

# Experimental thermodynamic first and second law analysis of a variable output 1-4.5 kWe, ICE-driven, natural-gas fueled micro-CHP generator

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## Abstract

This work experimentally assesses the thermodynamic performance of the only single kWe, variable-output, continuous duty, internal combustion engine driven, residential micro-combined heat and power (mCHP) generator (Marathon Engine Systems ecopower) available in the United States. The system underwent steady state testing over its full operating range, and first (energy) and second (exergy) law analyses were conducted on the collected data. At rated speed, first law results reveal the ecopower operated at an electrical efficiency of  $24.4\pm 0.7\%$  and a utilization factor of  $94.5\pm 12.6\%$ . At the same speed, the ecopower's second law electrical efficiency was  $24.3\pm 0.8\%$  and total second law efficiency (including exergy in both the recovered heat and electrical streams) was  $33.7\pm 1.9\%$ . This total second law efficiency was higher than that of common residential heating devices, including electric and gas furnaces and boilers, electric air-source heat pumps, and gas-engine driven heat pumps. Further, the ecopower outperformed most of these devices at all part-load conditions as well, indicating it would be an appropriate choice for a dispatchable generator to provide ancillary grid-support services in a future with increased variable renewable generator penetration. System-level and internal combustion engine irreversibilities are also presented to identify areas of inefficiency. The most prominent irreversibilities were (in decreasing magnitude) irreversible heat transfer, combustion irreversibility, frictional and pumping losses, followed by generator and power electronic losses.

*Keywords: Residential cogeneration, variable output micro-combined heat and power, thermodynamic exergy analysis, natural gas, internal combustion engine, dispatchable grid balancing CHP*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Motivation

The combined efficiency of the United States’s electrical generation and distribution system (delivered electricity compared to primary energy consumption) was 33.6 % in 2016. This includes losses incurred in the generator during conversion from primary fuel to electricity, as well as electrical transmission and distribution losses. There are two primary routes to increase this efficiency: improve the average centralized prime mover and generator efficiency, or decrease the transmission and distribution losses. Investigating these options in closer detail reveals that state-of-the-art centralized generators have seen a steady improvement in efficiency at a rate of approximately 0.5% annually since the 1960’s [1], with flagship 1.2 GW combined cycle plants currently achieving an efficiency of 63%<sup>†</sup> [2]. As this new technology diffuses into the generation fleet the average generation efficiency will increase as well. However, the electrical grid has not matched this level of technical improvement, with transmission and distribution losses remaining relatively flat over the last decade in the U.S. and over several decades globally [3]. This trend is mostly due to the large cost associated with rewiring transmission lines with more efficient and robust conductors that have lower resistivity or the ability to operate at a higher voltages.

#### Nomenclature

ARPA-E	Advanced Research Project Agency – Energy
CHP	Combined Heat and Power
mCHP	micro-CHP
DG	Distributed Generation
DOE	Department of Energy
GIMEP	Gross indicated mean effective pressure
HC	Hydrocarbon
HHV	Higher Heating Value
ICE	Internal Combustion Engine
LHV	Lower Heating Value
NIMEP	Net indicated mean effective pressure
PIMEP	Pumping indicated mean effective pressure
RMS	Root Mean Square

An approach to reduce transmission losses that does not require rewiring transmission and distribution lines is distributed generation (DG). This technique, which has seen an increase in interest recently, moves away from the traditional centralized generator model to one in which a large number of smaller generators are located closer to the site of electricity consumption. This spatial relocation

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<sup>†</sup> All efficiencies presented will be based on the fuel’s lower heating value (LHV).

60 of the electrical generation eliminates the need for electrical transmission and distribution, removing  
61 the associated losses. In the United States, these losses averaged 6% of the total electricity generation  
62 over the last decade. In 2016 alone these losses totaled 314 PWh, which had an associated retail value  
63 of \$32 billion [4]. The power generation sector could eliminate a substantial portion of these losses if  
64 distributed generation was to see widespread adoption. Further, the use of a coordinated fleet of  
65 distributed dispatchable generators could be used to provide ancillary grid services, such as demand  
66 response or supplemental generation, to support variable renewable generators. As renewable  
67 generator penetration continues to increase these services are expected to become increasingly  
68 necessary to maintain grid stability.

69 There are two major barriers to overcome before widespread distributed generator adoption  
70 occurs – increasing generator efficiency (reducing O&M cost) and reducing capital cost. Currently,  
71 natural gas fueled, internal combustion engine (ICE) driven, residential backup generators (~7 kWe)  
72 have a peak electrical efficiency of approximately 21.5% [5] (LHV based). Therefore, small  
73 generators cannot currently thermodynamically outperform the centralized-generation model, and  
74 would in fact reduce the overall electrical system efficiency if implemented. To overcome this  
75 limitation, generator manufacturers have designed a new class of cogeneration units in which the  
76 generator's waste heat is utilized to satisfy residential thermal loads. This technique is termed  
77 combined heat and power (CHP), or micro-CHP (mCHP) when utilized at the residential scale (below  
78 ~50 kWe). There are several commercial systems available with an electrical output under 5 kWe,  
79 the best of which have electrical efficiencies of approximately 28.6% [6] (LHV based). These systems  
80 have total utilization factors (useful heat output plus electrical output over total heat input)  
81 approaching 100% (LHV based), and as such would increase delivered energy efficiency vs the  
82 combined natural gas and electrical grid. Internal combustion engines also provide the ramping  
83 capabilities necessary to provide ancillary grid services. These systems are therefore seeing an  
84 increase in popularity, but have low consumer penetration due to their high capital cost and long  
85 payback periods.

86 In an attempt to spur innovation in mCHP technology, the Department of Energy's (DOE)  
87 Advanced Research Project Agency – Energy (ARPA-E) created a program (GENSETS [7]) to fund  
88 the development of more efficient and lower cost mCHP technology. This program specifically  
89 targeted heat engine based technology, as fuel cell mCHP units have been investigated in other  
90 programs and were further from the cost targets than more mature ICE based units. The work  
91 presented here is part of a program that was undertaken to establish the current performance  
92 benchmark of state-of-the-art of mCHP generators of various sizes. The findings were provided to  
93 the ARPA-E to assist with development of the GENSETS program objectives [8].

94 There has been a substantial amount of work conducted recently with regard to mCHP. Much  
95 of the published work has consisted of computational studies of the potential economic [9]–[25] and

environmental impacts [11]–[14], [19], [20], [25]–[29] of implementing mCHP. However, there are several shortcomings in the current literature that need to be addressed in order to further mCHP technology: 1) most of the computational studies identified in the literature rely on performance metrics provided by manufacturers ([10], [13], [14], [21]–[25], [27], [30], [31]) which may not be impartial, and 2) the experimental performance metrics reported are largely system level (e.g., system electrical efficiency, system utilization factor, etc.) and do not provide detailed component level information (e.g., ICE thermal efficiency, mean effective pressure, generator conversion efficiency, etc.) that are necessary for technology development.

This work aims to address each of these shortcomings by: 1) providing updated system-level heat recovery and electrical efficiency as a function of engine speed for use in updating and developing dispatchable mCHP models, and 2) presenting a detailed energy and exergy accounting of each energy conversion step from the fuel's chemical energy to the output electricity, including internal combustion engine and generator performance.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Generator Selection

The work reported in this paper was part of a larger effort to benchmark the most technically advanced and commercially relevant generators in the nominally 1 kWe [32], 5 kWe (this study), and the 7 kWe [5] output ranges. To this end, a generator model was selected in each of these size ranges and underwent performance testing.

