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PAPER 23

VENTILATION STRATEGIES FOR CRAWL-SPACES, ATTICS ETC.

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1. SYNOPSIS

In this paper ventilation of attics and crawl-spaces is investigated theoretically. Ventilation rates and temperatures of the spaces are calculated by means of flow balance procedures. Flow characteristics of ventilators and openings for attics and crawlspaces are far from well known, so a laboratory investigation on pressure drops across such devices was undertaken and reported in the paper. As convective flows from the heated part of a house into a colder, ventilated space can create moisture problems this situation has been investigated extensively.

2. INTRODUCTION

Spaces connected to heated parts of a building, such as crawlspaces, attics etc, are normally ventilated. The need for ventilation is mainly based on ambitions of moisture control. An adequate ventilation of these spaces prevents moisture problems and damages. The ventilation need for this purpose depends on many factors such as outer climate, heat insulation degree, moisture sources within the space itself, for example evaporation from the ground in a crawl-space, or built- in moisture in the building material, degree of moisture convection from the heated part of the buildning into the space. The ultimate ventilation need is settled by the critical level of moisture load for buildning materials within the ventilated space. This critical level is normally formulated in terms of maximum allowable relative humidity (RH) for different materials. For wood and wood-based materials this level is often claimed to be around 75% for avoiding mould growth on wood and around 80% for avoiding rot in wood. (NEVANDER & ELMARSSON, 1981). For chip-boards moisture-related movements may cause throuble for example om attic floors prepared for making dwelling room on later on. For steel and other metals, risk for corrosion may create certain critical moisture levels.

Considerations as these mentioned above lead to settlement of a minimum ventilation degree.

On the other hand, excessive ventilation of such spaces creates unnecessarily high energy losses due to transmission between the heated part of the building and the ventilated space. For example, the design philosophy of crawl-space foundation implies a certain insulation gain due to the presense of the crawl-space. This implies a maximum ventilation degree.

The desired <u>ventilation intensity</u> can be achieved by means of natural forces such as wind and/or temperature differences or by mechanical ventilation devices. The degree of wind-driven ventilation of these spaces is depending on several factors:

- local wind velocity
- shape of the surrounding of the building
- geometrical proportions of the building
- dimensions and design of air inlet/outlet openings and ventilators
- location of these openings and ventilators
- etc.

Estimating climate in ventilated non heated spaces belongs to the more severe problems in building physics. For a complete analysis of the problems a lot of factors have to be taken into account:

- The ventilation degree (see above)
- The air tightness behaviour of the buildning component between the space and the heated part of the buildning
- The heat exchange within the space involving transmission, convection and radiation
- Moisture sources, moisture flow and moisture capacity

The analysis is strongly simplified if average conditions are sufficient for the considerations. As a first step such an analysis may be enough as far as durability risks are concerned. The radiative part of the heat exchange is also a difficult step in a complete heat exchange analysis. However, for modern wellinsulated constructions between heated and ventilated spaces the influence of heat radiation may be small. The long wave radiation though can cause considerable surface temperature phenomena especially on the outside of roofs on clear nights. In this paper a method for calculating ventilation intensities in attics and crawl-spaces is presented. Furthermore an average based analysis of the climate in the spaces is carried out.

3. REFERENCE HOUSE

The calculations presented further on in the paper are all performed for a house outlined in figure 3.1.



FIG. 3.1 Reference house.

For wind load considerations the house is intended to be located in a built up area. The shape factors used for the calculations figure 3.2-3.4 are mainly based on comparisons and analyses of results reported by JENSEN & FRANK, 1965; GANDEMER, 1978; LEUTHENSSER, 1970; NEWBERRY & EATON, 1974; THURESSON, 1977; GUSTEN, 1984; AIC, 1984 & SOLIMAN, 1973.



the reference house.



FIG. 3.3 Shape factors for wind perpendicular to gable part of the reference house.



FIG. 3.4 Shape factors for wind 45⁰ to longside and gable part of the reference house.

