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## Publisher's Letter



### Dear Readers,

I will always remember how much fun summertime created for me as a kid. We had a community swim club a few blocks from home, and my friends and I would challenge each other almost daily by purposely running barefoot from one shady patch of asphalt to another as we made our way to the pool. With flip-flops in hand, the challenge was to see which of us could get to the pool first without burning our feet. Spending half a day swimming didn't make the short journey home any different. There was always that hot pavement laying in wait, ready to question our toughness as we tried to beat each other back to the house.

Today, it seems we face a similar challenge. Instead of hot pavement, unfortunately, it's a looming economic cloud that challenges each of us to see how fast we can run and how long we can endure. Granted, it's not nearly as fun or predictable as those two short blocks to the pool, and unfortunately the predicaments that our economy has caused don't seem to leave our consciousness each day the sun sets on the horizon. The best thing I can say about it is that we know what it is that's causing our challenges.

Regardless of each of our circumstances these days, it is important for all of us to take a moment or two and remember how business was before our economy tanked. Work opportunities were found around every corner, and we realized that this trade we call "decorative concrete" is not only a decorative alternative to other building materials, it's a green and sustainable solution. Remember that the demand for your workmanship has not been diminished, but instead, only shadowed by that economic cloud.

I know many talented artisans in other industries, all of whom are surviving these times because quality is always in demand. Decorative concrete artisans offer excellent quality, and they are practical and highly creative.

As contractors, supply stores, manufacturers and such, we have together demonstrated over the past decade that this industry can be highly successful. And most assuredly, it will continue to demonstrate its success for many years to come, provided we remain steadfast in our efforts to distinguish its many advantages. Doing so will increase awareness and demand while continuing to demonstrate decorative concrete's value to society.

Sincerely,

Bent Mikkelsen, Publisher

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*Concrete Decor* offers the industry's ultimate online search tool for finding just about anything related to decorative concrete. Start by going to [www.concretedecor.net](http://www.concretedecor.net). At the top of the page simply enter a keyword, such as "stencil," "stain" or "admixture." In less than a second we'll search our entire archive of stories and information from the pages of *Concrete Decor* and provide you with an extensive list of relevant articles.



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**John Craft, President**  
ICR Sales & Service, Ltd  
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# Features



28

## 28 **Artisan in Concrete: Colour, Placerville, Calif.**

Based in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, this father and son consider elaborate polished concrete surfaces a labor of love.  
*by David Searls*



32

## 32 **Project Profile: Labatt Blue Light Jungle Bar at Comerica Park, Detroit, Mich.**

Tucked into the stadium that houses the Detroit Tigers, this sports bar features a lush, shimmering decorative concrete floor.  
*by Erin F. Ansley*

## 36 **Project Profile: New Leaf Community Market, Santa Cruz, Calif.**

When Mike “the concretist” Miller takes on a project, just about anything could get put to work on the job site. In this case, it was “sail stamps,” bamboo fencing and jellybean glass. For starters.  
*by Erik Pisor*

## 40 **Waterfalls**

These days, homeowners who fall for waterfalls may get what they desire. Thanks to decorative concrete, options are almost limitless.  
*by Sue Marquette Poremba*

## 46 **Refreshing Pool Decks**

When offered the chance to help customers relax with cool pool designs, these veteran design crews dove right in.  
*by Emily Dixon*

## 50 **Technology: Polyaspartics**

Funny name, serious benefits: Polyaspartic coatings and sealers boast rapid cure times, UV stability, abrasion resistance and more.  
*by Amy Johnson*



40



46

**On the Cover:** Rockmolds.com’s goal for this project in Wailea, Maui, was to create a natural-looking oasis, getting away from a traditional pool feel. The pool’s waterfall, rock work, stepping stones, landscape edging and overlay were textured with Rockmolds.com stamps. For more examples of creative waterfalls, see page 40.

Photo courtesy of Rockmolds.com



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# Departments

## 12 **Carlton's Corner**

Cleaning up with pressure washing  
*by Doug Carlton*

## 14 **Thoughts on Polishing**

Wet or dry?  
*by John Abrahamson*

## 16 **Trowel & Error**

Sorting out responsibility when new work fails  
*by Chris Sullivan*

## 20 **the concretist**

Designing concrete that is maintenance free  
*by Mike Miller*

## 24 **Business Strategies**

Ten tips for concrete countertop manufacturers  
*by Mark Celebuski*

## 54 **Product Profile**

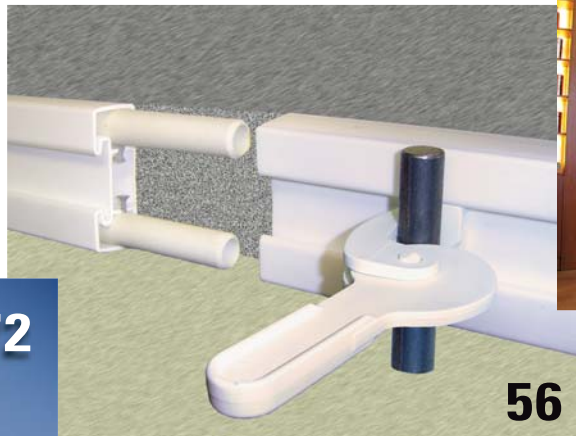
SoyCrete Architectural Concrete Stain from  
Eco Safety Products  
*by Kelly O'Brien*

## 56 **Tools**

Flatwork forms

## 72 **Final Pour**

Medieval Texas



- 2 **Publisher's Letter**
- 8 **Industry News**
- 25 **Concrete Additives**
- 58 **Product News**
- 64 **Classifieds**
- 65 **Association News**
- 66 **Concrete Quarters**
- 70 **Concrete Marketplace**



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Photo courtesy of ProSpec

## ProSpec donates materials for St. Jude Dream Home

ProSpec, Bonsal American's brand of professionally specified products, donated tile installation materials for the construction of the 2009 St. Jude Dream Home in Springfield, Mo.

A Nixa, Mo., ProSpec distributor, Unique Tile, donated tile installation materials to the Homebuilder's Association of Greater Springfield, which is coordinating construction of the home. The annual Dream Home program is a national fund-raising campaign for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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🌐 [www.prospec.com](http://www.prospec.com)

## Cheng debuts at Home Depot

Cheng Concrete has introduced Cheng Concrete Countertop Products to brick-and-mortar stores for the first time. A select line of Cheng Concrete products are now available in four Home Depot stores in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Each store has trained associates on site to answer questions on how to make a concrete countertop.

Cheng Concrete debuted its product line with in-depth two-hour free concrete countertop trainings at the stores. The initial presentations by the Cheng Concrete Training Academy were reportedly enthusiastically received. The Academy also spent two days training three Home Depot employees from each store. The locations will be offering free clinics in 2009 on mixing and pouring concrete, mold-making, and polishing a concrete countertop.

"Arizona has long been one of our strongest markets for the Cheng Concrete product line," said Annalyn Chargualaf, president of Cheng Concrete, in a news release. "We are pleased to work with Sakrete and Home Depot to offer our most popular products at the retail level. For homeowners working on a DIY project or for local contractors and artisans, they now have one-stop shopping where they can choose our most popular concrete countertop colors, buy bagged concrete mix, rent equipment, save on shipping costs, and have access to a trained professional."

🌐 [www.chengconcrete.com](http://www.chengconcrete.com)



## Cemstone agrees to use metakaolin

Cemstone has entered into a partnership with Whitemud Resources Inc. of Calgary, Alberta, to use WhitemudMK high-reactivity metakaolin throughout Cemstone's upper Midwest operations. Cemstone is the first ready-mix concrete producer in the United States to distribute and use the additive.

WhitemudMK is an ingredient utilized in concrete to enhance its strength, durability and workability while reducing its carbon footprint by as much as 13 percent. Cemstone will use WhitemudMK in its concrete mixes for infrastructure projects such as bridges, large structural slabs and parking structures.

WhitemudMK improves concrete's strength and durability by reacting with the calcium hydroxide in concrete to produce insoluble compounds, which, in turn, results in denser concrete with lower porosity and permeability. It is finer than fly ash and cement, yet not as fine as commonly used silica fume. As a result, concrete with the metakaolin is more workable and easier to finish than concrete made with silica fume.

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

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


## New stain sample kits, distributors

Concrete Coatings Inc. Acid Stain and GemStain are now available in sample kits. Sample bottles hold 4 ounces and can be used for sample boards or artistic designs.

Concrete Coatings Acid Stain and GemStain react with concrete to create antiqued marbled effects. The stains work on microtoppings, stampable overlays and bare concrete.

Acid Stain sample kits are available in 11 standard colors and GemStain sample kits are available in 10 standard colors.

In distribution news, Concrete Coatings Inc. has partnered with Concrete Coatings of Georgia to distribute products in the Southeast. Also, Arrow Construction Supply and Pierce Concrete Supplies have teamed up to offer Concrete Coatings products out of Pierce's location in Nampa, Idaho.

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## Super-Krete on the big screen

Super-Krete products are regularly used on the construction sets of major Hollywood motion picture studios to create scenes, rockscapes, themed sets and props.

Super-Krete Bond-Kote was used to create the Flying Dutchman pirate ship in "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest". Last year, Bond-Kote was used to create the Mayan temples seen in "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull."

Most recently, Bond-Kote was used to create a simulated version of the water fountain at Piazza Navona, Italy, for "Angels & Demons," released earlier this summer. The fountain was sculpted by masons using foam and was then coated with Bond-Kote. The replica fountain was created so the scene could be filmed in Los Angeles.

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## Dur-A-Flex offers Contractor Academy for Owners

Dur-A-Flex Inc. recently welcomed its first group of attendees to its new Contractor Academy for Owners, a program designed for independent commercial-floor business owners looking for a competitive edge in their industry.

The business owners — called “Partners” and part of Dur-A-Flex’s reseller channel — came to East Hartford, Conn., from as far away as Mexico and spent three days learning ways to strengthen their business practices to combat the challenges they face in today’s construction environment. The academy’s curriculum covers understanding management styles, improving profitability in a tight market, and financial strategies for the successful job site. The program also includes exercises in planning and post-job analysis.

More sessions are scheduled to run throughout the year.

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

## Vibco wins manufacturing honor

Vibco Vibrators was honored at the 2009 Progressive Manufacturing Awards gala in Sarasota, Fla. Vibco was selected as a winner of a Progressive Manufacturing 100 Award by Managing Automation Media, a Thomas Publishing Co. LLC publication.

Vibco trains its entire workforce in lean methodologies and identifies and eliminates waste through improvement projects. Key achievements include productivity increases by as much as 300 percent, inventory reductions by 40 percent over two years, and setup time on CNC equipment reduced from 2 1/2 hours to 10 minutes.

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🌐 [www.vibco.com](http://www.vibco.com)

## Fritz-Pak HQ awarded

The newly constructed Fritz-Pak Corp. headquarters in Mesquite, Texas, has been honored with a 2009 Outstanding Project Summit Award for projects under \$5 million for its new warehouse and office facility.

Fritz-Pak’s new facility was built

to company specifications by Raymond Construction, Dallas, under the project management of Brandon Fuller. The tilt-up building incorporates many environmentally friendly features, such as the use of skylights for natural lighting, low-emissivity glass to reflect heat and reduce energy consumption, positive air-flow ventilation in the warehouse for comfort, and concrete floors in the offices that reduce VOCs and allergens. All landscaping follows xeriscape techniques using drought-resistant plants, an important consideration in north Texas.

The Summit Awards are presented yearly by TEXO, the joint north Texas chapters of Associated Builders and Contractors and The Associated General Contractors of America.

🌐 [www.fritzpak.com](http://www.fritzpak.com)

## Flexmar improves operations

Flexmar Coatings LLC, a manufacturer and distributor of polyaspartic coatings, has announced new manufacturing operations with improved quality control measures that take mixed pot-life consistency and batch-to-batch color matching to unsurpassed levels.

Flexmar also plans to streamline its distributor base. The company is reorganizing its distribution regions and selecting new distributors strategically located within these regions, with a renewed focus on customer service.

