



the customer's expectations and the area of the country. Our recommendation is to contact several RPA member contractors and get estimates.

That approach works with some homeowners, while others continue to press for a more definitive answer. It is an answer we are not prepared to give. About the best we can do is give a range from between \$3.00 to \$15.00 per square foot of installed system and add that, "it depends." This is a totally unacceptable answer to those reporters who are looking for hard data for their latest story on radiant heating. Even after going through the variables involved in estimating the cost of a system, reporters want to nail down a number.

One RPA member decided to see if there was a way to track jobs and get a better handle on the cost per square foot issue. He took a look at 127 jobs over the last three years and listed them by total size and price per square foot. Using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, he was able to create a scatter chart and

## The Cost of Radiant

by Lawrence Drake

*RPA Executive Director*

"What does radiant heating cost?"

This is a question we get on a regular basis at the RPA office. The answer is always the same, "it depends." While this is the correct answer, it isn't always satisfying. We go on to explain that it depends on each installation,



find the mean price per square foot for various sizes of jobs. The result was a nice curve that revealed that the larger the job, the lower the price per square foot. This won't come as a revelation to many people in the industry, but the graphic display of this fact and the hard numbers attached should make a great reference for contractors and homeowners alike. The prices will vary by location and equipment used, but they certainly define the "ballpark" better than anything we have encountered.

Since this particular contractor also does a lot of snow melting jobs, he also applied his spread sheet to snow melting installations. This technique provides a good picture of the price of snow melting based on the size of the job.

The contractor who submitted these charts would like to remain anonymous for obvious reasons. We want to thank him for his efforts and for letting us publish this example of good job management.

A recent survey on the RPA website revealed that, of the 128 respondents, 36% said that radiant heating installed in a home in their area sold for between \$3.00 and \$5.99 per square foot. 28% said systems sold for between \$6.00 and \$9.99. 21% said between \$10.00 and \$13.99 was typical for their area, while 15% said systems in their neighborhood sold for \$14.00 per square foot and up. Unfortunately, the survey didn't qualify what size of systems these were so few conclusions can be drawn from the survey.

While these charts and surveys certainly don't replace a detailed estimate for each job, they do help place jobs in a ballpark and could be helpful in qualifying potential customers. Of course the ideal would be to make a similar chart based on your own job history. Also bear in mind that there are still a lot of "it depends" left in each job. 