time than not producing any report at all; 2) producing monthly reports takes a little bit longer to run. Compared with producing all predefined summary reports, the run time increase is between 5.0% and 8.4% for the four models; 3) producing all available variables in the rdd file take significant amount of run time. Compared with producing all predefined summary reports for the large office model, the run time increases by a factor of 1.7, 3.1, and 7.9 to produce the daily, hourly, and detailed (time step) reports (a total of 523 active report variables) respectively. The size of EnergyPlus standard output (eso) file also increases from 19.8 KB for the monthly reports to 134,298 KB for the daily reports, to 1,196,477 KB for the hourly reports, and to 4,761,972 KB for the detailed reports.

It should be noted that the inside and outside convection algorithms can be set at zone level. There are also convergence tolerances that can be set for many EnergyPlus objects: FAN COIL UNIT:4 PIPE, AIR CONDITIONER:WINDOW:CYCLING, PACKAGEDTERMINAL:HEATPUMP:AIRTOAIR, Unit Ventilator, and Unit Heater, SINGLE DUCT:CONST VOLUME:REHEAT, SINGLE DUCT:VAV:REHEAT, SINGLE DUCT:VAVHEATANDCOOL:REHEAT, SINGLE DUCT:SERIES PIU:REHEAT, SINGLE DUCT:PARALLEL PIU:REHEAT, SINGLE DUCT:CONST VOLUME:4 PIPE INDUC, BASEBOARD HEATER:Water:Convective, AIRFLOWNETWORK SIMULATION, CONTROLLER:SIMPLE, UnitarySystem:HeatPump:WaterToAir, and UnitarySystem:HeatPump:WaterToAir. These convergence settings may have impacts on EnergyPlus run time and they need to be investigated when models with these objects run very slowly.

The weather data used for the simulation runs may also have impacts, although not expected to be significant, on EnergyPlus run time, as different outdoor conditions can trigger different operation modes and controls for the building envelope, daylighting, and HVAC systems.

Sensitivity of Simulation Results

Speed and accuracy are two pillars of building performance simulations. In most cases, better accuracy requires more comprehensive solution algorithm and smaller time steps. Therefore, besides the impact on EnergyPlus run time, another important aspect of the run time analysis is to look at the sensitivity of EnergyPlus simulation results to variations of simulation settings.

Tables 17 to 20 summarize the HVAC end use and facility peak electric demand for the four buildings with various simulation settings. The percentage differences are compared with the base cases.

For the large office building, the following can be observed:

- The loads time step (b series) has significant impacts on the total HVAC electricity and gas usage. Compared with the base case, when the loads time step is set to 1 (hourly at 60 minutes), total HVAC electricity use increases by 50.9% with cooling, pumps, and tower electricity use about double. The gas use for space heating also increases by 28.5%, and facility peak electric demand increases by 19.7%. Although the simulation results are expected to be, to a small degree, dependent on the loads time step, this large discrepancy is a big surprise. The 5 and 10 minutes time step results show decreases in total HVAC electricity by up to 5.5% and in gas use by up to 15.9%.
- The maximum HVAC iterations runs (c series) do not show differences in energy use. This is due to reasons given in the run time analysis section.
- In most cases, the percentage differences in gas use are much higher than differences in electricity use.
- Except for the two outliers (S1b1 and S1d4), the differences in facility peak electric demand is less than 5%.
- The minimum HVAC time step has significant impacts on HVAC electricity and gas use. Again the hourly (60 minutes) run (S1d4) shows large differences in energy use. This is partly due to the loads time step also set to 60 minutes. For the 20 minutes HVAC time step (S1d3), HVAC electricity use decreases by 6.2%, and gas use decreases by 14.7%.
- Different solar distribution algorithms (e series) have very small impacts, less than 1%, on HVAC energy use. This is partly due to the simple geometry of the large office that does not result in countable differences in shadowing calculations.
- The heat balance algorithm (f series) runs show the CondFD run has significant impacts on HVAC energy use – electricity use down by 13.9%, gas use down by 39.4%, and facility electric demand down by 4.8%. These differences are mainly due to the use of the CondFD algorithm, because even compared with the CTF algorithm with the same loads and system time step, the CondFD results in much lower HVAC energy use.

Impacts of Model Features on EnergyPlus Run Time

EnergyPlus can model various configurations of building envelope, lighting and daylighting, service water heating, HVAC systems, and on-site energy generations. The run time of an energy model, to a great extent, depends on the characteristics of the energy features incorporated in the model. Models with simple building components and systems would run much faster than models with complex configurations and control strategies. Considering the broad modeling capabilities of EnergyPlus, it is impossible to try every individual or every combination of energy features in order to quantify their impacts on run time.

Model Feature Runs

Number of Windows

The M1a and M1b runs are to look at the impact of the number of windows in a model on run time. The base case model (M1a) of the large office building has only 12 windows (one large continuous horizontal band on each perimeter zone). The M1b model is copied from the base case but has 120 windows (10 on each perimeter zone).

Table 21 Parametric Runs with Different Numbers of Windows

| Run ID | Description | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|----------|---|-------------------------------|
| M1a (S1) | The large office building base case model. One window per perimeter zone. Total of 12 windows for the building. | 89 |
| M1b | Based on the large office model. Ten windows per perimeter zone. Total of 120 windows for the building. | 230 |

The EnergyPlus run time increases from 89 to 230 seconds (Table 21), this is a dramatic increase by a factor of 2.6, even though both models use simple solar distribution algorithm and no daylighting is involved.

Although no runs are created to look at the impact of the number of building surfaces on run time, it can be expected that the impact will be as significant as the number of windows.

Number of Zones and System Types

Five series of runs (M2 to M5) with different HVAC system types and different numbers of zones and systems are created. The VAV (M2a to M2c) and PVAV (M3c, M4c, and M5c) runs have only one system for the whole building, while the PSZ and PTAC runs have one system for each zone. The buildings have multiple stories with 5 zones (4 perimeters + 1 core) per floor.

Table 22 Parametric Runs with Different Number of Zones and System Types

| Run ID | Description | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|
| M2a | 15 zones, 1 VAV system (central built up with chillers and boilers) | 89 |
| M2b | 30 zones, 1 VAV system (central built up with chillers and boilers) | 232 |
| M2c | 45 zones, 1 VAV system (central built up with chillers and boilers) | 385 |
| M3a | 30 zones, 30 PTAC systems (packaged terminal air-conditioner) | 239 |
| M3b | 30 zones, 30 PSZ systems (packaged single zone) | 267 |
| M3c | 30 zones, 1 PVAV system (packaged VAV system) | 218 |
| M4a | 15 zones, 15 PTAC systems (packaged terminal air-conditioner) | 80 |
| M4b | 15 zones, 15 PSZ systems (packaged single zone) | 85 |

| | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| M4c | 15 zones, 1 PVAV system (packaged VAV system) | 80 |
| M5a | 45 zones, 45 PTAC systems (packaged terminal air-conditioner) | 406 |
| M5b | 45 zones, 45 PSZ systems (packaged single zone) | 456 |
| M5c | 45 zones, 1 PVAV system (packaged VAV system) | 368 |

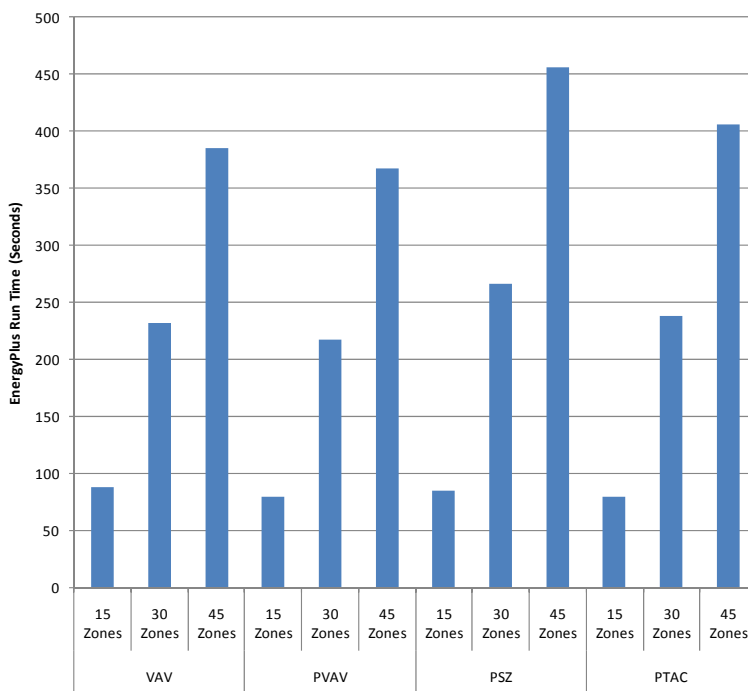


Figure 8 HVAC System Types and Number of Zones vs EnergyPlus Run Time

As can be seen in Figure 8, the number of zones has significant impacts on run time. For the VAV runs, the run time increases by a factor of 2.6 and 4.3 when the number of zones increases from 15 to 30 and to 45 respectively. For the PVAV runs, the run time increases by a factor of 2.7 and 4.6 when the number of zones increases from 15 to 30 and to 45 respectively. For the PTAC runs, the run time increases by a factor of 3.0 and 5.0 when the number of zones increases from 15 to 30 and to 45 respectively. For the PSZ runs, the run time increases by a factor of 3.1 and 5.4 when the number of zones increases from 15 to 30 and to 45 respectively. It should be noted that for the PTAC and PSZ runs, the increases of number of systems also contribute to the increase of run time even though to a less degree.

