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October 1, 2009 Issue # 17

Dear Jeffrey,

What is PassivHaus? In our feature article this month, John Straube looks at the PassivHaus criteria and makes a comparison to low-energy prototype houses build as part of the US Department of Energy's Building America research program.

BSC's 2009 seminar series with John Straube and Joseph Lstiburek is coming to a close. There are 3 dates to be aware of:

[October 14, 15 in Toronto \(Building Science Fundamentals\)](#)

[December 9, 10 in Westford, Massachusetts \(Building Science Experts' Session\)](#)

December [16, 17](#) in Toronto ([Designing Low Energy Buildings](#) and [Figuring Stuff Out](#) respectively)

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Happy reading!



Jeff Melvin  
Editor, buildingscience.com e-news

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**Featured Article** by John Straube, Ph.D., P.Eng.

## The Passive House (Passivhaus) Standard-A comparison to other cold climate low-energy houses

Building Science Insight No. 025

The Passivhaus (PH) standard is a set of voluntary criteria for an ultra-low energy use home. Originally developed in Germany for houses and low-rise multi-unit residential buildings, the standard has been applied to houses in a range of other countries and to commercial buildings as well. The most interesting aspect of the criteria of the Passivhaus standard may be that it has relatively few mandatory requirements, thereby providing design flexibility, and that it focuses exclusively on energy consumption. There are, however, many recommendations in the PH program that are not likely good decisions for cold climate North American housing, and some are very impractical with little or no

benefit to the environment or the homeowner.

The unique focus of the PH standard is an exceptional concern for heat loss by conduction and air leakage through the building enclosure and a complete disregard for the climate zone in its recommendations. High insulation values, very high performance windows, and airtightness levels better than any other building program anywhere are the normal result. Very efficient appliances are also practically required to meet the energy consumption targets. [article continues]

To read the entire feature article and find a downloadable PDF version, click [here](#) to visit our web page.



**Passive House in Darmstadt, Kranichstein - South elevation (left)  
and interior (right)  
(From <http://www.passiv.de/>)**

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**Building Science Corporation** specializes in building technology consulting. Our focus is preventing and resolving problems related to building design, construction and operation.

We are internationally recognized for our expertise in moisture dynamics, indoor air quality, and forensic (building failure) investigations. We are also on the leading edge of the design of sustainable communities and buildings.

We believe in promoting energy efficiency and environmental responsibility within the constraints of marketable and affordable building technology.

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