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## Dates released for traditional building conferences

The Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference returns to Baltimore, October 21-24, 2009, and to Chicago’s Navy Pier, April 7-10, 2010.

This is the largest single-trade event for people working in the fields of historic preservation, rehabilitation, and traditionally inspired new construction. Continuing Education Credits are available for workshops, seminars and tours. Hard-to-find products and services are showcased in the exhibit hall.

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## Blastrac expands sales territory

Blastrac and Diamatic sales and distribution is expanding with Jordan Power Equipment Co. of Tallmadge, Ohio.

With branches established in Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo, Jordan Power Equipment will also become the premier dealer for Blastrac in Ohio and reach into Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, western Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Jordan Power has had a relationship with Blastrac since 1982, when the company began to sell, rent, service and supply parts for Blastrac shotblasters and other surface-prep equipment.

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

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

## Arizona opens training facility

Arizona Polymer Flooring is opening a 3,500-square-foot, air-conditioned training facility in Glendale, Ariz. The official grand opening is slated for July 24, 2009.

The company will be hosting an open house to celebrate the opening.

Information about scheduled seminars is available on the company's Web site.

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

## Mapei Americas gets new CEO

Luigi Di Geso has been named president and CEO of Mapei Americas.

Di Geso has been in the Mapei family for almost 10 years, most recently holding the position of general manager for Mapei Inc. in Canada. In that role, he managed operations and sales functions and assumed responsibility for overall profitability of the Canada operations. Di Geso received his Bachelor of Commerce Degree from Concordia University, with a major in marketing and a minor in accounting.

[\(800\) 426-2734](tel:(800)426-2734)

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



## Werk names new CFO

Bruce Dwyer has been appointed to the position of chief financial officer for Werk Industries Inc. and its related companies.

In his new role as CFO, Dwyer will be instrumental in developing a financial strategy to assist in the dynamic growth of WerkMaster and its related companies, as well as lead the acquisition program that Werk Industries is currently undertaking.

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

## Nawkaw beefs up sales staff

Nawkaw Corp. has added a second sales representative to its Nawkaw Pacific Southwest Inc. territory.

Collyer Cronk will be responsible for sales and customer accounts for Nawkaw Architectural Stain, Reckli Concrete Formliners, and accessory product lines for all of California. Nawkaw Pacific Southwest Inc. covers California, Nevada and Arizona.

[\(866\) 462-9529](tel:(866)462-9529)

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## Cleaning Up With Pressure Washing

**L**et me start off by saying I have never seen a response like we had from the Carlton's Corner article "Solving Sealer Problems," published in the February 2009 issue of *Concrete Decor*.

Thanks to everyone who read as well as responded. The goal of this magazine and everything associated with it is to provide useful information that improves your business. When we receive dozens of e-mails commenting on a relevant issue like sealers, then we feel it's time to revisit the subject.



by Doug Carlton

I was pleased to get the green light from our editor to dive deeper into the warm-water pressure-washing method of removing old sealer. In fact, we went right to the warm-water well and interviewed Bryan Carr of Advanced Cleaning Solutions, in San Luis Obispo, Calif., and Visalia, Calif., asking him your questions word for word. Bryan seems to have found a way to make sense of a portion of our industry that keeps many up at night. I'm not sure if this is the fix-all of removing sealers, but it certainly has its place.

As you read the next few paragraphs, try to visualize how this method of cleaning and sealer removal could fit into your business. Some of you will take it to another level or direction, and this will be beneficial to all in the decorative concrete industry. Many of you already realize the big profit

potential of resealing decorative concrete but know that new sealer will not cover old sealer. Some of it simply needs to be removed.

I started off with Bryan by asking how he got into hot-water cleaning. It seems he stumbled into it part time and quickly landed several accounts with city and county departments looking for ways to clean concrete. Word spread of his success, and these agencies passed his name from one department to the other. Bryan feels the right equipment is the key to building a trouble-free business, whether it is full time, part time or a branch business. The right equipment and setup can be expensive, and one should plan on investing \$15,000 to \$20,000 to get started. Renting equipment can be an option and should be considered as a way to test the water. Bryan recommends contacting one of the big rental chains, such as United Rentals, to see about renting a steam cleaner on a trailer. He recommends calling ahead and reserving one because it may need to be relocated from another branch.

Bryan said a typical crew is usually two people, with one helping with setup, breakdown and hose tending. His business is completely mobile by way of a 30-foot enclosed trailer that is fully self-contained, from hauling the water to reclaiming it. Many local and state laws require reclaiming or filtering wastewater before entering the storm drain. Bryan made it sound like being mobile was important because of the quick move-in, move-out nature of this type of business.





Bryan Carr's trailer, which keeps his entire cleaning business mobile.

I asked Bryan if he could give us some insight on what it takes to actually remove a coat of sealer from concrete. He recommends starting with 2,000 psi and stepping it up to no more than 4,500 psi. The temperature of the water varies but is vital in this removal method. The hot pressurized water, usually more than 200 F, must be distributed via a surface machine (not a wand). High psi can slightly profile the concrete surface, so performing on a test area is recommended.

If multiple layers of sealer are involved, Bryan recommends treating the concrete surface with a solvent or chemical. Most jobs don't require all the sealer to be removed, just the damaged sealer. Once these areas are treated, your concrete is ready for resealing. You will need to combine chemical and hot water treatments if complete sealer removal is necessary. Remember to use a shield to protect landscaped areas from steam and warm water. I realize the techniques that Bryan has shared have cost him many hours and dollars to develop. Thanks, Bryan.

Many of you e-mailed or called about difficulties finding someone in your area to outsource this work to. I didn't realize this would be as difficult as it seems to be. I'm guessing many of you had a light go off in your head seeing the potential here. You may find this lack of availability frustrating, but please remember that we are in the infancy stage of this type of sealer

removal. The ones that enter it and stick with it first will benefit the most. The demand for resealing and restoring existing decorative concrete will always be there, regardless of the economy. Concrete restoration may be the one thing that keeps your business in the profit zone this year. Not to mention, there's how good your work will look for potential clients. Outsourcing to companies like Bryan's has made perfect sense to my company because we have never profited by scrubbing dead sealer off concrete.

If you decide to try this method, please let me know how it works in your area. Every decorative contractor I know has struggled with what to do when good sealer goes bad. Solving this issue with a simple, fast and effective remedy will do more for our industry than anything else to date. Thanks again to Bryan, who can be reached at [acs.visalia@sbcglobal.net](mailto:acs.visalia@sbcglobal.net).

A side note: Check out our column next issue, because we will be asking the owner of one of the leading sealer manufacturers tough questions concerning today's sealer challenges. His insight may be just what you need to turn one-time customers into customers for life. 📞

*Doug Carlton operates Doug Carlton Concrete in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at [carltondoug@comcast.net](mailto:carltondoug@comcast.net).*

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# Thoughts on Polishing

## Wet or Dry?

**I**s it best to polish concrete wet or dry? This is a question that will have to be asked before each job. The condition of the concrete floor, the environment it occupies, the desired look of the finished product, and other expectations and preferences will all play a role in this decision. Many times, it may be best to use a combination of wet and dry polishing.



*by John Abrahamson*

Wet polishing is the oldest form of polishing. Natural stone is most often polished wet and has been for centuries. In the earliest days of concrete polishing, the floors were polished wet. Over the years, it was discovered that dry polishing increased the level of shine, and equipment and tooling was created with dry grinding and polishing.

Dry grinding has been the most popular method in the United States over the past decade, but wet polishing has made a significant resurgence as part of the “go green” craze and with the bid process becoming more and more competitive.

There are disagreements over which method is greener.

Dry grinding solves the disposal problem much more efficiently, as the disposal of slurry can be a problem.

The regulations on slurry disposal vary from one jurisdiction to another, and regulations should be researched before any slurry is disposed of. Contractors need to have the proper wet-vac systems, which can be purchased or rented.

Wet grinding solves another environmental problem, silicosis. Wet grinding and polishing eliminate the dust clouds that can come from dry polishing. Asbestos became a huge problem for the flooring industry, and silicosis has the potential to become a similar problem for the concrete polishing industry. Even with a large dust extractor in use, workers can inhale a great deal of dust when concrete is polished dry.

When dry grinding, workers should be instructed to wear protective masks, and masks should always be made available on job sites. Also, special care should be taken in retail environments, as well as environments where customers or workers of the facility are around while the work is being performed. Dust in retail environments also needs to be cleaned up at the end of each day and not left on merchandise.

Wet grinding and polishing also increase diamond life dramatically on medium-hard to very hard floors and allow for more aggressive grinding. Wet grinding can be very effective when trying to remove a significant layer of concrete to expose aggregate. It allows the diamonds to cut faster on medium-



hard and very hard floors. Any contractor who has been asked to expose aggregate knows it can take a long time to grind an entire slab down to larger aggregate, taking out high spots and exposing aggregate as evenly as possible. Wet grinding creates more friction and, more importantly, keeps the diamond tooling cooler, which prevents metal bond tooling from glazing over. Using water in the first two or three steps of polishing helps remove scratches left behind by the metal bond diamonds. The floor can be finished out using wet polishing in the higher grits for a duller, easier-to-maintain shine level.

However, dry polishing will always give the floor a much higher level of shine than wet polishing. It will provide a much higher level of light reflection and a classier-looking floor. Dry polishing will also always work better on a soft concrete floor, which can wear even the hardest diamond bonds out far faster than expected, causing job costs to surge and profits to dwindle. While polishing wet on these floors, the diamonds could be overaggressive and leave gouge marks in the floor.

It is not necessary to do a whole job using one method or the other. It is possible to grind wet and polish one step wet, then polish dry to get a high shine and still keep costs and dust under control. The last few steps of polishing leave behind very little dust.

Quality concrete grinding and polishing require an experienced contractor. They require a contractor who knows what is best for his customer and who is not overly dependent upon the advice of vendors, who have to take their own best interests and profitability into consideration as well as those of the contractor.

Concrete polishing is a young and evolving industry. It is too early to make absolute and permanent determinations of any kind. Contractors need to take control of their own destiny and always be reeducating themselves. They need to always think of their own profitability and exposure and weigh the best approach on each given job.

Contractors also need to play a role in the education of general contractors and end users, and not leave this task entirely up to the vendors supplying the concrete contractors, as the contractor needs to make certain his best interests aren't left out of the equation.

The smaller and newer contractors in the concrete polishing industry need to take extra-special care to continually educate themselves on ways to provide a nice polished concrete floor faster, cheaper and better. Larger and more established contractors are controlling a larger and larger percentage of the work being done, especially the big work being done. They are established and have more negotiating power with vendors. They have the leverage to be recommended by the vendor for large jobs, especially jobs done by chains and on a national level. Without intending to do so, vendors can become virtually aligned with certain contractors. The system snowballs as the vendor aids the largest contractors and the largest contractors become larger and larger and obtain an ever-growing influence over the vendors. This can't be avoided in any industry. Margins are dwindling, especially for the smaller contractor, so

the smaller contractor needs to be especially open-minded about cost-controlling methods that will allow him to remain competitive. 📞

*John Abrahamson has been in the polished concrete industry since 2000 and was in the flooring industry for 15 years before that. His former positions include president of HTC Inc. and national sales manager for VIC International. He recently started a hard-surface flooring company in Knoxville, Tenn. He can be reached at john\_abe@comcast.net.*



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## Sorting Out Responsibility When New Work Fails

**W**hen a problem occurs with a recently installed decorative concrete job, who is responsible? I understand that this is a loaded question, and there are lots of factors to consider, but the question still stands.

This spring, while dealing with a rash of stamped-concrete spalling issues, it came to my attention that the issue of responsibility after a job is not something most people even think about. After asking a bunch of questions and doing some research, it became evident that very few installers use contracts (for residential work) and for those who do, even fewer include any language dealing with potential first-year issues and how they will be dealt with if they do occur.



by Chris Sullivan

While only a very small percentage of decorative work ends up not being acceptable, I have personally witnessed many small issues turn into expensive legal claims because there was no clear understanding between installer and client on what was acceptable first-year wear and tear and what was not.