The run time is more than proportional to the number of zones. It is worth further investigations to determine how and why the relationship between the number of zones and run time would evolve if the number of zones gets greater.

Number of Systems

The M6 series of runs have 60 zones but with different numbers of PVAV systems.

Table 23 Parametric Runs with Different Number of Zones and System Types

| Run ID | Description | EnergyPlus Run Time (Seconds) |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|
| M6a | 60 zones, 1 PVAV system (packaged VAV system) | 1109 |
| M6b | 60 zones, 2 PVAV systems (packaged VAV system) | 1100 |
| M6c | 60 zones, 3 PVAV systems (packaged VAV system) | 1110 |
| M6d | 60 zones, 6 PVAV systems (packaged VAV system) | 1139 |

It can be seen that the number of systems have very small impact on run time, less than 3% in this case when the number of systems increases from 1 to 6.

It is worth further investigation for other HVAC system types to see whether this result stays intact.

Thermal Comfort Model

Figure 9 shows the impact of the thermal comfort model on EnergyPlus run time. The thermal comfort model is assigned to each PEOPLE object except for the base case runs. Three thermal comfort models are available in EnergyPlus:

- The Fanger Model, developed by P.O. Fanger at Technical University of Denmark in 1967 to 1970. The Fanger theory laid foundations for most other thermal comfort models.
- The Pierce Model, a two-node model developed by J. B. Pierce Foundation at Yale University in 1970 to 1986.
- The KSU Model, a two-node model developed by researchers at Kansas State University in 1977. The KSU model is quite similar to the Pierce model. The main difference is that the KSU model predicts thermal sensation differently for warm and cold environment.

All three models apply an energy balance to a person and use the energy exchange mechanisms along with experimentally derived physiological parameters to predict the thermal sensation and the physiological response of a person due to their environment. The models differ somewhat in the physiological models that represent the human passive system (heat transfer through and from the body) and the human control system (the neural control of shivering, sweating and skin blood flow). The models also differ in the criteria used to predict thermal sensation.

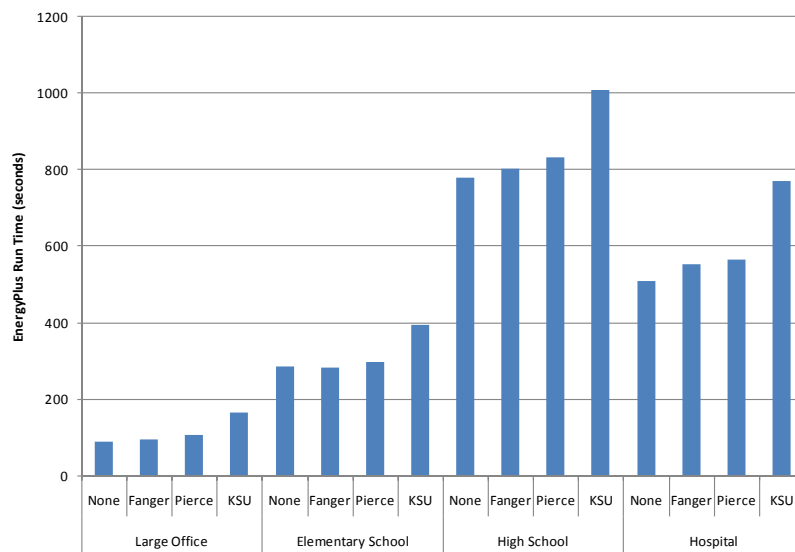


Figure 9 Thermal Comfort Model vs EnergyPlus Run Time

It can be seen that the Fanger and the Pierce thermal comfort models take relatively small amount of more run time than the base cases with no thermal comfort calculations. The KSU model is computationally intensive mainly due to more non-linear equations and iterative calculations. Compared with the base cases, the KSU run time increases by a factor of from 1.3 for the high school model to 1.9 for the large office model.

Other Features

Although not covered in this study, the daylighting and natural ventilation are predicted to have considerable impacts on EnergyPlus run time, especially daylighting with complex building geometry and

exterior and interior shading devices, and natural ventilation with the AirflowNetwork method with many cracks and openings (vents, windows, and doors).

Working with Large Models

With EnergyPlus interface like DesignBuilder and the Energy Design Plugin for Sketchup, it is possible and not hard to quickly create very large complex building models, but modelers should keep in mind the modeling goal before diving in and including every detail of the building design. Otherwise modelers may have created a very detailed model which is impractical to simulate because it is too complex and takes too long to run.

In the early design process, zoning is often simplified as perimeter and interior zones based on their orientations and space functions and operating schedules. In most cases, it is not necessary to model a building on the room-by-room basis for large buildings. If in certain cases that daylighting and shading are not important, multiple windows can be combined into one based on their orientations and construction types.

As rules-of-thumb, EnergyPlus simulations can be slowed down by:

- Many windows
- Many zones
- Many windows per zone
- Many surfaces
- Many surfaces per zone

By lumping building components together rationally, large models can be simplified and thus run much faster. As Einstein said – keep it as simple as possible, but no simpler. Large models can be simplified to a certain degree without sacrificing simulation accuracy. The techniques to simplify large models have been explained in modeling guides, such as the simulation related design briefs and design guidelines in the EnergyDesignResources.com web site, and implemented in some simulation programs, for example, using standard floor shape and layout, adopting typical zoning patterns, and using floor multipliers to represent standard typical floors with similar characteristics.

EnergyPlus Code Profiling

Introduction

So far the run time analysis has been done from the outside of EnergyPlus program, i.e. by making parametric runs using the EnergyPlus as a black box without knowing what happens inside EnergyPlus. As Chinese proverb says, “inherent forces play the decisive roles”. Another crucial aspect of run time analysis is to find out from the inside (source code) of EnergyPlus, for a particular simulation run, which subroutines consume the most amount of time, and which subroutines get called the most frequently. Then research on these subroutines can be done to find out potential solutions to speed them up. Code profiling tools can be used to help find out these critical subroutines.

Code profiling means determining how often certain pieces of code are executed. By knowing how frequently a piece of code is used, it can help more accurately gauge the importance of optimizing that piece of code. Proper use of profiling helps to answer these questions and more:

- What lines of code are responsible for the bulk of execution time?
- How many times is this looping construct executed?
- Which approach to coding a block of logic is more efficient?

Without profiling, the answer to the above questions becomes a guessing game. Software developers will oftentimes code PRINT/WRITE/DEBUG statements or manipulate their code in ways to instrument it so they can get response time metrics out that will help them diagnose inefficient code. But such techniques are difficult to do well, plus it is still a very much hunt-and-peck approach. Not so with code profiling.

To do EnergyPlus code profiling, first the EnergyPlus source code has to be compiled with the debug information turned on, then EnergyPlus runs are launched by code profiling tools. When the runs complete, the code profiling tools provide statistic summary of the code profiling results. For this study, the EnergyPlus source code, as of version 2.2.0.023, is compiled with the 32-bit version of the Intel Visual FORTRAN (version 10.1.024) compiler. Intel VTune, version 9.0u11 build 991, is used as the code profiling tool. Compiling and profiling of EnergyPlus is done inside the Microsoft Visual Studio 2005 (version 8.0.50727.762) development platform. The current desktop computer, described in the history runs section, is the platform for the code profiling analysis.

The expected goals of the code profiling include:

- Locating the EnergyPlus FORTRAN subroutines that consume the most run time,
- Locating the EnergyPlus FORTRAN subroutines that get called the greatest number of times,
- Identifying the critical path of the run time, and
- Helping explain EnergyPlus run time behavior in the previous sections of run time analysis

Code Profiling Runs

Four EnergyPlus models (Table 24) are selected from version 2.0 of the DOE commercial building benchmarks for the code profiling analysis. These four models have different number of zones, different number of systems, and different system types. They represent typical EnergyPlus models with various levels of complexity. For the large office model, a separate run (C1a) is made with all reports removed from the EnergyPlus IDF file. This extra run will help identify differences in code profiling for models with and without typical summary and monthly reports. The San Francisco TMY2 weather file is used in these runs.

The VTune analyzer instruments and profiles EnergyPlus runs, and displays summaries of function calls and call graphs that show critical functions and call tree.

