

Intelligent Building Saves Energy

Unique air flow windows and dual air-conditioning systems provide occupant comfort and energy conservation

By Katashi Matsunawa and Fumio Nohara
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The NEC high-rise headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, was designed to be the most advanced intelligent office building of its kind anywhere. In designing this building, our goals were to support the functions of intelligent systems, to maintain the indoor environment at a constantly comfortable level, and to simultaneously achieve energy conservation.

To achieve these goals, we first installed a "wind avenue" to reduce the wind damage to the building. The wind avenue enabled us to design the high-rise building with north/south oriented windows, which are preferable to enhance the occupants' comfort under the dominant seasonal north/south winds in Japan.

Then applying the results of our energy analysis to account for environmental impacts, we utilized a double-skin glazing system, so-called "air flow windows" and other energy conservation systems. As a result, significant energy savings were achieved. In contrast, other intelligent buildings consume lots of energy.



The NEC high-rise headquarters building in Tokyo, Japan.

Air flow windows

The greater the depth of a given room, the more that room's interior requires cooling throughout the year. This ratio is particularly notable in intelligent office buildings.

About the authors

Katashi Matsunawa is the general manager of the mechanical and electrical engineering department of Nikken Sekkei Ltd., Tokyo, Japan. He received his master of architecture degree from Waseda University. Matsunawa is a member of the Society of Heating, Air-conditioning and Sanitary Engineers of Japan (SHASE) and an accredited consulting engineer of mechanical engineering.

Fumio Nohara is a senior mechanical engineer with the electrical engineering department of Nikken Sekkei Ltd. He received his master of architecture degree from Waseda University. Nohara is a member of the Society of Heating, Air-conditioning and Sanitary Engineers of Japan (SHASE) and an accredited consulting engineer of mechanical engineering.

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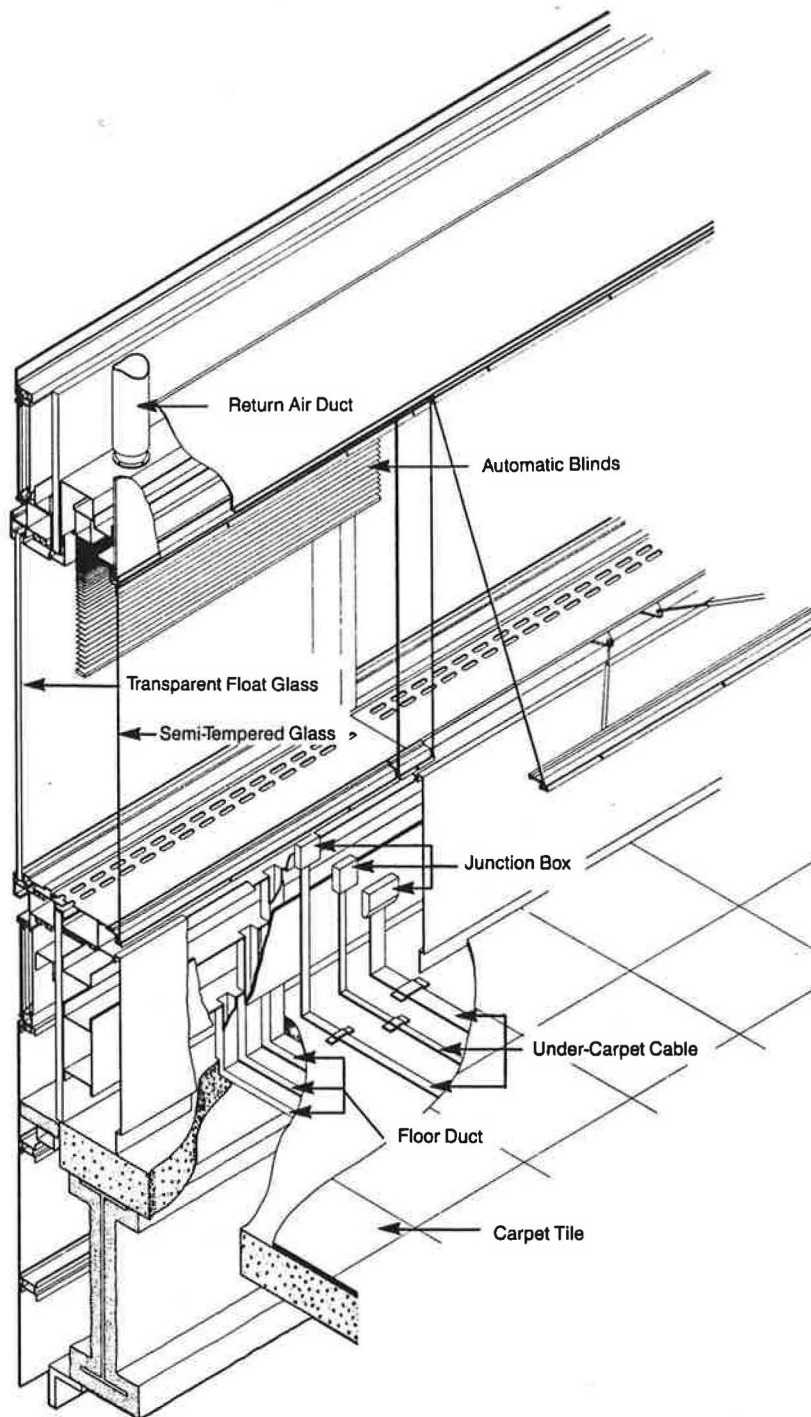


