

# Concrete

The Journal of Decorative Concrete

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# Decor

A man wearing a white polo shirt and a green baseball cap is working on a large, rectangular concrete slab. The slab has a rough, textured surface. He is standing on a wooden form or platform. In the background, there is a red brick wall. The entire cover has a blue, textured background that looks like a close-up of concrete.

**Texture Skins: A New Face on Concrete**  
**Self-Leveling Toppings**  
**The Complete Guide to Concrete Stains**  
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## Dear Professionals,

I hope this issue finds you with a cool drink in hand, looking for some shade in the backyard and the anticipation that these pages will help you discover new products, ideas or methods for growing your business in exciting new ways.

At *Concrete Decor* we have just completed moving our offices from Arnold, California to Eugene, Oregon. This move will safeguard a timely schedule for future issues and will help us to serve you better. With our move complete, we are pleased to introduce new staff to our growing publications.

Shirley Whitney, Account Executive for national sales, brings excellent experience in printing technology and Sales & Marketing to *Concrete Decor* magazine. Her professional attitude toward customer service and quality control provide our growing clientele greater confidence in our ability to deliver a timely publication. Her knowledge within printing will help maintain the high standard of quality in our printing processes representing advertised products and services.

Shirley is located at our new Eugene, Oregon headquarter offices and can be contacted directly at 541-341-3390. E-mail: (swhitney@paintpro.net)



Lucas Franklin, Account Executive supports our sales efforts in the eastern U.S.. His accomplishments at the collegiate level gives *Concrete Decor* the added strength of his work ethic and aptitude for excellence in quality service and customer relations. Lucas is located in Grove City, Pennsylvania and can be contacted at 724-699-2200. E-mail: (lfranklin@paintpro.net)

Our new designer, Stephen Stanley brings 27 years experience in periodicals production, design and management to *Concrete Decor* magazine. Having extensive experience in managing multiple production schedules Stephen demonstrates an excellent ability to disseminate advertising/editorial materials and to support and maintain timely guidelines for the publication's production each month. With numerous awards within graphic design, you can expect an exciting issue of *Concrete Decor* each quarter. Stephen is also located at our new Eugene headquarters and can be contacted at 541-341-3390. E-mail: (sstanley@paintpro.net)



Adding further to our services you can now send digital advertising materials, photography, news and product releases to us via our T-1 internet service. For questions concerning the use of this service please contact us at 541-341-3390.

As always, we encourage your comments and questions and look forward to continue our service to you in the pages of *Concrete Decor*, The Journal of Decorative Concrete.

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**ON THE COVER:** Shown is the use of texture skins on new concrete by Doug Bannister of the Stamp Store, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. See their ad on page 45. Photograph by Mary Logan-Wolf.

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# Decorative Concrete Tips

Decorative Concrete Tips is a forum for readers to exchange information about methods, tools, and tricks they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details to CD Tips, Concrete Decor, P.O. Box 25210, Eugene, OR 97402. We look forward to hearing from you!

**S**tamping concrete is a process of stretching the surface of the hardening concrete to create a unique indented pattern/texture on an otherwise flat surface. Because stamps impose significant stress on the surface, surface cracking often occurs. In order to resolve this problem keep a small bucket of water and a 3" to 7" inch (paint) roller with ½" nap on-hand. Then, whenever these small cracks appear while stamping, take your wet roller and carefully moisten the crack with your roller. This relieves the surface tension (stress) and fixes the crack.

— Steve VandeWater, Noblesville, IN



**I**f you didn't know this trick already, you know it now. Strengthen inside corners by placing two 12" to 14" lengths of re-bar into the pour as shown. Inside corners are known for cracking and this reinforcement helps minimize the likelihood for cracks.

— Doug Bannister, The Stamp Store, Oklahoma City, OK

**C**olor hardener offers many distinctive and custom colors to the concrete finisher. Use of various colors produce a more two dimensional (or realistic) look. They help to blend concrete to the environment or distinguish it from other construction materials.

Colors on concrete can enhance the overall aesthetic but they can also, without anyone knowing it, soothe the transition from light to shaded areas on a slab.

On this particular job the use of three different color hardeners terra cotta, sun-baked clay, and beige cream were used to give the concrete a natural stone look and a less distinct shadow-line that the house casts on the slab during most of the day. By using terra cotta, a darker color hardener in the heavily sunlit areas but transitioning to sun-baked clay, a light color in the shadow area, the end

result is a surface that is easier on the eyes and never too dark in a shaded corner. Beige cream is then used sparingly across the slab for greater depth of color. The concrete was also treated with #350 desert tan, a color release, before skinning to further distinguish it with natural colors and to further blend the three colors together. The desert tan also makes the veining from the skins consistent across the slab.

— Lee Levig, Fairfield, CA





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# Concrete Decor

The Journal of Decorative Concrete

## Contractor Profile



## In Las Vegas, Ron Garamendi performs magic with concrete!

By Susan M. Brimo-Cox



In "The Entertainment Capital of the World" the tendency might be to look up at all the bright lights. But if that's all you do, you're likely to miss some exceptional magic right under your feet. In the glitzy theme world of Las Vegas, concrete is everywhere. Making it look like anything else but concrete takes the magical talent of someone like Ron Garamendi.

No, he's not really a magician in the traditional sense. Though Garamendi's barely in his mid-30s, this Salt Lake City native has been working with concrete since he was about 15. Some of his first experiences with concrete were when his older brother took





him out of high school to pour concrete. Then during summers and after he graduated high school he worked as a concrete finisher.

"When I started out, there wasn't a whole lot of decorative concrete work. Everything we did was straight and flat, but when we did something on the decorative side we'd do exposed aggregate or swirled finishes," he relates. His first experience with colored concrete opened a world of new possibilities for him and he seemed to have a flair for decorative concrete work. Relocating to Las Vegas has provided unique creative opportunities.

## Practice makes perfect

Garamendi says he got his real start in decorative concrete when he was a concrete superintendent for a concrete company. "I worked on a project with two colors of concrete with an acid wash. Then the developers of the Monte Carlo Casino asked the company to put together an architectural concrete division to handle all the stamped concrete for several upcoming projects. I was asked to head up that new division."

"A consultant provided me information about basic techniques, but the industry was only beginning to take shape," he reports. "There wasn't a whole lot of information about decorative concrete. Bomanite was probably the only company doing it in Las Vegas when I got started. We would get new materials and try them out. We weeded out what we didn't like and experimented more with the materials we did like," he explains.

With casinos and other big jobs, you have only one chance to get it right, Garamendi says. "If a material hasn't been tested long enough it could fail, and that could make it hard to work with that client in the future. The sample process is the most important aspect-and you have to keep good records.

"You can find out about products that have a history. With new materials, it pays to have samples made or I might test it on a smaller project, such as a residential project. I let the client know what I'm doing, of course, then the client and I can watch how it performs."

For example, "I went through a lot of sealers to find a good one. I've found that QC II, though a little higher priced, has great predictability. I use Scofield stains because they have good predictability. Recently, I've also tried Rare Earth stains at my own home. I've found they have good workability and colors, and so I'm looking forward to also using them on commercial projects."

As far as his tried-and-true favorites, he likes Ardex Inc. and Concrete Solutions Inc. products for stamped overlays, self-leveling and trowelable toppings.

Sometimes, however, the magic doesn't happen. "There have been some situations where the job didn't turn out the way I wanted, and I take that personally," he confesses.



## Creating the illusion

"A lot of times we'll have an architect or owner who has a concept or a theme and they bring it to us. Then I work to come up with solutions that fit with the budget," he says. "For the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino, the goal was to incorporate the Mandalay flower design into the concrete. We were able to do that."

Today, a variety of techniques and products enable Garamendi to create his magic. Stampable toppings are good for theme work, he says, because they are cost-effective and they don't take too much time to install. "The wide variety of patterns and textures are all made to impersonate a natural material, so you can use patterns — such as London Cobblestone and European Fan — to get the look a designer wants with a concrete product."

But even with stamping, resourcefulness comes in handy. At the Mandalay, Garamendi was directing a very large stamp application of London Cobblestone. "I knew this stamp has a tendency to walk and get out of line, so there could have been trouble completing the project on time. With the help of my supplier and Proline Concrete Tools they were able to take my idea of combining three separate 27" x 30" stamps and come up with several 27" x 8' long stamps. Working with the oversized stamp allowed us to produce a quality product and finish the job within the time constraints," he says.

"Having a good relationship with my supplier is critical to our ongoing success. Jack Christiansen of Concrete Accessories, Las Vegas NV understands the importance of quality products and timeliness and makes it a priority to be sure we have everything we need for the job at hand. Even with special requests, Jack has personally made overnight road-trips to Los Angeles for supplies so we would have them on the job, at midnight a day later."

## Abracadabra

Sandblasting is the prime technique Garamendi used last year to create a giant map of the Caspian Sea on the floor of the Beluga Bar in the Aladdin Resort and Casino's Dessert Passage shopping complex. "I worked with a computer graphics guy. We enlarged an eight-and-a-half by 11-inch picture of the map to fit the space. Then we cut out the design, sandblasted it and colored it. The map covers about 1,100 square feet," he explains. "That project reinforced the idea that imagination is the only limit to what you can do. The owner told us what he wanted, and we came up with how."

Methanol dyes offer other creative effects, but Garamendi says they're best suited for small indoor areas, as an accent. "In a larger area, the effect seems to go away. I've had good and bad experiences with them, but I'll use them to tie in a theme. I've had the best luck spraying them with a small pump sprayer, but you can brush them, too. It depends on the effect you're trying to achieve," he explains.

At the Luxor Hotel and Casino's Ra nightclub, the challenge was to make the floor look like it was cracking.

Garamendi's solution was an Ardex floor with 10 different colors of dyes and stains, saw cuts and fiber optic lighting. At the All American Sports Park he created an American flag.

Garamendi says he has used methanol dyes over Ardex, Concrete Solution's Ultra Surface and regular concrete. But be careful of sunlight, he cautions — certain colors will fade more than others.

## It takes more than a magic wand

Most casino and resort projects present special challenges because of the fast-track schedule they're on. "The way it works with casino projects is that we're a part of the design process. We go to subcontractor meetings and set the timelines up early. Usually you're given an opening date of the property and I have to work backwards to figure out our schedule," Garamendi explains. "Out of 10 major casino jobs, nine have had us working around-the-clock for two-to-three months."

For Garamendi there is no "typical job."

"I approach each job differently. I look at the whole job and get a feel for what they want and work from there. I try to stay open-minded and talk to my guys about how we're going to handle the project," he says. "My job as director of the project is to make them comfortable with what we're going to do and how. It's high-stress work—it's important that my team feels comfortable."

"The guys I've had on my team take the work seriously and they always keep in mind what they need to do to produce a quality product. It's important to have qualified help and to let them know they're important. Even though I'm the boss, I'm a small part of what makes the job happen. And I try to do as much hands-on as possible, so I know what I'm asking them to do is possible," he says.

## The magic touch

In January, Garamendi joined Recreational Development Co. as its general superintendent of the Concrete Division. "RDC is real design-oriented. It created the replica of the Statue of Liberty in front of the New York New York Hotel and Casino and the sphinx in front of the Luxor," he reports. His current projects include installing stained concrete with metal inlays at the Neonopolis Mall in downtown Las Vegas and a wood plank-stamping project on the oceanfront boardwalk in Eureka, Calif.

If you ever have a chance to talk with Garamendi, you'll immediately notice he has a good sense of humor and his easy laugh is infectious, but don't think he isn't serious about his craft. "Ninety percent of the time it's fun," he says. "I get the opportunity to do poured-in-place, color-hardened, stamped, sandblasted, stained and more. In the years to come, I'm sure there will be new techniques and a lot more people producing decorative concrete. But right now, I really like the fact that not everyone can do it — decorative concrete is unique, cutting-edge. There's a lot that can be done with concrete." That is, if you have the magic touch.





