



Standard Practice for Installation and Use of Radiant Barrier Systems (RBS) in Residential Building Construction¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C1743; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice has been prepared for use by the designer, specifier, builder, and the installer of radiant barrier systems (RBS) for use in (multi- and single-family) residential building construction, not otherwise restricted from use. The scope is limited to instructions relative to the use and installation of RBS, including a surface(s) normally having an emittance of 0.1 or less, such as metallic foil or metallic foil deposits, mounted on substrates. Some examples that this practice is intended to address include: (1) low-emittance surfaces in vented building envelope cavities intended to retard radiant transfer across the airspace; (2) low-emittance surfaces at interior building surfaces intended to retard radiant transfer to, or from, building inhabitants; and (3) low-emittance surface at interior building surfaces intended to reduce radiant transfer to, or from, radiant heating or cooling systems.

1.2 This practice covers the installation process from pre-installation inspection through the post-installation procedure. It does not cover the production of the radiant barrier materials. (See Specification [C1313](#).)

1.3 This practice is not intended to replace the manufacturer's installation instructions but shall be used in conjunction with such instructions. This practice is not intended to supercede local, state, federal, or international codes.

1.4 This practice assumes that the installer possesses a good working knowledge of the applicable codes and regulations, safety practices, tools, equipment, and methods necessary for installation of radiant barrier materials. It also assumes that the installer understands the fundamentals of residential building construction that affect the installation of RBS.

1.5 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as standard. The values given in parentheses are mathematical conversions to SI units that are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

1.6 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. For specific precautionary statements see Sections 5 and 7.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[C168](#) Terminology Relating to Thermal Insulation

[C1313](#) Specification for Sheet Radiant Barriers for Building Construction Applications

2.2 NFPA Standards³

[NFPA 54](#) National Fuel Gas Code

[NFPA 211](#) Standard for Chimneys, Fireplaces and Vents

2.3 Other Document:⁴

[CPSC Product Safety Fact Sheet No. 18 "The Home Electrical System"](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this practice, refer to Terminology [C168](#).

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *applicator, n*—person or persons who apply radiant barrier materials in buildings.

3.2.2 *conditioned space, n*—any space in a building that is served by a heating or cooling system.

3.2.3 *open air space, n*—vented building cavity (for example, a vented attic) or a large conditioned or unconditioned building space.

3.2.3.1 *Discussion*—A large building space is defined as one whose minimum dimension exceeds 2 ft (0.6 m).

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [C16](#) on Thermal Insulation and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [C16.21](#) on Reflective Insulation.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ Available from National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471, <http://www.nfpa.org>.

⁴ Available from U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), 4330 East West Hwy., Bethesda, MD 20814, <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

3.2.4 *radiant barrier system, RBS, n*—building construction assembly consisting of a low-emittance (0.1 or less) surface bounded by an open air space on one or both sides.

3.2.4.1 *Discussion*—A RBS is used for the sole purpose of limiting heat transfer by radiation, into or out of a building assembly. An RBS is not specifically intended to reduce heat transfer by convection or conduction.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 In this practice it is recognized that effectiveness, safety, and durability of an RBS depends not only on the quality of the materials, but also on proper installation.

4.2 Improper installation of an RBS will reduce the thermal effectiveness, cause fire risks and other unsafe conditions, and promote deterioration of the structure in which it is installed. Improper installations include fires caused by: (1) heat buildup in recessed lighting fixtures, (2) deterioration or failure of electrical wiring components, and (3) deterioration in wood structures and paint failure as a result of moisture accumulation.

4.3 This practice provides directions for the installation of RBS products in a safe and effective manner. Actual conditions in existing buildings vary greatly and care shall be taken to ensure safe and effective installation.

4.4 In this practice requirements are presented that are both general and specific in nature and practical. They are not intended as specific instructions unless so indicated. The user shall consult the manufacturer for recommended application and installation methods. The requirements in this practice shall be the minimum material and installation requirements for RBS.

5. Safety Precautions

5.1 The applicator shall wear proper clothing and equipment as specified by the manufacturer and shall follow all local, state, and federal codes and safety regulations for building construction sites, for example hard hats, safety goggles respiratory protection, and other safety items.