The first step in the generator selection process was to identify all nominally 5 kWe generators that were commercially available. This was accomplished through two processes. The first was to purchase a database from Power Systems Research that contained every model of natural gas-fueled, internal combustion engine driven, residential generators between 0–100 kWe in which more than 50 units were used in the U.S. in 2014 [33]. After reviewing the Power Systems Research database, it was clear that there was a lack of nominally 5 kWe mCHP units in service in the U.S. in 2014. In fact, the database included only a single model, indicating that only one system had more than 50 units in service nationally in 2014. However, previous investigation indicated that there was more than one commercially available mCHP generator in the 5 kWe range that was not present in the database, implying these models had a negligible market penetration in the U.S.

To identify commercial mCHP technology in the 5 kWe range that was either in use outside of the U.S., or suffering from negligible deployment domestically, an international technology survey was conducted. This survey revealed 26 commercial mCHP units with outputs between 1–10 kWe, 11 of which were in the nominally 5 kWe output range. This list was then reduced to three units based on utilization factor (electrical plus thermal efficiency) and the feasibility of importing a unit into the

130 U.S. for testing. The three remaining units were the SenerTec Dachs family (the standard, condensing,  
 131 and low NO<sub>x</sub> variants), the Yanmar CP5WN, and the Marathon Engine Systems ecopower. Their  
 132 representative manufacturer provided specifications are compared in Table 1.

133 Table 1. Relevant manufacturer supplied specifications of final 5 kWe mCHP models. The Marathon  
 134 Engine System was tested for this work.

Manufacturer	SenerTec				Yanmar	Marathon Engine Systems
	Dachs 5.5		Dachs 5.0 (Low NO <sub>x</sub> )			
Model	Standard	Condensing	Standard	Condensing		
Fuel	Natural Gas	Natural Gas	Natural Gas	Natural Gas	Natural Gas	Natural Gas
Electrical Output [kW]	5.5		5		5	1-4.5
Thermal Output [kW]	12.5	14.8	12.3	14.6	10	3.8-13.8
Fuel input [kW]	20.5		19.6		17.8	6.2-19
Electrical Input [kW]	0.12		0.12		0.33	0
Voltage/Frequency	3ø 230 V/400V 50 Hz				240 /120 60 Hz	240/60 Hz
<b>Efficiency</b>						
-Electrical	27%		26%		28%	25%
-Heat Recovery	61%	72%	63%	74%	56%	68%
-Utilization Factor	88%	99%	89%	100%	84%	93%
<b>Emissions</b>	Meets German TA-Luft				Meets EPA	Meets EPA
-CO <sub>2</sub>	< 0.3 g/Nm <sup>3</sup>				< 610 g/kWh	327 kg/MWh
-SO <sub>2</sub>						Trace kg/MWh
-NO <sub>x</sub>	< 0.5 g/Nm <sup>3</sup>				< 5.36 g/kWh	0.03 kg/MWh
<b>Endurance [hr]</b>	80,000				60,000	40,000

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 136 Upon further investigation, the factors deemed most important when choosing the 5 kWe  
 137 mCHP unit were the unit’s efficiency, expected lifetime (endurance), capital cost, and availability.  
 138 Due to the claimed high efficiency of the Dachs units, they were left as contenders in the final  
 139 selection. However, importation restrictions proved to be too cumbersome, and they were eliminated.  
 140 This left only the Yanmar CP5WN and the Marathon Engine Systems ecopower. After receiving  
 141 quotes from both companies (confidential), there was not a significant difference in price. The  
 142 differentiating characteristic between the two units ended up being the utilization factor, where the  
 143 ecopower had a 9% higher total claimed efficiency. As a secondary benefit, the ecopower, (the engine  
 144 of which was originally designed by Briggs and Stratton for the York Triathlon engine-driven heat  
 145 pump), was able to modulate its thermal and electrical output. This modulating capability was  
 146 uncommon for the identified mCHP units in all size classes, and was an interesting contrast to the  
 147 common mCHP system which has a single operating point, including the selected 1 kWe and 7 kWe  
 148 models tested in this program.

## 2.2. Experimental Testing Range

It is typical for mCHP units to only operate at a single load point, i.e., operate in a binary on/off fashion with a single electrical output when in operation. This is common because optimizing a single load point results in a higher efficiency relative to optimizing a range of loads as design trade-offs are not as restrictive. However, binary operation results in a device that loses valuable features such as load following, or the ability to participate in market operations such as demand response or grid stabilization. As mentioned previously, the ecopower is capable of modulating its electrical output from  $\sim 1 - 4.5$  kWe with an associated heat output of  $\sim 4.0 - 12.4$  kW. Less than 10% of the identified mCHP generators in the  $0 - 10$  kWe range had the ability to modulate output, making it an uncommon attribute. This capability could theoretically allow the ecopower to respond to grid requests while still meeting the residence's electrical and thermal needs. To evaluate this capability, the ecopower was tested at the following five speeds: 1200, 1500, 1900, 2700, and 3600 RPM.

## 2.3. ecopower Experimental Facility

Testing of the ecopower occurred at Intertek Carnot Emissions Services with the assistance of the authors and a representative from Marathon Engine Systems. Triplicate performance and emissions data was recorded for repeatability. An instrumentation diagram detailing the location of the installed transducers is shown in Figure 1.

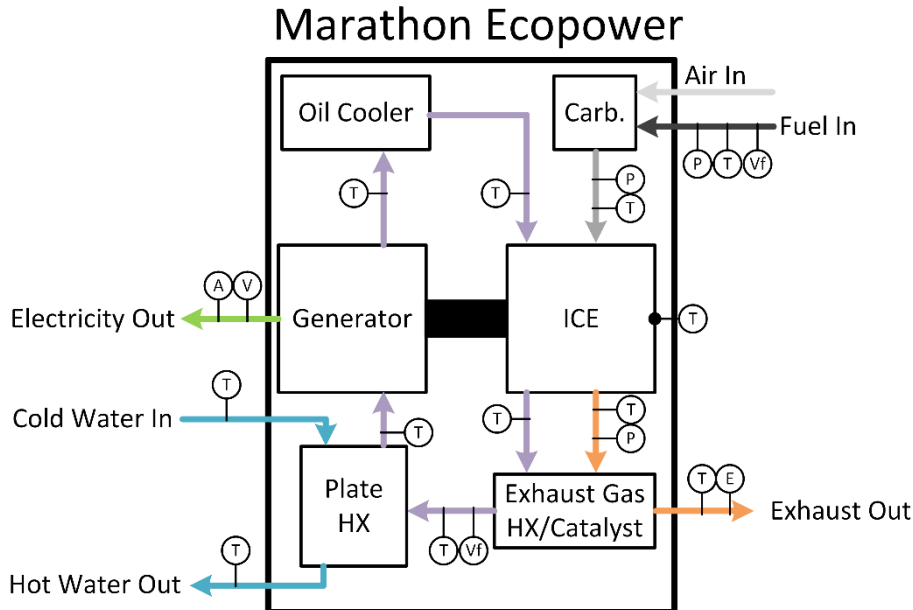


Figure 1. Instrumentation diagram of marathon ecopower. P-pressure, T-temperature, Vf-volumetric flowrate, A-amperage, V-voltage, E-emissions.