4. AIR FLOW CHARACTERISTICS OF VENTILATION OPENINGS AND VENTILATORS

In the laboratory the air flow behaviours of different ventilation openings and commercially offered ventilators were investigated. The openings and ventilators were connected to a pressurized box, airtight except for the investigated specimen. The pressure difference between the two sides of the specimen was monitored by means of an electrical micro-manometer. The air flow rate supplied to the box was monitored by means of an orifice plate and a micro-manometer. The pressure regime investigated was 0-100 Pa. The results are given in table 4.1 as pressure loss factors, ξ , originating from the well-known expression

$$\Delta p = \xi \frac{\rho \cdot u_m^2}{2}$$
where

 Δp = pressure difference, Pa

ε = pressure loss factor, -

ρ = density, kg/m³

 U_{m} = mean velocity i.e. q_{v}/A where q_{v} = volume flow rate, m^{3}/s and A = nominal frontal area, m^{2}

Ventilator/opening, type	Area mm ²	Pressure loss factor, ξ
Pressed steel	125 x 125	48
u_	150 x 150	47
"_	200 x 200	45
"_	250 x 250	32
"_	65 x 250	26
Light metal	125 x 125	7,7
и <u> </u>	150 x 150	6,9
и_	200 x 200	6,8
и	250 x 250	7,1
Open hole	71 x 71	2,1
и_	150 x 150	2,3
Hole with plastic net	71 x 71	2,3
Hole with brass net	71 x 71	2,4
Hole with plastic net	150 x 150	2,9
Hole with brass net	150 x 150	2,6

TABLE 4.1 Pressure loss factors for different ventilators and openings.

5. VENTILATION RATE CALCULATION PROCEDURE

The rates of air flow into and out from the ventilated space for different flow types were calculated using the following expressions. (see for example KRONVALL, 1980): Single resistance flow

$$|q_{v}| = \sqrt{\frac{|(\mu \cdot \rho \cdot u_{0}^{2}/2 - p)| \cdot \hat{2}}{\xi \cdot \rho}} \cdot A \qquad \dots 5a$$

where

 $q_v = volume flow rate, m^3/s$ $\mu = shape factor, -$

p = pressure in the ventilated space, Pa

 ξ = pressure loss factor, -

A = flow (frontal) area, m^2

Flow through building components etc. Laminar flow:

$$q_v = (\mu \cdot \rho \cdot u_0^2 / 2 - p) \cdot L \cdot A$$
 ...5b

where

L = flow coefficient, $m^3/(m^2 \cdot s \cdot Pa)$

Exponent flow:

$$|q_{v}| = \alpha |(\mu \cdot \rho \cdot u_{0}^{2}/2 - p)|^{\beta} \cdot A$$
 ...5c

where

 $\alpha = flow coefficient, m^3/(m^2 \cdot s \cdot Pa^\beta)$ $\beta = flow exponent, -, 0,5 \le \beta \le 1.0$

The flow expressions are written as flows into the ventilated spaces. For the flow balance calculation of the pressure differences 5 a and 5 c are given positive or negative values depending on the sign of the pressure expressions. Summing up all the different flows into the space and putting the sum equal to 0 i.e. :

 $\Sigma q_v = 0$...5d makes it possible to determine the unknown variabel p (pressure inside the space). If different flow types are involved the implicite function must be treated iteratively. The calculations were performed by using the Newton-Raphson procedure and executed on a Hewlett-Packard HP 85 computer. The computer program is listed in appendix 1.

6. CALCULATION RESULTS

Some of the results of executed calculations are given in diagraph form in

figure 6.1-6.6.

6.1 ATTICS

Two main alternatives for ventilating the attic were investigated:

- slot at roof bottom of the long sides of the house, width 20, 10 and 2 mm (the last case representing non volontarily made slots).
- ventilators in the gable tops, pressed steel and light metal, dimensions 150 x 150 mm and 250 x 250 mm.

The calculations were performed for different wind directions.