Table 24 Code Profiling Runs

| Run ID | Run Description | Common Simulation Settings |
|--------|--|---|
| C1 | The large office model | Loads time step: 10 minutes System minimum time step: 1 minutes |
| C1a | The large office model without any reports | System maximum iterations: 20 Heat balance solution: CTF |
| C2 | The elementary school model | Inside and outside convection algorithms: detailed Run period: 1/1 to 12/31 |
| C3 | The high school model | HVAC equipment: autosized Solar Distribution: FullInteriorAndExterior Maximum number of warmup days: 25 |
| C4 | The hospital model | Reports: All predefined summary reports, monthly reports, thermal comfort report (Fanger) |

Code Profiling Results

Code profiling results are summarized in tables and figures. Figure 10 shows the EnergyPlus thread call tree up to the main program node. It can be seen that the thread initializes and sets up environment and memory before executing EnergyPlus code. Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the EnergyPlus call tree with the highlighted top 10 self time functions. Figure 13 shows the EnergyPlus critical path in the graph which is the most time-consuming path (call-sequence) originating from the root. It is displayed as a thick red edge in the VTune call graph graphical view and starts from the heaviest, the most time-consuming thread or fiber. Figure 11 to Figure 13 are based on the large office EnergyPlus run.

Function call results for the five model runs (Table 24) are provided as five sets of three tables sorted by function self time, function total time, and number of function calls for only the top 50 functions (subroutines). Full scale function call results are available as Excel files. Table 25 list the definitions of headers used in Table 26 to Table 40. As the EnergyPlus execution file is compiled with debug and trace back information for code profiling, energy models will run much slower with this version of EnergyPlus than with normal release version. For comparison purpose, the absolute function time is not as important as the relative function time shown as percentages of self time and total time in the results tables. It should be noted that the self and total time shown in the results tables are in micro seconds.

The results tables sorted by function self time show the EnergyPlus FORTRAN subroutines (functions) that consume the most amount of EnergyPlus run time, while the results tables sorted by number of calls show the EnergyPlus FORTRAN subroutines that get called the greatest number of times. These two types of subroutines are the potential key areas to be enhanced or rewritten in order to speed up EnergyPlus runs. The self time is the execution time spent in the function itself without counting its calling subroutines. The total time includes the function self time and the total time of all subroutines called by the function.