The volumetric fuel flow rate into the system was recorded using an EKM PGM-75 bellows type flow meter ( $\pm 1.5\%$ ) with measurements for pressure and temperature taken using an omega px309-015CG5V pressure transducer ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) and a K type thermocouple ( $\pm 1.1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), respectively. A carbon balance calculation using the emissions measurements was also used to verify the measured fuel flow rate, which showed agreement within  $\pm 3\%$  for all test runs. The output voltage and current was measured with a Mastech MS2203 ( $\pm 1.2\%$ ) and an Extech 380943 ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ), respectively. All other temperature measurements, including the coolant loop, surface temperatures, exhaust temperatures, and water temperatures were made with type K thermocouples ( $\pm 1.1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). The coolant volumetric flow rate was measured using an Omega FTB8010HW-PT flow meter ( $\pm 1.5\%$ ), while the volumetric flow rate of the water was measured using an EKM HOT-SPWM-075 flow meter ( $\pm 2.0\%$ ). The emissions measurements were made using a Rosemount NGA 2000 ( $\pm 2.0\%$ ) with incorporated HFID for HC measurements, a NDIR MLT module for CO and CO<sub>2</sub> measurements, and a chemiluminescence detector for wet NO<sub>x</sub> measurement. In order to calculate the gross indicated mean effective pressure (GIMEP), net indicated mean effective pressure (NIMEP), and pumping indicated mean effective pressure (PIMEP), in-cylinder pressure measurements were taken with a Kistler 6118BFD16A41 ( $\pm 0.7\%$  including transducer, data acquisition devices and charge amplifier) at  $>0.2$  crank angle degree resolution measured by a BEI XHS25 shaft encoder ( $\pm 0.1\%$ ).

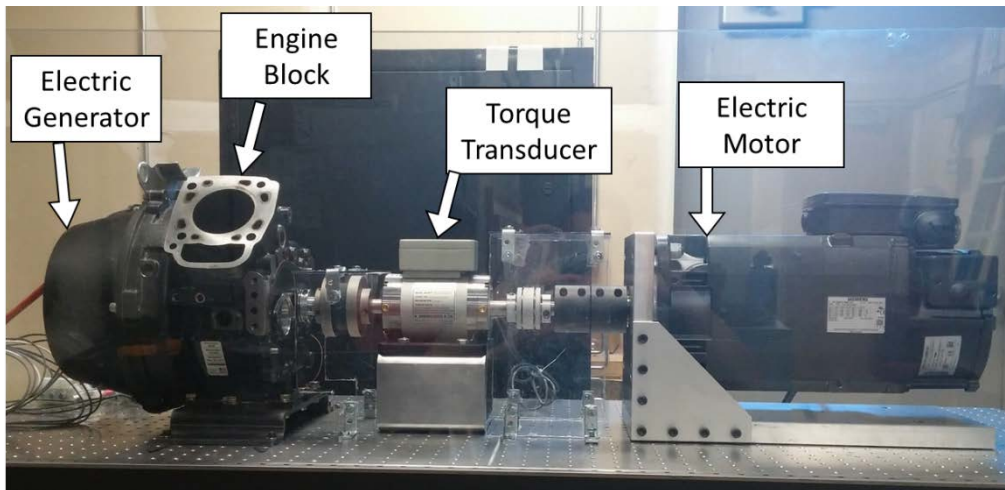
Prior to data collection, the ecopower was run at rated power output until the exhaust and inlet water temperature did not change more than  $0.5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 10 minutes, indicating that steady state was reached. The ecopower's outlet water temperature was held at  $70\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for all testing runs, and the inlet water temperature was allowed to adjust to reach steady state. After data was collected for approximately 10 minutes at 3600 RPM the speed was reduced to 2700 RPM and the exhaust and inlet water temperatures were allowed to reach steady state. This process was repeated until data was collected at each load point (each engine speed).

#### 2.4. Electric Motor Testing

The measured electrical production and fuel consumption of the Ecopower was sufficient to calculate the system level electrical efficiency, but a more in-depth analysis of the internal subsystems, including the engine and generator, was desired. The ecopower's control system had safeties and interlocks in place that would prevent the engine from running while disconnected from the generator, which precluded direct engine performance measurement through dynamometer testing. Therefore, to indirectly measure the engine performance, the generator's efficiency was measured through direct dynamometer testing. To calculate the engine's output shaft power the ecopower's output electrical power was modified by the generator (and assumed power electronics)

202 efficiency.

203 To couple the generator to the dynamometer a footing mount was fabricated to convert the  
204 stock engine block into a test stand. This was desirable for two reasons: 1) the generator housing was  
205 already fastened to the engine block in the stock orientation, and 2) the generator's rotor was already  
206 coupled to the crankshaft which extended through the engine block making for an easy location to  
207 couple to the torque transducer. A photograph of this arrangement is shown in Figure 2. To reduce  
208 the frictional losses as much as possible the piston was decoupled from the crankshaft and removed  
209 from the cylinder. However, the main crankshaft bearings were still located between the torque  
210 transducer and the electric generator, so the measured generator performance does include the main  
211 bearing losses, which would not normally be included in the generator efficiency. The generator's  
212 high frequency three-phase electrical output was connected to three NH Research 4600 AC electronic  
213 load banks ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ), and the input shaft torque and rotational speed were measured using a  
214 Himmelstein MCRT49002V ( $\pm 2\%$ ) torque transducer.



215  
216 Figure 2. Electric generator testing arrangement.

## 217 2.5. Control Volume Definition, Thermodynamic Analysis, and Uncertainty Quantification

218 The thermodynamic analysis methodology, including control volume definition, first and  
219 second law definitions, and the uncertainty quantification has been presented in a previous sister  
220 publication [32]. For brevity, the methodology will be briefly reviewed but not rigorously defined.  
221 This description should be sufficient for those who are familiar with these analyses. For those who  
222 are not, the complete mathematical definition can be found in Taie et al. [32].

223 Several energy flows into and out of the ecopower were identified (most of which are shown  
224 in Figure 1), including the heat input with the fuel, thermal and chemical energy exhausted with the



225 exhaust gases, heat recovered in the coolant, electricity produced, and heat transfer to the  
226 environment. These energy flows were instrumented as shown in Figure 1 and were recorded as power  
227 flows at steady state. The power input via fuel was calculated by measuring the fuel input mass flow  
228 rate and the lower heating value of the fuel. The rate of recovered heat was calculated from the coolant  
229 mass flow rate, the specific heat of the coolant, and the temperature difference of the coolant leaving  
230 and entering the ecopower. The electrical power produced was calculated from root mean square  
231 (RMS) voltage and current measurements. The rate of heat leaving in the exhaust was calculated from  
232 speciated exhaust concentration measurements, the mass flow rate of the exhaust, the specific heat of  
233 the exhaust species, and the difference between the exhaust temperature and 25 °C. The rate of  
234 chemical energy leaving in the exhaust was calculated from the speciated exhaust concentration  
235 measurements, the mass flow of the exhaust, and the lower heating value of each species. The  
236 unmeasured rate of heat transfer was calculated from a first law balance around the ecopower. The  
237 utilization factor of a system is equal to the recovered heat plus work produced divided by the input  
238 energy. It is a figure of merit (similar to an efficiency) that measures a device's CHP performance.

