

leading off



Prepping For Specialization

Happy New Year and may 2019 be full of peace, hope and dreams fulfilled!

As each year passes, and as I mature (actually get older), life demands more time to deal with grandchildren, children and aging parents. In parallel to this, I believe our industry will require more time and commitment due to the pending changes that will again “rock” our industry by the end of 2019. It’s called being prepared.

The Montreal Protocol, ratified in 1987, may have been instrumental in the reduction of ozone depletion and, now, global warming. However, let’s not forget how this international accord has propelled us forward with the development of new refrigerants, new technologies, new designs, new techniques and new applications that permit us to reduce energy use while having infinite control of operating conditions. All of these items are critical in ensuring that the use of the refrigeration cycle continues to grow beyond our normal uses, applications and expectations while providing new opportunities.

Effective January 1, 2020, the HCFC phase-out affecting imports, exports and manufacturing of all HCFC products will leave service technicians as the “last resort” in providing customers with short-term and long-term solutions as we deal with aging HCFC equipment, near-obsolete components and replacement refrigerant choices. Remember the CFC phase-out?

Also, January 1, 2020 will bring us face-to-face with the international phase out of HFC refrigerants, along with the accelerated phase-out of higher Global Warming Potential (GWP) by a number of states. This is all happening regardless of what the federal government decides to do with the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol. Manufacturers from across the globe have been working around this issue for a number of years in preparation for this phase out. In order for us to be prepared, the training offered by RSES and others is becoming more critical as we prepare for these changes.

The sophistication of these systems may lead us back to the days where we need to become brand-, product- and technology-specific in the same way the ammonia and centrifugal chiller industries have been for decades, and the way the CO₂ industry has become. We may need to specialize and understand how to better control our working environment as the refrigerants and technologies are diverging from sector to sector.

Don’t misunderstand what I am saying—a refrigeration cycle is and will always be a refrigeration cycle— however the knowledge, the skill, the tooling, the equipment, the controls and the safety requirements will differ so extensively from system-to- system that we may no longer be able to do it all the way we thought we could in the past.

It’s time to be somewhat controversial here and to put this statement into perspective—as the use of fossil fuels in our industry slowly decline (wood, coal and fuel oil come to mind)—how about the use of solar-powered refrigeration systems to replace commercial boilers? I have a feeling this is already being done!

Moral of the story—the outlook for refrigeration looks brighter and brighter for our children and grandchildren—if we can only convince them to be part of the refrigeration industry and related sectors. Maybe we should start small by reading them articles from *RSES Journal* and eventually convince them to become RSES members? ☺

Nick Reggi, CMS

Nick Reggi, CMS, RCT
RSES International President

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www.rsesjournal.com • Email: general@rses.org



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Executive Vice President

Lori A. Schiavo
Tel: 847-759-4035
Email: lschiavo@rses.org

Managing Editor

Erika Hobbs
Tel: 847-759-4051
Email: ehobbs@rses.org

Creative Director

Stephanie Rosheck
Tel: 847-759-4030
Email: srosheck@rses.org

Senior Editor

Jordan Brandes
Tel: 847-759-4032
Email: jbrandes@rses.org

Technical Review

Committee Chairman
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