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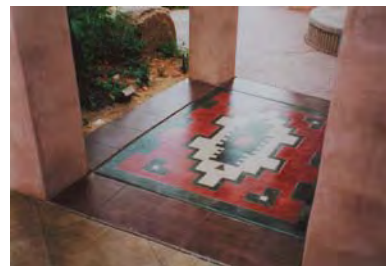
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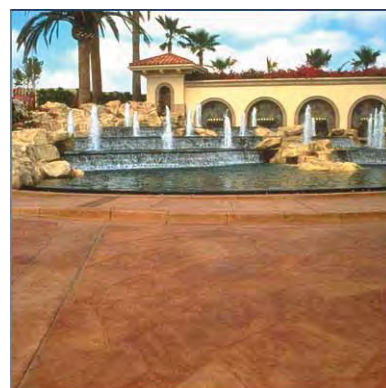
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# Membership has it's Privileges

Once the general public realized there could be more to concrete than broom finishes and exposed aggregate, they wanted it; contractors and suppliers hurried to meet the demand. Realizing the growing popularity of this segment of their industry, the board of directors of the American Society of Concrete Contractors (ASCC), in July 1998, approved the formation of its first specialty group, the Decorative Concrete Council (DCC). The ASCC seems to have been right on target.

The man who brought the idea to the ASCC is Frank Piccolo, president of Artcrete, Inc. of Natchitoches, La. He had made several calls to industry leaders before he was referred to the ASCC, and they agreed to develop and promote such a group. Piccolo presently serves as Council director.

Obviously the ASCC was correct concerning the interest and the need for a group focused solely on decorative concrete. At the DCC's first organizational meeting over 100 people were on hand to demonstrate their support for the organization. Many others have followed. "The people in this group are the cream of the crop. They're who we hope to emulate," said Mitch Leslie of Quality Concrete Co., Billings, Mont. Within weeks after the ASCC had formed the specialty council, membership had reached 110. (Those wishing to join the DCC must be members in good standing of the ASCC.)

In one of its first "public appearances," the Council presented a seminar and a Mega Demo at the World of Concrete (WOC) 2000. The seminar, "Decorative Concrete Flatwork," was the most well attended technical seminar in the show's history.

At the WOC 2001, the DCC organized and presented two seminars and six action exhibit demonstrations. Weeks before the show opened, both seminars were completely booked and had waiting lists. Show organizers repeated both seminars during the event. According to Susan Clancy, seminar program director/WOC, USA, it was the first time the WOC had been forced to repeat a seminar on such short notice.

The ASCC continuously monitors the industry pulse and what members want, and is constantly seeking worthwhile

new services and benefits to offer members. Some of these services include a nationally-recognized safety manual that members use to develop their own safety programs; two, 24-hour hotlines where members call for expert opinions and a Troubleshooting Newsletter featuring questions from the hotlines; and management information exchange groups (MIX Groups) where non-competing contractors share valuable information about running their businesses. "When a problem comes up I go to the toll-free hotline for help, or I

can call someone from my MIX group," says Tommy Ruturra, president, Ruttura & Sons Const. Co., Inc., Farmingdale, N.Y.

Along with the member benefits of the ASCC, the DCC has its own web site —

[www.decorativeconcretecouncil.org](http://www.decorativeconcretecouncil.org) — its own Troubleshooting Newsletter, and special meetings where DCC members can network and learn from each other.

In addition to improving their own companies, ASCC members work as a body to advance the use and quality of concrete construction. Presently the DCC is moving toward developing construction guidelines designed to improve quality installation techniques. Piccolo sees the DCC as "taking the lead to develop application and production guidelines for the decorative concrete industry."

The DCC is one of a very few organized groups of contractors, manufacturers, suppliers and others related specifically to decorative concrete. Like the founders of the ASCC, those who conceived the idea of a decorative concrete group recognized the advantage of combining the efforts of many individual companies to benefit an entire industry.

The Decorative Concrete Council is a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors (ASCC). Made up of concrete contractors that install decorative concrete, manufacturers and other interested parties, the mission of the DCC is to advance the quality and use of decorative concrete systems for both horizontal and vertical applications. Companies wishing to join the DCC must be members in good standing of the ASCC. For information on joining the ASCC call 1-800-877-2753 or visit their web site at [www.asconc.org](http://www.asconc.org).





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# Self-Leveling Overlays: The Aesthetic, Cost-Efficient Alternative

By Bruce Hackett



**C**oncrete contractors should by now be well aware of the recent spike in popularity of decorative concrete in a variety of applications. Concrete remains one of the most durable, functional, reliable building materials available, but there's no getting around the fact that when you mix Portland cement, sand and water, the initial result is not particularly attractive. Through the use of integral colors, dry-shake color hardeners and similar products, fresh concrete need no longer be gray, monotone and drab looking.

In situations where a concrete slab has cracked, spalled or aged, cementitious overlayments can provide a solution, when compared to the time-consuming and costly alternative of ripping out the hard slab and pouring new concrete. Numerous manufacturers offer products and systems that fall under the category of trowelable, stampable overlayments, but this article will focus solely on self-leveling, polymer-modified overlays.

Self-leveling overlays, flowable, polymer-modified cementitious toppings that have the huge advantage of setting within a matter of hours. They are a new options for contractors that appeared on the market within the last five or six years. Designed exclusively for use in interior applications, self-leveling overlays offer tremendous benefits that explain the widespread use in many casinos, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, resorts, theme parks, office buildings, and even residences across the country.

Self-leveling overlays offer a number of significant benefits over alternative floor coverings. Through staining, saw-cutting, dying and grouting, overlays can accommodate an almost limitless range of designs — global maps, for instance, or dolphins swimming through waves — that would be either impossible or cost-prohibitive with other materials. Provided they are properly and regularly maintained, self-leveling overlayments will also last indefinitely, which offers a clear

advantage over carpet, tile, vinyl and other more traditional floor coverings that must be periodically replaced. Additionally, overlays are considerably less expensive than pricier alternatives such as granite, terrazzo or marble.

"In the casinos of Las Vegas, the use of self-leveling overlays has taken off like crazy," says Gale Hodges, president of NuFloor Systems, a veteran contractor firm in the Western U.S. "It wasn't that long ago that 100 percent of my work was installing underlayments for the flooring people, but ever since these self-leveling overlays came out, now 95 percent of my time is spent putting in decorative toppings. It's like a revolution, at least in Vegas. That's all they use."

He said carpet used to be the preferred choice there, "but it wears out from all the traffic, and they had to change it at least once a year, which was a headache, and costly. In some areas, tile was popular, but that required maintenance too, and these overlays can be much more decorative. And the main benefit, of course, is it lasts. It's there forever, as long as you clean it and keep it waxed."

Another key advantage is the time factor, says Robert Harris, director of product training for The Scofield Institute, part of L.M. Scofield Co., a leader in architectural concrete for more than 85 years. "Depending on the size of the floor, you can conceivably turnkey a project — surface preparation, crack repair, priming, overlay installation, floorcutting, staining and sealing — in three days. That's a real fast-track turnaround, especially when compared to the 28 days it takes for a fresh-poured concrete floor to cure."

Polymer-modified, self-leveling overlays are designed to be  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$ th of an inch thick, but generally perform better at  $\frac{3}{8}$ " to compensate for variances in floor height. The vast majority of installations are in this range, although there might be rare instances when overlays have been installed to thicknesses as high as 4–5", says Seth

Pevarnik, technical field consultant with Ardex, Inc., a recognized leader in the self-leveling overlay product category. "That thickness would very expensive, even cost-prohibitive, but if we're talking about a customer who needs the project turned around in a day or two, he can't afford to wait for the alternative, which is to pour a fresh 4" structural slab, and wait the 28 days it takes to cure. With the casinos, for example, they can't afford to keep their slot machines and tables out of action for that length of time."

## **Substrate Preparation is Crucial**

Installers and manufacturers of self-leveling overlay systems universally agree that a project is doomed to failure if the concrete substrate is not properly prepared to accept the product. According to Pevarnik, "The key to success when installing our products is to achieve a good bond between the substrate and the topping, and proper preparation of the surface is by far the most important factor in achieving this bond."

Self-leveling overlays have been installed on top of substrates other than concrete — wood, tile, brick, metal — with only limited success. "Concrete overlays are designed to go on over structural concrete slabs, Period," says Harris. "With other materials, you can't be sure you'll get sufficient adhesion, and you can have serious problems with moisture and/or delamination." Pevarnik adds, "If you pour a self-leveling or self-drying topping over something flexible, like wood, you'll never get the topping to flex with the substrate, and cracks will appear. It's best that the substrate be a concrete slab."

Says Harris, "I can't overstate how critical it is to achieve an appropriate surface profile on the concrete. Technical guidelines recommended by ICRI (the International Concrete Repair Institute) indicate that, on a scale of 1 to 9, you want a surface profile of between 4 and 6 when you're installing a 10-mil topping like a self-





leveling overlay. Our experience tells us the best way to achieve that range is through shotblasting.”

Steel shotblasting is a process whereby steel shot — essentially, BBs — is centrifugally propelled in a special machine’s enclosed blast chamber at high velocity onto the substrate surface. This aggressive action roughens up, or abraids, the surface with many small indentations, which offer thousands of minute peaks and valleys to which the overlay can grab on to and adhere.

While there are a number of other ways to prep a substrate, from mild methods like detergent scrubbing or acid etching to super-aggressive processes such as scarifying or rotomilling, shotblasting is generally

recognized as the ideal methodology when self-leveling overlays are to be applied, according to IRCI guidelines. A single pass with a shotblasting machine is ideal for removing dirt, laitance, curing compounds, sealers, polyurethane coatings, tile mastics, and thin epoxy coatings. Some thicker materials may require multiple passes, and certain materials such as resin systems, resilient coatings and adhesives, may require scarifying or similar aggressive techniques. Shotblast systems are designed to contain airborne dust generated during the procedure.

While acid etching is a popular preparation method in some circles, overlay manufacturers discourage it for projects involving their products. “Acid

etching isn’t recommended because it’s difficult to get all the residual acids off the surface, and if it’s allowed to dry and be left behind, it acts as a bond breaker,” says Jeff Potvin, director of engineering for Increte Systems. Adds Pevarnik, “The acid can penetrate into the porous concrete and chemically react with the cement, thus affecting the long-term integrity of the concrete.”

Too much moisture content in the concrete substrate will almost certainly cause problems for a self-leveling overlay system. Moisture vapor transmission through the capillaries of the concrete reaches the surface and, eventually, will cause delamination with any kind of topping or overlay, says Harris. “Perhaps the concrete hasn’t fully cured, or it was made with a high water-to-cement ratio, or you have a high water table or other groundwater sources in your installation location. If you suspect you might have a moisture problem, regardless of the source, there are a couple of simple tests you can do to be sure. There’s ASTM 4263, which is a tape-down test, where you tape down and seal off a small area overnight or a minimum of 16 hours, and if you see beads of sweat or condensation, you’ve got excess moisture. There’s ASTM 1907, a calcium chloride test that takes three days, or between 60 and 72 hours. Critically, you’ve got to bring the moisture content down before applying an overlay.”

Another important part of the surface preparation process is the repair of existing cracks. Because the overlay is a concrete material, cracks in the concrete substrate have a tendency to eventually make their way to the surface of the topping. Most overlay manufacturers offer companion products for patching hairline cracks to help inhibit their ability to reach the new surface.