239 From the second law perspective several exergy flows and irreversibilities were identified.  
240 The mass flow streams into and out of the control volume carried exergy in two forms: chemical and  
241 thermomechanical exergy. The thermomechanical exergy (calculated using the flow exergy relation)  
242 is the work that could be produced when a system is brought to thermal and mechanical equilibrium  
243 with the dead state, without an accompanying change in chemical composition. The end state of this  
244 process is termed the restricted dead state since the chemical composition of the system is not  
245 composed of species that are present in the true dead state. The chemical exergy, then, is the work  
246 that could be produced as the system undergoes chemical reactions that change its chemical  
247 composition from the restricted dead state to the true dead state. This is similar to the heating value  
248 of a fuel which is a first law view of the same process. However, there is an entropy penalty that must  
249 be paid during this process, limiting the amount of work that can be produced from the chemical reaction.  
250 The chemical exergy of the fuel and exhaust streams was calculated from the Gibbs free energy of  
251 each species. Exergy was also transferred out of the system with heat transfer. The exergetic value of  
252 heat is the work that could be produced from the heat if it were supplied to Carnot heat engine at a  
253 given supply and ambient temperature. The combustion irreversibility was calculated from an entropy  
254 balance on the internal combustion engine, and the frictional and pumping irreversibilities were  
255 calculated from the in-cylinder pressure measurements.

256 The uncertainties presented in this paper are a combination of the known systematic errors  
257 and the measured random errors. The elemental systematic errors of each measurement device  
258 (presented in parenthesis next to each measurement device in Section 2) were combined using the  
259 root of sum of squares method to calculate the total expected systematic error of each measurement.  
260 The random error of each measurement was calculated from the standard deviation of the set of

261 measurements and a “t estimator” from statistical methods. The total uncertainty of each measurement  
262 is then the root of sum of squares of the random and systematic uncertainty of each measurement.  
263 The Kline and McClintock method was used to calculate the propagation of these uncertainties from  
264 individual measurements to calculated values. For a more detailed explanation of the uncertainty  
265 quantification method used see Taie et al. [32] section 2.4.4.

### 266 **3. Results and Discussion**

267 The results presented here first detail the system level performance for comparison to the  
268 state of the art and for use in updating mCHP models. Following this discussion, a detailed analysis  
269 of the energy conversion steps in the internal combustion engine and the electric generator will be  
270 presented.

#### 271 *3.1. System Level Results*

272 At the system level, the primary objective was to measure the ecopower’s electrical efficiency  
273 and utilization factor as a function of engine speed. At rated speed, these measurements provide a  
274 valuable update to models that treat the mCHP generator as a binary device, while the part-load  
275 measurements provide updated (and more granular) information for dynamic mCHP models. To  
276 calculate these figures of merit, instrumentation was installed on the four main system level energy  
277 flows into and out of the mCHP system: fuel input, heat recovered in the coolant recovery loop,  
278 electrical energy, and thermal and chemical energy in the system exhaust (Figure 1). To identify the  
279 proportion of input energy (or exergy) that left the system as unmeasurable heat transfer, an energy  
280 (or exergy) balance was conducted. The energy balance is presented in Figure 3 and Figure 4, and the  
281 exergy balance is presented in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

##### 283 *3.1.1. First Law Results*

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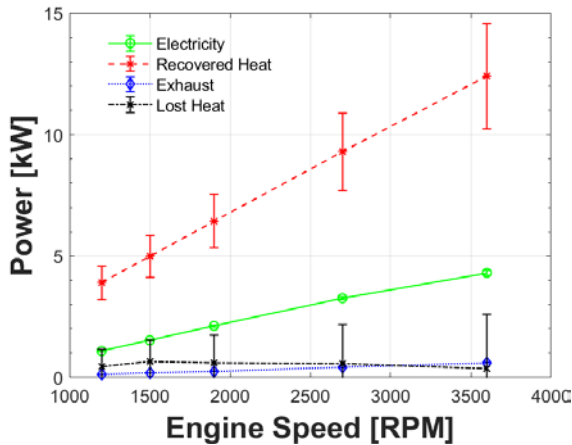


Figure 3. Output power streams of the ecopower under varying engine speeds.

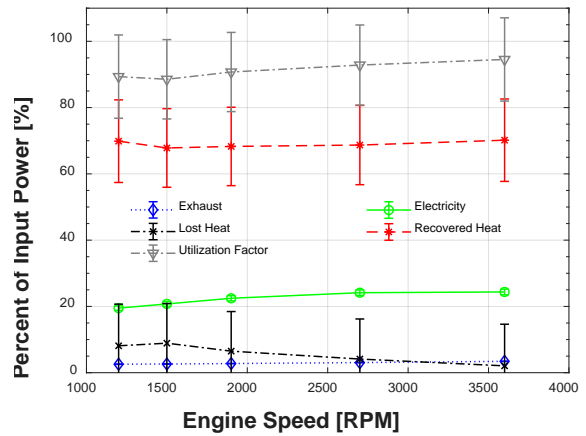


Figure 4. Percent of input power of each output power stream, defined as  $\frac{\dot{E}_{stream}}{Q_{LHV}}$ , along with utilization factor.

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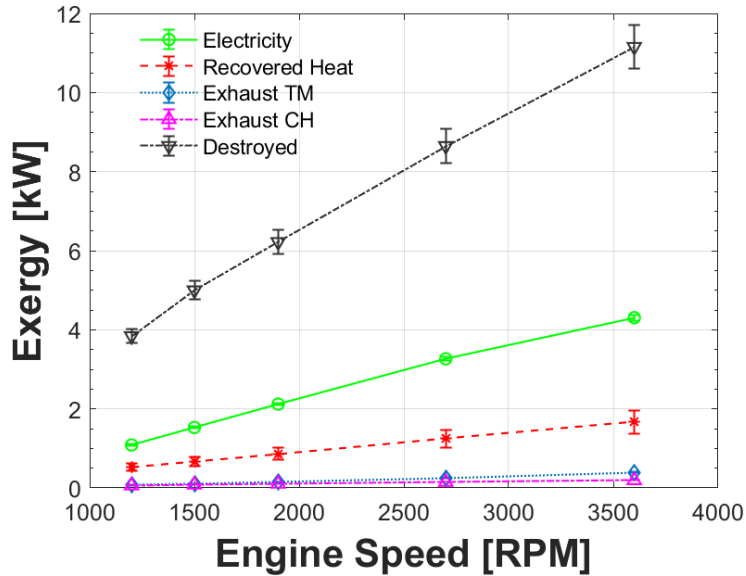
286 The ecopower was most efficient at higher engine operating speeds, Figure 4. A peak  
 287 electrical efficiency and utilization factor of  $24.4 \pm 0.7$  and  $94.5 \pm 12.6$  %, respectively, were recorded  
 288 at an engine speed of 3600 RPM. At the lowest engine speed of 1200 RPM there was a noticeable  
 289 uptick in the fuel energy fraction recovered as heat, which also increased the utilization factor even  
 290 as the electrical efficiency continued to decrease. This provides an interesting data point, as many  
 291 HVAC control strategies can utilize consistent, low heat flows to maintain room temperatures. As a  
 292 percentage of input power, the energy remaining in the stack exhaust increased slightly with engine  
 293 speed, but it was largely negligible.

294 The magnitude of recovered heat and electricity generated were nearly linear functions of  
 295 engine speed over the ecopower’s operating range, Figure 3. However, the energy remaining in the  
 296 engine exhaust (chemical plus thermal) showed a positive power fit to the engine speed, indicating  
 297 that in-cylinder heat transfer and combustion efficiency were increasingly effected by decreased  
 298 cylinder and catalyst residence times. Consequently, the energy lost to the surroundings through heat  
 299 transfer decreased in response to the higher amounts of energy remaining in the exhaust at higher  
 300 engine loads.