Figure 1. Sectional view of air flow window and open duct for wiring space.

On the other hand, such offices require heating around the perimeters in winter if the windows' insulation is poor. This causes a cross-mixing of warm and cool air in the space between the perimeters and the interiors, resulting in a substantial waste of energy.

To avoid such waste, we provided air flow windows and achieved a perimeterless air-conditioning system that eliminates cross-mixing (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 2 demonstrates the results of Predicted Mean Vote (PMV) calculations based on the field measurement of the indoor environment in summer and winter in a room with south-oriented windows. *Figure 2* also shows that, despite the use of a perimeterless air-conditioning system, a comfortable thermal environment was achieved.

Decentralized, concealed A/C

In intelligent office buildings, reduction of the fan-driving power is an indispensable part of any energy conservation program. Therefore, we adopted decentralized types of air conditioners in this project.

These air conditioners, which are concealed in the plenum, are installed at an interval of approximately 110 m² (1,184 ft²). This minimizes the transport resistance (see *Figure 3*).

The use of a variable air volume (VAV) control system using an inverter further enhanced the reduction of the fan driving power.

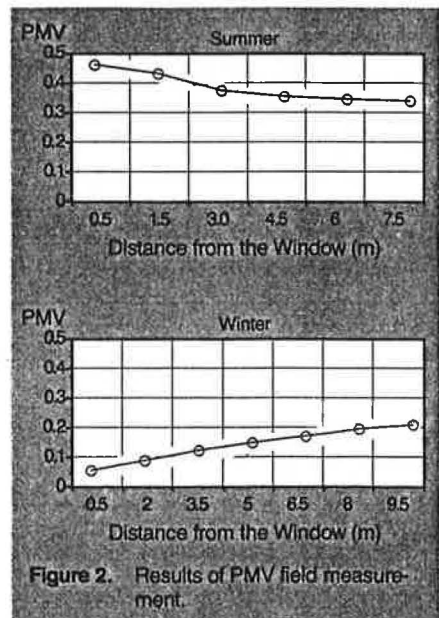


Figure 2. Results of PMV field measurement.

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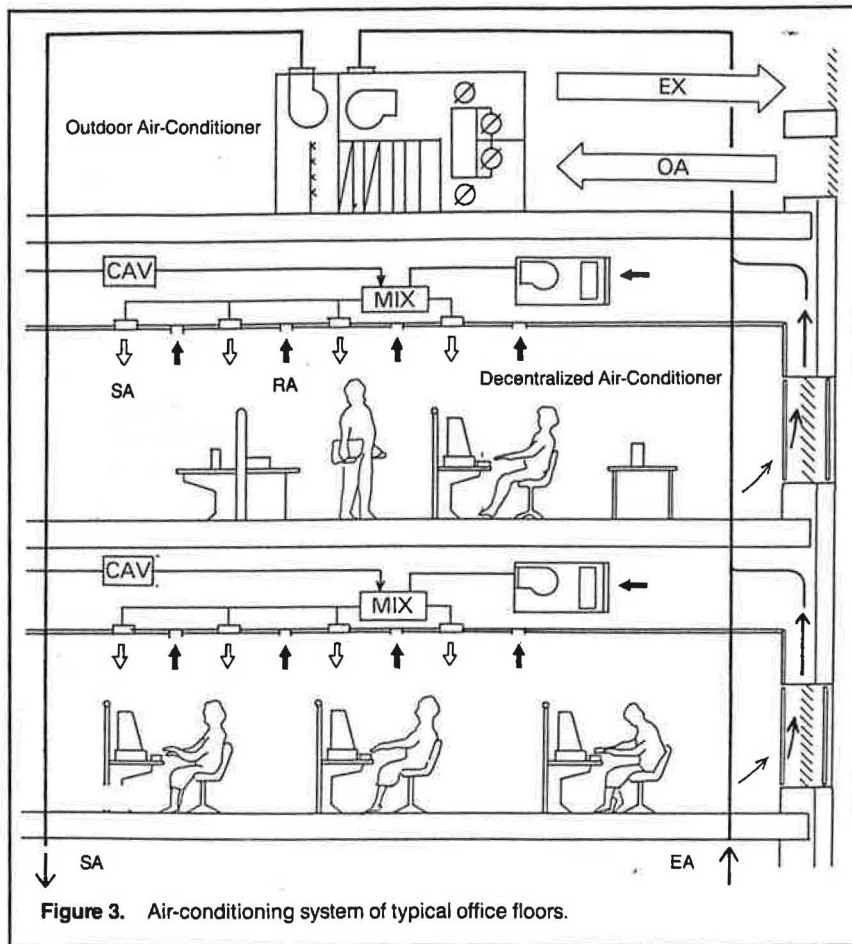