“One way to repair a crack is to grind the edges to help make it smoother, but the crack may still resurface over the course of a few years,” says Potvin. The use of Fiberglas tape or membranes, followed by patch, can be helpful in keeping cracks under control. Many



installers simply plan their designs to, wherever possible, include sawcuts in the same areas where cracks exist in the substrate. In this way, when cracks make their way to the surface, they are disguised as saw-cut joints. As Harris puts it, "Honor the crack. Let it do its thing, and make it work to your advantage. Make it part of your design."

## Applying Primer

Once the substrate is properly shotblasted, moisture content is determined to be at or below acceptable levels, and cracks have been satisfactorily repaired, the next step is application of an appropriate primer material. Most overlay manufacturers make a primer product specifically designed for use with their proprietary self-leveling overlay systems. Two coats, or even three or four, are recommended to ensure the primer accomplishes both jobs it is designed to do: bond with the substrate and seal the pores in the concrete.

"With our self-drying topping," says Pevarnik, "we recommend two coats of Ardex primer. It acts as a bonding agent, but more important, it seals the pores of the concrete so the substrate doesn't absorb water from the overlay mix. In return, it prevents air from coming up from the substrate into the mix and leave pinholes and air bubbles."

A simple water test can be conducted to ensure that the primer has properly sealed the substrate. "Once the primer has dried," says Harris, "pour a capful of water and then examine it closely. If it beads up, then that means the water won't penetrate, but also, check to see if any tiny air bubbles are permeating up through the primer. If so, apply a third coat."

Primer should be applied with a brush or pushbroom. "Some installers try to roll it on, or spray it on, but you need to brush it afterwards too," he notes. "You need to make sure the primer is being forced down into the pores of the concrete. Otherwise, it's just a film sitting on top, and it's not really bonding well."

It's wise to plan your project so the overlay material is applied within 72

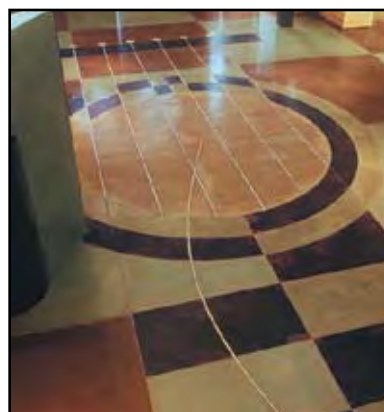
hours of the primer application.

"Actually, once the primer is dry to the touch — anywhere from two to eight hours — start overlaying as soon as possible. The longer you wait, the better the chance for dust or other small debris to collect and cause problems."

## Overlayment application

Some contractors mix their overlay systems and water in barrels at the job

site while others prefer using a pump and hose, and it often depends on the size of the job. Says Hodges, "Either way, it must be done precisely to the manufacturer's specifications. The amount of water in the mix must be consistent and exact. We put down about 100 truckloads annually, and we've found through experience that the pump gives you better control of thickness and consistency."



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For Scofield's Overlay product, says Harris, "You need to add exactly 4.5 quarts of water per 55-pound bag of mix. Don't vary from that ratio. If you add too much water, it dilutes the integrity of the mix, but if you don't add enough water, it won't self-level properly."

As the material is poured into place, particularly with larger areas, it's vital to keep a wet edge, just as painters do. Then, using either a gauge rake or a smoother, or both, you maneuver it around and help it find its own uniform level at a uniform depth. "You need to work quickly and efficiently, because this material is heat sensitive and the warmer the conditions the faster it will start setting up," says Harris. "Using a smoother breaks the surface tension and allows any entrapped air to get out. It's tempting to overmanipulate the material, but once you get a routine going that works,

**Once the overlay has reached sufficient hardness — which can take anywhere from three hours to overnight — there are special power tools available to score or sawcut the surface.**

you'll find that one or maybe two passes with the smoother is all you need. Then get off it."

If more than just a few bubbles appear, this probably indicates insufficient primer was applied. In these cases, a porcupine roller can help alleviate the problem, but then go back over it with a smoother if you don't like the dimpled effect left from the porcupine roller, he says.

Temperature — of the air, of the mix and of the water — is yet another important criterion in a successful overlay floor installation. "Keep in mind,

this is a concrete product, and it's best to work when conditions are cool," Harris notes. "If the ambient temperature is too warm, or the mix was stored outside in the sun, that will affect the set time. An air conditioning system or heating system should be shut off, if at all possible, before you begin pouring product. The water you add

should be chilled or cool. We recommend putting several bags of ice in the water barrel and coiling the hose in the chilled water if the conditions are warm. That will help prevent the floor from setting up too fast."

### Finishing and Maintaining

Once the overlay has reached sufficient hardness — which can take anywhere from three hours to overnight — there are special power tools available to score or sawcut the surface. The possibilities are almost without limit. A wide range of patterns, designs, artwork

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and even company logos can be cut into overlay surface. "You can achieve designs in concrete that you can't get with other materials," says Harris, "either because the material won't allow it or it would be cost prohibitive. With self-leveling overlayments you can do just about anything your imagination allows." Different diameter diamond blades on a straight or angle grinder permits the installer to show his or her artistic flair without causing excessive dust problems. As mentioned earlier, you might consider tailoring your design so certain sawcuts are made at places where there were cracks in the concrete substrate, thereby hiding them if and when they make their way to the surface.

Some overlay systems come only in gray or white; if different colors are desired, coloring products or pigments must be added to the mix. Several overlay manufacturers also offer custom mixed colors which allows the designer, architect or contractor to match any color whether it be a paint chip or other colors already in use. Other systems like Scofield's are premixed in dozens of different colors. Many installations, however, are made more dynamic and colorful through the use of stains (sometimes in multiple colors) applied to the hardened overlay. Through various brushing techniques, stains can be evenly applied or layered or mixed to create a faux look.

The final step is to apply sealer and protective coating to protect the floor from damage and traffic wear-and-tear. If the floor is in a high traffic area, some installers apply several coats of sealer, not only to protect the floor but to simplify the regular maintenance routine. "If you build up successive coats of wax or polish, an overlay floor is relatively easy to maintain," observes Harris. "It also depends how much traffic a floor is subjected to, but if you adhere to a regular maintenance schedule and continue reapplying wax, the floor should look great and last almost indefinitely."

Hodges agrees. "These floors can last forever, but only if they get the maintenance they require. In the casinos, they're buffed and polished every day, or every other day. In most locations, they should be cleaned and waxed a minimum of once every five days."

For concrete contractors looking to enter this popular new market niche, many overlay systems manufacturers and their distribution networks offer two-day or three-day training seminars that cover everything an installer needs to know in a hands-on environment.





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CIRCLE #41 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Sales and Marketing Techniques for the Decorative Concrete Specialist

By Bruce Hackett and Lindy Ausburne



It's one of the truest and simplest maxims in the world of business: You won't be successful if people don't know about you.

If prospective customers are ever going to buy the products or services you're selling, they need to know you exist and that your company's products and/or services are worth buying. In short, you need to sell yourself in the marketplace. The best and time-honored way to do that is through the effective use of various marketing tactics designed to increase awareness of your company's strengths and experience.

The decorative concrete industry is currently one of the fastest growing fields in the nation. Consequently, with more and more contractors entering the marketplace to meet the growing demand among architects and consumers alike, decorative concrete specialists must do more to market themselves — and in ways that differentiate themselves from the competition.

If you're like most contractors, however, your background is more in the skilled trades than in sales and marketing. You may be unsure about the best and most cost-effective ways of reaching your potential audience. Direct mail? Television commercials? Public relations? Trade shows? Brochures? All of these tried-and-true tactics can be useful, but you have to choose the ones that are right for your business and within your limited budget.

## Home & Garden Shows: A Must

For the decorative concrete contractor just starting out, particularly those who wish to concentrate on the residential market, participation in a local home and garden show is an excellent way to get the word out about your work. Also effective are the various "Parade of Homes" exhibitions traditionally sponsored by local or regional chapters of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Events focusing on more specialized subcategories, like spa and pool deck installation, are worth considering, too. Those who attend



these events are exactly the people you want to reach — builders, architects, designers and consumers who may be looking for a quality contractor, or are eager to know more about the relatively new world of decorative concrete.

Darby Hebert runs a Kwik Kerb Decorative Concrete franchise in the Charleston, SC, area. He has been in business just 18 months. "Last year, we did the landscaping and remodeling expo they have each year here in Charleston, and that did really well for us. We generated close to 200 quality sales leads."

If you choose to participate in a local industry expo, you might consider offering your services for free to the show sponsors, installing a section of decorative concrete floor that shows off your stamping or staining skills. Your work will be on display in a high-traffic area, generating significant awareness of your name and quality of craftsmanship. If you're an exhibitor, you'd be well advised to have brochures,

media kits, business cards and other printed materials available to distribute to those who visit your booth.

### Suppliers Can Help

Oftentimes, the manufacturer from whom you buy your decorative concrete products can assist you in these efforts. At Specialty Concrete Products, the company is happy to help contractors generate postcards, brochures, even videos and CD-ROMs for use in marketing themselves. "We want our customers to be successful, and we'll help them in any way we can," says Jeff Hartzog, International Sales Manager. "We help them put promotional materials together at cost, and then they compile or acquire a mailing list and send them out. We can even help them get a website up and running, if that's the way they want to go."

Because decorative concrete is such a visual product, a promotional video is an excellent method for educating potential clients about how to turn

conventional grey concrete surfaces into something truly extraordinary. "When you take a video to prospective customers, you're doing two things," said Hartzog. "First, you're educating them about the attractive option of decorative concrete, which they may not know about yet, and second, you're showing them that you're the person they should hire to do their job."

Videos should be limited to 8-10 minutes in length to avoid boring your audience. They should include "before, during and after" shots of several different projects, tightly edited for maximum effectiveness. Producing your master video represents most of the cost involved; making multiple copies to leave with your prospects is very inexpensive.

### Know Your Customers

The visual presentation of quality work goes a long way in convincing your audience to hire you. Jeff Chambers, a veteran in decorative concrete instal-

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lation in the Southern California market, concentrates almost exclusively on retail commercial applications, especially chain stores and restaurants. He has learned the wisdom of researching how an organization is structured, approaching the right decision-makers and offering a compelling case through Power Point and other computer-based presentations.

"I have the added advantage of doing my installation work right where everyone can see it," Chambers notes. "In malls and shopping centers, if I'm putting in a decorative concrete floor in a high-end retail space, the architects and contractors involved in other jobs in the same area walk by and see the finished floor as well as the skill and care we put into our work."

Chambers has a relationship with Crossfield Products Corp.'s Miracote Division. Ron Borum, Corporate Vice President, says one of the reasons Chambers has been successful is his ability to be flexible to meet retail clients' demanding timetables. "He presents his work professionally, with touch-and-feel samples and high-quality photos of completed jobs, and then he's able to respond almost immediately if need be," he observes.

### High-Quality Portable Samples

While photos and videos do a fine job of showing off your work, even better are actual samples that you can take with you when making sales calls. The accepted standard is 2' x 2' squares that adequately represent patterns, textures and colors, but they can sometimes be awkward and heavy to transport. Some contractors are now using a relatively new alternative that is far more convenient and portable — 5½" round samples made from pure color hardener mixed with water and formed in plastic laboratory petri dishes.

Perhaps better still is the option of pouring sample areas in your warehouse, showroom, or outside your building and then inviting architects and designers to come for a visit, either

## ...industry insiders are virtually unanimous in their opinion that the best advertising in the decorative concrete field is word of mouth.

by appointment or via an open-house event. This method allows larger patterns and textures to be displayed to full advantage, and allows customers to walk on, feel and touch the product.

### Should You Be On TV?

Some marketing tactics are inappropriate for certain types of businesses, and some can be too expensive when weighed against the amount of business they help draw. For example, TV commercials have long been regarded as undignified for lawyers, doctors and others who sell professional services. On the other hand, businesses that sell a visually oriented product or service have found television to be a very persuasive medium to get their message across. Decorative concrete falls in that category, and some contractors have found TV ads to be well worth the investment.