To be fair, I will look at the issue from both sides (installer and homeowner), as well as discuss some simple ideas that will help resolve issues should they arise.

### For the installer

A critical part of any decorative concrete service performed by a professional installer needs to be expectation management. Talk to any person not involved in the day-to-day business of concrete and you will find they view the product as an indestructible utilitarian material that



will look, feel and perform as such for the next 100 years or more. The typical layperson does not realize that concrete is a product that is most often poured on-site, and being so is at the mercy of the environment, weather and job-site conditions, which change every day and definitely with every job. Add color, texture or any decorative element, and the level of expectation goes up exponentially. Unless you have a thorough explanation process regarding what to expect, the ideas and expectations floating around in your client's head before you begin will be the benchmark by which the completed work will be judged.

After troubleshooting hundreds of concrete projects, I can tell you that extra time and cost upfront in terms of explanations, referrals, samples and plain old hand-holding will pay dividends after the job when questions start coming up regarding color, finish, cracks, joints, and the myriad of other issues that seem to surface after the job is complete. In fact, the right upfront expectation management and detailed product and process information eliminate most of those questions.

This allows you the opportunity

to be proactive with common concrete issues, such as color variations, cracking and overall artistic feel and appeal.

On the other hand, these proactive measures do not allow you to not deal with issues that occur, or worse yet, allow you to avoid or ignore a client's questions or concerns.

As a special side note, I want to pick on one particular issue that always ends up in a bit of finger-pointing between the installer and homeowner in terms of responsibility, and is a personal pet peeve. The issue of concrete spalling and scaling is one that seemingly is getting worse year after year, and I don't see anyone addressing the root of the problem. I know many of you will disagree with me, but my research (and about 1,000 years of history) have taught me that concrete is a pretty durable material and, if designed, mixed and installed properly, will last a very long time. To blame deicing salts and a bad winter for the surface coming off concrete after 10 months of service life is just plain wrong. If bad weather and salt caused concrete to spall within a year or two, then the world around most of us would literally be crumbling.

Rather, I think the industry has gotten lazy, and the basics of good concreting are being ignored. Concrete spalls because it has a weak surface caused by a high water-to-cement ratio at the surface combined with poor finishing technique, i.e., adding too much water to concrete in order to make finishing easier. Fast forward to the first winter, and we see how the expansion of water in the concrete by 9 percent when it freezes causes that weak layer to fail. Salt attracts water through the process of osmosis and makes a bad situation worse — but does not cause the problem.

So getting back on track, unless you specifically say that spalling is a possibility with all concrete you pour, it is your responsibility to repair or replace spalling concrete that has spent only a few months in service. You can't expect a client to pay thousands or tens of thousands of dollars for a product

or look that is arbitrary. Setting the proper standards and making sure you are both on the same page before you begin is your responsibility.

### For the homeowner

If you're a homeowner, you need to understand that there are five constants of concrete that will never change. These are, in no particular order:

- Concrete will get hard.
- Concrete will turn a color.
- Concrete will crack.
- Concrete will not catch fire.
- No one will steal your concrete.

Outside of those, everything and anything goes. You hire a professional to provide a finished product that at least meets your expectations and hopefully exceeds them.

Please understand that concrete is not an inanimate object. In fact, concrete contracts, expands, breathes and actually becomes one with the environment it is placed into.

This big, heavy, colored, textured slab sitting behind, in front of or in your house or building is not immune

to the everyday environmental beating the world we live in dishes out. In fact, it may need some occasional TLC, depending on the type of finish and level of customization you have requested. It is your responsibility to make your applicator aware of what you want in details that are as clear

***I think the industry has gotten lazy, and the basics of good concreting are being ignored.***



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## Trowel and Error

as possible. Demand samples, but don't expect them for free.

Also, concrete is not like paint — you can't just go over it if you don't like the look or color. If something is truly wrong, you have the right to demand it be fixed or replaced to meet the agreed-upon level of expectation. However, you can't demand or expect to have concrete replaced or repaired because the color is a bit darker, lighter or whatever than you expected. Understand that everything your installer does costs him or her money, and nothing is really for free. Do your homework, and live with the final product for which you paid \$6 per square foot when all the other bids were \$10 per square foot. Too often I get sent pictures of projects and asked, "Is this acceptable work?" Unless it is really bad, I usually ask, "What did you pay, and what did you agree to?"

The last big item in dealing with responsibility is a contract. Contracts are important for both parties. Too often I hear after the pour, when an expectation issue has arisen, "I did not know contracts existed or that I even needed one." I recommend them for every concrete project, small or large. They can be short and sweet, just as long as they call out in detail what is expected by both parties. There also needs to be language that clearly states who takes ownership of issues after the pour and when.

I also like warranties or guarantees within limits. These will only last for a few years, and will not cover issues such as random cracking or sealer issues caused by day-to-day environmental impact. While they are not short or simple, I like to use car warranties as a model when dealing with

concrete contracts. Most new-car warranties cover the frame, power train and general guts of the vehicle. They don't cover the paint job, windshield, light bulbs and interior aesthetics. The same should hold true for your concrete warranty. The structure, surface integrity and overall performance should be covered, while color, sealer performance, level of gloss, dog urine stains and tree sap are not. Having a good contract protects both parties and allows for a neutral third party to give an opinion if it happens to come to that.

My experience has taught me that if every concrete project were treated like a service — with managed expectations, detailed explanations on process and products, and written contracts — the number of unresolved problems would go down significantly. There are many qualified, professional concrete technicians out there performing really good work every day. These businesses take their responsibility to the industry seriously and understand that it is not just this job but future jobs that are at stake if you don't perform. Responsibility for a project after the fact is something that needs to be considered before the job begins, unless, of course, you are that person who never has any problems with their decorative concrete projects. 📁

*Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has presented seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America, including at the World of Concrete convention. Contact him with technical questions at [trowelanderror@concretedecor.net](mailto:trowelanderror@concretedecor.net).*

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## Designing Concrete That Is Maintenance Free

**W**hen *Concrete Decor* magazine suggested “maintenance” as a subject, I jumped at it! After all, this is something that torments most decorative concrete contractors, unless, that is, there is a significant maintenance profit center to their business. In the case of *The Concretist*, there is not. We have always been more focused on creating than maintaining, although we certainly have an interest in our projects looking as spiffy as possible.



by Mike Miller

Most of our work has involved interiors, so we’ve tried to maintain relationships with skilled janitorial firms along the way. A skilled janitor is like a skilled auto mechanic: worth his weight in gold (even though, lucky for us, most don’t realize it themselves and don’t charge that way). The maintenance of our exteriors has been directed to other concrete contractors with a dedicated maintenance component to their business. These guys seem to be more aware of their worth, and so you pay for it ... That’s OK, it’s money well spent.

It also behooves us to completely disclose the pluses and minuses of all aspects of maintenance to our clients, although I’m not sure, even after serious attention, that many have really gotten

it. Whether commercial or residential clients, most claim to have an interest in maintenance and to be committed to at least some level of effort or allocated budget. However, I have yet to see a consistent level of follow-through.

This being the case, what are the things that we can design in that allow for the best-looking product all along the way, whether it’s well-maintained or not?

### Take the middle road

We’ve found that, almost always, the middle road is best — concrete not too dark but not too light. Concrete less homogenous, with some variegation of color. Concrete not too smooth, with some texture, but not too much, sealed enough to protect and look “finished,” but not too glossy.

Dark colors don’t show stains and scuff marks like light colors, while lights don’t show dust and scratches like darks. In general, medium-saturation colors wear best. It’s also best to not apply especially dark or saturated colors (stains, dyes, tints) over a really light substrate (such as a white cement-based concrete or overlay). The same goes for really light titanium white or yellow oxide tints over a darker substrate.

We prefer paving with some level of visual movement in both color and texture. Seamless texture mats over complimentary colors of release agent over hardener work well, as do layers of complimentary tint and dye washes and



stains over a chattered, sweated natural gray base.

It also helps to prewear the concrete, removing any weak cement paste that was likely to wear off quickly anyway. Of course, a ground surface with all of its paste removed and the subtle drifts of its fines and coarses exposed is the ultimate expression of this. Whatever wear can be borne by the harder sand or aggregates, rather than cement, is best. With nonground surfaces, we achieve this by sanding with a floor machine. If there are any highs and lows to the concrete, this process finds and defines them, removing vulnerable high spots while leaving protected lower areas untouched. On a micro level, sand is exposed in cross-section at the highs, contrasting with a denser cement paste left at the lows. This is better on lightly textured stamped concrete or concrete with chattered or sweated finishes, but it works on smooth troweled surfaces too. Not only does it prewear, it adds an element of subtle serendipity, turning simply troweled natural gray concrete into something akin to stylized honed limestone.

Speaking of honing, in general, a honed look is preferable to a polished look. Concrete that is glossy needs to be maintained to remain glossy. And the glossier it is, the sooner that scratches and wear patterns will show. We prefer to apply the minimum level of sealer needed to protect. We also try to allow that sealer to penetrate as deeply as possible, or to at least provide as many protected low areas on a micro level as possible. Better that the sealer is in, rather than on, the concrete.

We prefer thinned solvent-based, VOC-exempt acrylic sealers. These penetrate deeply, don't build up excessively and appear natural. They're also inexpensive and easy to fix if something goes awry. You can also buy the sealer with, or add, a dulling agent — a super-fine sand that doesn't change the texture, but refracts, rather than reflects, light.

The protected low areas are produced through a more textured finish (stamped, chattered, sweated, sanded and, sometimes, acid-etched or blasted). If something requires a higher buildup

of sealer (for protection), you may want to consider dulling it with an abrasive scuff pad on a floor machine. This produces millions of microscratches that, again, refract rather than reflect light. Sometimes a true penetrating sealer or impregnator is just the ticket! Or, a penetrating sealer/impregnator followed by wax, driven into the pores with a good buffing by a floor machine. Ooo! A good buffing with a floor machine ... Sounds exciting! Perhaps I should rethink whether The Concretist pursues a significant maintenance profit center or not?

### **Case study: Katherine Delmar Burke School, San Francisco, Calif.**

In 1996, my art director, Karen Tierney, and I were engaged to produce a series of world maps for a prestigious San Francisco girls' school. The venue was three 600-square-foot outdoor courtyards. This was new, from-the-ground-up concrete, to be illustrated in a style that was nearly photorealistic.

The concrete was placed and colored with an off-white hardener

by Bay Area Concretes Inc. It was finished in a swarthy, leathery fashion (great for reproducing both oceans and landmasses). The Concretist then laid out and diamond-cut the map grids as contraction joints.

According to this writer, the finish was great! We subsequently sanded the slabs with an 80-grit screen, wore off any weak cement paste, visually accented highs and lows, encouraged deep penetration of the copper and iron-based acid stains (with boosted acid content to further augment texture) and dyes, and created protected low areas for deposition of tints. I was young, bright, impetuous ... I was fantastic!

What could go wrong?

The job was near the ocean, about as far west as one could go before wetting your feet in the Pacific. We were placing concrete during the summer break. The project had to be completed before kids returned for school. I had allowed for a little more than 30 days for the concrete to cure/dehydrate before beginning staining. During the summer in San Francisco's East Bay, where I

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Photo courtesy of the concretist

live, this would have been absolutely appropriate. However, in The Avenues, it was foggy, producing surface water every morning. That's every morning until just before noon!

As art directors, we had specified an off-white color hardener as a canvas to start from. We needed to produce bright ocean blue-greens, earthy tans and dirtier greens for continents, and even white snowy ice for Greenland, Northern Europe, etc. These were to be done in a representative style, like watercolor, with soft or liquid color transitions and no distinct separations.

According to "Miller's Rules" (which hadn't been entirely compiled back then), it's not a good idea to apply darker

colors over a lighter base, but I don't know that we had a choice. And we were intending to go no darker than was necessary.