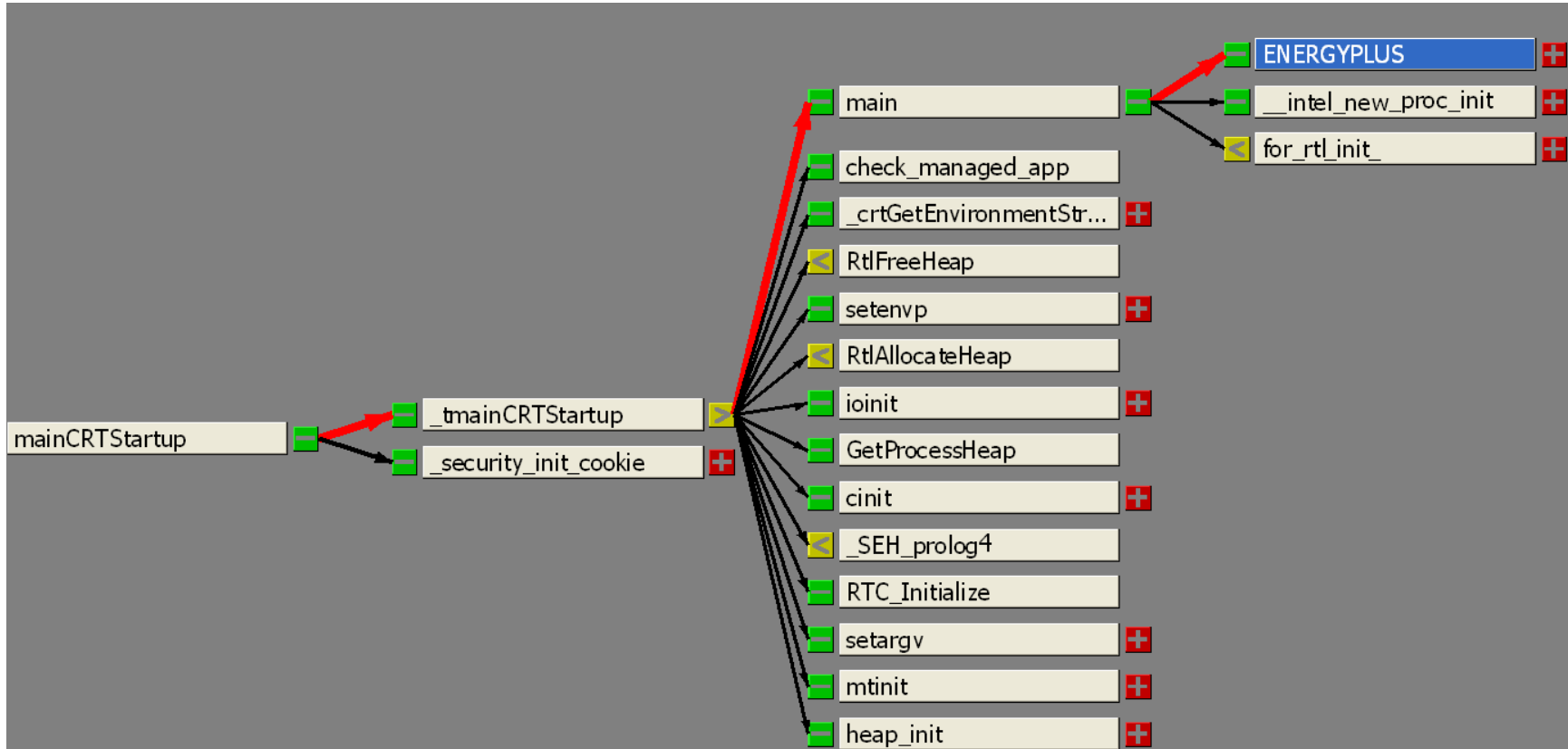


Figure 10 The EnergyPlus Thread Call Tree

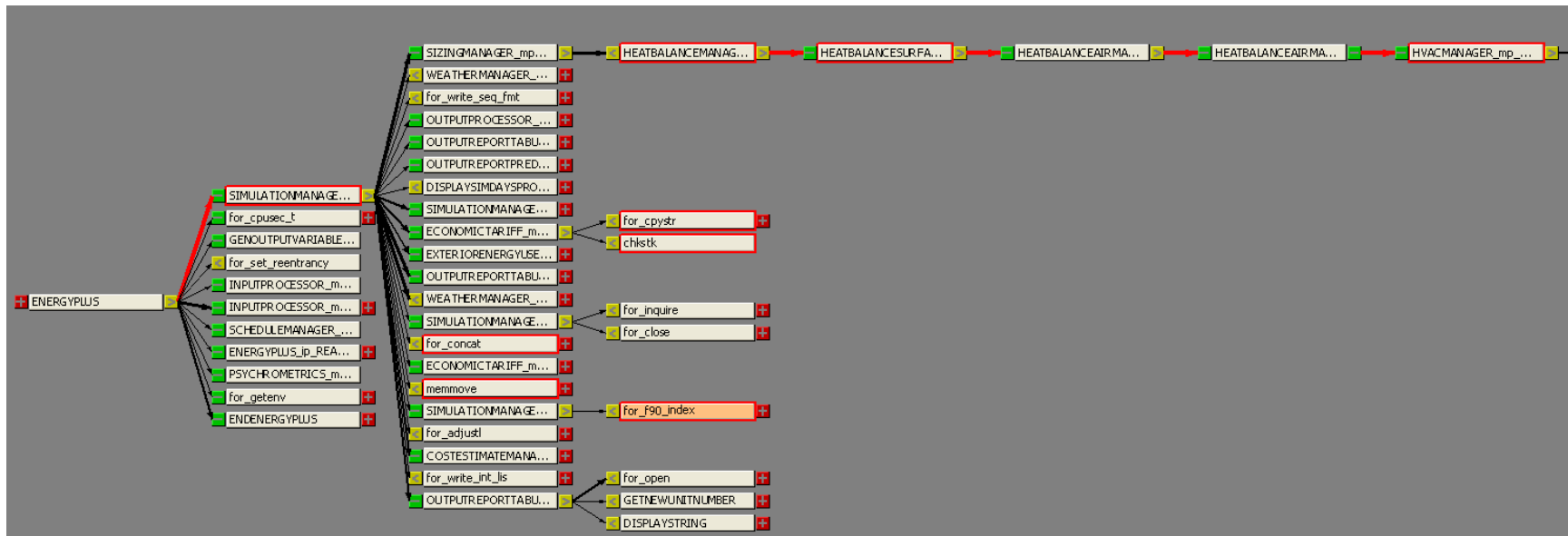


Figure 11 The EnergyPlus Call Tree Starting at EnergyPlus Program

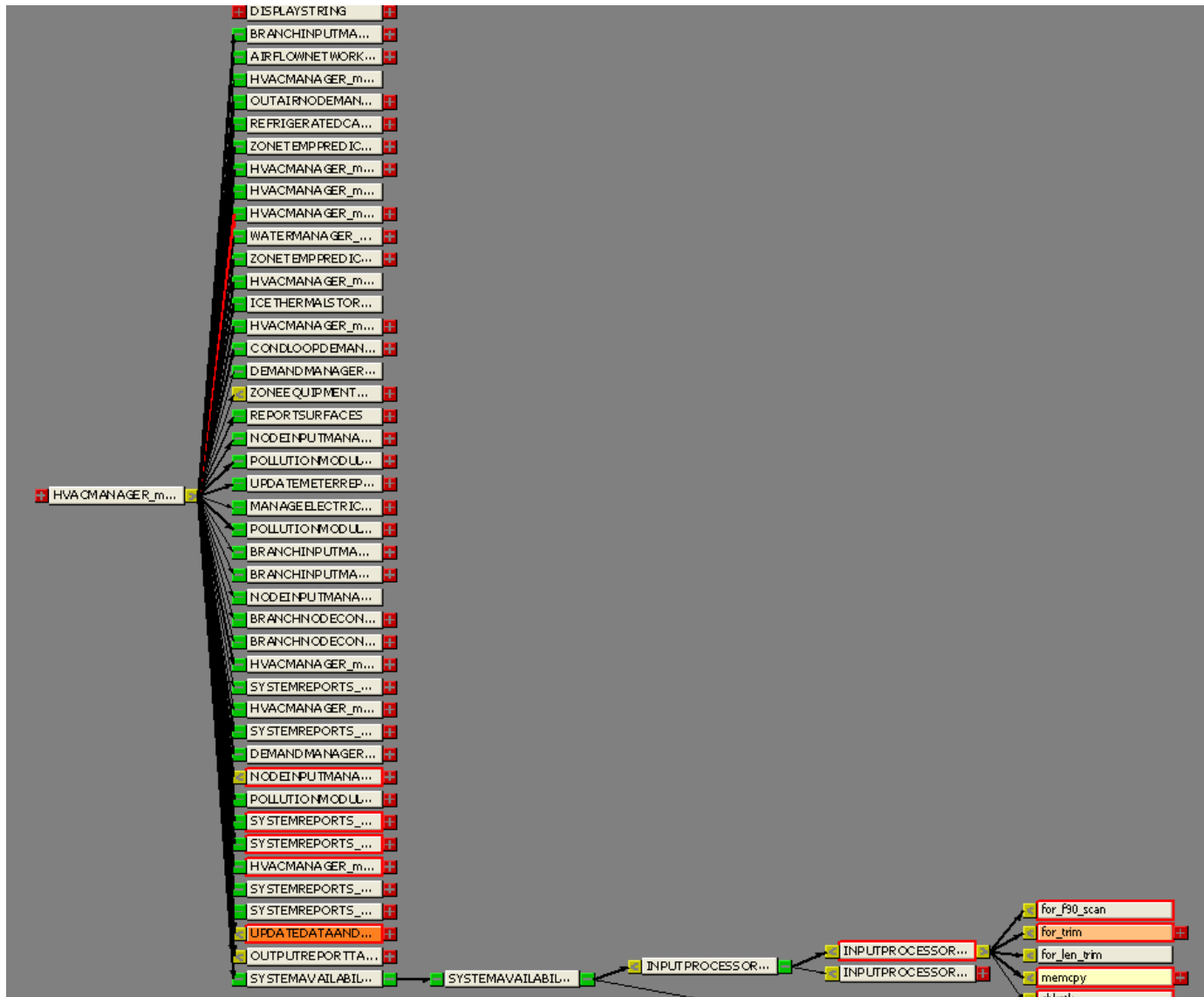


Figure 12 The EnergyPlus Call Tree Continued at HVACManager_mp_ManageHVAC Node

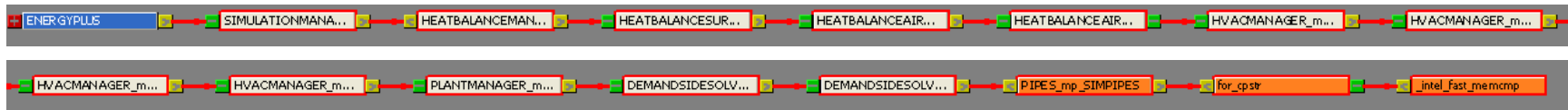


Figure 13 The EnergyPlus Critical Path

Table 25 Headers for Function Call Tables

| Column | Description |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Function | Name of the function. |
| Self Time | Time (microseconds) spent in the function itself. |
| % Self Time | Function self time as a percentage of total self time |
| Total Time | Time (microseconds) spent in the function and in all the callees it called. |
| % Total Time | Function total time as a percentage of total total time |
| Calls | Number of times the function was called by all callers. |
| Callers | Number of caller functions that called the function. |
| Callees | Number of callee functions the function called. |
| % in function | Percentage of time was spent in the function itself. You can calculate the ratio using the following formula - Call graph:Self Time/Call graph:Total Time |
| Average Self time per call | Average distribution of self time in milliseconds. You can calculate the ratio using the following formula: $\frac{\text{Call graph:Self Time}}{\text{Call graph:Calls}} \times 1000$ |
| Average Total time per call | Average distribution of self time in milliseconds. You can calculate the ratio using the following formula: $\frac{\text{Call graph:Total Time}}{\text{Call graph:Calls}} \times 1000$ |
| Source File | Name of source file to which the function belongs. |

Table 31 Code Profiling Results Sorted by Number of Calls for the Large Office w/o Reports Run

Table with columns: Rank, Function, Self Time, % Self Time, Total Time, % Total Time, Calls, Callers, Callees, % in function, Average Self time per call, Average Total time per call, Source File. It lists various functions such as OUTPUTPROCESSOR_mp_SETPROCESSOR, PSYCHROMETRICS_mp_PSYHNTDBW, and WATERCOILS_mp_SIMULATEWATERCOILCOMPONENTS with their respective performance metrics.

Table 34 Code Profiling Results Sorted by Number of Calls for the Elementary School Run

Table with 12 columns: Rank, Function, Self Time, % Self, Total Time, % Total, Time Calls, Callers, Callees, % in function, Average Self time per call, Average Total time per call, Source File. Contains 50 rows of profiling data for energyplus.exe.

Code Profiling Results Analysis

Call tree and critical path

The function names in Figure 11 to Figure 13 are prefixed by the names of code modules where the functions reside. Unfortunately these names are long and get truncated. For the critical path shown in Figure 13, the subroutine call sequences are:

EnergyPlus → ManageSimulation → ManageHeatBalance → ManageSurfaceHeatBalance → ManageAirHeatBalance → CalcHeatBalanceAir → ManageHVAC → SimHVAC → SimSelectedEquipment → ManagePlantLoops → SimPlantDemandSides → SimulatePipes → SimPipes → FindItemInList → String Comparisons (native IVF FORTRAN run time subroutines: for_cpstr and _intel_fast_memcmp)

Where A → B denotes subroutine A calls subroutine B.

For details of the EnergyPlus call tree, please refer to the EnergyPlus Guide for Module Developers. Major sections of the call tree are attached in Appendix A for reference.

It can be seen that even for the relatively simple large office model, EnergyPlus uses a very complex call tree (Figure 11 and Figure 12) with a critical path of 12 levels of calls from EnergyPlus main entry to the subroutine SimPipes (Figure 13). Each level of calls further executes a few sequential subroutine calls, for example, the ManageHVAC subroutine calls 44 other subroutines as illustrated in Figure 12. The structure of EnergyPlus code is designed for modularity and ease of maintenance. On the other hand, deeper calls involve much more data packaging, exchanging, and sharing between modules and subroutines, which no doubt consumes more execution time. From the run time perspective, it is not sure whether this is the most efficient way.

The large office run

From Table 26 and Figure 14, which shows the top 50 self time function calls, it can be seen that:

- The top 50 functions consume about 85.6% of total EnergyPlus run time, while the remaining more than 1000 functions (not showing in Table 26) consume about 14.4% of total run time.
- Among the top 50 functions, the subroutine UPDATEDATAANDREPORT consumes 23.7% of total run time, followed by 7.2% for CALCINTERIORRADEXCHANGE and 6.7% for SETREPORTNOW. All three subroutines together consume 37.6% of run time. These three subroutines are the only ones that consume more than 5% of the total run time, excluding the native IVF run time subroutines of for_cpstr and __powr8i4.
- String operations, including string searching, concatenation, trim, copying, and comparison, consume 12.9% of run time. They are listed as functions of for_cpstr, _intel_fast_memcmp, for_f90_index, for_trim, memcpy, for_concat, _intel_fast_memcpy, for_cpyst, and for_f90_scan.
- Mathematics operations consume 6.8% of run time by functions of __powr8i4, log, exp, and pow. The __powr8i4 function is the 4th power operation mostly (96.2%) used in surface long wave radiant heat exchange calculations. The log and exp functions are mostly (96% and 81.3% respectively) used in the psychrometric function PSYPSATFNTEMP which calculates the air saturation pressure based on the air drybulb temperature. The pow function is mostly used in three subroutines: CalcASHRAEDetailedIntConvCoeff, CalcSimpleHeatingCoil, and CalcThermalComfortFanger.
- Output processing and reporting consumes significant amount of run time. The top four functions together consume 35.3% of run time: 23.7% for UPDATEDATAANDREPORT, 6.7% for SETREPORTNOW, 2.6% for GATHERMONTHLYRESULTSFORTIMESTEP, and 2.3% for SETMINMAX.