301 The uncertainties of the utilization and the recovered heat were primarily derived from the  
 302 use of type K thermocouples which have a larger error than their type T counterparts. No type T  
 303 thermocouples were available at ICES. The utilization uncertainty reaches above 100 % because the  
 304 efficiency values provided are defined based on the LHV. The ecopower is actually a partially  
 305 condensing unit, which means that the HHV is the maximum bounding case. The HHV limit is

306 approximately 110% of the LHV.

307 *3.1.2. Second Law Results*



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Figure 5. System-level ecopower output exergy flows. Exhaust TM – thermomechanical exergy present in the exhaust, Exhaust CH – chemical exergy present in the exhaust.

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Figure 5 shows the system-level ecopower exergy outflows, including the system exergy destruction, as a function of engine speed. The major difference between the system-level exergy (Figure 5) and energy (Figure 3) outflows is the value of the recovered heat. As shown in Figure 3, the recovered heat contains approximately three times the energy present in the electricity, however, it only contains approximately half as much exergy as the electricity does. This discrepancy indicates the low quality of the recovered heat (which is recovered at approximately 70 °C). With the exception of the thermomechanical exergy present in the exhaust which shows a positive power correlation to engine speed, the exergy flows are relatively linear or flat with engine speed. At 1200 RPM the thermomechanical exergy present in the exhaust is roughly 25% higher than the chemical exergy present in the exhaust, however, this discrepancy increases to approximately 100% at 3600 RPM. This indicates that the reduced residence time has a larger impact on heat transfer within the engine cylinder and exhaust catalyst than it does on system-level chemical conversion efficiency.

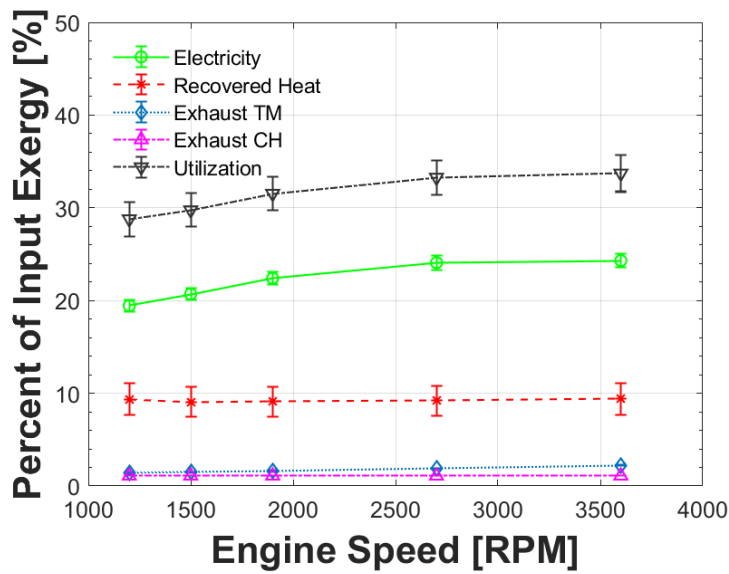


Figure 6. Exergy output streams normalized by input exergy. Exhaust TM – thermomechanical exergy present in the exhaust, Exhaust CH – chemical exergy present in the exhaust.

When the output exergy streams are normalized by the input exergy stream, the efficiency trends become clearer. The second law efficiency of the electrical stream reaches  $24.3 \pm 0.8\%$  at 3600 RPM, while the coolant stream delivers  $9.4 \pm 1.7\%$  of the input exergy at the same speed. Combined, these yield a second law utilization factor (also known as effectiveness or total second law efficiency) of  $33.7 \pm 1.9\%$ .

The ecopower’s total second law efficiency is quite impressive when realizing that it is primarily a furnace. Current heating technology has been developed with an emphasis on first law heat delivery efficiency, which has resulted in maximizing the heat delivered by the device. However, this approach has yielded devices with relatively low second law efficiencies as can be seen in Table 2.

336 Table 2. Typical energy and exergy efficiency values for standard residential heating equipment. 1-[34], 2-[35],  
 337 3-[36], 4-[37], 5-[38].

Device	Energy Efficiency [%]	Exergy Efficiency [%]
Electric resistance heater <sup>1</sup>	99	6
Electric Boiler <sup>2</sup>	67	5
Electric Furnace <sup>2</sup>	54	18
Electric heat pump <sup>1</sup>	380	19
Gas furnace <sup>3</sup>	85+	10
Gas boiler <sup>1,2,4</sup>	90+	<10
Gas-ICE air-source heat pump <sup>5</sup>	176	29
Geothermal <sup>4</sup>	95	16
ecopower mCHP	95	34

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These efficiency measurements highlight the ecopower's main thermodynamic benefit of providing electricity as well as heat. Not only does the ecopower compare favorably at rated speed, but it outperforms most of the highlighted heating appliances at all part load conditions as well. Efficiently operating at part load is important because it could allow the ecopower to efficiently deliver heat while operating in a mode in which it could either increase or decrease its electrical output. This wait-and-respond capability is a valuable resource to the grid, and implies the ecopower could be a valuable demand response asset if configured to be able to receive grid requests. These data show that a fleet of variable output mCHP devices could provide grid support that is expected to become increasingly necessary, all while operating at a higher second law efficiency than most current residential heating systems.

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Though the ecopower shows promise with regards to its technical performance, its capital cost is a large barrier to widespread adoption. The combination of high historic R&D costs and current low production volume has resulted in a capital cost that is approximately an order of magnitude larger than current gas furnace and air-source heat pumps. Techno-economic analyses have shown that this up-front cost is the primary driver in market penetration of mCHP devices [39]. As such, reductions in this metric must be achieved for the ecopower to be an economically viable grid-support generator.

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### 3.1.3. System Emissions

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Dilute post-catalyst emission measurements were recorded in triplicate at each of the load points. The composite measurements were calculated following a test cycle that was intended to mirror a 5-mode B-Cycle [40 CFR 1054 Appendix II(a)] steady-state test. However, the somewhat autonomous generator control system did not allow for the direct control of engine load, allowing only for engine speed to be controlled. The weighting factors for the composite emissions were

362 therefore adjusted to account for only engine speed (instead of load), and are shown in Table 4. The  
 363 emission measurements and relevant EPA standards [40] are given in Table 3. The measurements  
 364 show that all relevant emissions were below the standards by at least an order of magnitude.

Table 3. Composite brake emission measurements for the ecopower.

Composite Brake Emissions	Standard
[g/kWh]	[g/kWh]
BSCO	610
BSCO <sub>2</sub>	804.3
BSTHC	6.97
BSNO <sub>x</sub>	0.70
BS(THC+NO <sub>x</sub> )	7.68
BSCH <sub>4</sub>	6.971
BSNMHC	0.000
BS(NMHC+NO <sub>x</sub> )	8.0
BSN <sub>2</sub> O	0.140
BSFC	310.967

Table 4. Mode weighting factors for composite emission calculations.

Test Cycle	Mode Weighting Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Torque [%] (Speed [RPM])	100 (3600)	75 (2700)	50 (1900)	25 (1500)	10 (1200)
Alt B Cycle	0.09	0.21	0.31	0.32	0.07

365 *3.2. Internal Combustion Engine Subsystem*

366 The ecopower’s prime mover is a single cylinder, liquid cooled, natural gas fueled internal  
 367 combustion engine called the Marathon Engine. Briggs and Stratton, under direction from the Gas  
 368 Technology Institute, initially designed this engine for use in an ICE-driven heat pump. The engine’s  
 369 specifications are given in Table 5.