6. Pre-Installation Inspection and Preparation

6.1 *Pre-Installation Inspections: New and Retrofit Buildings:*

6.1.1 Inspect the roof, wall, ceiling, and floor building materials to identify areas in which previous or existing moisture problems have caused paint peeling, lumber warpage, staining, visible fungal growth, rotting, or other structural damage. Do not install the RBS in such areas until the owner/builder has been informed and has certified that these conditions have been corrected and the cause of the condition repaired.

6.1.2 In areas where an RBS is to be installed, components of the electrical system shall be in good condition. When there is reason to believe the electrical system is faulty, do not install RBS in such areas until the owner/builder has been informed and qualified inspection and repair has been accomplished.

NOTE 1—The CPSC Product Safety Fact Sheet No. 18 has identified the following signs of potential electrical deficiencies: lights dimming, fuses

blowing, circuit breakers tripping frequently, electrical sparks and glowing from receptacle, light flickering, and cover plates on switches and outlets that are warm or hot to the touch.

6.1.3 In areas where an RBS is to be installed, the applicator shall locate and plan for installation around ventilation openings. The applicator shall not install RBS that will obstruct or block existing ventilation openings, such as gable ends, dormers, ridge, off ridge, soffit vents, or any others.

6.2 Preparations:

6.2.1 All electrical wiring at, or near, radiant barrier material attachment surfaces shall be either moved, or protected, to ensure that fasteners used to install the radiant barrier material cannot contact the electrical wiring system.

6.2.2 When attic ventilation and new, or existing, ceiling insulation will be compromised by the installation of an RBS, vent baffles shall be installed at the soffits of the attic such that attic ventilation air flows are maintained in accordance with applicable building codes.

7. Installation Guidelines-New and Retrofit Buildings

7.1 Material Handling:

7.1.1 The radiant barrier material shall be handled in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, shall be kept dry, and shall not be in contact with the ground or sources of water.

7.1.2 The radiant barrier material shall not be placed in contact with corrosive building materials.

7.2 Performance Considerations:

7.2.1 The performance of the RBS depends on adherence to manufacturer's specifications. Manufacturer's installation instructions and all applicable building codes shall be followed. The manufacturer shall provide the product information sheet(s) that specify the product's intended use(s), application method(s), health and safety considerations, and material properties per Specification C1313.

7.2.2 The performance of the RBS is dependent on the presence of an open airspace adjacent to at least one low-emittance surface.

7.2.3 The performance of the RBS will be adversely affected by foreign materials on the low-emittance surface. Before installation, foreign materials shall be removed using manufacturer's instructions, taking care not to damage the radiant barrier material.

7.2.4 The performance of a radiant barrier will be reduced by a corrosive environment. In some instances, severe pollutants react with the low-emittance surface causing an increase in the emittance of the material. When such conditions exist, the owner/builder shall be informed that these conditions have the potential to result in material degradation and a decrease in RBS performance.

7.2.5 In some instances, the performance of a radiant barrier will be reduced by the presence of moisture on the low-emittance surface. Such conditions are potentially temporary or long term and the manufacturer shall be consulted to determine the applicability of RBS when these conditions are expected to occur.

7.2.6 The performance of the RBS will be adversely affected by the accumulation of dust over time on the low-emittance surface. RBS shall be installed to avoid the settlement of dust on the radiant barrier surface. Dust is not a concern on a downward facing RBS.

7.2.7 Damaged areas will result in loss of performance and shall be repaired in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

7.3 Installation Precautions:

7.3.1 In areas in which radiant barrier materials are to be installed, the applicator shall provide clearance around lighting fixtures, motors, fans, blowers, heaters, flues, chimneys, and other heat-producing electrical and mechanical devices.

7.3.1.1 The applicator shall provide 3-in. (75-mm) minimum clearance around all sides of recessed lighting fixtures unless such fixtures are approved for installation in direct contact with radiant barrier materials. Such fixtures include fixture wiring compartments, ballasts, and other heat-producing devices. These devices shall not be covered unless they are specifically approved for operation when covered.

7.3.1.2 The applicator shall provide the minimum clearances specified in NFPA 54. Provide a 2-in. (50-mm) minimum clearance from the outside face of the masonry around masonry chimneys or masonry enclosing a flue. For vents, vent connectors, and chimneys other than masonry, provide minimum clearances as specified in NFPA 211.