We sallied forth and, primarily thanks to Karen, produced one incredible piece of concrete ... Yes, we were fantastic! That is, until we sealed with a dull-rubbed, thinned-down, solvent-based acrylic lacquer, which we further dulled by scrubbing with a scuff pad. Well, even then we were fantastic — until the next morning, when the copper-based stains, upon going anaerobic in a still slightly moist environment, began to turn somewhat black. Ughhh! We chocked it up to artistic license, were able to explain that

this was all part of the plan, noting that those dark areas were the deeper parts of the oceans, and collected our check.

It still looked great, but, not surprisingly, didn't wear particularly well. While the applied colors remained, scratches posed a constant problem.

## Second chance

Fast-forward to 12 years later. We were again retained, this time to spruce up the maps, which had become a perennial hit with the students, parents and staff of the school. Refurbishment was under the direction of my partner, Kelley Burnham, and our current art director, Martin Webb. Kelley and Martin were determined to not make the mistakes that the hotshot Mike Miller had made.

A methodology was developed and proven out through site mock-ups. The slabs were lightly sandblasted to remove the original scratched acrylic and to further increase penetration and develop protected low areas. Amazingly, even after sandblasting, the graphics from the original stains, dyes and tints were still visible. This is an applied color system where the materials had hung in there outside, under heavy use and with no maintenance, for some 12 years.

There was no sign of a current moisture problem, but Kelley and Martin discarded any patina stains as an option, developing the system around Colormaker Floors' Aquacolors (super-finely ground pigments in a water or water/acetone or alcohol base). These could be used to produce a mid-range (remember the "middle of the road rule") level of coloration in a realistic watercolor style. The maps were again sealed with a dull-rubbed effect using thinned-down, solvent-based acrylic lacquer, which we again further dulled by scrubbing with a scuff pad. And, again, we collected our check. 📁

*Mike Miller is managing principal of The Concretist, based in Benicia, Calif. He also runs workshops and an artist-in-residency program at his ranch in northeastern Nevada. He can be reached at [concretist@aol.com](mailto:concretist@aol.com).*

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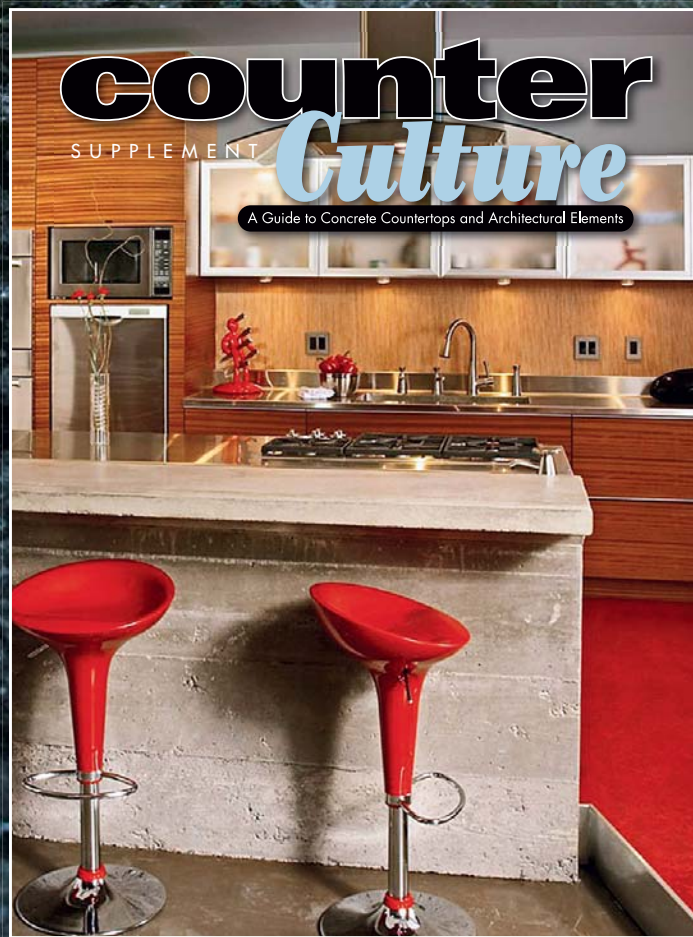
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## Ten Tips for Concrete Countertop Manufacturers

**M**ark Celebuski, general manager of Pinnacle Cast Concrete, wants to share some of his hard-earned wisdom with the readers of Concrete Decor. He has developed a list of 10 tips he thinks will help concrete countertop makers in particular improve their businesses. Enjoy.



by Mark Celebuski

### 1. Set your shop up for success.

It's easy to blame employees for shortcomings in your operation. The harder and more profitable approach is to set your shop and employees up for success.

I'm often asked what the most important piece of equipment is that fabricators should purchase. The answer is simple: An overhead crane. The most common injuries occurring in the precast industry are back and crushing

injuries. Both are directly related to lifting things and setting them back down (sorry to be so obvious). Both can be very expensive — back injury claims can drag on for years.

The solution: Don't lift heavy things by hand.

A 1-ton overhead crane that slides in one direction on an I-beam will cost you less than \$3,000 in parts. Pay a professional engineer to spec the size of the I-beam and mounting configuration if you're not comfortable with this part. You can also purchase free-standing overhead cranes that slide in both directions for about \$15,000.

Invest in equipment to do the heavy tasks. We can actually cast, strip, process, deliver and install a countertop without ever lifting it by hand.

### 2. Decide what you want to be the best at and work towards that goal.

One thing that the successful companies I've worked for over the



years have had in common has been an intense focus on their main products. They had an easy time finishing the statement "We want to be the best at ..."

The ones that were not focused were not very profitable and in some cases ceased to exist. One company I worked for that produced parking garages hired a full-time person to investigate and develop new products. Problem was, they weren't very good at making parking garages. Their energy and money would have been far better spent improving their existing operation rather than trying something new. I saw the writing on the wall and quit just before they were bought and stripped for parts and real estate.

If you make concrete countertops, get really good at making and selling them before moving on.

### 3. Double the size of your shop without adding any square footage.

There is a misconception in the concrete countertop industry that concrete countertops need to stay in the mold and be moist-cured for days before stripping, and after stripping, concrete countertops must be moist-cured for an additional length of time before and during processing. This misconception cost you time and money.

Imagine turning around a kitchen in five days. If your normal turnaround was 10 days, you've just doubled the size of your shop.

Don't think you can do it? I was part of a team that implemented systems and procedures to get multistory prestressed buildings done quickly. We would balance production, shipping and erection of up to 8,000 square feet a day. Casting was day one, stripping and loading to ride day two, and shipping and erecting day three. Turning a kitchen five days from templating should be a piece of cake.

### 4. Do, redo, learn, move on.

Ernest Hemingway rewrote the ending to "A Farewell To Arms" 39 times. My helper made his first rebar cage, looked at it, and said that he was no good at making rebar cages. What result did he expect?

We live in a society where failure is looked down on. Employees end up afraid to make a mistake. But failure is where success comes from. You need to make or do a lot of something to get good at it. If you've never made a concrete sink, make one. Never tried acid staining? Stain something. Forge ahead.

Don't let fear of failure stop you from doing something, over and over if necessary.

### 5. Define your company and your products before someone else does it for you.

Concrete countertops continue to

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suffer in the media. Allegedly they stain, they crack, they curl, they warp and they are not a good choice for a working kitchen. Nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to modern concrete countertops and sinks.

Unless you (or we as an industry) take proactive steps to combat the media's negative perceptions, things will not change.

Use your Web site as a tool to change perceptions. Get press coverage whenever you can, and hire a PR company to help if this isn't your comfort zone. Offer to give talks at your local National Kitchen & Bath Association meeting. Invite customers to your plant. Donate an outdoor table to a charitable auction. Spread the word whenever and wherever you can. Slowly, perception will change.

### 6. Modernize your sales and marketing efforts.

In 1985 it took five TV commercials to achieve 85 percent penetration of TV viewing households, according to public relations master Howard Bragman. In 2008, it took 1,292 commercials to achieve the same penetration.

Not many fabricators would use TV to advertise, but this does illustrate the changing way people get information.

If you don't have a professionally done Web site with good photos, do whatever it takes to get one — no excuses. I also like to view Web site statistics that tell me how viewers got to my site, what they looked at, how longed they stayed, and so on. People get to our site and go immediately to the projects/photos page. Out of 5,000 or so visitors, less than 100 have looked at "About Us."

Google AdWords may be the best rifle approach to advertising currently out there. You can target certain geographical areas and certain keywords. The cost is pay-per-click, so you can set the budget, and it's very easy to do yourself. If you're a fabricator in Walla Walla, Wash., you can get your ad shown when someone within 20 miles of Walla Walla types "concrete countertops."

DVDs are a great way to give customers a lot of information for very little money. We've got 10 minutes

worth of projects on one DVD that costs us about \$3.25 each, including a nice full-color cover. The same information printed would cost more than \$100 per piece.

### 7. Stay in the loop.

This year's Surface Fabrication & Design Expo in Orlando was sparsely attended by all measurable standards. However, while I was there, I meet a manufacturer and ordered a sander that eliminated my dust problems, cut my sealer sanding in half, may eliminate the need for a second coat of sealer, and could potentially save me more than \$5,000 per year. I would have never seen the sander, never talked to the manufacturer, and never had him agree to take the sander back if it didn't work if I had not attended. One thing made the show a great success for me.

There is a wealth of information-sharing going on right now, from shows to online forums. Take advantage of it.

### 8. Keep an ear to the ground.

Concrete countertops are a rapidly changing industry, with fabricators leapfrogging each other with products and processes. GFRC, CSA cements, new sealers, coatings, admixtures — it's an exciting time. Keep an open mind.

I like the story a farmer once told me about rats. When rats are presented with a new food source they will eat a tiny bit of it, go away for a while and see if it makes them sick. If it does, they don't eat it again. They're survivors.

Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. I don't specialize in GFRC, but when I had to make a curved fireplace surround, it made the most sense, so I used it.

### 9. Learn to prioritize

Running a lean business can mean running out of hours in the day before everything is done. The key is to learn to prioritize.

Customers must always come first. Without them you have no company. If they want to meet on a Saturday, need a phone call returned, have a problem, need an estimate, whatever, put customers first on your list.

Next come current projects.

If you're not casting concrete for someone you're not billing anything. Get accustomed to running projects through your plant in a timely fashion. Put pressure on yourself so your customers won't.

Third come plant or company improvement projects. You should always have a plan for improving your operation. Here is my current list off the top of my head: Get all the pieces for the new display done, paint the restroom and cast a new vanity for it, install a dust collection system for the new sander, hang a new light fixture, install a new front door, install shelves with dispensers for the admixtures, design a simple hanging/weighing/dispensing system to use "supersacks" of cement.

### 10. Do what it takes to get through this economic downturn.

You would be hard-pressed to sift through a day's worth of news and come up with some good news on the economy.

However, there is good news when it comes to concrete countertops — the demand is rising faster than the economy is dropping. The problem is that the distribution network has collapsed in some cases.

Kitchen designers have closed their doors, and the ones that are open have cut staff and are looking toward more traditional surfacing materials. I've seen a lot less risk-taking on the part of designers in my market.

The companies that are holding their ground have doubled their advertising budget rather than cutting it, made their operation leaner (see Tip No. 3), and gotten back to customer service basics.

We've actually had to rethink the way we do things. In the end the companies that emerge will be stronger than before. 🚧

*Mark Celebuski is general manager of Pinnacle Cast Concrete, a company specializing in concrete countertops and an international distributor of concrete countertop manufacturing equipment. Mark has worked in the architectural and structural precast concrete field for the past 30 years, and he has completed more than 15 million square feet of projects. He can be reached at [mark@pinnaclecastconcrete.com](mailto:mark@pinnaclecastconcrete.com).*





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# BALTIMORE





## Colour Placerville, Calif.



Photos courtesy of Colour

by David Searls

**T**o the father-and-son team of Jim and Chris Swanson, nothing beats peeling back an old, moldy carpet and finding a gem beneath.

Both men love discovering the aged outlines of nail and bolt holes, electrical boxes, stray bits of wood and other ghosts of construction and time that have made their presence known in the decades since a concrete floor was installed. The more scars and pits defacing the floor, the better, says Jim, the elder partner in Colour, of Placerville, Calif. "The blemishes and imperfections add character. In fact, I think old floors look better than new pours."