Darby Hebert was initially hesitant to spend the money to produce a TV spot, "but we finally bit the bullet and got a 30-second ad produced. We've been running it during the local morning news and during a lunch-hour program called "Midday" shown here in Charleston. It has pulled really well for us."

Hebert also learned first hand about the wonders of public relations. Through inquiries with the producers of the "Midday" program, Hebert found himself featured in a six-minute "what's new in home improvement" segment on the show, demonstrating how decorative concrete is installed and how good it can look. "By the time we finished doing that live appearance,

I found a half-dozen messages on my cell phone from people who'd seen it and wanted to know more. That's what they call free advertising!"

As the Internet continues to make inroads into the ways every industry does business, contractors would be foolish to ignore the opportunities and valuable information awaiting them online. A number of industry websites are available on which contractors may post information and list services, either for free or a modest fee. These include (but are not limited to):

[www.decorative-concrete.net](http://www.decorative-concrete.net)

[www.thebluebook.com](http://www.thebluebook.com)

[www.arcad.com](http://www.arcad.com)

[www.usacontractor.com](http://www.usacontractor.com)

[www.contractorfind.com](http://www.contractorfind.com)

[www.buildingtradedir.com](http://www.buildingtradedir.com)

### There's Nothing Like Word of Mouth

While visual aids, TV ads, trade show participation and other techniques can be very helpful in marketing yourself, industry insiders are virtually unanimous in their opinion that the best advertising in the decorative concrete field is word of mouth. "It's an extremely visual product," says Hartzog, "so the main thing is to put in quality work, because the product sells itself. A great job for a satisfied customer spreads the word for you. You go into a residential neighborhood and put in a quality driveway or patio or pool deck, and soon everybody sees it, and everybody wants one."

That's why it's so critical to make sure your customers are satisfied with your work, because you'll want to enlist their help in getting the word out. Don't forget to take quality color photos and/or shoot video, both before and after, of your work for use in future marketing efforts. Secure their permission to use their names as references, and ask if you may send prospects by the customers' houses to inspect your work first-hand.

"Satisfied customers who will recommend you to others are worth their weight in gold," notes Hartzog.





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# Concrete Skins

Photograph courtesy L.M. Scofield Company



# Adding Profit and Great Looks While Undercutting the Competition

By Dave Cagle

New-and-profitable-tricks can be learned by old dogs, including concrete and contractors. Texture skins and color release chemicals are changing the look of concrete, as well as the bottom line of contracting, as more customers want their concrete to resemble more expensive materials and are willing to pay for it.

To meet this demand, contractors are using trowel-in color hardeners, color and clear release agents, and flexible texture skins to impress every pattern imaginable. The result: contractors can now produce concrete that is nearly a dead ringer for more expensive materials, but at a warehouse-store price.

Skinning looks easy enough: When concrete passes the thumb test-impreses only about a quarter inch-release agent are spread. Then urethane or high polymer plastics mats with raised images of slate, granite, sandstone, bricks, seashells, dinosaur footprints, alligator claws, leaves, branches, even geometric patterns, such as compasses and stencils, are laid on the fresh mix and gently tamped.

When the mats are lifted, the concrete has been imprinted with the decorative impressions. Appropriate colors can be mixed into the concrete or spread on the wet surface and worked in before skinning. Stains can be applied after the concrete is dry.

Texturing and coloring can increase costs from 50 to 100 percent, but customers who appreciate value happily pony up their dough. The contractors who take the time to educate the customers and sell them on texturing can raise their prices accordingly and laugh all the way to the bank.

But it's not that simple.

On a monolithic pour Kevin Santistevan, Vacaville, CA, uses the skins to guard his transition from stamped to textured concrete.





## Skinning: More Than Pouring and Tamping

Properly done, the process starts long before the mud arrives. "Preparation and layout are everything," Lee Levig, proprietor of Concrete Work in the San Francisco Bay area, said. "The more time you take to prepare, the better job you will do."

Preparation is just one step in what Doug Bannister calls "controlling the environment. By doing that, a concrete finisher's more productive and not working three jobs—placing, finishing and skinning—at once."

Long before the forms are set and the mud arrives, Levig draws the project, using a computer-assisted design (CAD) program. He includes all of the dimensions, the various joints, the stamp patterns, and the textures. Every step is reviewed exhaustively before the first truck rolls up.

Timing is critical when using texture skins. Because the impressions stretch the surface of the concrete, the plasticity of the mix is critical. That's why careful contractors check the weather forecast just before a pour. Rain, wind, or a hot sun can significantly affect the curing time of the concrete. Concrete that passes the thumb test will usually imprint well.

Left to become too-hard and the pour can be very difficult to texture, and may even cause surface cracks.

Not waiting long enough, and the water in too-soft concrete might break through the release agent. A powder release agent used on too-wet mix could stain the concrete heavily or unevenly. Impressions could "pillow," which means they bulge, instead of being crisp. Footprints can also show. "You might also get 'squeeze,'" Bannister, owner of The Stamp Store in Oklahoma City, said, "which means joints would need more detailing to look good."

Even vertical surfaces, such as stair risers, cantilevered pool edges, or bullnose borders, are candidates for texturing. Once the concrete has consolidated, a worker will treat these delicate surfaces with a smaller skin, one that has a straight edge that can align with joints, and carefully pat or slap the mat with a hand or other suitable but flat tool.

Having different textures or stamps on opposite sides of a joint can present problems, but solutions are plentiful. Casto favors using jigs to keep a stamp pattern from crossing a joint. Others use skins. Bannister will cut a 1/16-inch sheet of polycarbonate to match the contour of the joint. "You can run your stamps across it and there is no problem." Because the polycarbonate is so thin, the stamp will appear clean and uniform up to the edge. "The whole idea is to get a monolithic pour that looks like separate ones. It gives you a structurally superior slab and saves the owner money."

Casto has even seen the two sides poured on separate days, so that one will be hard while the second is being placed and textured.

The skinning process can be destructive on joints and may even collapse them to some extent, which can look unprofessional or require reworking. Some customers, however, prefer the way partially collapsed joints look. The so called, collapsed joint look, once mastered, can also give the concrete a uniquely rugged stone-like look along its edges.



**Applying the first skin.**



**Using a 2' x 2' skin for touch-ups.**



**Lifting one skin to move the other.**



**Tamping the texture skin into the surface of the concrete.**





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Using the smaller 2' x 2' skin to treat edges of the slab.

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## Overlapping Skins Produces the Natural Look

Producing concrete that mimics natural stones is art in a cementitious medium and overlapping texture skins is one of the crucial techniques. Completely counter to the precise alignment of stamps, skins must be placed randomly so their impressions imitate the irregular looks of natural stone materials.

Bob Harris, director of product training for the Scofield Institute, suggests overlapping skins some four to twelve inches. "I hold a skin up and when it overlaps the one I am standing on, I step on the one I am holding to keep it from moving when I am laying it down. Then I walk out on it."

He recommends rotating a mat 45 to 90 degrees each time it is picked up and relaid. "If you don't rotate a mat, you will see the repetitive pattern which customers don't like."

Mats cannot be dragged across the wet concrete. To make crisp, professional impressions, the mats must be pulled directly up and placed straight down.

Many crews will use mats in sets of three. They stand on the first, lay the second and tamp it. While standing on the first and second mats, they lay the third. Then, picking up the first mat, they repeat the process.

## Skinning or Stamping: Which Is Better?

While both skinning and stamping produce decorative impressions, many differences exist. Skins, while producing more shallow impressions, are much easier to handle, faster and more forgiving, as well as available in a wider selection.

Stamps produce deeper impressions, but are repetitive, often interlocked and demand extreme attention in order to get a professional look. The forms must be aligned carefully and checked often during the installation in order for the job to look professional. Las Vegas contractor Ron Garamendi said, "You have to be on with the layout and keep checking lines. If you are off the line, even a minimal amount, it will show up."

Since skins produce a random appearance that seems more natural, they don't have to be carefully aligned. As a result, well-honed skinning crews can texture several thousand square feet a day, according to Bob Harris, a former contractor and current director of product training at the Scofield Institute. On big jobs, he said, "you can have a skinning

crew following behind a pouring crew. A typical stamping crew might do a thousand square feet a day. It is not unheard of for a skinning crew to do a couple of thousand feet per day."

Skins can also produce unique textures where stamps would create only headaches. Harris had a customer who wanted mounds in his driveway, like those in a skateboard park. Making a stamp pattern look professional would have been very difficult, because of the contours. With skins, his crew had no problem producing a fine texture.

A skinning crew generally uses a variety of mats, ranging from very small to large. For a driveway job, Bannister recommends two skins that are 20 inches square, one three feet on a side, and four that are five by five. He will usually cut one of the 20 x 20s so that it has a straight edge or a 90-degree corner for skinning into corners and up to walls.

Levig likes to have two or three mats per finisher to do about 600 square feet a day. Levig also makes his own skins with liquid polymer rubbers poured out over unique rock formations he finds in the Sierra mountains.

Skins cost upward from \$120 and require careful cleaning throughout the job. Otherwise, they start to pick up concrete from one position and carry it to the next. This can leave unnatural blemishes in an otherwise rough finish.

## Color Adds Realism

Both integrally colored concrete and broadcast colors or both can offer greater depth of color and make the finished concrete look natural. Choosing between the two methods most often depends on what color the customer wants.

Integrally colored concrete is usually better when earth tones or medium shades are desired, although some very light and very dark shades are available. Broadcast colors-pigments that are thrown or "broadcast" onto the wet concrete and then troweled in-are the product of choice to produce very light or dark concrete.

Since natural stones contain mixtures of colors, Harris said, some contractors attempt to reproduce these tones by "flashing" or broadcasting pigments onto integrally colored concrete. Herman Bettencourt of Azores Concrete Floor Specialists in Aylmer, Quebec, keeps a stable of six or seven broadcast colors and uses them in different combinations to mimic different natural materials. "Mixing and using colors is a real art form."

Broadcast colors add work-and therefore cost-to the project since they have to be worked into the surface before skinning. Bannister cuts the volume he will pour by about a third when color hardeners are used. Some pours are so large, the crew cannot throw the color far enough to reach every area.

According to Casto, integrally colored concrete does not accept release patterns and agents as well as broadcast color.

## Skinning New Concrete and Overlays

Texturing new concrete is generally more forgiving than skinning overlaid mix. Since most new pours are 3½ inches thick or more,





they are less likely to dry or "crust" prematurely, Harris said. Most overlays are a half inch or less and have less moisture to evaporate. Another problem with overlays is that some reliefs can bottom out on the hard substrate. "Generally, you should overlay about twice the depth of the imprint," he added.

## Selling Textured Concrete-and Its Increased Costs

"Textured concrete competes well with higher-end products," said Casto, "but a contractor has to educate the customers." Because texturing entails more labor, it can drive up costs considerably. Those costs are recouped, however, in the higher prices.

"If the buyers compare textured concrete with the regular, gray stuff, it seems expensive," Casto said. "But, put it next to more expensive materials, such as actual stone, redwood decking, etc., and it does very well." A married couple balked at paying \$42 per square foot for Italian stone on their patio. Casto showed them textured concrete that resembles such stone and closed the deal for \$16 per foot.

## Skinning Requires Lots of Experience

"Every variable that you have in regular concrete is intensified when you are using skins," Casto said. "You have to adjust the mix and the application techniques so that there's no water standing on top. You have to have the proper amount of the right-size rock. You not only have to get a finish on it, but the imprint has to be consistent across the entire surface."

