

For the Bookshelf

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Uncertainty and Risk: Part II in a Series on Least-Cost Energy Decisions for Buildings

by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), The Office of Applied Economics, Building 226, Room B226, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-0001. Videotape, 36 minutes, plus workbook, 44 pages, no ISBN. For publication information call (301) 975-6132.

Part II is an excellent addition to the series NIST is producing on least-cost energy decisions. (Part I was **Introduction to Life-Cycle Costing.**)

This is a painless way to introduce or reintroduce your professional staff (or yourself) to uncertainty and risk analysis. The tape and workbook are admittedly basic—NIST says this up front on the tape. The purpose of the tape is not as much for the instruction of techniques as it is for exposure to how these methods complement the engineering process; other materials are available for detailed instruction. The actual application is tailored for building economics, specifically the evaluation of energy-saving options, but absolutely everything presented is applicable to any financial evaluation. These techniques are as relevant to an oil drilling operation as they are to building construction or renovation.

The running time and booklet length are of particular relevance to our own membership. This would be an excellent 1 to 1-1/2 hour technical presentation for a monthly meeting, as part of a seminar program, or even as a presentation to technically-oriented high school or college students (It is an easy way to answer the standard student's question, "What sorts of things do you guys do?"). Not only is the length right, this information will never go out of date. When you call the NIST publications office, you may want to inquire about their other publications in life-cycle costing as well.

And don't forget one of the biggest advantages of government videos and publications: you are free to make copies for others!

Handbook for Productivity Measurement and Improvement

Edited by William F. Christopher and Carl G. Thor, 1993. Productivity Press, PO Box 13390, Portland, OR 97213-0390. 1344 pages, hardcover, US\$90.00. ISBN 1-56327-007-2. **ACE No. 16962.**

This work is divided into 10 sections, with a total of 101 chapters. This is an impressive collection of information covering almost any facet of productivity that one can think of. There are 81 contributors (there is a collection of brief biographies in the back) that include such well-known names as Joseph Juran, Lester Thurow, John Kendrick, and more. Because of the number of contributors, a number of the specific things that I have become accustomed to looking at are uneven: Some chapters are better illustrated than others, not all chapters include a bibliography or reference list, and not all chapters include a summary or conclusion. But most chapters include most of these elements, and the composite is an extended body of knowledge covering an area that is becoming of more interest to a lot of professionals (if the technical inquiries coming into our office are any indication). There is a 44-page index, a 10-page glossary, and a 3-page listing of "leading information sources." This is most certainly an excellent reference book for professionals who are concerned with productivity.

Benchmarking Management Guide

by the American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993. Productivity Press, PO Box 13390, Portland, OR

97213-0390. 249 pages, hardcover, US\$39.95. ISBN 1-56327-045-5. **ACE No. 16963.**

This is a good overview of benchmarking. The work was explicitly written "...as a resource to address the needs of beginning and experienced benchmarkers." When the intent of any work is to appeal to the experienced and inexperienced both, it probably is more easily approachable to one audience than the other, and so it is here. This work is more for the novice than the experienced benchmarker. However, for the initiate, it is a good guide through a process that can be intimidating.

The book is divided into 9 sections, and includes 8 appendices. Section Nine is devoted entirely to a bibliography of benchmarking literature, and source and reference information is provided throughout the book. The first appendix is devoted entirely to "The Benchmarking Code of Conduct" and the others are summaries of prize and award criteria (The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, The Deming Prize, etc.). There is no index.

This is a potentially useful work for an individual or organization that needs to get involved with benchmarking work, or at least needs to understand the process.

NOTE:

Extra note on **Facilities Planning and Relocation**, published by R.S. Means Company and reviewed in our July 1993 issue—in early editions, a message appears that tells users they must pay a registration fee of US\$49.00. This message is erroneous; just ignore it.