7.3.1.3 The operative material of most RBS is a metallic foil or vapor deposition of a metal on a substrate. Therefore, radiant barrier materials can provide an extremely high resistance to water vapor transmission. Radiant barriers shall not be installed so as to lead to moisture accumulation and deterioration in the structure. Some radiant barriers are produced to provide low resistance to water vapor transmission. High vapor permeable- house wraps and perforated products are examples.

7.3.1.4 In wood or steel framed buildings (new or retrofit), a perforated radiant barrier shall always be used when ceiling insulation is installed, such as in roof or sidewall installations, in direct contact with the radiant barrier (cold-winter side). When the radiant barrier is below or next to an unfaced insulation in the wall or roof (warm-winter side), a nonperforated radiant barrier shall be used.

7.3.1.5 Regardless of construction type, all radiant barrier materials that are installed with the low-emittance material(s) in direct contact with other metals shall be separated by an acceptable thermal break.

7.4 Installation:

7.4.1 Determine that the RBS material and installation meet the following criteria:

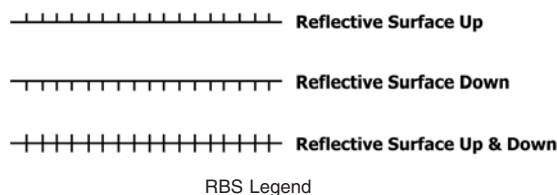
7.4.1.1 *Testing and certification*—The materials shall meet all the requirements of Specification C1313 as well as comply with all certification and codes governing the use and installation of radiant barriers.

7.4.1.2 *Installation*—The installer or applicator shall install the RBS according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. In addition, the following minimum installation procedures shall be followed when installing an RBS in specific areas of the structure such as:

(1) *Attic*—There are four methods of installing a RBS:

- (a) Factory applied (laminated) or field-applied RBS (stapled) to the underside of the roof deck facing towards the interior (Fig. 1. A perforated RBS is always required for this type of installation. A single- or double-sided radiant barrier material shall be used in the deck-applied installation, as long as a low-emittance surface (dull or shiny) faces downward;
- (b) Draped over the rafters or trusses (top chord) before sheathing the roof (Fig. 2);
- (c) Installed between the rafters or top chords of the trusses (Fig. 3);

RADIANT BARRIER INSTALLATIONS



RBS Legend

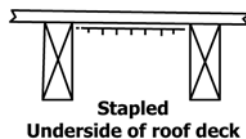
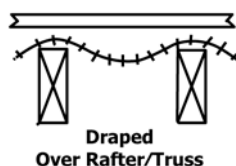
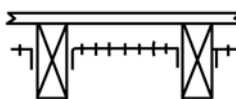


FIG. 1



Draped
Over Rafter/Truss

FIG. 2



Between Rafter/Truss

FIG. 3

(d) Secured to the bottom surface of the rafters or truss (top chord) (Fig. 4); and

(e) Shall maintain a minimum 1½-in. (3.8-cm) airspace at the center of the truss/rafter span between the radiant barrier surface and the underside of the roof deck in installations (b) through (d), and a perforated radiant barrier is not required in these installations (Figs. 2-4). Gable end walls and all other vertical attic surfaces above the ceiling insulation, such as knee walls and division walls in multi-family housing, shall be covered by either a single- or double-sided radiant barrier, perforated or not, installed with a low-emittance surface facing the attic cavity for visual inspection purposes (Fig. 7).

NOTE 2—In retrofit and new construction, secure a perforated radiant barrier directly to the underside portion of the roof deck, over the eave or soffit, so that the barriers' coverage extends at least 3 in. (7.6 cm) beyond the top plate of the sidewall without being in contact with any ceiling insulation once it is installed. In an effort to prevent blockage of eave or soffit venting, a total vertical airspace of no less than 3½ in. (9 cm) shall be maintained between the RBS and the top of the ceiling insulation regardless of installation method.

NOTE 3—In new construction or room additions that include vaulted or cathedral ceilings, install a perforated radiant barrier foil facing down towards the interior directly against the underside of the roof deck. When installing the insulation, allow a 1-in. (2.5-cm) minimum space between the top of the insulation and the underside of the foil radiant barrier. When appropriate, by design or retrofit, vent both the upper and lower ends of these assemblies before the installation of the RBS (Fig. 6).