Results:

A 45° angle between wind direction and the long side of building seems to produce higher ventilation rates than that of wind perpendicular to the long sides of the house. The least effective ventilation seems to be obtained when the wind is parallel to the long sides of the house. In the case of ventilation openings in the gable tops however the situation is the opposite. There are linear relationships between

- wind velocity and ventilation rate

- ventilation opening area and ventilation rate



FIG. 6.1 Slot at roof bottom, width 20 mm, permeable gable tops 0.14 \cdot 10⁻³ m³/(m² \cdot s \cdot Pa)



FIG. 6.2 Slot at roof bottom, width 10 mm, permeable gable tops 0.14 \cdot 10⁻³ m³/(m² \cdot s \cdot Pa)





1 ventilator 150 x 150 mm, pressed steel, in each gable top



FIG. 6.4 Slot at roof bottom, width 2 mm,permeable gable
 tops 0.14 · 10⁻³ m³/(m² · s · Pa)
 1 ventilator 150 x 150 mm2, light metal, in each
 gable top



gable top





These facts are of course due to the small influence of the presumed laminar flow through the gable tops. $(L = 0,14 \cdot 10^{-3} \text{ m}^3/(\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{s} \cdot \text{Pa})$; value for wood panel according to BANKVALL, 1981.)

The most effective ventilation of the attic space seems to be obtained by means of ventilation slots at the roof bottoms of the long sides of the house.

6.2 CRAWL-SPACES

The ventilation devices chosen for the crawl-space are ventilators 150 x 150 mm, pressed steel and light metal. The number of ventilators was chosen according to recommendations in the Swedish Building Code. $(0,10 \text{ m}^2 \text{ open area}/100 \text{ m}^2 \text{ floor area, which is a}$ recommendation for houses in tight built up areas when using wood bottom floor. For pressed steel ventilators an area reduction is prescribed, namely 22% of ventilator frontal area.) In order to study the consequences of a leaky bottom floor, one calculation was made for a bottom floor having an air leakage of a value corresponding to 3,0 h⁻¹ at 50 Pa pressure difference, evenly distributed over the house envelope area.

Results:

Apart from the linear relationship between wind velocity and ventilation rate mentioned above, the ventilation rate is strongly depending on type of ventilator used. This is of course due to the large differences between pressure loss factors for pressed steel and light metal ventilators, cf. table 4.1. When using light metal ventilators instead of pressed steel ones, both being of the same size, the ventilation rate is raised by a factor of appr. 2.5.

(= ξ / ξ). pressed light steel metal

When the untight bottom floor is added to the calculation the ventilation rate increases and the air flow through the bottom floor, directed from the crawl-space to the heated part of the house is of considerable magnitude, appr. 75% of the total ventilation flow rate !

7. HEAT BALANCE CALCULATIONS

Heat balance calculations have been conducted for a winter case with the temperature of outside air equals $\stackrel{+}{-} 0 \stackrel{0}{-} C$. Conductive and convective parts of the heat exchange have been taken into account. For the roofing a heat transmission coefficient of 1,5 $W/(m^2 \cdot K)$ was chosen.

7.1 ATTICS

Figure 7.1-7.4 illustrate the resulting air temperature in the attic space under influence of different ventilation rates (fresh air), heattransmission coefficients of the attic floor and convection flows from the heated part of the house into the attic.









In order to make it possible to perform proper considerations on the magnitude of the convective flow into the attic, figure 7.5 can serve as a basis. Even distribution of leaks all over the house envelope is assumed, why n_{50} describes the air tightness of the attic floor. For different pressure differences the resulting air flow into the attic can be seen. The air tightness behaviour of the attic floor can also be included in the air flow balance calculation revued in ch. 5. However, as stack effect inside the house must be considered at winter conditions the "normally" used inner shape factor, μ_i of a magnitude - 0,3, see for example NEWBERRY & EATON, 1974, must be modified for stack effect. This was made for a "typical" winter condition assuming that the pressure difference caused by stack effect inside the house was appr. + 2 Pa at ceiling height.







FIG. 7.6 Modified inner shape factor μ ; , mod for different wind velocities.

This modified shape factor, μ _i, mod, of course different for different wind velocities, is plotted in figure 7.6. Using μ_i ,mod in a calculation with conditions presented in figure 6.1 (wind along the long sides of the house), the contribution to the total ventilation flow from leaking indoor air can be studied for different n₅₀ - values. Figure 7.7. The calculation was run for one wind velocity only; 2 m/s.



FIG. 7.7. Incoming heated air into the attic. Wind velocity 2 m/s. In table 7.1 the resulting ventilation flows of fresh and heated air can be studied for different tightnessdegrees of the attic floor.