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Table 5. Tables of the relevant ecopower specifications.

<b>Engine Specifications</b>	
Engine Name	Marathon Engine
Number of Cylinders	1
Engine Speed	1200-3600 [RPM]
Displacement	272 [cm <sup>3</sup> ]
Bore	7.3 [cm]
Stroke	6.5 [cm]
Fuel Consumption (Natural Gas)	22.2-68.6 [MJ/h]
<b>Alternator Specifications</b>	
Rated Maximum Continuous Power	7,000 W
Rated Voltage	240 V
Rated Maximum Continuous Current	30 A
<b>Genset Specifications</b>	
Length	1.37 [m]
Width	0.76 [m]
Height	1.1 [m]
Endurance	40,000 [h]

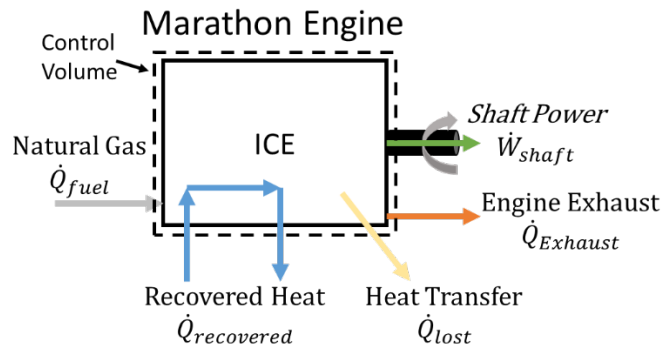
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The ICE is responsible for converting the chemical energy stored within the fuel into mechanical shaft work. The remaining energy leaves as either chemical or thermal energy in the exhaust, or through heat transfer that is either recovered or unrecovered, Figure 7.



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Figure 7. ICE system diagram including energy flows across control volume.

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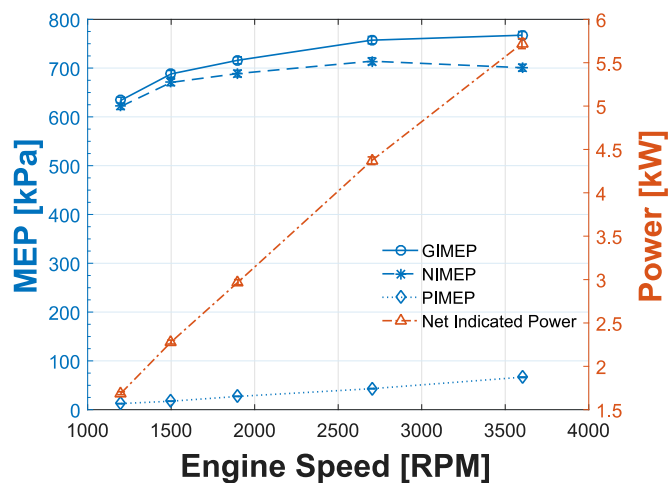
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As was discussed in Section 2.4, it was not possible to directly measure the shaft power output by the engine due to the ecopower's sophisticated control system. Therefore, the output shaft power was calculated using the electrical power produced by the ecopower, and the measured generator efficiency (discussed in the forthcoming section). The exhaust temperature was measured using a custom fabricated exhaust manifold with an integrated thermocouple which allowed for calculation of the thermal energy present in the exhaust. Direct engine emission measurements were not taken at



383 the engine exhaust due to resource constraints. As such, the engine exhaust (pre-catalyst) was  
 384 assumed to have the same composition as the system-level emissions (post-catalyst). The recovered  
 385 heat was calculated by measuring the coolant temperature before and after the engine coolant  
 386 passages, as well as the flowrate through the coolant loop. This accounted for the energy flows  
 387 crossing the control surfaces.

388 Several losses that occurred within the control volume are of interest to engineers that were  
 389 unaccounted for in these energy flows crossing control surfaces; namely: frictional and pumping  
 390 losses. To measure these losses, in-cylinder pressure measurements were recorded at greater than 0.2  
 391 crank angle degree increments at each of the engine operating speeds. Using the known engine  
 392 geometry, the in-cylinder pressure measurements were used to calculate the GIMEP, the PIMEP, and  
 393 the NIMEP produced by the engine, Figure 8. The GIMEP is the mean effective pressure during the  
 394 compression and power stroke of the engine, and is a measure of the power produced during  
 395 combustion. The PIMEP is the mean effective pressure during the time that gas was being pumped  
 396 into and out of the cylinder (when the intake or exhaust valves are open), and is a direct measure of  
 397 the power consumed to intake fresh air-fuel mixture and exhaust the combustion products. The  
 398 NIMEP is the GIMEP less the PIMEP, and is a measure of the net power produced over the entire 4-  
 399 stroke engine cycle. This is a direct measure of the useful indicated power the engine can produce  
 400 after pumping losses are accounted for.



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Figure 8. Mean effective pressure and indicated pressure as a function of engine speed.

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The net indicated power is plotted in Figure 8, and is nearly a linear function of engine speed. The pumping losses increased with engine speed, but were less than approximately 10% of the gross indicated power over all engine speeds. The frictional loss within the engine was calculated by

406 subtracting the connecting rod brake shaft power (calculated from the generator efficiency and  
 407 generator electrical output as described in the forthcoming section) from the measured net indicated  
 408 power. With the losses internal to the control volume (friction and pumping) calculated, and the  
 409 streams crossing the control surfaces measured, a component-level energy and exergy balance was  
 410 conducted on the Marathon Engine, shown in Figure 9 through Figure 12.

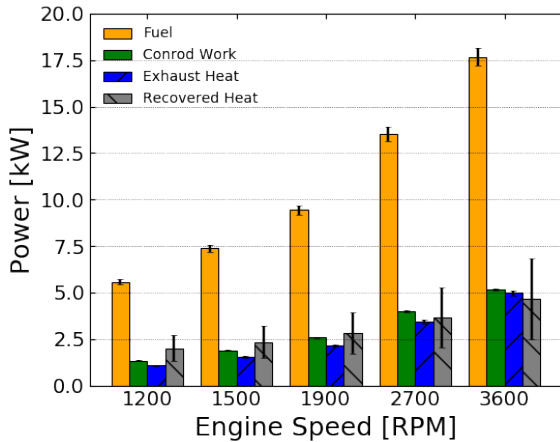


Figure 9. Major components of the first law energy balance on the engine.

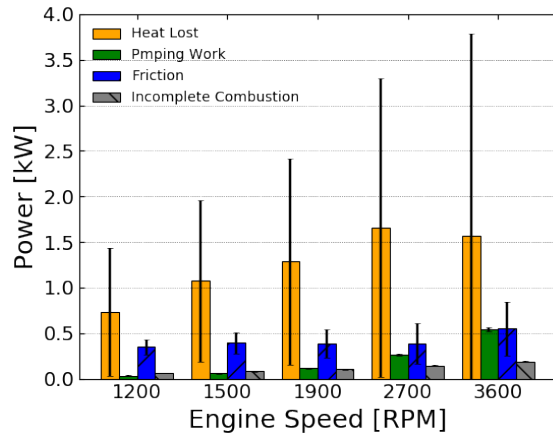


Figure 10. Minor components of the first law energy balance on the engine.