That's one reason the Swansons, along with partner Jamie Schneider, have specialized in polishing concrete floors instead of coating them.

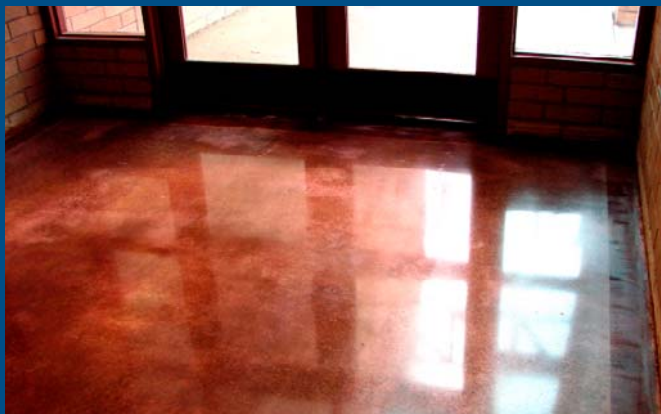
Jim and Chris have strong feelings about

polishing versus coating concrete. Coatings seal in moisture, they say, which eventually results in increased maintenance, coating failure, and a need to replace the floor system. "You're constantly stripping and rewaxing," says Jim. With polishing, on the other hand, "there's very little maintenance."

And finally, Jim says, polishing is a 100 percent green process that's VOC-compliant from beginning to end.

Jim Swanson is an Akron, Ohio, native. Planning to go to Australia after release from military service in 1969, he had gotten as far as Mark Twain's celebrated Calaveras County in California when he met his future wife, Sandy, at a firemen's ball. Enjoying the weather almost as much as the girl, he forgot all about the "land down under" and set down roots in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.





He got his real estate license, raised a family and met his and his son's future business partner in the Golden State.

"Jamie, my dad and I all have backgrounds in real estate and construction," says Chris. "So eight years ago we bought a rundown house, a real neighborhood eyesore, and went about fixing it up for resale."

The investment was intended in part to fund the Christian ministry goals of Jim, an ordained minister, and his son, a licensed minister. Their long-term plan still includes founding a youth center with the proceeds of their "buy, renovate and sell" activity, but the failing economy got in the way and derailed them at least temporarily.

In the meantime, they picked up a thriving trade. As is often the case with entrepreneurs, the work that the Swansons

and Schneider do today deviates greatly from their original plan.

Even now, the two men can't really explain why they decided to go with concrete countertops in the kitchen of that investment property except that, in Chris's words, "It sounded like fun."

When the neighbors dropped in to tour the newly refurbished home, they immediately focused on those eye-catching counters. Very few contractors in that part of California were decorating with concrete back then.

"When we started doing decorative concrete, we were not yet aware of any local suppliers such as Spec-West in Sacramento," Jim recalls. "We ordered everything online from back east."

The self-taught artisans so impressed their curious neighbors that phone calls

started coming in almost immediately.

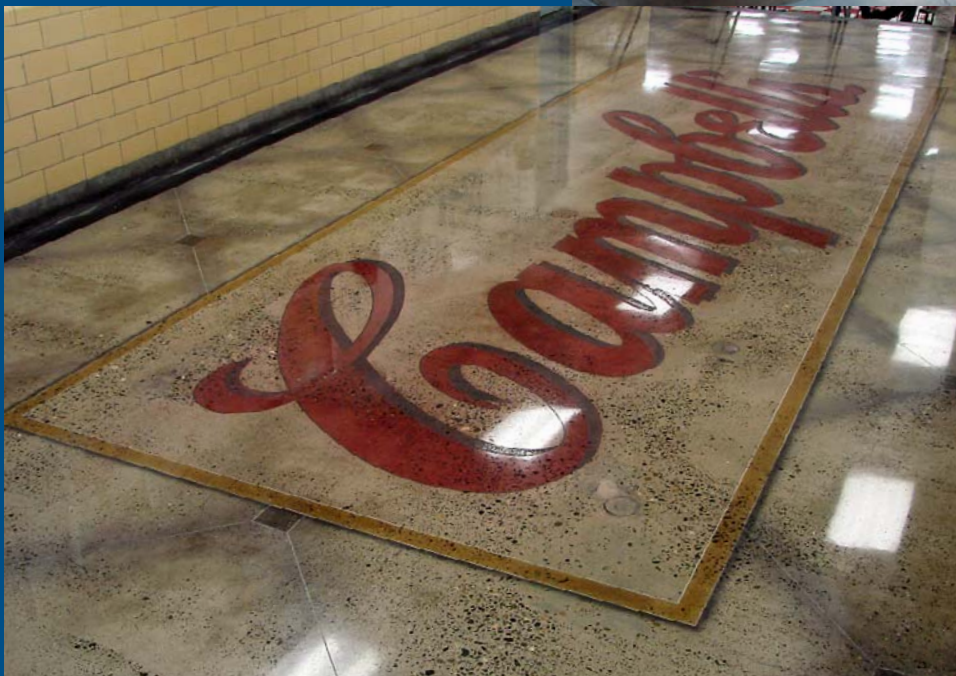
"Everyone wanted us to install concrete counters for them," says Chris.

While the first few nibbles came from homeowners, the partners eventually settled on a primarily commercial customer base. They regularly get calls from architects working on behalf of commercial, retail and institutional properties. While Schneider still does general contracting, the other two devote all of their talent and energy to decorative concrete.

It was Chris who came up with the name Colour, with its British spelling, on something of a whim. "I thought it looked more interesting that way," he recalls.

The company is in negotiations to assume its first medical project, the cancer center of a leading area hospital system. The





project would serve as a perfect example of the benefits gained with polished concrete. “They’ve been using terrazzo in the past,” says Chris. “But they saw that terrazzo is more expensive and higher maintenance, and they’d have to close the lobby for a month to work on it versus only a week with polished concrete.”

Wax-free polished concrete is appropriate on all kinds of flooring in medical settings, except in surgery rooms and other areas where blood spill is expected. Those areas must be sealed in order to have complete containment.

“We offer an incredible savings in labor and chemicals,” says Jim.

## Chalk and cut

Chris Swanson works either with his own chalk-drawn designs or by shotblasting or sandblasting through stencils made by Colledi Designs. Even in cases where the client supplies the pattern, there’s often a chance to add creative touches. For instance, on a project for The Campbell Soup Co., Swanson stenciled the logo but added a shadow-drop border to give the art a raised appearance.

When coloring, the team uses basic dyes from AmeriPolish, but Chris adds “other tricks,” according to his father, to suspend the color a little longer and make it float, giving it an appearance almost like acid

staining for a more distinctive look.

“On occasion, we do small-scale samples of what we want to do, but 75 percent of the time we’re given a license to create,” says Chris. “I’ll chalk a design on the floor, then get their okay.”

Jim Swanson tells of a church whose leaders trusted Chris to install a design of his choice, based solely on portfolio photos and the raves of former customers. “They said when they hired us that they’d seen our work and had talked with a competitor who told them that Chris was the best color concrete artist in the country,” says Jim.

One recent commercial building project illustrates a typical workday for the Colour crew. A floor poured nearly 100 years ago had





been cut up, raised, lowered and repeatedly patched for nearly a century. "It looked like a jigsaw puzzle," says Jim.

"We had to rip out a moldy carpet, then use a grinder to remove two or three coats of glue," says Chris. After major patching, leveling and crack repairing, they applied a concrete densifier from VersaFlex Inc. to tighten the pores in the concrete. They laid out a design, then colored and polished the floor. The final step was a stain-guard treatment.

The Colour process includes the buffing of the floor with a specially designed pad from HTC Inc., their supplier of grinding equipment. Twister pads are embedded with thousands of polishing diamonds that clean

and polish the concrete in a single swipe. That's the only maintenance step, along with mopping up standing spills in reasonable time, that the Swansons recommend.

### Beauty in the eye

To the Swansons and Schneider, loyalty is as vital a component of their business life as it is within their shared Christian faith. That's why they've maintained close ties to an extensive team of suppliers, which includes VersaFlex, stencil-maker Colledi Designs, California-based supplier Spec-West Concrete Systems, and HTC.

As Chris Swanson states in an e-mail, "All of these people have been wonderful to us and we have much more than a business

relationship with them; they've all become good friends of ours. Doug Knode has had an influence in my life and has taught me many things over the years. But he has been much more than a teacher, he's been a friend and he means a lot to me and my family."

And all share the Colour passion for finding and enhancing the natural beauty hidden deep within the pits, scars, blemishes and water stains of a weathered slab of concrete flooring. 🛠️

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# Project Profile



Photos courtesy of Abstract Concrete

## Labatt Blue Light Jungle Bar at Comerica Park, Detroit, Mich. Contractor: Abstract Concrete

by Erin F. Ansley

**B**rian Whinnery and Dennis Yurconis, partners at Rochester Hills, Mich.-based Abstract Concrete, are no strangers to bringing life back to buildings in the Detroit area. In fact, hundreds tread on their work daily throughout the interior of the renovated art deco-style Water Board Building in downtown Detroit.

This past spring, the award-winning company stepped up to the plate again, adding the finishing touches to the new Labatt Blue Light Jungle Bar at Comerica Park, where fans of the Detroit Tigers can enjoy a tropical sports dining experience, complete with 119-inch high-definition TVs and 65-inch plasma TVs, plus rain-forest foliage and other theme attractions.

Ilitch Holdings Inc., the architects behind the project, originally wanted to stain the floor of the 3,300-square-foot concrete jungle, but the existing floor wasn't in the right shape for acid stain, explains Whinnery. When the architects

**Scope of work:** Floor for sports bar at Comerica Park in Detroit, Mich.

**Contractor:** Abstract Concrete, Rochester Hills, Mich.; Brian Whinnery and Dennis Yurconis, partners

**Architect and construction manager:** Ilitch Holdings Inc., Detroit, Mich.

**Project design and management:** Ray Rifenberg Sr., Elite Crete of Michigan LLC





Abstract Concrete installed this concrete floor at the Labatt Blue Light Jungle Bar at Comerica Park in Detroit, Mich. using a mix ratio of 6 ounces of Elite Crete System's Reflecter Enhancer per gallon of epoxy. In order to achieve this unique look, the metallic pigment load was changed.

saw samples of Elite Crete Systems Inc.'s Reflecter Enhancer, he says they were impressed with the cost, durability and look of the product, and that's where Whinnery and his team came into play.

"We had the project introduced to us through Ray Rifenberg Sr., the distributor from Elite Crete of Michigan," he recalls. "He wrote the specs and dealt with the architects through the design phase. He doesn't do any installation, so he handed it to us."

Reflecter Enhancer is a nonmetallic admixture used to create unique floor finishes that from a distance look like acid stain, but also give off a shimmering effect. The effects come from reflective nanoparticles, each between 10 and 50 microns wide, in 100 percent solids epoxy over an Elite Crete troweled overlay. The product is available in 18 colors that can be blended for almost any look.

Whinnery says he's been installing concrete with pearlescent powder pigments for years. Though there are similar products on the market (Miracote's Chameleon Symphony line and Key Resin Co.'s Key Luster Metallic, to name two), he says he likes working with Elite Crete's system because it doesn't require a dispersing agent to achieve a patina finish.

"These systems are great because they create such a unique look, at first glance most people think stained concrete, but the floor has so much dimension it really looks like stone," he says.

With opening day and a NCAA Final Four party looming, Abstract's team of five installers completed the

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new floor in just five days (two shy for a typical job of this caliber), but the job didn't come without its challenges. Whinnery says that several elements of the interior had been remodeled, with walls moved and bar stools torn out, all damaging the existing concrete in different ways.

If that wasn't enough, the concrete was emitting vapors in some areas due to trench work a previous contractor had handled just prior to Abstract's involvement. "They didn't use epoxy mortar, so it took longer to cure. Usually we would wait until there are acceptable vapor emissions," Whinnery explains. "We tested it, and it was in excess of 9 pounds per 1,000 square feet for a 24-hour period." Time was of the essence, so they had to sign a waiver to not install a vapor barrier and move forward

to meet the schedule.