Figure 3. Air-conditioning system of typical office floors.

Outdoor air conditioners

The air-conditioning systems adopted for the typical floors of the building dually and concurrently condition the outdoor air (through cooling, dehumidifying, heating and humidifying) and the indoor air (cooling of the sensible heat generated in a room).

The reason for this "division of labor" is because, as long as the two cooling systems are of a completely different nature (total heat cooling versus sensible heat cooling), they should not be mixed.

To be more specific, one system supplies chilled water of a relatively low temperature to the outdoor air conditioners, which then perform dehumidifying functions. The other system supplies chilled water of a relatively high temperature to the decentralized air conditioners, which then cool the sensible heat. The heat source system as a whole improves the COP of the chiller, thereby contributing to energy conservation.

Energy consumption results

The total annual primary energy consumed was 482 Mcal/m²a (177,710 Btu/

ft²/year). The ratio taken up by lighting systems and receptacles accounts for more

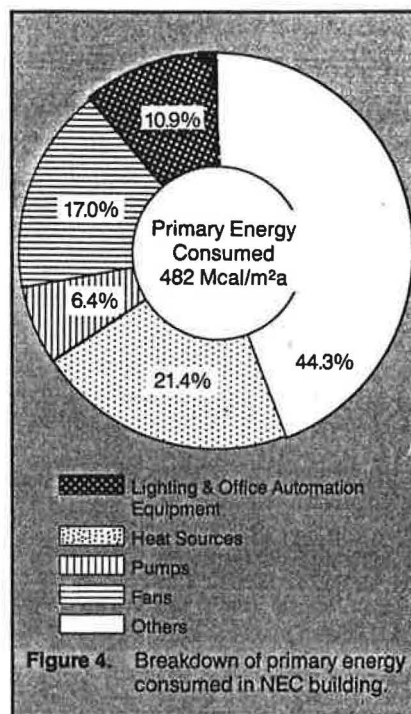


Figure 4. Breakdown of primary energy consumed in NEC building.

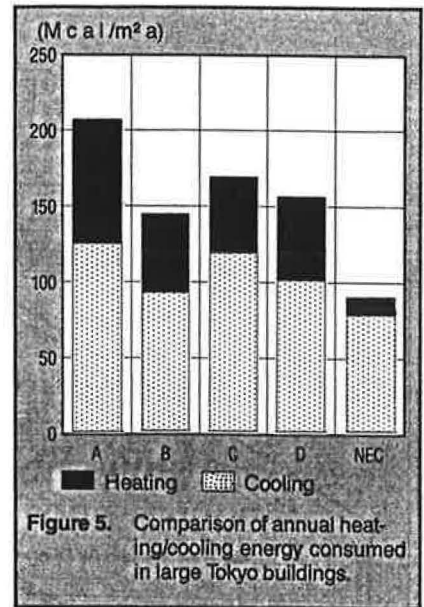


Figure 5. Comparison of annual heating/cooling energy consumed in large Tokyo buildings.

than 44% of the total. This is considerably larger than general office buildings where the ratio is estimated to be about 33% (see Figure 4).

Comparison was made with office buildings of similar scale in Figure 5, so that the unique features of heating/cooling energy consumption of the NEC office building can be more fully understood. As shown in this figure, the energy consumption for heating is very small compared with that consumed for cooling.

The results clearly show that the energy consumed for heating in our project is extremely small when compared with those of other buildings. We believe this is the result of the combined effects of the air flow windows (which eliminate loads at their "roots"), the perimeterless air-conditioning system (which prevents cross-mixing), and the division of labor of the air-conditioning system (which is free of reheating through dehumidification). ■

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