

CONTRACTOR

THE NEWSMAGAZINE OF MECHANICAL CONTRACTING

Reprint from August 1998

Wireless thermostats ready to leave Europe for U.S.

BY JOE FIEDRICH

Hydronic heating authority

Three years ago the first wireless, radio-controlled thermostat system was introduced by the Velta Co., a floor-heating system manufacturer, at the ish show in Frankfurt. Since then every other electronic control manufacturer has watched its marketplace performance.

Now, 3 1/2 years later, a half-dozen systems are on the market and more are being introduced every few months. Wireless is the latest in temperature control in the European

heating market; it's an off-spring technology developed originally by Europe's floor-heating industry.

With 20,000 systems in operation in Europe, wireless is now considered a reliable technology, setting new stan-

dards not only from the installation standpoint but also in the way a thermostat senses and controls temperature.

The cost of \$60 per control point, not counting the powerhead, might sound high but consider that the wiring cost of a conventional thermostat is eliminated, plus you have the added value of cen-

Imagine being able to place a thermostat anywhere in the room: on a wall, a shelf, a table, your shirt pocket or any point where it gives you the best results.

tral temperature and set-back programming. The system then becomes price competitive, definitely on retrofit applications, often even on new construction.

The thermostat units are powered by batteries with a sig-

nal range of up to 100 ft. to the receiver. The receiver is mounted near the distribution manifold and all the 24v powerheads are wired to it. A number of the units have interface capability to talk to outdoor reset controls.

One system manufacturer, Penta Com Corp., developed a thermostat that actually senses the radiant heat portion of a floor-heating system, rather than looking at the convection portion. This comes the closest to how our bodies

respond to radiant heat. The technology results in lower ambient room temperatures and subsequent fuel savings.

Imagine being able to place a thermostat anywhere in the room:

on a wall, a shelf, a table, your shirt pocket or any point where it gives you the best results. No more callbacks or rewiring thermostats because of location problems. I believe this new technology has a great future, especially in the residential sector where con-

trol distances don't exceed 100 ft.

You can't buy them here — yet. Penta Com is working on ul and fcc approval, required for transmission frequencies these units work with, to make sure they don't open and close your garage door every time the thermostat calls for heat. An American version should be available in the beginning of 1999.

The author is president of Stadler Corp. (tel. 781/275-3122), a Bedford, Mass.-based supplier of hydronic heating equipment