



## REALLY RAD...

Madison, WI, was the site of the first RadFest organized by the Radiant Panel Association (RPA). Held April 16th and 17th, the Great Lakes Radfest brought together 46 exhibitors and 428 attendees for two days of seminars, classroom training and product displays.

This was one of two RadFests scheduled for 2004, with the second held May 21st and 22nd in Loveland, CO.

The show, the first of its kind for the RPA, gave attendees and exhibitors a multitude of ways to connect with each other. In keeping with its grassroots heritage, the most interesting of these was the Soap Box Forum, where anyone who wanted to speak could take the stage and share their views. This same stage dou-

bled as a performance stage, with live music being presented in the background at various times during show hours.

### NOVEL EVENTS

Another interesting element were the four "Pit Stop" areas where manufacturers had one hour to present new products or discuss installation strategies. What was unique about this was these



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venues were right on the tradeshow floor. For those contractors who might visit with their families in tow, kids of all ages were invited to try their hand at "Radiant Round-up" one of a few activities intended to facilitate attendance for local contractors.

It is always interesting at regional shows to observe local biases in regard to fuel sources and how that affects equipment choices. In the Northeastern U.S. and many parts of Canada this would mean a proliferation of oil-fired products. And while this show featured mainstream exhibitors including most of the major tubing, boiler and control manufacturers, the rural nature of the local market made it no surprise to see a variety of wood, coal and waste oil boilers, intended for Pole Barn and other agricultural installations.

The international flavour of the show was no surprise given the maturity of the radiant market in Canada. Among those in the Canadian contingent were Dahl Canada, MacDuffco (demonstrating its radiant system) and tekmar Control Systems Ltd., who conducted Pit Stop sessions on both days.

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#### CONSUMER MARKETING

At any trade show there is always one standout event, something new that makes the trip worthwhile. For me, this was meeting with the representative from Wright-Hennepin, a cooperative electric association, which is essentially a subscriber-owned private energy utility. Energy co-ops are not new. What was unique was the fact that Wright-Hennepin is marketing the Mini Boiler, a proprietary boiler and supporting this sales effort by offering design and installation of radiant systems with in-house financing. This is further evidence that

hydronic heating systems can be marketed successfully to the consumer. HPAC

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