- Six psychrometric functions, PSYPSATFNTEMP, PSYCPAIRFNWTDB, PSYHFNTDBW, PSYRHOVFNTDBRH, PSYTSATFNPB, and PSYRHOAIRFNPBTDBW, show up in the top 50 list consuming a total of 4.7% of run time. Summary of EnergyPlus psychrometric functions is presented in Appendix B.

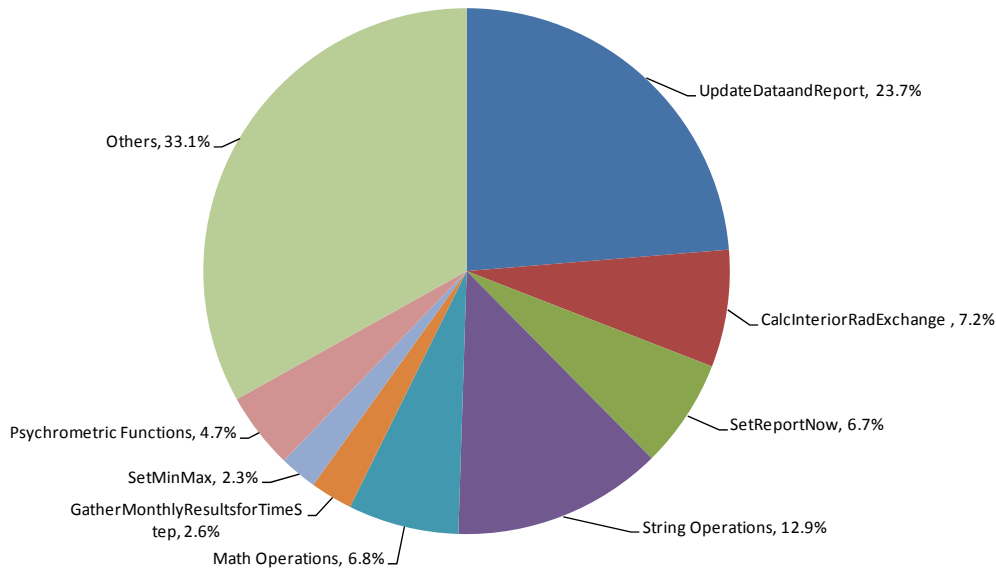


Figure 14 Top Functions by Self Time – The Large Office Run

Table 27 shows the top 50 functions sorted by total time. Obviously the subroutines shown up in the critical path consume the greatest total time. It is worth pointing out that:

- The UPDATEDATAANDREPORT subroutine consumes a total of 33.5% of run time which includes 6.6% of run time from its downstream calling subroutine SETREPORTNOW. The UPDATEDATAANDREPORT upstream caller subroutines are ManageHVAC (30.9%) and ReportHeatBalance (69.1%).
- Another report subroutine UPDATETABULARREPORTS consumes about 9% of run time, which is contributed by 63.2% and 36.0% from its downstream calling subroutines GetInputTabularMonthly and GatherMonthlyResultsForTimeStep respectively. The upstream caller subroutines are ManageHVAC (77.1%) and ReportHeatBalance (22.9%).
- Two report subroutines UPDATEDATAANDREPORT and UPDATETABULARREPORTS together consume 42.5% of run time.

Table 28 shows the top 50 functions sorted by number of calls. Several facts can be observed:

- The SetReportNow function gets called 1,087,157,992 times by the UPDATEDATAANDREPORT subroutine; that is more than 1 billion! This also translates to more than 1000 calls per loads time step per zone, i.e. $1,087,157,992 / (8760 * 16 * 6) = 1292.76$, where 8760 is the annual number of hours, 16 is the number of zones, and 6 is the number of loads time step per hour.
- The second EnergyPlus subroutine SETMINMAX gets called 463,230,963 times mostly (87%) by the UPDATEDATAANDREPORT subroutine. Another three input and output related subroutines also get called more than 30 million times: GETINTERNALVARIABLEVALUE (63,734,186) and ENCODEMONDAYHRMIN (48,438,282) both mostly (85.6% and 99.6%) get called by the GATHERMONTHLYRESULTSFORTIMESTEP subroutine, and GETCURRENTSCHEDULEVALUE (31,681,606).

- The IVF native string functions (`_intel_fast_memcmp`, `for_cpstr`, `memcpy`, `for_trim`, `for_f90_index`, etc.) and the mathematics functions (`_powr8i4`, `log`, `exp`, and `pow`) show up at the top of the top 50 list.
- Nine psychrometric functions show up in the top 50 list, including `PSYHFNTDBW` (187,063,090), `PSYCPAIRFNWTDB` (76,720,326), `PSYPSATFNTEMP` (61,248,462), `PSYRHOAIRFNPBTDBW` (46,019,998), `PSYRHOVFNTDBRH` (34,167,296), `PSYRHOVFNTDBWPB` (34,167,296), `CPCW` (14,853,076), `CPHW` (12,523,552), and `RHOH2O` (5,524,475).
- The initialization of the water coils subroutine `INITWATERCOIL` gets called 12,420,340 times by the `SIMULATEWATERCOILCOMPENENTS` subroutine.

The large office run without any reports

The profile results in Table 29 to Table 31 show similar patterns as in the run with reports. It is worth pointing out:

- By the function self time, the top two function names are the same, `UPDATEDATAANDREPORT` and `CALCINTERIORRADEXCHANGE`, although they consume relatively higher percentage of the total run time than in the run with reports.
- The subroutine `SETREPORTNOW` is moved down from top 3 to top 5 in terms of the function self time, but still consumes 4.4% of total run time.
- The subroutine `GATHERMONTHLYRESULTSFORTIMESTEP` is no longer called.
- The subroutine `UPDATETABULARREPORTS` is still called the same 114,361 times, but consumes negligible run time, moving from the top 16 with 9% of run time to top 449 with very small percentage of run time.
- In terms of the number of calls, the top 6 function names are the same. The psychrometric functions move to the top of the top 50 list compared with the IVF native string functions at the top of the list for the run with reports.

The other runs

The other three EnergyPlus code profiling runs, including the elementary school run (Table 32 to Table 34), the high school run (Table 35 to Table 37), and the hospital run (Table 38 to Table 40), show surprisingly consistent run time patterns as the large office run, no matter by results sorted by the function self time, the function total time, and the function number of calls.

Proposed Actions

Based on the code profiling results analysis, the major run time issue is that the input and output related subroutines, the string operation functions, and the psychrometric functions get called so many times and consume so much run time.

It is crucial to further investigate why and how those top 50 subroutines get called that many times and consume that much run time. The proposed actions are to:

1. Investigate why and how the input and output related subroutines, including `UPDATEDATAANDREPORT`, `SETREPORTNOW`, and `SETMINMAX`, get called so many times and consume so much time. Separate functionality of data updates for time step (history) calculations and for output reporting to reduce or avoid unnecessary calls. Explore the feasibility and potential of re-writing these subroutines for parallel computing in order to reduce EnergyPlus run time.
2. Identify reasons that reporting subroutines like `UPDATETABULARREPORTS` get called the same number of times even if no reports are requested.

3. Reduce psychrometric functions calling times and run time by simplifying the function algorithm and/or using data table lookup and interpolation. In normal building and HVAC operation conditions, many air properties have a limited range of variations.
4. Reduce string operations as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary string operations.
5. Replace string operations with logical or integer type operations, and cache string operation results for later use.
6. Improve string operations by using variable length strings to avoid the use of the trim function. Explore potential of using a string function library written in C or C++ language for better performance.
7. Cache intermediate results to avoid unnecessary time consuming re-calculations. Computer memory has become much more affordable now.
8. Explore potential of short-cutting and bypassing loops. Identify idle loops and avoid the call from the upstream calling subroutines. This is normally beyond the capability of compiler optimization.
9. Analyze why input subroutines like GETCURRENTSCHEDULEVALUE get called so many times? Any way to cache the schedule values once and be accessible for faster later use?
10. Investigate why the initialization subroutines get called so many times, for example the INITWATERCOIL subroutine? Is every call necessary? Any way to limit the number of calls?
11. Reduce the number of HVAC iterations by developing more intelligent algorithms to automatically adjust the HVAC time step based on system dynamics and history calculation results.
12. Research the consistency of many threshold values used to determine the convergence of iterative calculations. For complex software like EnergyPlus, one or a few calculations with high resolutions may not improve the overall resolution at all!
13. Review EnergyPlus code for possibilities of software architecture improvement and data structure reengineering, with the goal of improving computer execution time.