ⁿ 50	fresh air		heated air from the house		
h ⁻¹	m ³ /s	h ⁻¹	m ³ /s	h ⁻¹	
0	0.092	2.72	0	0	
1	0.090	2.66	0,002	0.06	
3	0.085	2.51	0.007	0.21	
6	0.078	2.31	0.014	0.41	

TABLE 7.1

7.2 CRAWL-SPACES

Meaningful heat balance calculations must be based on non-steady state calculations, mainly due to the considerable heat capacity of the ground under the crawl-space. Such calculations are not presented in this paper.

8. MOISTURE CONSIDERATIONS. ATTICS

Calculations on heat and air flow balances may serve as a basis for moisture considerations. A simple moisture damage criterion could be:

 $(RH)_{attic air} \leq (RH)_{critical} \cdots 8 a$ The moisture content in air within a ventilated space, in this case the attic, can (under steady state conditions) be written $v_a = v_0 + \frac{G}{nV} \cdots 8 b$

where

 v_a = moisture content in attic air, g/m³ v_o = "- "- in outdoor air, g/m³ G = moisture supply in or into the attic, g/h n = ventilation rate (fresh air), h⁻¹ V = attic inner volume, m³

Furthermore:

$$(RH)_{a} = \left(\frac{v_{a}}{v_{s}}\right)_{\theta_{a}} = \frac{v_{o} + \frac{G}{nV}}{\left(v_{s}\right)_{\theta_{a}}} \dots 8c$$

where

RH = relative humidity, - $(v_s)_{\theta_a}$ = moisture saturation value at $\theta = \theta_a$, g/m³

The same outer condition of air temperature as for the heat balance calculations is chosen i.e. $\theta_0 = {}^+ 0^{\circ}C$. Outdoor relative humidity is chosen to 80%. Since the saturation value for ${}^+ 0^{\circ}C = 4,84 \text{ g/m}^3$, $v_0 = 0,8 \cdot 4,84 = 3,87 \text{ g/m}^3$. Indoor conditions are ${}^+ 20^{\circ}C$, RH = 45%, so the moisture content of indoor air is 0,45 \cdot 17,28 = 7,78 g/m³. Using attic temperatures calculated by means of the heat balance procedure it is possible to calculate maximum moisture supply, G, under different conditions.

$$G_{max} = \{ (RH)_{critical} \cdot (v_s)_{\theta_a} - v_o \} \cdot nV \dots 8d$$

Such calculations were made for different air tightness degrees of the attic floor (i.e. the whole house tightness, even tightness distribution prescribed). Two heat transmission coefficients were chosen, $0,2 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$ (modern, highly insulated construction) and 1,0 $\text{W/m}^2\text{K}$ (older, badly insulated construction). Furthermore two levels of (RH)_{critical} were chosen; 70% and 80%.

The calculation results can be studied in figure 8.1.





The result should be compared to actual levels of moisture supply (see table 7.1 or figure 7.7). The relation between $_{50}$ and moisture supply is almost linear. The conection between air flow and moisture flow is

q moisture $(g/h) = q_v (m^3/s) \cdot 3600 (s/h) \cdot v_{in} (g/m^3) \dots 8e$ Since $q_v = 0.002 \cdot n_{50} (m^3/s)$ (Fig. 7.7) and $v_{in} = 7.78 g/m^3$ (see above) q moisture = 0.002 $\cdot n_{50} \cdot 3600 \cdot 7.78 g/h = 56.0 \cdot n_{50} g/h \dots 8f$ This line i also included in figure 8.1. If RH = 80% is chosen as a critical level, it could be seen that

for n_{50} - values less than 3.0 h⁻¹, the actual moisture flow rate is below the highest permissable moisture supply rate. If the air tightness is less than so ($n_{50} \ge 3,0$ h⁻¹) the critical RH-level (80%) will be exceeded. RH = 70% will not be possible to attain.

For the badly insulated attic floor case, actual moisture supply flow rate is always lower than critical flow rates.

Thus, moisture problems can be expected if a house with bad air tightness in the attic floor will be additionally insulated without any attempts made to tighten up the attic floor in connection with the additional insulation procedure.

Bad conditions can also arise if, in a new, highly insulated house, large air leaks are left in the attic floor. Such leaks may occur for example around pipes penetrating the floor if no special care is undertaken to tighten up around the pipe. Large leaks are also frequent in the connection between the attic floor and the gable wall, especially in $1\frac{1}{2}$ story buildings.

