Art Rosenfeld, 'godfather' of energy efficiency, dies at 90

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This undated photo provided by Lawrence Berkeley National Lab shows physicist Dr. Arthur Rosenfeld at ceremonial launch of the ITRI-Rosenfeld Fellowship in Berkeley, Calif. Rosenfeld, spearheading breakthroughs in reduced

energy for lighting, refrigerators, televisions and other electronics while working at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, has died at age 90. Rosenfeld died Jan. 27, 2017, at his home in Berkeley, said Lawrence Berkeley National Lab spokeswoman Julie Chao. (Roy Kaltschmidt/Lawrence Berkeley National Lab via AP)

Physicist Arthur Rosenfeld, who spearheaded breakthroughs in energy efficiency for lighting, refrigerators, televisions and other electronics while working at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, has died. He was 90.

Rosenfeld died Jan. 27 at his home in Berkeley, said Lawrence Berkeley National Lab spokeswoman Julie Chao.

Rosenfeld was known to his colleagues as California's "godfather" of energy efficiency, a field he is credited with creating.

A native of Alabama, he was known for his detailed calculations, but also for his talent in translating the results into terms that could be easily understood.

A particle physicist, he moved to Berkeley in the 1950s to work in the particle physics group of Luis Alvarez, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1968.

A turning point in his career came in 1973 when the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries declared an oil embargo. Knowing he would have to wait in a long line the next day to buy gas, he decided to calculate how much energy could be saved by turning off unused lights.

"After 20 minutes of uncovering light switches (and saving 100 gallons for the weekend), I decided that UC Berkeley and its Radiation Laboratory should do something about conservation," he wrote in a 1999 autobiography of his career, "The Art of Energy Efficiency."

He received numerous awards and honors, including the National Medal of Technology and Innovation in 2011—the nation's highest honor for technological achievement—for the development of energy efficient building technologies.

This undated photo provided by Lawrence Berkeley National Lab shows physicist Arthur Rosenfeld in his office in Berkeley, Calif. Rosenfeld, spearheading breakthroughs in reduced energy for lighting, refrigerators, televisions and other electronics while working at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, has died at age 90. Rosenfeld died Jan. 27, 2017, at his home in Berkeley, said Lawrence Berkeley National Lab spokeswoman Julie Chao. (Lawrence Berkeley National Lab vua AP)

Gov. Jerry Brown said that during his first term as governor in 1975, Rosenfeld told him that simply by requiring more efficient refrigerators, California could save as much energy as would be produced by the then-proposed Sundesert Nuclear Power plant.

"We adopted Art's refrigerator standards and many others, did not build the power plant and moved the country to greater energy efficiency," Brown said in a statement after Rosenfeld's death was announced.

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