Computer Platform

It is certain that EnergyPlus run time depends on computer platform. A faster computer will run EnergyPlus simulations quicker. Both the computer hardware and software have impacts on EnergyPlus run time.

Computer Hardware

For small EnergyPlus models, which do not require large amount of computer memory, PCs with faster CPUs are more effective in reducing run time than PCs with more RAM. For large models, more and faster computer memory including RAM and internal cache will be more effective in reducing run time.

Paging memory to disk during EnergyPlus simulations can cause EnergyPlus to grind to a halt. In computer operating systems that have their main memory divided into pages, paging (sometimes called swapping) is a transfer of pages between main memory and an auxiliary store, such as hard disk drive (HDD). Paging memory is typically many orders of magnitude slower than RAM. Therefore it is desirable to reduce or eliminate swapping, where practical. Some operating systems offer settings to influence the kernel's decisions. The memory paging is probably occurred in the H4a run in Table 1 which takes more than 3 hours to run the large office model on the very old desktop computer with 192MB of RAM.

If an energy model run will produce lots of hourly or time step reports, HDD access speed becomes more important in reducing run time.

Current available and affordable PCs with 2GHZ of 32-bit CPUs and 2GB of RAM are sufficient for most EnergyPlus simulation runs. For large and complex energy models, it is recommended to have powerful PCs with 3 or more GHZ of CPUs and 3 or more GB of RAM.

EnergyPlus, as of version 2.2.0.023, is a single thread application running on a single CPU. PCs with multiple CPUs would not benefit more than PCs with one CPU assuming no other time consuming processes occur simultaneously with the EnergyPlus simulation run. But for a large volume of parametric runs on PCs with multiple CPUs, users can still harness the potential of launching multiple parallel EnergyPlus runs from separate folders with their own copies of the EnergyPlus engine files including the EnergyPlus.exe, the Energy+.idd, and the linked DLL files. Future improvements to EnergyPlus could allow EnergyPlus to run multiple simultaneous simulations from the same folder.

As an experiment, the large office model takes 89 seconds to run, and two sequential runs would take 178 seconds. But if two parallel runs are launched simultaneously, each run takes 109 seconds. This means a reduction of run time by as much as 39% $((178-109)/178)$. Therefore, for a large volume of parametric runs, it is recommended to launch multiple parallel simulations on PCs with multiple CPUs. The optimal number of parallel runs has to be determined by experiments, but the general rule is not more than the number of CPUs on the PC. If running on a distributive computing network, many more runs may be launched parallel.

Although not covered in this analysis, it is worth looking into the impact of using PCs with 64-bit CPUs for EnergyPlus simulations as most numeric calculations within EnergyPlus (as of version 2.2 and later) use 64-bit real variables.

The current trend of personal computer progress is to embed more CPUs rather than to increase the clock speed of a single CPU for a PC. This poses a challenge to EnergyPlus as one EnergyPlus simulation only runs on a single CPU. To make EnergyPlus efficient in parallel computing, EnergyPlus code needs to be parallelized by programmers rather than relying on compiler parallelism settings.

Computer Software

Computer software plays a key role in enabling EnergyPlus simulations on PCs with multiple CPUs. Either this is done by reengineering EnergyPlus code or using future parallel computer language compilers, is an interesting and challenging question hard to answer at the moment.

EnergyPlus is used for building performance simulations which involve a sequential run period and the integrated coupling of building envelope, lighting/daylighting, HVAC, service water heating, and on-site energy generations. The time step correlated calculations makes it difficult to completely re-write the EnergyPlus code for parallel computing. As can be seen in the short period of runs, the a series runs in Table 13 to Table 16, the one-time run time overhead makes it inefficient to split a longer run period into multiple shorter run periods. In other words, trying to split an annual run into say 12 monthly runs would not speed up EnergyPlus simulations, besides the challenge of combining results from the monthly runs.

FORTRAN Compiler Settings

Modern FORTRAN compilers have options to turn on the optimization and parallelism. Previous studies on profile guided optimization and parallel computing using only compiler settings for EnergyPlus by Michael Wetter at LBNL did not get noticeable improvements in run time. The profile guided optimization resulted in less than 2% improvement in run time; turning on the parallel compiling option resulted in longer run time! It is recommended to try using programming instructions, as opposed to compiler settings, to exploit parallel computing for EnergyPlus.

As shown in Table 41, different settings of optimization levels are used to compile EnergyPlus with Intel Visual FORTRAN version 10.1.024. Then the compiled EnergyPlus.exe is used to run the four selected DOE commercial benchmark energy models on the current desktop PC. The run time is summarized in Figure 15.

Table 41 Compiler Settings Runs

| Run ID | Description | Intel Visual FORTRAN Compiler Settings | EnergyPlus.exe File Size (KB) |
|--------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| O2 | Official release of EnergyPlus 2.2.0.023. Enables optimizations for speed, the generally recommended optimization level. | Fortran: /nologo /assume:buffered_io /recursive /fpscomp:nolib /fpe:0 /traceback /check:uninit /4Yportlib /c Link: /INCREMENTAL:NO /NOLOGO /SUBSYSTEM:CONSOLE | 11,392 |
| O1 | Enables optimizations for speed and disables some optimizations that increase code size and affect speed. | O2 settings + /O1 | 11,000 |
| O3 | Enables O2 optimizations plus more aggressive optimizations, such as prefetching, scalar replacement, and loop and memory access transformations. Recommended for applications that have loops that heavily use floating-point calculations and process large data sets. | O2 settings + /O3 | 11,436 |
| NoOpt | Optimization is disabled. | O2 settings + /Od | 20,876 |
| P | Parallelism is turned on. | O2 settings + /Qparallel | 11,672 |

Table 42 Compiler Settings vs EnergyPlus Run Time

| Model | Compiler Settings | EnergyPlus Run Time (seconds) |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Large Office | Official Release | 153 |
| | O1 Optimization | 169 |
| | O3 Optimization | 152 |
| | No Optimization | 279 |
| | Parallelism | 155 |
| Elementary School | Official Release | 653 |
| | O1 Optimization | 694 |
| | O3 Optimization | 641 |
| | No Optimization | 1119 |
| | Parallelism | 646 |
| High School | Official Release | 1884 |
| | O1 Optimization | 2043 |
| | O3 Optimization | 1813 |
| | No Optimization | 3029 |
| | Parallelism | 1838 |
| Hospital | Official Release | 911 |
| | O1 Optimization | 980 |
| | O3 Optimization | 896 |
| | No Optimization | 1351 |
| | Parallelism | 908 |

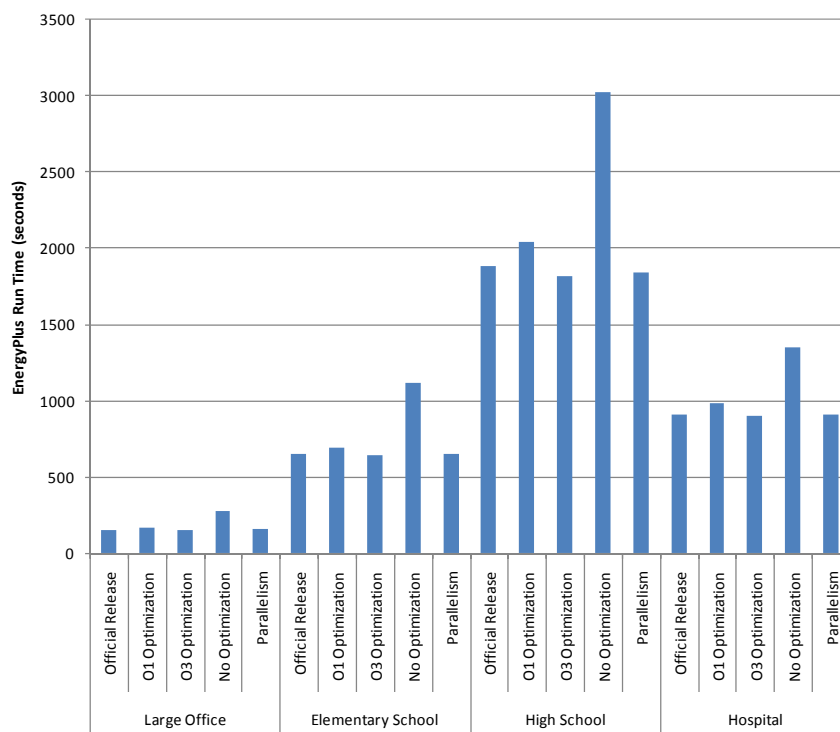


Figure 15 FORTRAN Compiler Settings vs EnergyPlus Run Time

From Figure 15, the following can be observed:

- The official release of EnergyPlus implements compiler optimizations for fast speed.
- Turning on the parallelism option only marginally impact EnergyPlus run time. Compared with the official EnergyPlus release, it uses about 1% more time for the large office model and about 2.4% less time for the high school model. It should be noted that these runs are performed on the current desktop PC which has Core 2 Duo two CPUs. Further experiments should be done on PCs with more CPUs to see whether the parallelism option makes more differences in EnergyPlus run time.
- Without optimization, the EnergyPlus.exe file size almost doubles. The run time increases significantly. Compared with the official release, the run time increases by ranging from 48% for the hospital model to 82% for the large office model.
- The O1 option reduces the EnergyPlus.exe file size by about 3%, but compared with the official release, the run time increases by ranging from 6% for the elementary school model to 10% for the large office model.
- The O3 option provides a marginally better run time than the official release, with run time reduction ranging from about 0% for the large office model to 4% for the high school model.