8.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It would be strongly desirable to execute calculations similar to the presented ones for other outside climates than this single investigated one ($\stackrel{+}{-}$ 0^oC, RH = 80%.) Experience shows for example that severe moisture conditions in attic spaces are frequent at spring and autumn conditions.

In a coming research project under my direction at the Lund Institute of Technology such calculations will be performed. Also the influence of non stationary conditions and moisture capacity effects will be investigated both theoretically and in field measurements.

APPENDIX 1.

Computer program "AIRBAL" written in HP-BASIC for HP-85 for calculation of ventilation rate of ventilated spaces such as attics, crawl-spaces etc.

100 REM PROGRAM "AIRBAL" FOR 120 REM CALCULATING VENTILATION 140 REM INTENSITY OF CRAWL SPACE 160 REM ATTICS ETC. 180 REM CREATED BY JOHNNY KRONVA 200 REM NATIONAL SWEDISH TESTING INSTITUTE 220 ASSIGN# 1 TO "TEST!" 240 PRINT "DENSITY OF AIR" 260 READ# 1 ; R10 PRINT R1;"ka/m 289 PRINT "DYNAMIC VISCOSITY OF SIR" 300 READ# 1 ; VIE PRINT V1;"Ns/m $\mathcal{D}^{\mathbf{R}}$ 320 PRINT "NUMBER OF SINGLE RESI STANCES" 340 READ# 1 ; NI@ PRINT N1 360 PRINT "NUMBER OF EXPONENT FL 0WS. READ# 1 ; N2@ PRINT N2 PRINT "NUMBER OF LAMINAR FLO 380 400 WS" 420 READ# 1 ; N30 PRINT N3 440 PRINT "NUMBER OF MECHANICAL VENTILATION DEVICES" 460 READ# 1 > N4@ PRINT N4 480 REM 500 REM PRINT "SINGLE RESISTANCE CHA 520 RACTERISTICS" 540 FOR I1=1 TO H1 560 READ# 1 ; A1(11)@ PRINT "ARE A"; A1(I1); "m2" 580 READ# 1 ; K1(11)@ PRINT "LOS S FACTOR"; K1(I1) 500 READ# 1 ; M1(11)@ PRINT "SHA PE FACTOR"; M1(I1) NEXT I1 620 PRINT "EXPONENT FLOW CHARRET 640 ERISTICS" 660 FOR 12=1 TO N2 680 READ# 1 ; A2(I2)@ PRINT "ARE A"; A2(I2); "m2" 700 READ# 1 ; W2(I2)@ PRINT "FLO W COEFFICIENT"; W2(12); "m3/(s *m2*Pa^e?" 720 READ# 1 ; B2(I2)@ PRINT "FL0 W EXPONENT, BETA*; B2(12) READ# 1 ; M2(I2)@ PRINT "SHA 749PE FACTOR" : M2(12) 760 NEXT 12 PRINT "LAMINAR FLOW CHARACTE 780 RISTICS" 800 FOR 13=1 TO N3 820 READ# 1 ; A3(13)@ PRINT "ARE A"; A3(I3); "m2" 840 READ# 1 ; L3(I3)@ PRINT "FL0 W COEFFICIENT";L3(I3);"m3/(m 2*s*Pa)"