412 Figure 9 and Figure 10 show the major and minor components of the energy balance (note  
 413 the difference in ordinate scales), respectively. The major components (connecting rod brake shaft  
 414 work, heat in the exhaust, and the recovered heat) were relatively balanced, with all power flows  
 415 increasing with engine speed. The minor components were less structured. Lost heat (heat transferred  
 416 from the engine but not into the coolant) was the largest minor component at each engine speed by a  
 417 wide margin. Frictional loss was somewhat constant until an increase was seen at the higher engine  
 418 speeds. It should be noted that this measure of friction only includes friction between the piston rings  
 419 and the cylinder, and the connecting rod bearing. It does not include main bearing friction due to the  
 420 apparatus used to measure the generator efficiency (Section 3.3). Pumping work showed a positive  
 421 power fit to the engine speed, and was roughly equal in magnitude to friction at 3600 RPM.

422 At rated speed, the shaft power produced, heat present in the exhaust, and heat recovered into  
 423 the engine coolant were all comparative in magnitude. At rated speed, the engine operated at a  
 424 connecting rod brake efficiency of  $29.3 \pm 0.9\%$ , with  $26.4 \pm 12.3\%$  of the input energy recovered into  
 425 the coolant, and  $28.2 \pm 0.1\%$  present as thermal energy in the exhaust. This equates to an engine  
 426 utilization factor of  $55.7 \pm 12.4\%$ , highlighting the necessity of the exhaust gas, oil, and generator heat

427 exchangers.  
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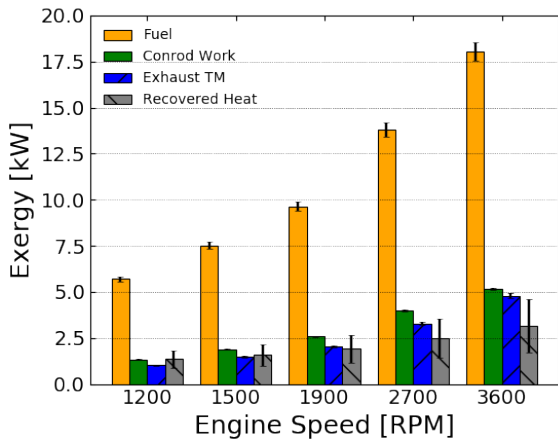


Figure 11. Major components of the second law exergy balance on the engine.

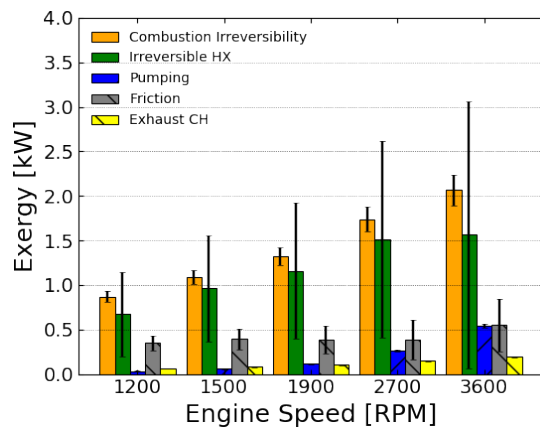


Figure 12. Minor components of the second law exergy balance on the engine.

429 The exergy balance on the Marathon Engine is presented in Figure 11 and Figure 12. In  
430 descending order, the largest contributions to the exergy balance at rated power were the connecting  
431 rod work produced, the thermomechanical exergy in the exhaust, heat recovered in the coolant,  
432 combustion irreversibility, irreversible (including uncaptured) heat transfer, irreversible pumping  
433 work, friction irreversibility, and finally the chemical exergy present in the exhaust (note that this is  
434 calculated from post-catalyst emission measurements).

435 The second law efficiency of the connecting rod work stream was highest at the higher engine  
436 speeds of 2700 and 3600 RMP, reaching a peak of  $28.7 \pm 0.9\%$  at both of these speeds. This is a rather  
437 impressive result for an engine in the 5 kW range. For example, Primus et al. measured a 224 kW six-  
438 cylinder, turbocharged and aftercooled, diesel engine operating at 2100 RPM to have shaft-work  
439 based second law efficiency of 39.21% [41], [42]. Therefore, the ecopower sees an approximately  
440 10% second law efficiency reduction from an engine that has cylinders with roughly six times the  
441 displacement. The ecopower’s second law efficiency also compares favorably to the other mCHP and  
442 residential backup generators that were tested. The Honda ECOWILL (1 kWe) and Generac 8 kW  
443 Guardian were measured to have second law efficiencies of 27.2% [32] and 24.4% [5], respectively.  
444 The improvement over the ECOWILL is believed to be due to a more favorable cylinder volume to  
445 surface area ratio which results in lower heat transfer. Higher quality components and a higher level  
446 of engine optimization are believed to be responsible for the ecopower’s increased performance over  
447 the Guardian.

448 The ecopower’s exergy efficiency mirrored the energy efficiency results by increasing at

higher engine speeds. The exergy accounting revealed that the largest measured irreversibility was the combustion irreversibility, closely followed by irreversible heat transfer (including heat that was not captured into the coolant). At low engine speeds the friction irreversibility was somewhat significant while the pumping irreversibility was not. However, as engine speed increased, neither the pumping nor friction irreversibility proved to be significant.

### 3.3. Electric Generator and Power Electronics Subsystem

After the engine converts the stored chemical energy to shaft work, the electric generator converts the shaft work into high frequency 3-phase electrical work. The high-frequency three phase electricity is then converted into 120 Hz, 240V, single phase electricity by the power electronics. This electricity pathway is shown in Figure 13.

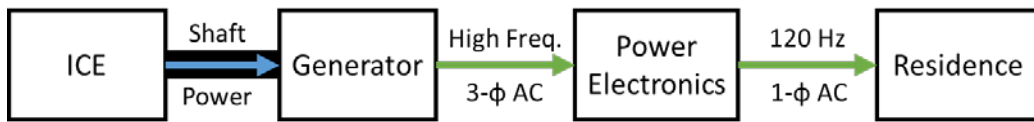


Figure 13. Energy conversions from ICE to the residence.

In this testing campaign it was infeasible to measure the power electronics efficiency due to available sensors, space constraints, and DAQ channels. Thus, a power electronic efficiency of 91 % was assumed based on manufacturer specification sheets. To determine the losses associated with the generator, the electric generator underwent performance testing via dynamometer as outlined in Section 2.4. The generator was run at 4 different speeds: 1200, 1700, 2500, and 3500 RPM. The electronic load was swept over a series of loads at each of the speed set points, producing a curve for each of the operating speeds. Then, the input power measured at the torque transducer and the output electrical power was used to calculate the electrical generator efficiency, which is presented in Figure 14.

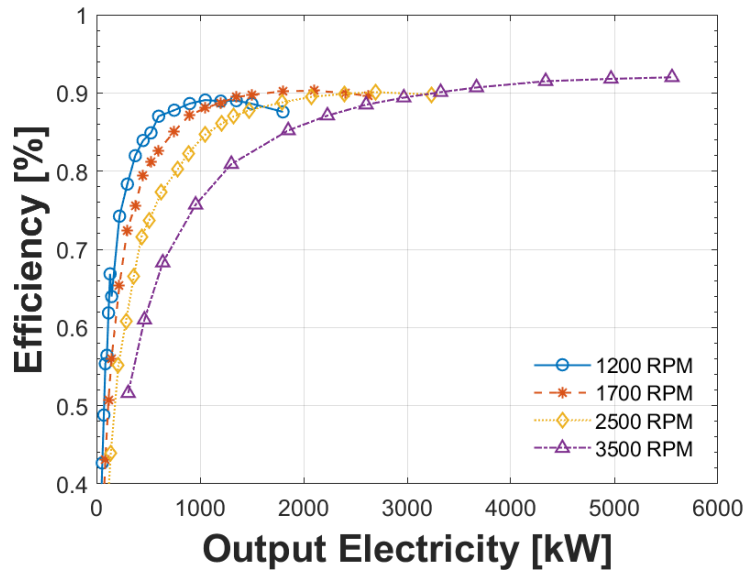


Figure 14. Electric generator efficiency as a function of rotational speed and power output.