Recommendations to Improve EnergyPlus Run Time

Compared with creating energy models either by hand coding the IDF file or by using GUI tools or a combination of both, EnergyPlus run time is normally a small fraction of the total time needed to complete an energy modeling job. Therefore it is very important to build a clean and concise EnergyPlus model up front. Techniques of simplifying large and complex building and systems should be used during the creation of energy models, especially during the early design process when detailed zoning and other information is not available. Producing lots of hourly or sub-hourly reports from EnergyPlus runs can take significant amount of time. Modelers should only request time step reports when necessary. On the other hand, producing summary reports and typical monthly reports take relatively small amount of run time. These reports are valuable references for troubleshooting and model fine tuning.

With powerful personal computers get more and more affordable, EnergyPlus modelers should choose to use current available PCs with 3 or more GHZ and 3 or more GB of RAM. For a large volume of EnergyPlus parametric runs, modelers can launch multiple runs in parallel. Minor changes to EnergyPlus code should be made to make this more convenient to use.

For modelers, most time is spent on troubleshooting and fine tuning energy models. During the early modeling process, it is recommended to keep the model as simple as possible and make quick runs to identify problems. Then modify the IDF file to fix problems and re-run the model. This is an iterative process until satisfactory solutions are found. The simulation process can be split into three phases: the diagnostic runs, the preliminary runs, and the final runs. The three phases would use different simulation settings. The diagnostic runs would use a set of simulation settings to speed up the runs with simulation accuracy being set as the second priority. The diagnostic runs will help catch most model problems by running simulations on summer and winter design days. The preliminary runs use a tighter set of simulation settings in order to catch problems missed in the diagnostic runs, and provide better results for quality assurance purpose. The final runs use the EnergyPlus recommended set of simulation settings in order to achieve better accuracy for simulation results ready for review and reporting. Table 43 gives samples of simulation settings for the three phases of runs.

Table 43 Recommended Simulation Settings for EnergyPlus Runs

| Parameter | Value | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| | Diagnostic Runs | Preliminary Runs | Final Runs |
| Run Period | Design Days | Annual | Annual |
| Loads Time Step | 1 (60 minutes) | 4 (15 minutes) | 6 (10 minutes) |
| Maximum Number of HVAC Iterations | 5 | 20 | 50 |
| Minimum HVAC Time Step | 20 minutes | 10 minutes | 5 minutes |
| Solar Distribution Algorithm | MinimalShadowing | MinimalShadowing | FullInteriorAndExterior |
| Heat Balance Solution Algorithm | CTF | CTF | CTF or CondFD or EMPD |
| Warmup Loads Convergence Limit | 0.04 (4%) | 0.04 (4%) | 0.02 (2%) |
| Warmup Temperature Convergence Limit | 0.2°C | 0.2°C | 0.1°C |
| Number of Warmup Days | 7 | 14 | 21 |
| Inside Convection Algorithm | Simple | Simple | Detailed |
| Outside Convection Algorithm | Simple | Simple | Detailed |
| Reports | HVAC sizing reports, Envelope summary reports | All Predefined Summary Reports | All Predefined Summary Reports, and other reports as needed |

Inside EnergyPlus, code review and enhancements to the critical subroutines, identified in the code profiling section, should be done. This task is undergoing and a separate report will document the findings and results.

Another potential improvement in EnergyPlus run time is to make EnergyPlus capable of parallel computing on current and future PCs, which do not increase CPU clock speed much over the past, but carry more and more CPUs. To make this happen, EnergyPlus code need to be parallelized by programmers rather than relying on compiler parallelism settings.

EnergyPlus development was started in late 1990s. The FORTRAN 90/95 language, used by EnergyPlus code, although has some object based features, is not an object oriented computer programming language that fully supports encapsulation, modularity, polymorphism, and inheritance. FORTRAN is especially inefficient in handling string operations which are used intensively in EnergyPlus code. DOE-2 was rewritten twice from scratch in order to have better software architecture, data structure, and better run time performance. Therefore, in the long term, it is worth considering rewriting EnergyPlus in an object oriented language like C++, so that EnergyPlus can better integrate with future computer hardware, software, operating systems, and make it easier to add new features to EnergyPlus and allow EnergyPlus to more effectively interoperate with other simulation programs.

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Appendix A – EnergyPlus Call Tree

Top Level Calling Tree

EnergyPlus

- ProcessInput (in InputProcessor)
- ManageSimulation (in SimulationManager)
 - ManageWeather (in WeatherManager)
 - ManageHeatBalance (in HeatBalanceManager)
 - ManageSurfaceHeatBalance (in HeatBalanceSurfaceManager)
 - ManageAirHeatBalance (in HeatBalanceAirManager)
 - CalcHeatBalanceAir (in HeatBalanceAirManager)
 - ManageHVAC (in HVACManager)

The HVAC part of EnergyPlus is divided into a number of simulation blocks. At this point, there are blocks for the air system, the zone equipment, the plant supply, the plant demand, the condenser supply, and the condenser demand. There will be simulation blocks for waste heat supply and usage as well as electricity and gas. Within each HVAC time step, the blocks are simulated repeatedly until the conditions on each side of each block interface match up. The following calling tree represents the high level HVAC simulation structure. It is schematic – not all routines are shown.

High Level HVAC Calling Tree

(schematic – not all routines are shown)

ManageHVAC (in HVACManager)

- ZoneAirUpdate('PREDICT', . . .) (in HVACManager)
 - estimate the zone heating or cooling demand*
- SimHVAC (in HVACManager)
 - ManageSetPoints (in SetPointManager)
 - SimSelectedEquipment (in HVACManager)
 - ManageAirLoops (in SimAirServingZones)
 - ManageZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
 - ManagePlantSupplySides (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
 - ManagePlantDemandSides (in PlantdemandSideLoops)
 - ManageCondSupplySides (in CondLoopManager)
 - ManageCondenserDemandSides (in CondenserDemandSideLoops)
- ZoneAirUpdate('CORRECT', . . .) (in HVACManager)

From the amount of heating and cooling actually provided by the HVAC system, calculate the zone temperatures.

Each of the “Manage” routines has a different structure, since the simulation to be performed is different in each case. We will show schematic calling trees for several of the “Manage” routines.

Air System Calling Tree

(schematic – not all routines are shown)

ManageAirLoops (in SimAirServingZones)

- GetAirPathData (in SimAirServingZones)
- InitAirLoops (in SimAirServingZones)
- SimAirLoops (in SimAirServingZones)
 - SimAirLoopComponent (in SimAirServingZones)
 - UpdateBranchConnections (in SimAirServingZones)
 - ManageOutsideAirSystem (in MixedAir)
 - SimOutsideAirSys (in MixedAir)
 - SimOAController (in MixedAir)
 - SimOAComponent (in Mixed Air)
 - SimOAMixer (in MixedAir)
 - SimulateFanComponents(in FanSimulation; file HVACFanComponent)
 - SimulateWaterCoilComponents (in WaterCoilSimulation; file HVACWaterCoilComponent)
 - SimHeatRecovery (in HeatRecovery)
 - SimDesiccantDehumidifier (in DesiccantDehumidifiers)
 - SimulateFanComponents (in FanSimulation; file HVACFanComponent)
 - SimulateWaterCoilComponents (in WaterCoilSimulation; file HVACWaterCoilComponent)
 - SimulateHeatingCoilComponents (in HeatingCoils; file HVACHeatingCoils)
 - SimDXCoolingSystem (in HVACDXSystem)
 - SimFurnace (in Furnaces; file HVACFurnace)
 - SimHumidifier (in Humidifiers)
 - SimEvapCooler (in EvaporativeCoolers; file HVACEvapComponent)
 - SimDesiccantDehumidifier (in DesiccantDehumidifiers)
 - SimHeatRecovery (in HeatRecovery)
 - ManageControllers (in Controllers)
 - GetControllerInput (in Controllers)
 - InitController (in Controllers)
 - SimpleController (in Controllers)
 - LimitController (in Controllers)
 - UpdateController (in Controllers)
 - Report Controller (in Controllers)
 - ResolveSysFlow (in SimAirServingZones)
 - UpdateHVACInterface (in HVACInterfaceManager)
 - ReportAirLoops (in SimAirServingZones)

Plant Supply Calling Tree

(schematic – not all routines are shown)

ManagePlantSupplySides (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)