820 READ# 1 / A3(I3)@ PRINT "ARE A": A3(13):"m2" 840 READ# 1 : L3(I3)@ PRINT "FLO W COEFFICIENT";L3(I3);"m3/(m 2*s*Ps)" READ# 1 ; M3(13)@ PRINT "SHA 860-PE FACTOR" (MECIE) NEXT 13 389 PRINT "MECHANICAL VENTILATIO 900 N DEVICES" 920 FOR 14=1 TO N4 926 READ# 1 ; 04(14)@ PRINT "AIF FLOW RATE"; Q4(I4); "m3/s" 950 NEXT 14 PRINT "REFERENCE WIND VELOCI 980 TYPE 1000 INPUT UE PRINT U; "m/s" PRINT "INTERNAL START PRESS 1020 URE" 1040 INPUT POC PRINT PO; "Pa" "TOLERANCE VALUE" 1060 PRINT 1989 DISP "NORMALLY 1.E-6" 1100 INPUT E@ PRINT E 1120 PRINT "MAX NUMBER OF LOOPS" N90 PRINT N9 1140 INPUT "LIMIT DELTA P" 1160 PRINT 1180 DISP "NORMALLY .001 Pa" 1200 INPUT P9® PRINT P9 1220 D= 00001*P0 @ P1=P0 @ N=A 1240 GOTO 1320 1260 REM 1280 H=0 1300 D=P1-P0 1320 P=P1 1340 GOSUB 1780 1350 Q6=Q IF ABS(06) (=E THEN 1600 1380 P=P1+D 1400 GOSUB 1790 1420 1440 97=0 1460 P2=P1-0*06/(07-06) 1480 IF ABS(P2-P1) (=P9 THEN 1640 1500 P0=P1 1520 P1=P2 N=H+1 @ PRINT N: 1540 1566 IF N>=N9 THEN 1680 GOTO 1300 PRINT "CALCULATION TERMINAT 1580 1690 ED DUE TO FLOW CRITERION" 1620 GOTO 1700 1640 PRINT "CALCULATION TERMINAT ED DUE TO PRESSURE CRITERIO ы н 1669 GOTO 1700 1680 PRINT "CALCULATION TERMINAT ED DUE TO MAX LOOP CRITERIO Η" 1700 REM 1720 GOTO 2440 1740 REM

1760 REM 1780 REM SUBROUTINE FLOW RATE 1808 REM FLOW THROUGH SINGLE RES ISTANCES 1820 Qi=6 1840 FOR I1=1 TO N1 Q1(11)=SQR(ABS(M1(11))+U^2*R 1960 1/2-P)#2#A1(I1)^2/K1(I1)/R1 1889 IF SGN(M1(I1)#U^2*R1/2-P)>= 0 THEN 1920 1999 G1(I1)=-Q1(II) 1926 Q1=Q1+Q1(11) 1940 NEXT 11 1960 REM FLOW THROUGH EXPONENT 1986REM FLOW COMPONENTS 2009 02=0 FOR I2=1 TO N2 2020 2040 02(I2)=W2(I2)*ABS(M2(I2)*U/ 2*R1/2-P)^B2(12)*A2(12) IF SGN(M2(12)*U^2*R1/2-P)>= 2060 0 THEN 2100 2680 02(12) = -02(12)2100 Q2=Q2+Q2(I2) 2120 NEXT 12 2140 REM FLOW THROUGH LAMINAR 2160 REM FLOW COMPONENTS 2180 03=0 2200 FOR I3=1 TO N3 2226 Q3(13)=(M3(13)*U^2*R1/2-P)* L3/I3>*A3(I3) 2249 03=03+03(13) 2260 NENT 13 2280 REM FLOW THROUGH MECHANICAL 1201REM VENTILATION DEVICE S 2300 04=0 320 FOR 14=1 TO N4 2340 04=04+04(14) 2360 NEXT 14 REM TOTAL AIR FLOW 2389 2400 9=01+92+03+04 2420 RETURN 2440 PRINT @ PRINT @ PRINT 2460 PRINT "RESULT ." 2480 PRINT "INTERNAL PRESSURE (P a)': 2500 PRINT P2 2520 PRINT 2540 FOR J=1 TO N1 2560 PPINT "Q1(J)="/Q1(J),"m3/c" 2580 NEXT 2699 1=A 2629 PRINT "Q1=";Q1:"m3/s" 2640 FOR J=1 TO N2 2660 PRINT "Q2(J)=";Q2(J),"m3/s" 2680 NEXT 3 2700 PRINT "02=";02;"m3/s" 2720 J=0 2740 FOR J=1 TO N3

```
2760 PRINT "Q3(j)=";Q2(j);"m3/s"
2780 NEXT J
2800 PRINT "07=",03;"m3/s"
2928
     J=0
2840 FOR J=1 TO N4
2860
     PRINT "Q4(J)=";Q4(J);"m3/s"
2939. NEXT
2939 NEXT J
2900 PRINT "Q4=";Q4;"m3/s"
2920 PRINT "0 tot=":0,"m3/s"
2940 DISP "NEW WIND VELOCITY YES
     /HQ*
2960
    INPUT H$
2998
    IF H$="YES" THEN S80
    PRINT "CALCULATION FINISHED
3000
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```
3020 END
```

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