Like all art forms, there is room for individual techniques. Garamendi, concrete division operations manager for Recreational Development Co., will often start imprinting if the concrete is still a little wet. He must because he pours massive amounts when building the huge concrete expanses in and around Las Vegas's hotels and casinos. Canada's colder climate means that Bettencourt has to start texturing while the mix is wetter and he uses larger crews to get the work done in time.

Training programs are offered by many groups, but a lot of crews learn on the job. Harris advocates formal training and then lots of practice. "Learn on wet and compacted sand with stamps or skins," he said. "Beginners should start out slowly, experiment at home and go from there."

One thing no training course can teach is a knack for texturing. "Some guys don't have an eye for detail or the drive to master it. It took a good eight months to get five out of our 20 guys to where they were really skilled at skinning," Garamendi noted.

Despite the time it takes to learn skinning, contractors across the country are adding textures to the services they offer. When it is well done, skinning makes customers happy while providing a new and generous source of profits.




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# Manufacturer Profile: L.M. Scofield Company

**T**o concrete contractors all over the world, the name L.M. Scofield Company represents the oldest, and one of the most trusted manufacturers in the business. The recognition comes from more than 85 years in the industry, creating high standards for products that form a virtually unlimited menu for coloring and texturing concrete.

The company can trace its roots back to 1915, when a young engineer, Lynn Mason Scofield, developed proprietary systems for making concrete not only beautiful, but more durable as well. His early successes helped to change the way the building industry viewed using concrete.

The 1920's and 30's proved to be an inspiring time period. Scofield's premier line of Lithochrome® products became recognized among architects and designer, including such well-known names Lithochrome® Color Hardener, Lithochrome® Chemstain™ and Lithochrome® Colorwax.

With an eye on the growth opportunities, the family moved the business from the first offices in Chicago to Los Angeles. During this era, trend-setting California architects favored grand Art Nouveau, Art Deco, early Modern and Spanish influenced styles that proved ideal for Scofield products, particularly Lithochrome Chemstain®. The chemically reactive, penetrating stain was used to add variegated color to new or old concrete to produce an antiqued timeworn patina, stone-like features or one-of-a-kind faux finishes. Some of the most glamorous Hollywood homes, owned by luminaries including Charlie Chaplin, Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire, were known to use innovative Scofield products.

As more and more designers and architects discovered the colorful, aesthetic appeal of architectural concrete improved with Scofield systems, they became aware of pragmatic construction advantages from adding both color and structural strength with Chromix® Admixtures. They also found that concrete was much more cost-effective than using granite, marble, or other materials and also offered the flexibility to meet very specific performance criteria required in structural work.

In the 1940s, the company contributed to the war effort by providing large volumes of material needed for military housing in San Francisco and Hawaii. Government contractors found

that using Scofield architectural concrete systems allowed fast track construction and helped keep buildings on schedule and budget. Under the leadership of Lynn's son, George Scofield, the company continued to grow during this challenging time. With his background in chemistry, the new company president accelerated product improvements and innovations. Following World War II, the building boom provided more venues for using decorative concrete in everything from housing, parks and schools to commercial properties such as department stores, banks, luxury hotels and lodges. Interest in colorful, architectural concrete created with Scofield Systems gained wide popularity throughout the post-war years.

## New Leadership Brings Continued Success to Industry Leader

A milestone for the company came in the 1960s when control passed from the Scofield family to Dave R. Arnold, a gifted engineer who brought with him twenty years of prior experience in design and construction management. Under his guidance the "engineered" systems evolved. Mr. Arnold expanded the color range and product offerings, developed comprehensive technical documentation, and contributed to the development of industry testing standards. With the aim of delivering reliable results and eliminating guesswork and problems that can arise when untested coatings or finishes are introduced, Scofield developed compatible systems with stringent quality controls.

The 1960's, '70s and '80s saw rapid adoption of colorful concrete and fueled company expansion in both domestic and international markets. Architects specified the top-of-the line products and contractors turned to Scofield for technical

support and training in using colored concrete in new ways, like imprinting.

Today, at the Scofield Institute, located near Atlanta, Georgia, concrete contractors can gain both knowledge of sound construction practices and skills in decorative work like staining, imprinting, template sand-blasting and diverse coloring techniques for interior and exterior uses. The training center offers a selection of specialized hands-on workshops. For instance, the interior workshop teaches successful installation of the unique, self-leveling SCOFIELD™ Overlay™, the durable interior flooring

**The L.M. Scofield Company offers worldwide availability from three manufacturing and distribution hubs: Los Angeles, California serving the Western United States and Asia-Pacific; Atlanta, Georgia serving the Eastern United States and Latin America; and the United Kingdom serving Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Information on local technical support and sales contacts can be obtained by email to [info@scofield.com](mailto:info@scofield.com) or toll free in the USA and Canada 1-800-800-9900.**





Photograph courtesy L.M. Scofield Company

system used for new construction or refurbishment. Developed for use in high traffic pedestrian areas, the product is in demand for well-known retail, restaurant, and entertainment establishments and attractions.

### **High Product Standards and Ability to Meet Unique Specs Keeps Scofield on Top**

Phillip J. Arnold, the current President of L. M. Scofield Company and Chairman of L. M. Scofield Europe Ltd., carries forward the family traditions the company has been built upon. "We are proud to be a manufacturer in this industry," says Phil Arnold. "As a manufacturer we are able to control quality and make concrete better, more durable and beautiful. So it looks great today and improves with age." One way the company makes concrete better long term is Chromix® Admixtures. The product makes concrete that is structurally superior by reducing the water requirement and improving workability. Efflorescence, laitance, and color bleeding are reduced and freeze/thaw resistance is improved. The finished concrete maintains its good looks since the coloring-conditioning admixtures produce a permanent, streak-free, and uniform appearance and can withstand extremes of weather and even heavy vehicular use — long term.

"Coming up with solutions that meet tough specifications is just part of the day-to-day business of L. M. Scofield Company," says Phil Arnold. "We are continually improving and developing new products that increase opportunities for the industry by expanding design options and improving performance. The creative possibilities are so diverse that often these surfaces look like anything but concrete."

Anyone who has been to a Walt Disney property or other similar attractions will be familiar with the use of concrete to create remarkable, life-like environments that endure high volume use. For example, in Animal Kingdom and the new Animal Kingdom Hotel in Orlando, naturalistic environments have been created which the lead designer dubbed "designer dirt." With the dilemma of creating walkways suited to heavy foot traffic without spoiling the illusion of the Serengeti Desert re-creation, they turned to Scofield. With actual dirt samples from the desert, Scofield developed special colors for their client. To add to the authentic look of the walkways, contractors imprinted the concrete with animal paw prints and tire tracks from all-terrain vehicles.

Today the use of custom colors and innovative decorative techniques is not limited to famous attractions or the homes of rock stars and wealthy business moguls. The popularity of Scofield Systems is seen in town centers, arenas, shopping centers, schools, medical facilities and even small-scale residential improvements. Opportunities for concrete contractors are expanding because of the environmental and cost benefits and because concrete can be a remarkably creative medium in the hands of skilled contractors. "We are truly inspired by the contractors we work with and what they do with our systems. We are their biggest fans," says Arnold. "As it has since 1915, Scofield provides reliable systems, technical know-how and the extensive color palette that designers and concrete contractors use to create beautiful works of art."



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# Health & Safety

By Tammy Fulton

**T**he concrete has cured for at least 28 days, the surface has been cleaned thoroughly, and the contractor is ready to start applying the acid stain. Or, is he? Did he prepare to do the job safely? Is he wearing the proper personal protection?

Many times contractors take their time preparing to do a good job, but neglect the one thing that is most important to future jobs, themselves! If the contractor does not protect his body properly, there may be problems for him later on.

Acid stain is a coloring product involving a chemical reaction on a cementitious material. A solution mixed with water, acid and inorganic salts react with minerals already present in the concrete, the result of this reaction is color. To apply the acid stain, you will need a 1–2 gallon pump sprayer (without metal parts) to apply



the stain. The product will now be airborne and can be absorbed by breathing it. Having the correct \*NIOSH approved respirator will protect the contractor from absorbing any of the spray from the acid stain.

"Basically it is common sense - you don't want to breathe anything or get anything on your body if you can avoid it," said Art Pinto of DecoSup in Miami, Florida. "Just like working with concrete, you want to protect yourself from the products."

It is important to have as much ventilation as possible when you are working indoors with the acid stains. Murray Lemons of Tropical Decks and Coatings in Apopka, Florida says his crew wears the protection against potential hazards. He also recommends good rubber gloves and safety glasses.

Paul Schneider of Patterned Concrete of Cincinnati agrees. Wearing



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respirators, eye protection, gloves, long sleeve shirts and long pants are all important. "Because accidents happen and you don't know if you are going to be that person," said Schneider.

But, he knows from experience that sometimes a guy on the job thinks he doesn't need protection from something he is used to working with. So, the second day on a three-day job, Schneider might find some of his crew without their respirator masks on but complaining of sore throats. He thinks it directly relates to using the acid stain and not being properly protected.

If the contractor is working indoors, a half-mask cartridge-type respirator is recommended. Since the acid stain process requires a sealer be put on afterward, one type of mask could be used for both the acid stain application and the sealer. The P100 series of respirators provides the most protection from acid gases and organic vapors (solvent based). There is an Organic Vapors/ Acid Gases Cartridge with the P100 filter available. NIOSH has three

rating levels for respirators, P, R & N. The R series could be used, but will not protect as well as the P series. DO NOT use the N series for this application. For more information about NIOSH ratings, go to the website [www.cdc.gov/niosh/respir.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/respir.html).

Remember to keep a cartridge sealed until ready to use. It starts working the moment it is unsealed from the package. Therefore, someone may be using an ineffective cartridge and not know it. Masks should be kept sealed in a protective package between uses and cleaned after every use, unless a disposable type is being used.

There is a misconception out there that a dust mask will protect workers from the effects of acid stains, but that is not true. There are many varieties of respiratory masks available. MSA, 3M, AO Safety, Drager, Lab Safety Supply, Moldex, North, Pro-Tech, Scott, Sellstrom, Survivair and Willson are some of the many manufacturers of respirators. Using the wrong respirator or using it in the wrong manner can

cause employees to become ill on the job and they may not realize the source of their illness right away. Check the MSDS sheet provided by the manufacturer of the acid stain. It will list the ingredients and the proper protection to be used.

Train employees to use their respirators properly. The OSHA Standard 29 CFR Part 1926.134 was updated in 1999. All those who use respirators need to read this standard and follow it to properly protect their employees.

## References:

\*Refer to 42 CFR part 84 for the specific NIOSH standard information.

- OSHA standard 29 CFR part 1926.134, Respiratory Protection Standard
- The websites [www.acid-stain.com](http://www.acid-stain.com) and [www.decorative-concrete.net](http://www.decorative-concrete.net), [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).
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CIRCLE #33 ON READER SERVICE CARD



# Put the brakes on moisture problems and color problems!

Densifier

**PRODUCT  
PROFILE**

By Jack Klein

Photograph courtesy Applied Concrete tech.



Imagine putting down a colored, architectural concrete walkway that will be used by tens of thousands of people, at a minimum, per day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Add to the mix a concrete contractor's nightmare of staining substances, such as spilled coffee, colas and any manner of sticky substances. Keep in mind these substances will have to be removed on a daily basis with a minimum amount of expended labor. Now imagine you have to guarantee that your walkway will look just as it did the day it opened — five years from now.

This is certainly not your typical scenario, but it is one that is faced by concrete contractors who work regularly with the nation's largest theme and amusement parks.

"We're not talking about a typical residential walkway or swimming pool patio," says "Honk" Visger, general superintendent of Site Technology in Atlanta. "Yet, even though it has to stand up to extremely high-volume pedestrian traffic, when you're working on a theme park, the finished product can't look industrial. It has to blend in

with the surroundings, and look every bit as pretty as something you would find in a high-end private residence.