This experience exemplifies Abstract's dedication to educating itself and its clients about testing slabs. "You can't assume that even if a slab is a month old it won't give off emissions," Whinnery says. "Many people think if a slab is 28 days old, it has had time to dry, but the fact is the 28-day mark refers to the designated point when a slab should have reached 80 percent of its designed compressive strength, and it has nothing to do with vapor emission." He adds that there are several ways to conduct such tests, including electronic and calcium chloride tests. Regardless of the method, Whinnery recommends testing slabs every 700 square feet.

The team moved quickly and carefully to install the nanopowder product on the sports bar floor. Before

the real work could commence, Abstract had to use a planetary surface grinder to remove several coats of industrial floor paint. They also had to repair numerous cracks in areas — such as the space where old bar stools once stood — by using a deep penetrating fast-set polyurea-urethane hybrid. Then they applied the first layer of Elite Crete's Thin-Finish, a polymer-based concrete with a thin, black-tint finish, followed by a coat of clear epoxy primer. The next day, they applied 33 gallons of 100 percent solid epoxy mixed with roughly 6 ounces of Reflector Enhancer per gallon using a 1/16-inch notched squeegee. Next came a steel trowel to randomly spread the self-leveling epoxy. Lastly, they applied a floor finish for maintenance purposes.

"There's no such thing as a



maintenance-free floor, so we put a water-based mopable floor finish on to get them started,” Whinnery notes. The product also carries a 5-year warranty against failure not caused by traumatic damage, and if maintained, it will last a lifetime.

The staff was presented with one final challenge. On the evening of the project’s last day, just hours before the party for the Michigan State-UConn Final Four basketball game, the protective cardboard was removed to reveal a nasty surprise. Unbeknownst to Abstract or the client, the cardboard had become saturated with water that leaked through a doorway, re-emulsifying the wax. Ilitch Holdings project manager James Lavallee responded to the emergency.

“After we lifted the protective covers, we had big areas of hazing in the wax finish,” he remembers. “We sanded down the bad areas and reapplied a new wax coating to the entire area. That was a late night.”

Abstract hit a home run by going above and beyond the call of duty. The firm hopes to land future contracts with Ilitch Holdings. “There was no better time to have something looking right,” Whinnery says. 🚗

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# ■ ■ ■ Project Profile



Photos courtesy of The Concretist

Kelley Burnham of The Concretist directs employees of Coast Concrete in the placement of embossing sails.

## New Leaf Community Market, Santa Cruz, Calif. Contractor: The Concretist

by Erik Pisor

**W**hen New Leaf Community Markets decided to construct a new 20,000-square-foot location in Santa Cruz, Calif., the flooring was one feature the company wanted to be unique, durable and representative of the beach community in which the natural food store would be located.

“For this floor we wanted to do something sculptural,” says New Leaf creative director Sarah Miles.

To achieve a floor that reflected Santa Cruz’s ocean-oriented west side while also being relatively inexpensive to create, Miles and project manager Steve Crocker turned to Bay Area-based concrete artist Mike Miller and his firm, The Concretist.

By utilizing sail-shaped stamps, differential curing, some basic construction materials and a sweat finish, Miller crafted a colorful ocean-

**Scope of work:** Floor for new natural foods store

**Store owner:** New Leaf Community Markets, Santa Cruz, Calif.

**Decorative concrete contractor:** The Concretist, Benicia, Calif.

**Project manager:** Steve Crocker, CDM Real Estate Co., Watsonville, Calif.

**Creative director:** Sarah Miles, New Leaf Community Markets

**Concrete placement:** Coast Concrete, Santa Cruz, Calif.





A beach theme was illustrated through plasma-cut steel templates of stylized pier images, which were sandblasted, then stained with Colormaker Patinaetch.



themed floor that fit the bill.

"He created a presence that you normally don't get in a floor," says Crocker, of CDM Real Estate Co., based in Watsonville, Calif. "It's multilayered and complex."

Design for the market's floor began during summer 2008, when Miller, Crocker, Miles and other members of the design team sat down and decided the core identity of the store's interior would revolve around pier and sailing ship themes.

"Our plan was to do as much as possible in the original concrete pours ... there wouldn't be any applied colors or graphics, just grey concrete," Miller says. The concrete was later stained a pine wood color at the request of New Leaf.

Because New Leaf was on a shoestring budget, Crocker referred Miller to a design style inspired by Samuel Mockbee's Rural Studio that emphasizes basic, inexpensive construction materials.

Miller and his partner, Kelley Burnham, combined this design style with the pier and ship sail themes and produced renderings that met with design team approval. "We created both simple (two-dimensional) and more complex (three-dimensional, in perspective, with a vanishing point over an exaggerated horizon) versions of looking at a pier," Miller says. "It's a graphic element that moves you through the store."

Inexpensive construction materials were used generously when it came to the design of the ship sail stamps, which would be pressed into the fresh concrete throughout the left-hand side of the market.

"We didn't want to use traditional stamps that were simulated brick, cobble or wood plank," Miller says. The sail stamps were constructed of burlap, duct tape, bamboo and redwood battens by Burnham and seamstress

Emily McClintick.

Initially the first concrete pour, within the shopping area of the market, was set to occur in early fall 2008. However, this pour was pushed back, and Miller instead completed several test areas in the back part of the market, which included restrooms and a demonstration kitchen. These test areas were key to the project's success, as they gave Miller the opportunity to sample texture, stamping and curing techniques that would be used frequently during the project.



To suggest windblown whitecaps on the Pacific Ocean, a sweat finish was used over the entire floor of the market.





Bamboo fencing was cut into cloud graphics and rolled on top of the concrete when it was hard, yet still green. The sheets sat on top of the concrete for 10 days and were weighed down in various spots to promote differential curing.

The restrooms represented the first test area. It was there Miller focused on achieving a concrete surface that when completed, resembled an open, windblown ocean full of waves and whitecaps. This ocean look was achieved through a sweat finish used on parts of the floor during the final troweling. Miller explains: Typically during the second pass of concrete trowel finishing, a lot of pressure is applied on the concrete surface to ensure its smoothness. In a sweat finish, rather than applying the trowel at an angle with force, the trowel is laid flat, allowed to float, and is moved around in a radial sweeping motion. "It creates a suction, and it slightly lifts the cement paste in a swervy way," Miller says.

The second test area was the demonstration kitchen, where Miller placed the sail stamps in the fresh concrete during the second trowel pass and removed them the next day. "He took advantage of a step that most would overlook," Crocker says.

A challenge during the sail stamping was determining the best time to apply the sail to the concrete, as applying at the wrong time could result in an impression that was too deep.

"When it was too deep we filled it in with a clear epoxy resin," Miller says.

In an attempt to differentiate the colors of some of the sails from the rest of the slab, Miller applied a water-based acrylic sealer to the portions of concrete that were not textured by the

sail stamp. Thanks to the sealer, the sail-imprinted portions of the concrete were able to hold in a different amount of moisture, when curing, than the rest of the slab. As a result, these portions ended up a different color.

Miller completed the sails with a combination of applied and impressed finishes and colors that included Colormaker Patinaetch stains, Deso Dyes and Aquacolor tints.

Then, Santa Cruz subcontractor Coast Concrete began placing the concrete slabs during late fall 2008. Five main sections of concrete were placed, beginning with the left-hand side of the market, which included the sail compositions.

Because a significant amount of Miller's work took place on fresh concrete, Coast Concrete had to work with him throughout the pouring, says John Cureton, owner of Coast Concrete. What made Miller's work unique was the use of novel construction materials and different embeds, he notes.

The sail-stamping methods

utilized in the demonstration kitchen were replicated during the first pour. Miller also engaged metalworker Brian Giambastiani to produce plasma-cut steel templates of stylized sail images and pier images, which were then sandblasted into the concrete to create graphics similar to the wavy reflection of a sail on water and piers in a sandy beach.

During the second placement near the slab with the sails, Miller used bamboo fencing that was cut into cloudy-textured graphics and rolled on top of the hard yet still-green concrete. He was able to create larger images that showcased the fine details of each piece of bamboo. "I think a lot of people on the project were wondering, 'What are they doing?'" says Miles of New Leaf.





Sail stamps were made from burlap, duct tape, bamboo and redwood battens. The stamped surfaces were completed with a combination of applied and impressed finishes and colors.

The bamboo sheets were not pressed into the concrete. Rather, they sat on top of the slab for 10 days and were weighed down in various spots to promote differential curing, which brought out the details of the bamboo and created color variations. "That was the first time we've done that," Miller says.

The third and fourth pours took place in the center and right-hand, back portion of the store, and both featured a pier theme. In order to achieve the look of pier pilings, similar to what is seen at a Santa Cruz wharf, Miller placed circular, plasma-cut steel templates onto the concrete and sandblasted the field.

Miller also blocked out circles that would represent pier pilings and be filled with jellybean glass. Glass was seeded at the right entry of the store and exposed through washing. Different colors of tumbled glass were scattered into the concrete throughout the store to suggest sand on a beach.

The market's exterior pour was the last of the five pours.

Miller was generally satisfied with the project. The sail stamps and templates will not be reused, but that's no loss — using nontraditional materials and discovering new techniques drive Miller as a "concretist."

"Our business is not based on creating a system and repeating it," he says. 🛠️

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Jellybean glass from American Specialty Glass is floated into concrete to suggest pier pilings. Different colors of tumbled glass were also scattered into the concrete throughout the store to suggest sand on a beach.

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Photo courtesy of Rockmolds.com

This waterfall, from Rockmolds.com, was constructed using a stone and concrete substrate, waterproofed with a rolled-on rubber membrane, and finish-textured with hand-carving techniques and stamps from the company. Finally, it was acid-stained, neutralized, and sealed with an acrylic sealer.

By Sue Marquette Poremba

**W**hen Southern California landscape company The Green Scene was hired to develop a waterscape for the Babb residence in Calabasas, Calif., president Scott Cohen says the challenge was to create a rustic backyard in the middle of a desert on an up-slope lawn.

The end result featured a natural-looking waterfall and a faux-wood poured-in-place concrete bridge. “We used an acid-based concrete stain and Styrofoam forms to create recesses and enhance the bridge’s realistic wood-plank appearance,” Cohen says.

Waterfalls are gaining popularity among homeowners who are looking to bring a touch of nature to their backyards, jazz up an in-ground pool or spa, or add a unique element to outdoor entertaining.

However, contractors interested in

diving in should know that waterfall installations are not simple projects.

Several items and factors need to be addressed when designing a water feature for a setting, says Paul Gustafson, project coordinator for Lakeland Co., in Rathdrum, Idaho. “The scale of the feature within its surroundings, whether or not it is designed as a focal point or creating atmosphere in the fore or background, the line of sight and desired viewpoints of the feature, as well as the size, style and color of the rock work all need to be considered,” he says.

Climate has to be considered as well, he says. “A water feature built in a colder climate has to be designed with winter in mind. If designed properly, some features can be run all year long, with the freezing temperatures of winter creating a unique and dramatic





A multilevel waterfall splits into several spillways as it cascades toward a pool. The cast concrete bridge was stamped to look like it was made from wood planks. Colorful plants were used to soften the hardscaped areas.

visual of ice and rock.”

Waterfalls aren’t just about visual beauty, either — they have an aural component. “The sound and noise level of the water itself is often overlooked when designing a water feature,” Gustafson says. “The sounds emanating from a water feature can vary from a soothing trickle to a deafening roar that can enhance and create drama or overshadow the desired effect.”

That’s why the most essential step when designing and fabricating a water feature is meeting with the client to establish clear-cut design ideas and budgets, Gustafson says. “The key to any successful project is planning.”

Too often, homeowners will point to the corner of the backyard and say they want the waterfall there, says Jim Jenkins of Synthetic Rock Solutions in Sheridan, Ore. He remembers one client who thought that a waterfall should be installed in the back corner of his property because when he sat on his deck, that was the part of the yard he saw. However, Jenkins soon learned, the client rarely sat on his back deck. Instead, the installer put the waterfall at a spot in the yard where it could be seen from the man’s favorite chair inside the house, where he spent more time.