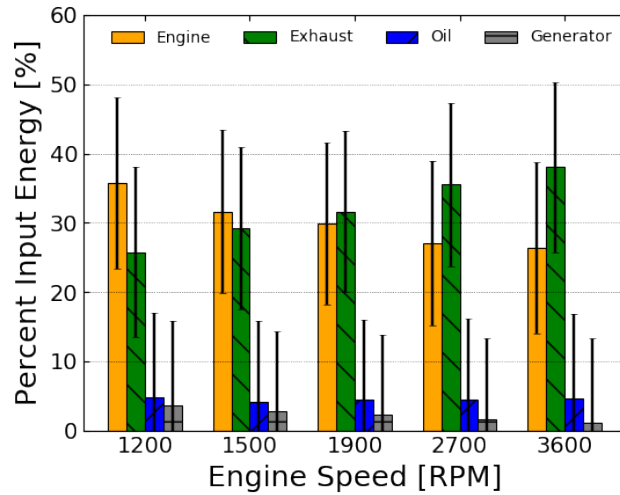
These data show that the generator operates at approximately 90 % efficiency over the entire electrical output range of 1 – 4.5 kWe. For example, at an engine/generator speed of 1200 RPM the electric generator generates about 1.2 kWe (measured before the power electronics). Following the line with circle symbols, the generator would operate at an efficiency of approximately 88%. At an engine/generator speed of 3600 RPM the generator was measured to produce 4.75 kWe. Following the line with triangle symbols the generator can be seen to operate at approximately 92 % efficiency. At intermediate speeds the generator maintains an efficiency of about 90 %.

Using the electrical power measured after the power electronics, the assumed power electronic efficiency and the measured generator efficiency, the connecting rod brake shaft power was calculated. Since the main bearing friction was included in the generator efficiency, the brake vales reported are calculated at the connecting rod instead of the crankshaft.

### 3.4. Heat Recovery Loop

Like other mCHP devices, the ecopower is designed to capture heat from nearly every available source within the system. The ecopower's stock coolant loop collects heat in the following order: electric generator, oil cooler, exhaust gas heat exchanger, and then the engine. However, in an attempt to quantify the performance trade-offs that rerouting the heat recovery loop could have, the recovery order was re-configured as such: electric generator, oil cooler, engine, and then the exhaust gas heat exchanger. This was done for comparison purposes with other published results in the literature to determine if an increase in heat recovery or electrical efficiency could be achieved. As is annotated in Figure 1, thermocouples were installed on either side of each heat recovery device to

492 measure each device's contribution to the total heat recovery. These data are presented in Figure 15.



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Figure 15. Heat recovery of each device in the ecopower's heat recovery loop.

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For all engine speeds, the ecopower recovered a majority of its heat from the exhaust gas and the internal combustion engine heat exchangers. In comparison to the engine and exhaust gas exchangers, the oil cooler and generator provided relatively low amounts of heat. However, combined they recovered approximately 7 % of the input power, thereby increasing the ecopower's utilization factor by the same amount.

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At low engine speeds the majority of the heat was recovered from the internal combustion engine, followed by heat recovery from the exhaust gasses. However, as the engine speed increased, this trend reversed. At the rated engine speed (3600 RPM) the majority of the heat was recovered from the exhaust gas. It is believe this was due to the reduction in heat transfer to the engine cylinder walls, as there was a decrease in residence time of the hot combustion products in the engine cylinder at higher engine speeds. This reduction in relative heat transfer was further elucidated by the increase in engine exhaust temperature. As engine speed increased the engine exhaust temperature increased from approximately 480 °C at 1200 RPM to 680 °C at 3600 RPM, indicating that a larger portion of energy was remaining in the exhaust as opposed to transferring into the cylinder walls.

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#### 4. Conclusion

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A Marathon Engine Systems ecopower was selected to undergo thermodynamic performance testing due to its high utilization factor and its uncommon ability to modulate its thermal and electrical output. First and second law system-level analysis were conducted to assess the ecopower's utilization factor, as well as its potential to provide grid-support ("ancillary") services in a future with increased

514 penetration of variable electricity generators. Component-level (ICE and electric generator) analysis  
515 were conducted to identify inefficiencies and irreversibilities within the subsystems that must be  
516 improved to increase the performance of the ecopower in specific, and mCHP generators in general.

517 Key findings from this study were:

- 518 • The ecopower operated at an electrical efficiency and utilization factor of  $24.4 \pm 0.9$   
519 % and  $94.5 \pm 12.6$  %, respectively.
- 520 • The ecopower's second law electrical and total exergy efficiency was  $24.3 \pm 0.8$  %  
521 and  $33.7 \pm 1.9$  % respectively.
- 522 • The ecopower's ICE operated at a connecting rod brake first and second law  
523 efficiency of  $29.3 \pm 0.9$  %, and  $28.7 \pm 0.9$  %, respectively.
- 524 • The ecopower's electric generator maintained an efficiency (when including main  
525 bearing friction) above 88% over all operating speeds, including 92 % at rated speed.

526 The system-level measurements show the ecopower can operate at a higher second law  
527 efficiency than most other residential heating technologies (i.e., furnaces, engine-driven and electric  
528 air-source heat pumps, boilers), even when operating at part load. This indicates that variable-output,  
529 dispatchable, mCHP generators, such as the ecopower, can efficiently provide grid-support services  
530 by operating at part-load and then ramping output up or down to respond to grid requests. The largest  
531 system-level energy losses were uncaptured heat transfer from the device, followed by thermal and  
532 chemical energy present in the exhaust. However, the ecopower was effective in converting and  
533 recovering energy present in the exhaust, leaving only 4% of the input energy in the exhaust at rated  
534 speed. Though the recovered heat provides a direct energy boost from the first law perspective, it only  
535 marginally improves the second law efficiency. To increase the ecopower's second law efficiency,  
536 improvements in generating and retaining mechanical and electrical work need to be prioritized over  
537 recovering heat. In particular, efficiency improvements to the ICE need to be prioritized as they will  
538 have the largest impact on system-level exergy efficiency (e.g., a 2% increase in ICE efficiency yields  
539 a 1.7% increase in system-level efficiency while a 2% increase in generator or power electronics  
540 yields a 0.5% system-level efficiency increase). Some advanced technologies that have the potential  
541 to improve engine efficiency are advanced combustion technologies such as homogeneous charge  
542 compression ignition (to reduce heat transfer), alternative thermodynamic cycles such as the Atkinson  
543 cycle (to reduce pumping losses), and in-cylinder energy retention techniques such as thermal  
544 insulation coatings.

545 The device-level ICE analysis revealed that the largest energy loss was unrecovered heat  
546 transfer, while the largest source of exergy destruction was combustion irreversibility. There was a  
547 clear division between major and minor energy flows from the engine. The major flows comprised:  
548 shaft work, exhaust thermal energy, and recovered heat. The minor flows comprised: unrecovered

549 heat, pumping work, friction losses, and incomplete combustion.

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