**Tiger Wall** — This new wall is was produced with shotcrete application using two colors of integrally colored concrete. Densifier was applied prior to the artists painting work. Protecting the painting was the use of a UV sealer.

Visger works with virtually every type of architectural concrete in his walkway projects for a number of the top theme parks in the country, including colored stamped, textured and exposed aggregate. But he says he gets a lot of help in preserving his projects' color integrity with the use of a product called PROTECRETE Densifier, also known as PROTECRETE-CDS Concrete Densifier Sealer.

"Densifier works extremely well in preventing staining substances from penetrating the concrete," says Visger. "These walkways have to hold up to everything from strawberry ice cream to Coca-Cola, and every other imaginable thing that can be spilled on them. We've found that Densifier not only helps to prevent staining, but also makes it much easier to wash down the walkways at the end of the day."



**Airless spray application is the manufacturer's recommendation for Densifier. It is also a labor saving approach.**

A companion product to PROTECRETE's Densifier is its Mix Water Conditioner (MWC), which changes the chemical composition of the water in such a dramatic way that virtually all of the mix water is used — unlike ordinary concrete where a great deal of bleed water is left over.

MWC is a clear, environmentally neutral, non toxic, odorless, non-VOC or VOS liquid. Concrete containing MWC at the recommended dosage rate of 10 ounces per hundred weight has been shown to produce concrete with virtually no shrinkage cracking and virtually no curling. As measured per ASTM C-157, it has a shrinkage rate of 0.015.

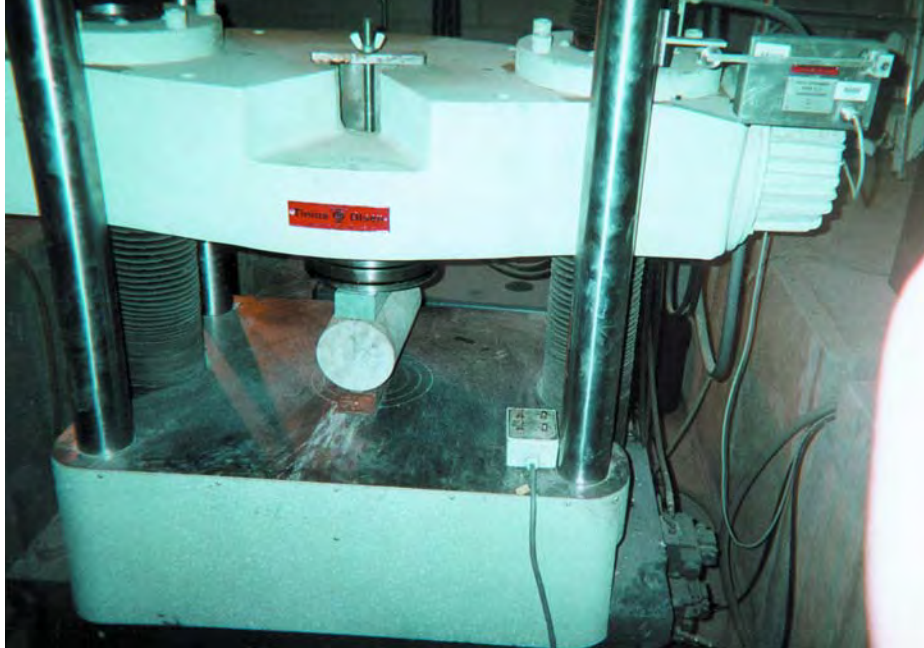
MWC is not advantageous only for large pours, either, as evidenced by its use at Soupcan, Inc., a Chicago company which manufactures high-end concrete tubs, sinks and countertops.

"We've noticed that not only does Mix Water Conditioner give us a better all around concrete to work with for manufacturing purposes, resulting in less curling and warping in our slabs, but it's also excellent for colored concrete work," says Gerry Santora, president. "Simply by adding a little of the product to our mix water enhances our color because we're getting a more homogenous mix with the material in there. Red remains red, not pink. Grass green is grass green and not a pale green version of itself."

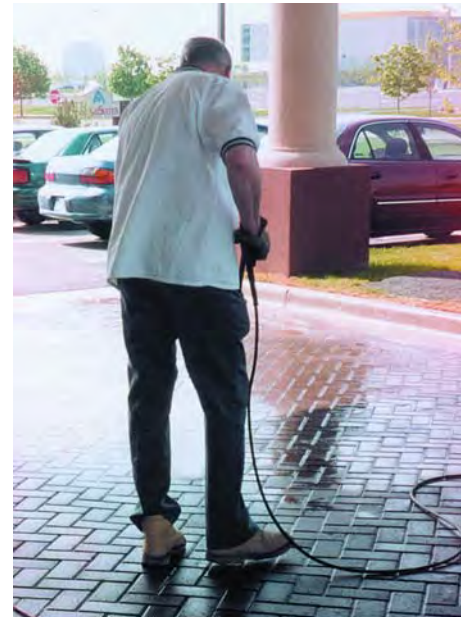
It certainly appears that in the case of MWC, what you see is what you get. And that's a good thing for contractors working with decorative concrete.







**Product testing at University of Illinois prove that concrete treated with the Densifier can render a slab that is 30% to 40% stronger.**



**Applying the Densifier first helps the application gain increased control of colors with acid stains.**



Densifier is currently the only product available for already-poured concrete that makes “concrete within concrete.” When Densifier is used at any point in the concrete’s lifespan, the concrete becomes better than it was in the beginning.

The purpose of Densifier is to fortify the concrete, or make it denser. Normally, the sooner it is applied to the concrete, the better. (The exception to that rule is when the concrete contains chlorides, like a calcium chloride accelerator, which Densifier will push to the surface if in a wet, or solublized state, like it is in very fresh concrete. This is not a disaster, but it does require that the concrete be cleaned.) Densifier stops the deterioration and improves the integrity of the concrete at any stage in its lifespan, beginning as early as the concrete can be walked on without leaving footprints. For new concrete, it is used as a cure. For older concrete, it can be used as a “densifying” sealer under the decorative overlayment. Then “densify” the overlayment with Densifier.

“Within 28 days of application, the concrete can be expected to be 20 to 30% stronger,” says Andrea Bright, president of PROTECRETE. “Another thing we like to point out is that Densifier is environmentally safe. Not just friendly, but actually safe. It won’t burn your skin, and it doesn’t harm vegetation either.

Bright says that what this means to contractors is that there’s no fear in applying it and having it hurt them, although it is recommended that a painter’s mask is worn during application, because the airless sprayer kicks up concrete dust, which IS harmful.

“What this all means to building owners, homeowners and environmentalists is that harmful chemicals aren’t leaching into the environment — such as with the now outlawed silanes and siloxanes. Plus Densifier is keeping harmful by products, such as concrete dust, radon, etc., sealed within the concrete.”

Preventing stains, however, is by no means the only advantage to using Densifier, any more than walkways are the only uses of concrete in a theme park.





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Sam Bennington is project manager of Rock Waterscape Systems in Orlando, Florida. His company is a concrete contractor specializing in artificial rock work that may also be found in the most popular theme parks in the United States.

"We use Densifier primarily to stop the efflorescence in the concrete," says Bennington. "So in situations where our concrete is under water, such as in waterfalls, the calcium in the concrete will work its way to the surface and leave all those little white efflorescence marks. By using Densifier, we can eliminate a good 95% of that efflorescence. It greatly reduces the call backs we get from people who would otherwise call us and say, 'The rock is all white, what are you going to do about it?'"

Bennington says his company's method of making magic in theme parks is to put the concrete down, put the Densifier on the surface, and then paint the rock with acrylic latex paints, or on occasion, apply acid stains. He says the sequence of applications is important.

"We had a client who wanted to do the acid stain first, and then put the Densifier over that," he recalls. "Because the product will bring soluble salts to the surface, it ends up with a white powder that looks like snow over everything. So the sequence needs to be Densifier first, wash it off and get rid of anything the Densifier has forced to the surface, and then paint or stain it. If you reverse that process, you'll

end up having to paint or stain it all over again. After staining or painting it we put a clear sealer over it that contains a UV inhibitor that keeps the paint from fading.

According to Randall Henry of Elite Crete Solutions, a Colorado Springs based contractor and training facility for decorative specialists, Henry notes that Densifier works to create better color control when working with acid stains on old concrete. "Densifier does two jobs. First, it keeps moisture from migrating up through the slab which can have an adverse darkening effect on blue and green colored acid stains. Second, it keeps the water in the stain from sinking into the concrete too deep which limits your control with the stain. Surfaces treated with the Densifier provide more consistent color with acid stains across any surface," says Henry.

Densifier should always be applied with an airless paint sprayer at medium pressure (low pressure when using on hours-old concrete), and the best tip size is .019. Applying Densifier with an airless sprayer atomizes the material allowing it to penetrate deeper into the surface. Densifier can be tricky to remove after it dries from surfaces like glass and can dull some metals, so the manufacturer always recommend covering surfaces not intended for treatment. The product will not harm people, although the manufacturer's label warns against ingesting it.

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Bright maintains that Densifier is easy to apply and can be applied in a single application, while other products require two and three applications to be effective. This, she says, saves in labor costs.

"Basically, all it involves is pointing a wand and waving it back and forth 6 inches from the surface — and it goes on very quickly," she says. "Saving application time is where a contractor can make a lot of money on this product. One person can spray anywhere from 3,000 square feet an hour using a small sprayer to 15,000 square feet an hour using one of the large sprayers. And, unless the concrete is extremely old and porous, the concrete does not need a second application."

Densifier travels deep into the concrete, forming a gel-like barrier using the free alkali — leftover cement from the original placement — that can't be penetrated by water and other contaminants. Because it becomes an actual part of the concrete, it can't be worn away. This makes the product economical.

"The concrete doesn't even have to be that clean for Densifier to work," says Bright. "Of course, things that would block its entry would have to be removed, like acrylics or other impenetrable substances. But you don't have to make sure it's perfectly clean, as it will travel through light dirt and dust and even certain other sealers. This also saves in labor costs."





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## Industry News

### PCA Predicts Continued Growth For Cement Through 2004

**A**s the U.S. enters its 116th straight month of economic expansion, the Portland Cement Association projects continued gains in construction and cement use, according to William D. Toal, PCA's Chief Economist. Portland cement consumption is forecast to rise 1.1% in 2000, cement consumption is expected to reach 114.3 million tons.

Toal attributes the cheery outlook to continued high construction levels. While residential building is expected to drop off slightly in the next two years, nonresidential construction is expected to hold steady, and public construction should increase, bolstered by passage of TEA-21 and AIR-21 (federal transportation and airport construction funding bills). Construction overall should dip slightly in 2001 and rebound in 2002.

The outlook for masonry cements is less optimistic. Tied closely to the residential construction market, masonry cement consumption is expected to slip by 1.5% this year, with another small decline in 2001 before recovery begins.

With demand for cement still rising, producers have scrambled to increase supply, both by increasing imports (to 29.3 million tons last year) and initiating expansion programs, including several "green field" plants, which could add up to 27 million tons of new capacity. As new capacity is added, imports are expected to drop to 23.5 million tons next year, with further declines to near 20 million tons by 2004.

A full copy of Toal's "U.S. Construction and Cement Forecast Update" will be published in the next Monitor, a monthly newsletter published by PCA's Economic Research department. For additional copies, contact Karen Arneson at PCA: 847.966.6200, ext 362; e-mail: [karen\\_arneson@portcement.org](mailto:karen_arneson@portcement.org).

### In Memory of John Beuler, Opa Locka, Florida

**A**lthough months have past since the last World of Concrete show in Las Vegas, Nevada, *Concrete Decor* magazine would like take this opportunity to acknowledge the loss of an important individual and major contributor to the world of concrete construction, in particular, decorative concrete.