In general, the waterscape should be situated in the yard so it can easily be viewed through a window, especially from the most-used room in the house, Jenkins says. “The idea is to bring the landscape into your home via the window.”

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Above: This conceptual rendering of a residential pool with a 30-foot infinity edge waterfall was created by Lakeland Co. for a Sandpoint, Idaho, client using 3-D computer modeling software.

Right and below: Construction of the Sandpoint, Idaho, pool project as planned in the rendering. Massive footers and rebar were required for a water feature of this size at this location.



## Digging in

Gustafson's company uses conceptual drawings, 3-D computer and scale models, and engineering expertise to envision a project and predict problems before breaking ground. "Once the plans are in place, fabrication and construction can begin. This usually takes place on multiple fronts simultaneously. Excavation can begin while pumping systems are created and water-feature substructures are prefabricated and constructed on site."

Installation of the pumping system is next. "The water

system is the heart of any feature and can make or break it," says Gustafson. "Having a pumping system that exceeds the hydraulic requirements is imperative. This allows for a full range of adjustment in flow rates to achieve the desired aesthetics and style of a waterfall."

Mike Fedele, plant manager at Rock & Waterscape of Auburn Hills, Mich., uses steel to design the waterfall structure. He adds what he calls secondary steel to form the shape of the rocks. His team uses shotcrete on the steel structure, he explains. "When it starts to harden, we shape it and detail it until it looks like a rock formation."

The shotcrete is usually applied in two layers, with waterproofing tackled between the first and the second layer. "After the final coat, there is an optional crystalline waterproofing that is actually mixed into the concrete," he says.

Cohen uses a rubber liner for waterproofing. "The way we construct waterfalls is to set a rough structure when we do our gunite work, which we step like shelves," he says. "We go back over that with a rubberized liner and then build our rock work." The rock work isn't cemented together but held together with expansion foam, which Cohen says adds another layer of waterproofing. "By using a liner underneath the feature, we guarantee there won't be leaks later on. The liners are flexible. As concrete shrinks and expands, many waterproofing materials can fail, but



Photos courtesy of Lakeland Co.





Photo courtesy of Lakeland Co.

This three-tiered waterfall at the Jackson Rancheria Casino & Hotel in Jackson, Calif., spills into a whitewater stream that flows to a large pond.



Photos courtesy of Rockmolds.com

Members of the Rockmolds.com crew create substrate rock shapes utilizing diamond lath that is hung, shaped to the company's specifications, and filled with a concrete mix.



The substrate is almost complete, with the diamond lath filled and a scratch coat applied over the surface. It's ready for a final texture coat of a sand-and-polymer mix that will be hand-carved and stamped.





Photos courtesy of Europa Artisans

## Weeping walls: Indoor waterfalls

Weeping walls are a water feature in which the water trickles down the side of a wall, a piece of glass or a similar surface. They can be built inside or outside, but they are becoming more popular in residential homes. The weeping wall can be designed to include a number of decorative features, such as lighting.

Richard DiGiacomo of Europa Artisans offers seminars on installing weeping walls. "They might seem complicated to do, but they are very simple," DiGiacomo says. "Weeping walls create a very soothing atmosphere."

DiGiacomo constructs his walls using 1-inch concrete board, modified cement, "T-ed" PVC pipe, a pump and a waterproof basin. The concrete is often stained or textured. He recommends two-part polyurethanes as sealers.

Holes are drilled into the pipe to allow the water to trickle down the new wall surface. A trough is installed at the bottom of the wall to catch the water.

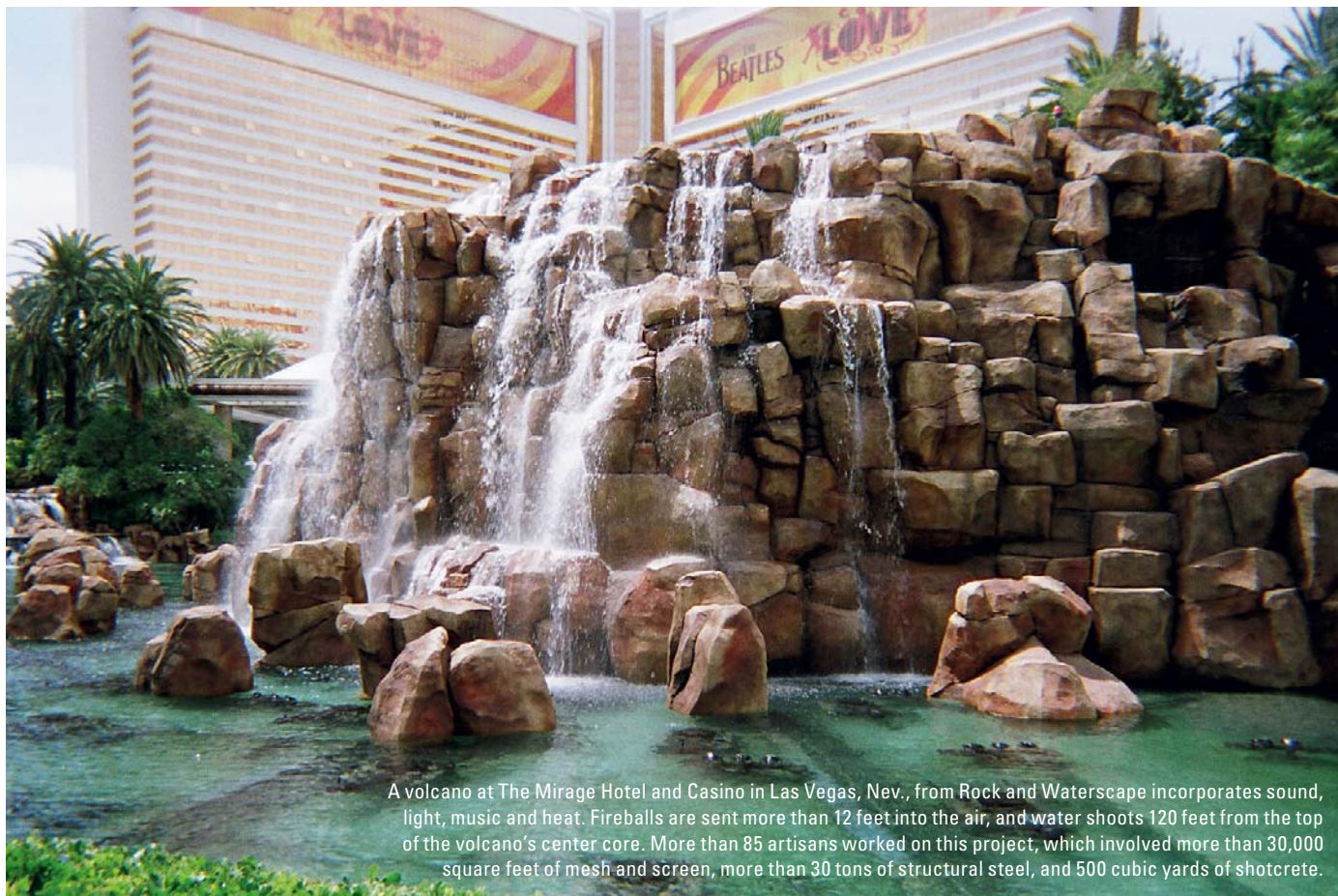
When installing, DiGiacomo's crew likes to use niches already cut in a wall. "Some of those areas already have electricity hooked up for the pump or lighting," he says.

Weeping walls tend to be trouble-free, he says.

🌐 [www.europaartisans.com](http://www.europaartisans.com)







A volcano at The Mirage Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nev., from Rock and Waterscape incorporates sound, light, music and heat. Fireballs are sent more than 12 feet into the air, and water shoots 120 feet from the top of the volcano's center core. More than 85 artisans worked on this project, which involved more than 30,000 square feet of mesh and screen, more than 30 tons of structural steel, and 500 cubic yards of shotcrete.

Photo courtesy of Rock and Waterscape

the liners are good for a minimum of 15 to 20 years.”

David Schwartz of Rockmolds.com, based in Maui, recently completed a waterfall and pool that was to look like a natural pond. His first step was to use Hydrostop, which he says takes the place of plaster and works as a waterproofing method. Diamond lath was used to form the boulders.

Schwartz considers knocking on a faux rock and hearing the echo a pet peeve, and he prefers to make his boulders more realistic. “We don’t like hollow boulders — we like them to be solid,” Schwartz says. “We fill the diamond lath with regular concrete mix and fill the boulders.”

Once that is cured, the lath is covered and a texture coat is applied. Schwartz does not stamp the concrete, but hand-trowels it to develop a subtle texture.

Coloring is the biggest challenge when trying to match concrete boulders to natural surroundings. Steve Kroo of Concrete Jungle, in Northridge, Calif., says that in general, coloring is easy if done the right way. “You do have to know some basics before you color,” he says. “You start with a base. You can use an acid stain and learn techniques to make rocks look natural.”

Jenkins agrees that staining is the way to go. “If you paint a rock, it looks painted.” Paint also adds another layer to the concrete when what you want is for color to penetrate, he notes.

Certain waterfalls will be designed with spillway features. Typical spillways don’t recirculate the water — instead, water

flows at a constant rate from a reservoir, says Fedele.

“Design is done essentially the same way. A retaining wall may be poured first, then waterproofing, and then comes forming the rock with shotcrete.”

Very little maintenance is required for waterfalls once installed. “If you have the waterfall under trees, you’re going to have to keep it well cleaned of leaves,” says Billy Sanders of Decorative Concrete Coatings, in Monroe, La. “That’s pretty much common sense.”

Water can also calcify on the concrete and may need to be scrubbed off. Schwartz uses a bristle brush to scrape off calcium from the stone. Kroo recommends pressure-washing the rock every month or two to clean off the dirt and minerals.

“Every so often things might come loose, and areas may need to be touched up,” Kroo adds, “but that’s a fairly easy fix.”

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# Refreshing Pool Decks

by Emily Dixon

Photos courtesy of Tom Ralston Concrete

**With the summer heat now hovering over the country, it's time to bust out the air mattress and floaties and head to the pool. Since it's the season, *Concrete Decor* interviewed two leading designers about recent pool deck projects. One project highlights an exquisite outdoor kitchen, while the other features a high-end outdoor living space. Reading about these cool projects will help you beat the heat.**

## Unconventional Convention

**Saratoga, Calif.**

**Contractor: Tom Ralston Concrete**

**A**t this Saratoga, Calif., home of an NFL star, there is no such thing as simple. The quarterback had visions of a pool deck connected to an outdoor kitchen that featured a fireplace, barbecue and trash compactor.

Tom Ralston of Tom Ralston Concrete, in Santa Cruz, Calif., was chosen as the man for the job. "He wanted the pool to have somewhat of an organic feel," Ralston says. "But at the same time, he wanted to have more of a conventional look."

The customer's wishes were met by Ralston's team painting the kitchen components white. The pool deck was also tied in to the look.

"The concrete is acid-stained, and what that



does is play off his conventional-looking barbecue and pizza oven with organics," Ralston says. "I always view acid stain as an organic because it comes from the iron oxides that are in the Earth. The way the iron oxides play out, they have this variation that is hard to reproduce with any other medium."

To create the color on the pool deck, Ralston blended L.M. Scofield Co.'s Padre Brown and Faded Terracotta acid stains. Three Rivers Flagstone was employed to create a band around the pool.

Although Ralston and his project foremen did a large amount of work, no one person can take credit for the design. "It's really a result of many minds," he says. Preconstruction meetings were held with Ralston and his crew, an architect, a landscape architect, a pool contractor and the homeowner. Ralston suggested what hardscape mediums to use and provided samples for the group.

"It was like a Mr. Potato Head," Ralston says. "We pieced things together and mixed and matched until we came to agreement with all parties."

In order to keep all of the deck's elements cohesive, the same tile was used in a spa, around the pizza oven and barbecue, and in the pool coping.

"It ties itself together that way," Ralston says. "It's really nice to have juxtaposition in our hardscapes."