- GetLoopData (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- SetLoopInitialConditions (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- CalcLoopDemand (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- ManagePlantLoopOperation (in PlantCondLoopOperation)
- DistributeLoad (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- SimPlantEquip (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
 - SimPipes (in Pipes; file PlantPipes)
 - SimPumps (in Pumps; file PlantPumps)
 - SimEngineDrivenChiller (in ChillerEngineDriven ; file PlantChillers)
 - SimBLASTAbsorber (in ChillerAbsorption ; file PlantAbsorptionChillers)
 - SimElectricChiller (in ChillerElectric ; file PlantChillers)
 - SimGTChiller (in ChillerGasTurbine ; file PlantChillers)
 - SimConstCOPChiller (in ChillerConstCOP; file PlantChillers)
 - SimBLASTChiller (in ChillerBLAST ; file PlantChillers)
 - SimOutsideCooling (in OutsideCoolingSources ; file PlantOutsideCoolingSources)
 - SimGasAbsorber (in ChillerGasAbsorption ; file PlantGasAbsorptionChiller)
 - SimBoiler (in Boilers; file PlantBoilers)
 - SimWaterHeater (in WaterHeaters ; file PlantWaterHeater)
 - SimOutsideHeating (in OutsideHeatingSources; file PlantOutsideHeatingSources)
- UpdateSplitter (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- SolveFlowNetwork (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- CalcLoopDemand (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- SimPlantEquip (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- UpdateSplitter
- UpdateMixer (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- SimPlantEquip (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- CheckLoopExitNodes (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)
- UpdateHVACInterface (in HVACInterfaceManager)
- UpdateReportVars (in PlantLoopSupplySideManager)

Zone Equipment Calling Tree

(schematic – not all routines are shown)

ManageZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)

- GetZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
- InitZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
- SimZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
 - SimAirLoopSplitter (in Splitters; file HVACSplitterComponent)
 - SimAirZonePlenum (in ZonePlenum; file ZonePlenumComponent)
 - SetZoneEquipSimOrder (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
 - InitSystemOutputRequired (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
 - ManageZoneAirLoopEquipment (in ZoneAirLoopEquipmentManager)

- GetZoneAirLoopEquipment (in ZoneAirLoopEquipmentManager)
- SimZoneAirLoopEquipment (in ZoneAirLoopEquipmentManager)
 - SimulateDualDuct (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - GetDualDuctInput (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - InitDualDuct (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - SimDualDuctConstVol (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - SimDualDuctVarVol (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - UpdateDualDuct (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - ReportDualDuct (in DualDuct; file HVACDualDuctSystem)
 - SimulateSingleDuct (in SingleDuct; file HVACSsingleDuctSystem)
 - GetSysInput (in SingleDuct; file HVACSsingleDuctSystem)
 - InitSys (in SingleDuct; file HVACSsingleDuctSystem)
 - SimConstVol (in SingleDuct; file HVACSsingleDuctSystem)
 - SimVAV (in SingleDuct; file HVACSsingleDuctSystem)
 - ReportSys (in SingleDuct; file HVACSsingleDuctSystem)
 - SimPIU (in PoweredInductionUnits)
 - GetPIUs (in PoweredInductionUnits)
 - InitPIUs (in PoweredInductionUnits)
 - CalcSeriesPIU (in PoweredInductionUnits)
 - CalcParallelPIU (in PoweredInductionUnits)
 - ReportPIU (in PoweredInductionUnits)
- SimDirectAir (in DirectAirManager; file DirectAir)
- SimPurchasedAir (in PurchasedAirManager)
- SimWindowAC (in WindowAC)
- SimFanCoilUnit (in FanCoilUnits)
- SimUnitVentilator (in UnitVentilator)
- SimUnitHeater (in UnitHeater)
- SimBaseboard (in BaseboardRadiator)
- SimHighTempRadiantSystem (in HighTempRadiantSystem; file RadiantSystemHighTemp)
- SimLowTempRadiantSystem (in LowTempRadiantSystem; file RadiantSystemLowTemp)
- SimulateFanComponents (in Fans; file HVACFanComponent)
- SimHeatRecovery (in HeatRecovery)
- UpdateSystemOutputRequired (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
- SimAirLoopSplitter (in Splitters; file HVACSsplitterComponent)
- SimAirZonePlenum (in ZonePlenum; file ZonePlenumComponent)
- CalcZoneMassBalance (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
- CalcZoneLeavingConditions (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
- SimReturnAirPath (in ReturnAirPathManager; file ReturnAirPath)
 - SimAirMixer (in Mixers; HVACMixerComponent)
 - SimAirZonePlenum (in ZonePlenum; file ZonePlenumComponent)
- RecordZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)
- ReportZoneEquipment (in ZoneEquipmentManager)

Appendix B – EnergyPlus Psychrometric Functions

EnergyPlus has a full complement of psychrometric functions. All arguments and results are in SI units.

Variable Definition and Unit

- H = Enthalpy, J/kg
- W= Humidity Ratio, kg.H₂O/kg.dry.air
- Rh= Relative Humidity, fraction
- V= Specific Volume, m³/kg
- Rhov= Vapor Density of Air, kg.H₂O/ m³.d.a
- Hfg = Latent energy (heat of vaporization for moist air), J/kg
- Hg= Enthalpy of gaseous moisture, J/kg
- Pb= Barometric Pressure, Pa
- Twb=Temperature Wet Bulb, °C
- Twd= Temperature Dry Bulb, °C
- Tdp= Temperature Dew Point, °C
- Tsat and Psat= Saturation Temperature and Saturation Pressure, °C
- T = Temperature, °C

Function Definition

PsyRhoAirFnPbTdbW (Pb,Tdb,W,calledfrom)

Returns the density of air as a function of barometric pressure [Pb], dry bulb temperature [Tdb], and humidity ratio [W].

PsyCpAirFnWTdb (W,Tdb,calledfrom)

Returns the specific heat of air as a function of humidity ratio [W] and dry bulb temperature [Tdb].

PsyHfgAirFnWTdb (W,Tdb,calledfrom)

Returns the Latent energy of air [Hfg] as a function of humidity ratio [W] and dry bulb temperature [Tdb]. It calculates hg and then hf and the difference is Hfg.

PsyHgAirFnWTdb (W,Tdb,calledfrom)

Returns the specific enthalpy of the moisture as a gas in the air as a function of humidity ratio [W] and dry bulb temperature [Tdb].

PsyTdpFnTdbTwbPb (Tdb,Twb,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the dew point temperature as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], wet bulb temperature [Twb], and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyTdpFnWPb (W,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the dew point temperature as a function of humidity ratio [W] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyHFnTdbW (Tdb,W,calledfrom)

Returns the specific enthalpy of air as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb] and humidity ratio [W].

PsyHFnTdbRhPb (Tdb,Rh,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the specific enthalpy of air as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], relative humidity [Rh], and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyTdbFnHW (H,W,calledfrom)

Returns the air temperature as a function of air specific enthalpy [H] and humidity ratio [W].

PsyRhovFnTdbRh (Tdb,Rh,calledfrom)

Returns the Vapor Density in air [RhoVapor] as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], Relative Humidity [Rh].

PsyRhovFnTdbWP (Tdb,W,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the Vapor Density in air [RhoVapor] as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], humidity ratio [W] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyRhFnTdbRhov (Tdb,Rhov,calledfrom)

Returns the Relative Humidity [Rh] in air as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb] and Vapor Density in air [RhoVapor].

PsyRhFnTdbWPb (Tdb,W,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the relative humidity as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], humidity ratio [W] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyTwbFnTdbWPb (Tdb,W,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the air wet bulb temperature as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], humidity ratio [W] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyVFnTdbWPb (Tdb,W,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the specific volume as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], humidity ratio [W] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyWFnTdpPb (Tdp,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the humidity ratio as a function of the dew point temperature [Tdp] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyWFnTdbH (Tdb,H,calledfrom)

Returns the humidity ratio as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb] and air specific enthalpy [H].

PsyWFnTdbTwbPb (Tdb,Twb,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the humidity ratio as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], wet bulb temperature [Twb], and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyWFnTdbRhPb (Tdb,Rh,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the humidity ratio as a function of dry bulb temperature [Tdb], relative humidity [RH], and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyPsatFnTemp (T,calledfrom)

Returns the saturation pressure as a function of the air saturation temperature [T].

PsyTsatFnHPb (H,Pb,calledfrom)

Returns the air saturation temperature as a function of air specific enthalpy [H] and barometric pressure [Pb].

PsyTsatFnPb (P,calledfrom)

Returns the air saturation temperature as a function of saturation pressure [P].

CPCW (T,calledfrom)

Returns Specific heat capacity (J/kg-K) for chilled water as function of temperature [T].

CPHW (T,calledfrom)

Returns Specific heat capacity (J/kg-K) for hot water as function of temperature [T].

CVHW (T,calledfrom)

Returns Specific heat capacity (J/kg-K) for hot water at constant volume as function of temperature [T].

RhoH2O (T,calledfrom)

Returns density of water (kg/m³) as function of Temperature [T].