John Beuler, President of Super Stone, Opa Locka, Florida was a leader in the development of quality products that helped shape the industry as we know it today. The Super Stone name is built on John's reputation and goals to deliver the best and most innovative products which, to this day, are backed by a strong educational and customer service program.

On behalf of the industry we offer our sincere wishes and God's peace and understanding in this difficult time for the Beuler family. Life is truly a gift.



# Appealing, Revealing. Concrete Stains

## *Let Good Looks Shine Through*

By Robin Suttell

**N**o one wants to remain a dullard forever. Concrete is no exception. Blandly gray to the eye but reliable in use, traditionally it has been relegated to basements, garages, driveways and walkways as a functional surface, not a decorative one. Yet, concrete is coming into its own. Today, contractors and developers are specifying and installing intricately textured cast concrete into foyers, lobbies, garden pathways, and even countertops. But what about the cubic yards of already-installed humble gray matter? Are these surfaces doomed to remain forever mundane?

Chances are, you'll have clients who will want to update their existing concrete surfaces from functional to fashionable. With the help of a high-quality concrete stain or refinishing product and some creativity, you can now engineer a complete makeover of the dull kid on the block. This product category offers a wealth of opportunities for contractors.

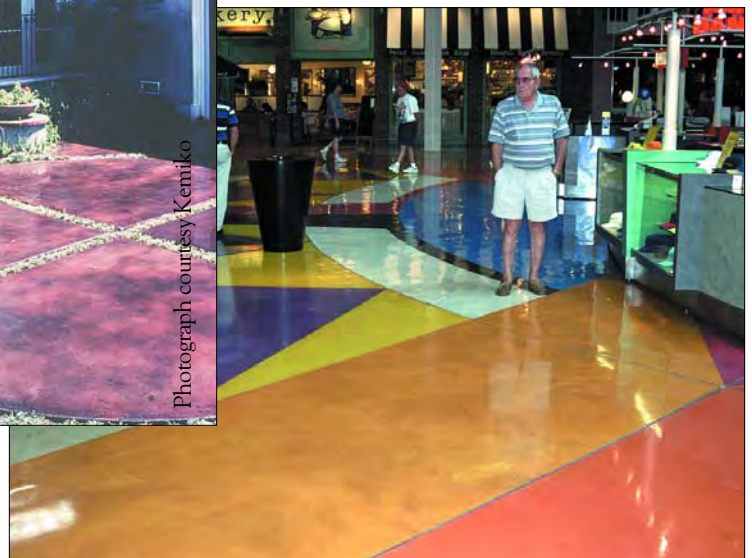
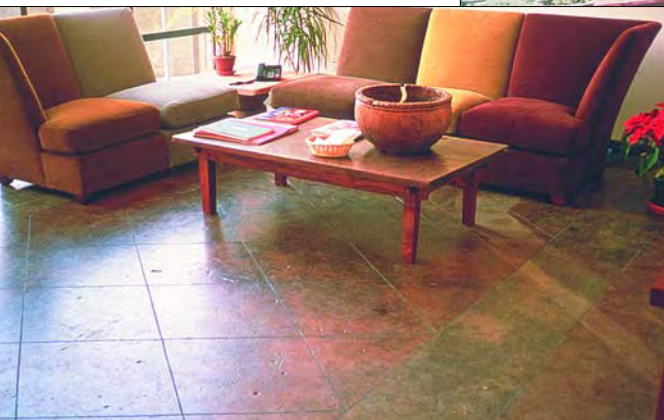
### The Skinny on Stains

In the past, people seeking style have often opted to paint concrete surfaces. Particularly in the 1950s and '60s, patios, garages and basement recreation rooms sported bright-colored paint to disguise fundamentally functional surfaces. But paint, as you know, can sometimes need lots of attention. Paint sits atop the concrete and covers the natural surface texture. Since the paint does not penetrate the concrete surface, it can eventually fail because of the substrate's inherent moisture. In fact, Sherwin-Williams' experts report that concrete's moisture content rarely dips below 15 percent, even in existing installations.

Thus, as moisture attempts to escape the opaque coating, it forces cracks, peeling and blistering in the coating film. The traditional definition of a stain is a "transparent or semi-transparent solution or suspension of color matter in a vehicle designed to color a surface by penetration without hiding it." And for this reason, today's concrete stains offer some definite aesthetic and performance benefits. Concrete stains penetrate the porous surface and add color without hiding the concrete's natural texture. These penetrating coatings shift with the concrete and allow the substrate to breathe.

"A painted surface is just that — an opaque painted surface," says Bill Shorey of Spec-West, a Sacramento, CA-based concrete products distributor. "It gives you a specific hue or color."

"Staining doesn't deliver a specific color because it is a reactionary process," he explains. "The concrete itself actually gives you the final look. Depending on how old the concrete is and the condition it is in when you start out can make a lot of difference. The stain can enhance and





intensify the discoloration and marks in the concrete. A lot of people want that variegated 'Old World' look."

Shorey uses wood stain as a comparison. Both concrete and wood are highly porous surfaces. As a result, penetrating stains don't cover the substrate uniformly. Instead the coatings infiltrate the substrate's pores and almost literally color the inner surface, as well as the outside one.

"If you have an unblemished surface with a good grain you can intensify the grain," Shorey explains. "Concrete isn't just gray. You have high and lows, lights and darks, stains and black marks. When you stain it, the stain accents those different imperfections unless you put down a topcoat. It's not a smooth, unbroken finish."

### Easy Acrylic

Clean air regulations and a concern for the environment have brought about a new generation of improved water-based acrylic stains. These products are easy to apply and they clean up with soap and water. They have low odor and also have a low volatile organic compound (VOC) content, a key requirement for states with strict emissions regulations like Arizona and California.

Popular water-based concrete stains include Safety Stain II from Flex Art Company, Mason's Select Transparent Concrete Stain from Duckback Products and the H&CT system of concrete care products from The Sherwin-Williams Company.

The stains in these lines are typically composed of acrylic resins in a water base. This formulation allows the stains to penetrate deeply into the concrete surface and adhere to the concrete to bring out color.

Another option, polymer refinishing systems — such as Concrete Solution's Ultra Surface Concrete Polymer — change the chemistry of regular concrete, causing mixtures of cement, sand, water and the polymer to adhere or bond tenaciously to an existing surface. Similarly, Micro-Top from Bomanite, a combination of liquid polymer and a


colored powder, can be applied to create surface uniformity or be blended to create an eye-catching variegation.

Limitless color combinations and graphic designs can be used to transform existing concrete and other materials into art forms without affecting surrounding materials and fixtures. Most water-based stains and overlay systems come in at least 40 colors, as well as custom colors, expanding color choices immensely over traditional acid or

chemical stains, which come in a range of about eight earthtone-inspired shades.

### Acid Trip

Traditional acid or chemical stains, Shorey says, yield the best-variegated finish with a nice wash of color. However, as Luposello notes, such stains can be challenging to use and offer less protection than water-based counterparts. Nevertheless, acid/chemical stains have many fans because of the stylish effects



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they bring to concrete surfaces. They do not have as deep of a penetration as the water-based products, but instead derive their coloration through chemical reactions between their components and the aggregate to which they are being applied. Because of various environmental and air quality issues, today's acid and chemical stains generally contain some sort of water component.

Acid stains, such as Blush Tone from Brickform/Rafco Products, Lithochrome Chemstain from L. M. Scofield Co., Rare Earth® Stains, Bomanite Chemical Stain, ChlorStain from SuperStone, Kemiko Concrete Stain, and QC Patina, to name a few, chemically color concrete surfaces by combining the metallic ions with particles in the concrete to form oxides. The acid in the stains lightly etch and penetrate existing concrete, allowing the ions to form permanent insoluble chemical precipitates that remain in the concrete's pores.

## Repair, Prepare and Refinish

Any concrete surface that is to be refinished, whether it is a floor, walkway or even a countertop, must be clean and porous in order to ensure good topcoat integrity. As in any job, the age-old mantra of good surface preparation is key.

First, clean the concrete to remove any grease, oil, paint or other contaminant that would inhibit the penetration of the stain. Then test the surface to see if it needs to be "etched" or sanded in order to permit the coating to apply easily. Luposello suggests feeling the surface and comparing it to a piece of 120-grit sandpaper. "If it feels the same, then it's OK," he advises. "If not, the surface needs to be 'etched.'"

If you're using a water-based product, some experts recommend using a 10:1 solution of muriatic acid and water or a similar product. This process, called acid etching, opens the surface of the concrete to allow good adhesion and penetration. Rinse thoroughly several times and allow the surface to dry completely.

Other professionals advise against acid etching and instead suggest using one of the many commercial concrete preparation cleaners or strippers on the market. These products are reported to be milder but do a similar job to etching. The preparations are designed to remove dirt, grease and oil from the surface to be stained.

If you're coating with a chemical stain, do not use muriatic acid. The purpose of using muriatic acid is to get down to clean, new cement. It will "eat" away the cement and leave the aggregate — that is, the sand and stone mixed with the cement to make concrete. Because of the presence of the muriatic acid, the acid stain will not react with this treated surface. And, the aggregate will not take the color. Shorey instead recommends sanding the surface to achieve the textured finish needed to accept the chemical stain. He also likes sanding for water-based stains, he says.

For either acid stains or waterborne products, proper preparation for the look you want to achieve may include pebble blasting or powerwashing to ensure a clean finish. And, again, don't forget the critical role that moisture can play, experts urge.

"The concrete must be completely dry — not just the surface," Luposello says. "If moisture is below the surface and gets trapped below the coating, it will eventually come up, thereby ruining



the job. We recommend a 24-hour drying period between preparation and application of the first coat."

Efflorescence — the white residue caused by surfacing of concrete's inherent salts — can be removed by a light sanding or by using a commercial masonry cleansing agent, according to the Portland Cement Association. The trade group also notes that laitance, a fine, powder-like material sometimes found on the surface of hardened concrete, should be removed by a steel scraping tool, acid etching or sandblasting/sanding, depending upon the kind of coating you will be using.

### Good to Know

Application and finishing recommendations vary from brand to brand, so it's important to follow the manufacturer's label instructions or tech data sheets to ensure your job is the best it can be.

As a rule, however, most water-based concrete stains look best with a two-coat application. The first coat usually will penetrate and seal the concrete but not show a great deal of color. A thin second coat, applied 12 to 24 hours later over a dry surface, will bring out most of the desired color. A third coat can intensify the color even further.

Some manufacturers recommend spray applying the first coat, using either a pump or airless sprayer. Initial application with a brush, roller or pad applicator may result in lapping because the concrete may absorb the first coat faster than these types of application tools can apply the wet stain.

Wait at least 24 hours to walk on floor surfaces. And, for exterior surfaces such as driveways, allow surface to dry for at least seven days before running vehicles across it. Acrylic stains are often prone to tire marking, and some vehicle tire brands contain chemicals harmful to coating products. Thus, it's not uncommon for the finish coat to lift off the surface after a vehicle has sat on it for several hours.

Polymer overlay systems generally can be applied with a squeegee or a trowel on the surface at a thickness of approxi-

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mately 20 mils, depending on the manufacturer. These systems can give an existing concrete surface not only a new, fashionable color, but they also can be worked into decorative textures with tools or stamps. Always consult the product label for the manufacturer's directions and product usage recommendations.

Because chemical stains contain hydrochloric acid, always use safety goggles, rubber gloves and a rubber apron when applying acid stains. And if you're working inside or have respiratory problems, don't forget to wear a respirator or mask.

Two coats of acid stain deliver the best results. Whether you spray or brush depends on the manufacturer's recommendation. Once stain is on the surface, you must scrub it in with a brush as soon as it touches the concrete. Shorey suggests waiting a minimum of four hours, or until the stain is dry, before re-coating.

