

Here Comes The Sun

Ric Berg

Roller shades are a solution for glare, energy reduction and customer satisfaction

The depleting ozone layer is becoming more of an issue. Even with measures being put in place, climate change is increasing the earth's temperatures year after year and becoming a factor we are all dealing with.

In a typical restaurant, windows account for nearly 50 percent of the heat gain/loss, depending on the season. Researchers have explored the benefits of installing roller shades to reduce solar heat gain for many years. The ability to understand and control cooling loads in a commercial environment has been crucial not only to restaurant facility managers but also to architects, engineers and building designers.

A Win-Win Solution

Roller shades are a proven solution to reduce solar gains. They also increase natural daylight without obstructing views. Best yet, they help reduce the carbon footprint of your location. There are even systems that track with the sun, which allows maximum natural light while reducing direct UV rays.

Both energy use and comfort are crucial elements in the restaurant industry. Energy use is important for economic and environmental factors, while comfort affects the customer experience and employee productivity.

Roller shades are excellent for temperature control, reducing glare on the registers and cutting the intense light coming into a restaurant space. Without compromising aesthetics, roller shade fabrics are designed to block ultraviolet rays and lower the temperature, thereby reducing the load on air conditioner output and energy use.

The fabrics used in today's roller shades offer low VOC (volatile organic compound), virtually eliminating off-gasses, and are Greenguard certified and fire resistant. There are hundreds of colors and densities available to match your décor. The darker colors offer the best glare reduction and visibility; the lighter colors have the best heat reflection. The fabrics also come in different densities for visibility and ultraviolet ray intrusion. These options provide a stylish way to reduce your heating and cooling costs.

KOOL Black is a new, revolutionary fabric on the market that has all the characteristics of dark colors with the same heat reflection as lighter colors. Created for the military, specifically for the intense Middle East deserts, the material is dark but still heat reflective. It is one of the more popular fabrics on the market.

Studies have shown that identical buildings facing the same elevations with similar temperatures have experienced a 15 to 75 percent reduction in energy costs by installing roller shades. In addition, using roller shades can add up to 10 LEED points in four different categories for LEED-certified buildings. Many fabrics are manufactured using a chemical called Microban, which is an anti-microbial that kills bacteria.

Energy Savings

Untreated windows allow about 20 times more heat into a location than an equal amount of insulated wall space. By controlling the way the sun's energy enters the building, restaurants can save on energy bills in the summer and take advantage of "free" heating in the winter.

Roller shades are an excellent way to save energy. They provide insulation during the cold winter months and repel the heat during the summer. The benefits of deflecting the sun's heat in the summer months include:

- Lower energy bills
- Little to no glare (during winter months as well)
- Reduced carbon footprint
- Less fading of product and furniture
- A comfortable environment for customers and employees

Immediate and Long-Term Results

Natural light can be a beautiful design element. Restaurants can effectively manage the sun's heat and glare with sun-control fabrics. Choosing the right fabric for your roller shade will diffuse light, reduce glare and help control interior temperatures. Sun-control fabrics reduce the amount of solar gain.

Roller shades reduce heat, lowering interior temperature levels, which creates a comfortable environment for customers and reduces cooling costs. Restaurants should budget roller shades during the planning process to realize maximum savings on cooling costs over the time of occupancy.

Roller shades come in a variety of systems and options, including manual and motorized. Shop around and find the design that works best for your restaurant.

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