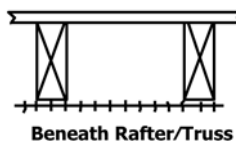
(2) *Exposed basement ceiling*—This area shall be covered with either a perforated (vapor permeable) or nonperforated (non vapor permeable) radiant barrier. A single- or double-sided product is acceptable as long as a low-emittance surface

faces an airspace. It is acceptable, in some instances, that the RBS be in direct contact with an unfaced insulation, as long as a low-emittance surface faces an airspace (Fig. 5).

(3) *Exterior crawl spaces*—When covering the underside of a floor assembly facing a crawl space cavity, use a nonperforated product, regardless of whether the floor is insulated (Fig. 5). Proper ventilation of these crawl spaces is very important. In this installation, the RBS is also a vapor retarder and it shall always be a nonperforated product. All seams and penetrations shall be properly sealed and the crawl space vented to meet necessary code requirements. To prevent damage to the insulation and structure, the humidity level in crawl spaces must be maintained below a level that creates a condition for condensation to occur on the crawl space surfaces. Treatments to prevent crawl space condensation include, but are not limited to: (1) Sealing the interface between the ground and the crawl space walls and floor; (2) Venting the crawl space to the outside climate, when the humidity conditions require.

(4) *Sidewalls and basement walls*—When the wall is not covered, use a perforated RBS. Once the wall is covered and not vented, this assembly becomes a reflective insulation system, not a radiant barrier. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for installing reflective insulation systems

7.4.1.3 *Attic ventilation*—In all installation methods, including factory or field-applied installations, against the underside of the roof deck, inspect all ventilation openings to be sure they have not been blocked by the installation of the RBS. In gable roof construction, be sure that the RBS has been held back at least 6 in. (15 cm) at the ridge on all under-the-deck methods, other than those secured directly to the sheeting. While desirable, it is not practical to cut the RBS back on hip, or hip and ridge construction, in the hip area.



Beneath Rafter/Truss

FIG. 4

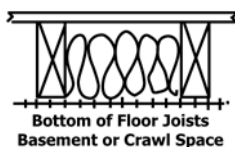


FIG. 5

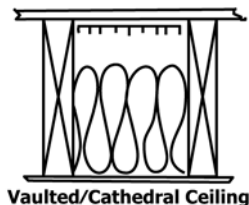


FIG. 6

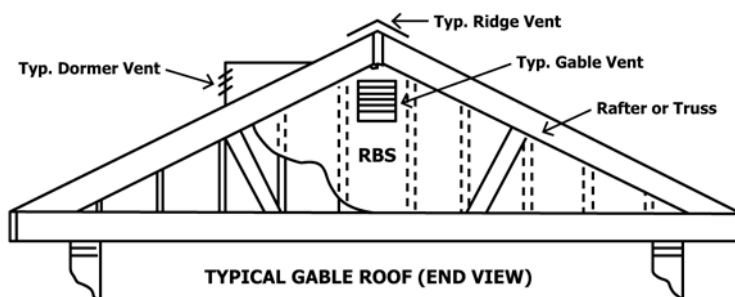


FIG. 7

7.4.1.4 *Venting ratio*—Typically, a minimum net-free ventilation of not less than 1 ft² (0.09 m²) of vent area for each 150 ft² (14 m²) of attic area be used in both new and retrofit construction whenever practical.

7.5 Post-Installation Inspection:

7.5.1 Ensure that the proper amount of radiant barrier has been installed to achieve the greatest amount of protection from heat gain or loss according to the area covered such as: attic, walls, floors, or crawl spaces.

7.5.2 Ensure that the RBS material does not restrict air flow in, out, around, or over exhaust and inlet venting.

7.5.3 The applicator shall provide a signed and dated statement to the owner/builder describing the RBS installation, the radiant barrier material installed in accordance with Practice C1743, and the area covered.

8. Keywords

8.1 aluminum foil; division walls; gable ends; hip and ridge construction; installation practices; low emittance; metallic deposit; radiant barrier; radiant barrier system; vapor retarder; venting ratio

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