When applied, acid stains will fizz. This is due to the chemical reaction with the concrete. Continue spreading the stain in a circular or figure-eight motion until the fizzing action ceases. At least four hours after the final application, the surface must be scrubbed and rinsed clean.

Due to the hazardous content of the stain, all residues, runoff, cleaning water and absorbent materials must be discarded and disposed of in accordance with applicable state, local and federal regulations.

## The Finishing Touch

Both concrete stain manufacturers and experienced contractors say a routine maintenance schedule for all colored concrete is

key to preserving a top-quality appearance. Maintenance will vary depending on a number of factors, including intensity of traffic, UV exposure, geographic location, and weather conditions. Interior residential applications, for example, require less cleaning and maintenance than larger scale commercial projects.

The first step of this plan is sealing the surface following application and drying of the stain. In most cases, experts recommend applying two coats of an acrylic sealer. Products of this type will seal the surface, enhance the color, resist staining from foreign matter, as well as provide easy cleaning and maintenance. Be sure to follow manufacturer's application instructions.

Acrylic sealers, however, will not provide a high-gloss surface or prevent scuff marks from shoe soles as a commercial wax will do. While some contractors apply a coat of urethane over the sealer, Shorey says a wax coating provides an excellent final touch.

"I recommend using a good maintenance contractor to apply a wax coat," Shorey says. "Have that person apply sealer and then put down three to four coats of wax."

In general, the need for professional maintenance ranges from 12 to 24 months, depending on foot traffic. Maintenance wax coats should be applied periodically to assure the desired gloss level. Your stain and sealer manufacturer can provide you with the names of qualified maintenance contractors in your area.

And, keep in mind that each sealer brand will likely affect the stain coat's color differently. Consequently, it's important

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to include the sealant step in the test sample you prepare for your clients. "You don't want to have any surprises at the end of the job," Shorey says.

## Job Site Troubleshooting

Both decorative concrete and coatings experts say they cannot stress enough the unpredictability of concrete as a substrate.

"A contractor must always test the stain/sealer in an inconspicuous spot to ensure that the desired results will be achieved before full application," Luposello says.

But sometimes, even testing isn't fail-safe. Concrete can simply be a fickle substrate. Shorey recalls a time when he once sold a dark acid stain to a contractor to cover a coffee shop floor. The contractor had done test samples in an out-of-the-way area, which resulted in a rich dark brown shade that the owner loved. After staining the entire floor, the contractor called Shorey with a problem: The entire job had come out jet black and the coffee shop owner could not live with it. The contractor, Shorey recalls, was desperate for a solution.

"Having known from experience that a diluted muriatic acid wash would lighten the acid, I offered this as an option to the contractor," he says. Adding, "if it did not work then the next option would be to re-sand the floor, put down an overlay and/or maybe both, depending on unpredictable results when using acid stain on old concrete."

The contractor called Shorey several days later.

"He could not thank me enough," Shorey says. "After being coated with a mild (20:1) muriatic acid solution, the floor had come out a wonderful chocolate brown with nice mottling."

Concrete dyes can also solve application problems. Shorey recommends using such a product if the finished stain job has areas that did not take stain at all. For example, a 1,500-square-foot floor stained dark green has one-or two-foot-square areas that are still pretty much bare concrete.

"It can happen with old concrete, and it happens often, even if you've sanded well," Shorey says. "You can fix it by mixing the dye with denatured alcohol and fogging it in over the gray area. It is transparent and mottles in with the stain, making it look like stain... but it's not."

Whether you're using acid stains or water-based formulations, enhancing existing concrete surfaces requires experimentation, skill and practice to discover the multitude of colors and patterns that can be achieved. While applying concrete stains at first might be daunting, learning this skill can open new doors for your business and to your clients.

A posting on the Decorative Concrete Network ([www.decorative-concrete.net](http://www.decorative-concrete.net)) forum archives perhaps sums up the benefits of using a high-quality concrete stain: "The multitude of desirable, lasting, decorative effects which are achieved by the use of stain (in lieu of paint) make for a much wiser investment, time, money, wear resistance, and lasting eye-appeal!"





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# Product Profiles

## Sealer/Stain

Acryl-Pen is a deeply penetrating, pigmented water repellent sealer/stain designed for both interior and exterior horizontal concrete and masonry surfaces. Surfaces are protected from discoloration caused by air pollution and the damage caused by freeze-thaw cycles, carbonation, graffiti, and pedestrian and vehicular-borne substances. Ideal for both commercial and residential applications where the concrete has not received a smooth finish. Acryl-Pen is available in 11 standard colors. Special order custom colors are also available. For vertical applications, ask about their pigmented sealer/stain, Nox-Carb. For more information contact Nox-Crete Products Group (800) 669-2738.

[www.nox-crete.com](http://www.nox-crete.com).



## Scoring Tape

Decorative Concrete Supply now offers an easier way to score concrete with the use of "Scoring Tape." The tape is a 1/2" reinforced filament tape with a black line down the middle and running the length of the roll. Unlike a chalk line, the tape always provides a visible line to follow. Scoring tape extends between two points and adheres firmly to the surface. Once the tape is in place, simply following the black line with the saw to produce a clean, straight line. The tape is also marked every 4" inches, so creating geometric patterns (tile patterns) will save labor while providing exact placement for your sawcutting of lines in the concrete. For more information please call 800-788-0014.

[www.decorativeconcrete.com](http://www.decorativeconcrete.com)

See our ad on page 40.

## V-Blade for Scoring

The V-Blade by Soff-Cut International is a beveled blade designed to chase joints up to a 1/4" inch in width. The V-Blade bevels the edge of the control joint for a crisp look and straighter joint lines. The V-Blade can be used the day after early entry dry-cut of control joints on a new slab or to improve the look architectural scoring on existing slabs. For more information contact Soff-Cut International at 800-776-3328. [www.soffcut.com](http://www.soffcut.com)

See our ad on page 45.



## Densifier

See article on page 32!

**PRODUCT  
PROFILE**



## Decorative Concrete Engraving Adds Solid Beauty to Driveways, Patios and even Walls, with new Innovative KaleidoCrete™ System

Engrave-A-Concrete®, Inc. has put the 'décor' back in 'decorative concrete' for driveways, floors, patios and concrete walkways of all types. Introducing KaleidoCrete™, a brand new method of cutting patterns into existing concrete, the newly developed and patented system signals a major design innovation in the decorative concrete industry.

Company president Darrel Adamson said, "Our concrete engraving system is superior to all other processes in the concrete industry because it is "in" the concrete, not "on" the concrete. Other companies lay designs are cut right into the existing concrete. The only other way a result like ours can be achieved is with sandblasting, however, there are many drawbacks to the sandblasting process. Our method is cleaner and far more economical."

Engrave-A-Crete® gives contractors and consumers a variety of different machines to create artful concrete designs. The Super Compact 2500D is our most versatile and popular tool. But with the introduction of the KaleidoCrete™ System, operators can cut patterns across the floor, up the wall, across the ceiling and down



the steps. Powered by in Mochton Stylus "Shark" Engraver, there is no limit to creative design patterns for concrete. Adamson added, "Our system is faster, easier, more detailed, and cuts a

deeper texture and the templates are durable and reusable. It's versatile with a capital V."

The company makes the KaleidoCrete™ System user friendly. A contractor or a homeowner sends art work, photos or even ideas, to Engrave-A-Crete®, Inc and then they scan the art, run it through CAD/CAM software and send the program out to one of the company's CNC machining centers. The CNC mill cuts it and then the template is shipped to the installer by UPS. The installer lays the template on the concrete or attaches it to the wall and cuts the pattern into the concrete. Presto! A kaleidoscope of colors and patterns can be achieved in any existing concrete. Any size template, even as small as 6 inches or as wide as 100 feet across can be produced. Engrave-A-Crete® also stocks an enormous selection of borders, hieroglyphs, logos, brick, stone and masonry patterns.

There simply isn't a better way than the Engrave-A-Crete® Systems to enhance and beautify the concrete on your property, whether residential or commercial.

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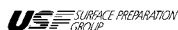
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Contractors, property owners and potential franchisees can visit our Web site for information: [www.engraveacrete.com](http://www.engraveacrete.com) or telephone 941-355-2114. See our ad on page 41.

### Euclid Chemical Markets First Products for Residential Use in 90-Year History

The Euclid Chemical Company, a leading producer of concrete additives for commercial applications, announced today it has acquired a new product line for beautifying indoor and outdoor concrete floors, which it will make available to the residential markets.

Ultra-Tex is a proprietary blend of acrylics, cement, sealers and colorants that simulate the look of brick, stone, slate or tile on concrete surfaces. It is ideally suited for residential driveways, walkways, patios, swimming pools and interior floors. Commercial uses include theme parks, hotels, restaurants, stores and shopping malls.

"Ultra-Tex complements our line of high-performance commercial floor coating systems, and it's an exceptional product for many residential applications as well," said Bob Swan, Director of Marketing for Euclid Chemical. "We believe the professionals who specify and install our products are well suited to install Ultra-Tex in both the commercial and residential markets.

"Architects and engineers already know and specify Ultra-Tex in commercial applications, but there is nothing like it available to consumers," said Swan. "While we don't see this as a do-it-yourself product, we believe we can tap the consumer market by making homeowners aware of it.

Ultra-Tex is installed in two layers over existing concrete surfaces, and can be used on either new construction or renovations. It uses patented templates to achieve a wide range of natural stone or masonry effects.

Euclid Chemical acquired the Ultra-Tex product line from Dryvit Systems. Both companies are owned by RPM Inc. in Medina, Ohio. Dryvit specializes in exterior insulation and finish systems for vertical surfaces. Euclid Chemical develops and manufactures concrete additives, sealers and repair products primarily for horizontal concrete surfaces.

"Ultra-Tex is a proven product. It's been used commercially for 10 years, but contractors generally don't think of Dryvit products for horizontal concrete surfaces. That's our specialty, and we are confident we can expand the market for Ultra-Tex."

Since 1910, Euclid Chemical products have been sold exclusively to contractors and ready-mix companies for use on commercial and residential construction projects. Ultra-Tex is the first product line Euclid Chemical will market to consumers.



### CEMTEC Concrete Repair Products

Cemtec has introduced a new one component, stampable overlay system to its line of resurfacing and repair products. Cemtec One Stop Stamped Overlay contains special additives that provide high flexural and bond strength, low shrinkage, exceptional trowelability and improved pot life and working time in hot temperatures. The product needs only clean water for mixing, so it is simpler to use and saves freight by not having to ship additional mixing liquid. There are 30 standard colors available for integral coloring and antiquing. Custom colors and factory blended coloring is available on large projects. A water based sealer, liquid release agent concentrate and a powdered non-chlorine accelerator additive round out the system. One Stop Stamped Overlay readily accepts imprinting from stamping tools or can be smooth troweled for acid staining and scoring. Cemtec manufactures a wide range of concrete repair, decorative and resurfacing products at its plant near Atlanta, Georgia. For more information please give us a call at 888-233-6499. See our ad on page 19.



### New Concentrated Concrete Stain Kit

Rare Earth® Labs' Concentrated Concrete Stain is now available in a Contractor test kit providing an ideal opportunity for the experienced pro or first time applicator to try each of eight colors at a minimal investment. The kit includes instruction, beaker, brush, gloves and generous amounts of concentrated stain to allow for ample experimentation in creating Rare Earth's natural earth tones. To order your test kit today please call us at (800) 664-0670 or write to us at: Rare Earth Labs, 527 Russell Ave., El Dorado, AR 71730. Visit us on-line at: [www.rareearthlabs.com](http://www.rareearthlabs.com) See our ad on page 39.





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