Because there were so many elements to the kitchen, there were a lot of different types of workers in the area. "It was a challenge to keep everything coordinated between the electrician, pool contractor, landscaper, architect, and the homeowner's desire to have this built in three months," Ralston says. The project ended up taking around five months to complete.

Thankfully for Ralston, he had three foremen on the site — a masonry foreman, concrete foreman, and staining and sealing foreman. "All of those guys have years and years of experience with me," he says. "A key to success is to have people in the field who really know what they were doing."

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## Rockin' Moroccan

**Calabasas, Calif.**

**Contractor: The Green Scene**

**S**cott Cohen of The Green Scene, based in Canoga Park, Calif., has created many unique projects, but none quite like this. Nicknamed "Rockin' Moroccan" by The Green Scene, the intricate patio and pool deck came complete with firepits, a pond, an outdoor kitchen and hand-painted tiles.

As part of the project, Cohen built an infinity-edge pool to take full advantage of the homeowner's magnificent view of the Santa Monica Mountains, as well as an illusion spa that flows over on all sides.

The pool's deck is a combination of precast concrete pavers, cast-in-place concrete coping and stamped concrete pads that were poured on the bias. The end result is a deck reminiscent of the Shalimar Gardens in Pakistan, the owner's home country.

Heading away from the pool towards the house, Cohen and his team placed strips of grass between individual concrete pads to break up the concrete look. The grass is there for more than just aesthetics. There is expansive clay on the site, so using individual pads helps prevent cracks, as each section of concrete can move on its own.

"I didn't want to have too much hardscape," Cohen adds.

Cohen also built a large outdoor

kitchen. Vibrant colors were used, as well as both large and small pieces of green, red and amber glass embedded in the cast-concrete kitchen countertop. He placed 1,000 fiber optic cables into the countertop to give it an extra element of glamour at night.

There are square fire pits on either side of the pool deck that contain tiles which were hand-painted to the client's specifications. The tiles were used as a decorative veneer on the outside of the fire pit.

"For this client, everything had to be special and unique. She had to be able to customize the work and make it her own," Cohen says. "It helped differentiate our work from that of other contractors."





Photos courtesy of GreenSceneLandscape.com



As a result, Cohen and his team were pushed to their creative limits.

"We weren't allowed to have anything that was standard or ordinary," he says. "It challenged our creativity, and we tapped into everything we knew how to do to create a project that was tastefully unique."

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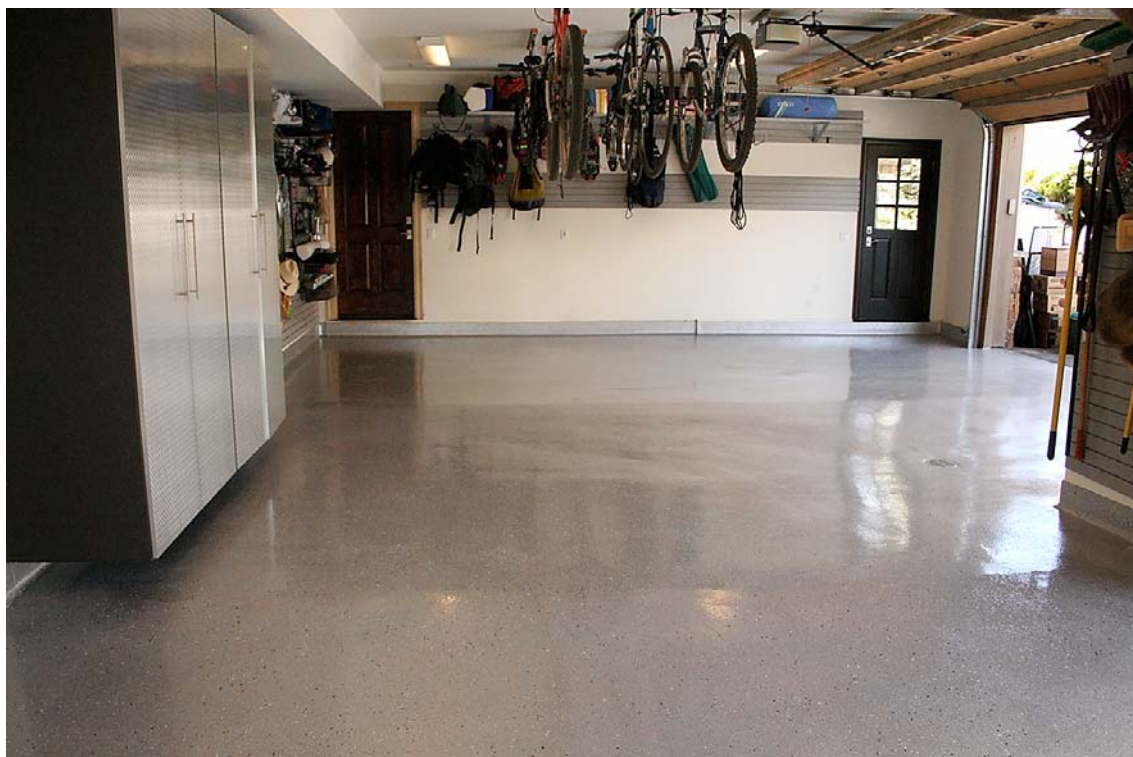
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Photos courtesy of One Day Floors of the Rockies

This garage with a metallic finish was installed using a system from One Day Floors that includes polyaspartic technology.

## Polyaspartics

by Amy Johnson

**W**hat coating material with a long name allows projects to be completed in less time? Polyaspartic aliphatic polyurea.

Polyaspartic coatings and sealers are based on chemistry developed and patented by Bayer MaterialScience LLC. Ed Squiller, Bayer MaterialScience director of business development, polyisocyanates, offers this definition: "Polyaspartic esters are high-performance resins used to make two-component light-stable coatings for the construction and corrosion markets. The fully reacted coating cures to a hard, durable finish that offers many outstanding properties."

Bayer recommends many uses for polyaspartics, two of which will particularly impress decorative concrete contractors: in clear topcoats for acid-stained concrete and in bases and topcoats for fast-curing garage floor coatings.

Polyaspartic coatings are commonly applied in two or three coats when used on garage floors. The first penetrates and seals the concrete and serves as a primer for subsequent applications.

The second layer is often pigmented and serves as the bed for color chips or other decorative additions. The topcoat protects the surface from wear.

Rapid cure is one of the material's key benefits. Depending on the formulation, the primer or seal coat can be tack-free and ready for the second coat in 30 to 45 minutes. The mid-coat or chip coat can be ready to seal as early as an hour after it is applied. The topcoat can usually be walked on in 3 to 4 hours and will stand up to vehicle traffic in 24 hours.

Polyaspartics deliver several other benefits too. Their UV stability prevents yellowing and material degradation in outdoor applications and protects the underlying concrete color from UV degradation. They deliver high abrasion resistance, so they wear well and retain their gloss in traffic areas. They also resist stains, acid and chemicals, making them a good choice for harsh environments from industrial floors to garages to commercial kitchens.

Unlike some sealers or other coatings,



polyaspartics cure by the cross-linking of the two components, not by temperature or humidity. As a result, they can be applied across a wide range of temperature and weather conditions. They are also low in VOCs and are very low-odor compared to other coating materials.

## Chemistry counts

The performance of a polyaspartic depends largely on the chemistry or blend of the formulation. “You want to keep the chemistry as pure as you can,” says Mason Harms, trainer for manufacturer Advacoat. “The more different things you add, the weaker the chemistry. We’ve tried to keep out everything that might cause delamination.”

Polyaspartic coating formulations can be adjusted to balance various features. “We’ve worked long and hard on developing formulations to get a high-performance balance of desired wetting, moisture blocking, UV stability, chemical resistance and abrasion resistance,” says Doug Bannister, founder and partner of One Day Floors, which formulates and sells polyaspartic coatings.

Polyaspartics tend to have a high price per gallon compared to other products. In an attempt to bring that price down, some manufacturers may reduce solids content or add plasticizers or other less expensive ingredients. One common failure of poorly blended polyaspartics is delamination over time. “As a contractor, you want a good, dependable product,” says Joe Sheehan, owner of Garage Floors 1, based in Minneapolis. “You need to be sure that what is listed on the label is what is in the can.” Sheehan is also a partner in One Day Floors.

Rather than look for lower prices, contractors should evaluate the total cost of applying polyaspartics, according to Harms. “The cost can be 20 to 30 percent higher per gallon than epoxies,” he says, “but you can upsell the customer on better performance and quicker turnaround.” The potential for getting a higher price and reducing labor hours means that a floor with a polyaspartic coating can give a contractor a 10 percent to 15 percent higher profit.

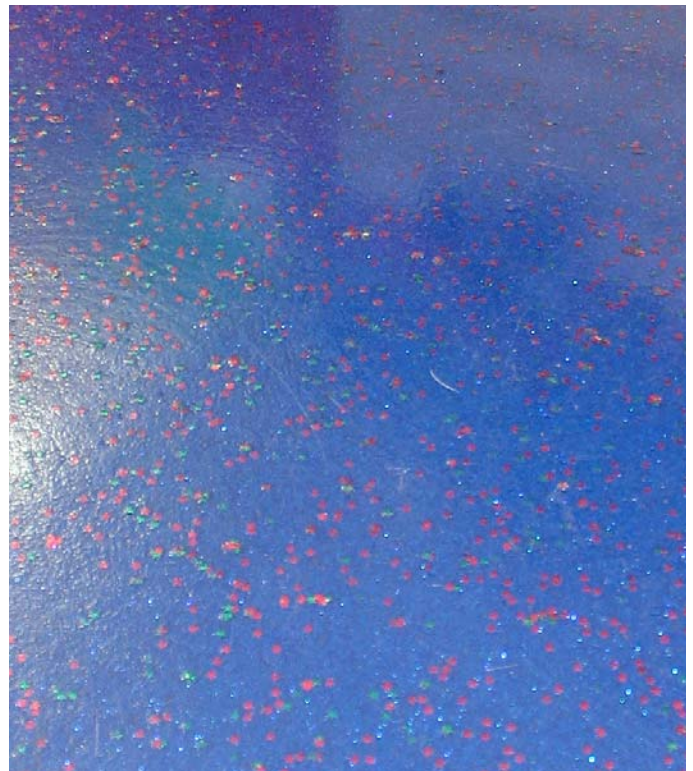
## How to apply

Like every good concrete finish, preparation is the most important step. In the case of polyaspartics, the concrete needs to be open and porous. Manufacturers recommend grinding the surface to a profile between 50 grit and 100 grit to achieve uniform wetting and penetration of the pores. Laitance and contaminants such as oils, fats, old sealers and cure-and-seal bond breakers should be ground off following manufacturers’ directions.

It is possible to apply a polyaspartic to a stamped surface, but timing is sensitive. The concrete must be fresh enough to have open pores, but sufficiently cured (typically 30 days) to prevent delamination caused by moisture vapor transmission.

When it comes to applying the polyaspartic, the biggest challenge contractors face is leaving behind their previous experience and techniques. “When I train guys I tell them it’s reverse thinking,” says Sheehan. “Whatever you knew about epoxy, go the opposite direction.”

While “opposite” may be an exaggeration, the differences



## Praise for Polyaspartics

“I finished three floors in three days this week. If I was using epoxy, I’d be working through the weekend.”

— Joe Sheehan, Garage Floors 1, contractor, Minneapolis

“One of our contractor customers had to refinish the floor of a grocery store meat department while the store was closed. After diamond grinding, the new coating was applied and the floor was ready when the store opened the next day.”

— Mason Harms, Advacoat, manufacturer

“The applicator was given one week, start to finish, to recoat a 67,000-square-foot airplane hangar floor. This was the middle of March in Boston, so the temperatures were still cold and damp with snow-like conditions outside. The applicator finished the floor with one or two days to spare.”

— Jack Bracco, Flexmar Coatings LLC, manufacturer

“When you’re working on a commercial or retail project, coatings have to reach performance characteristics quickly, because you can’t be there to protect the concrete. Everybody’s working around or on your surface — using your counter as a workbench!”

— Chris Klipfel, CK Concrete Design, contractor, St. Louis, Mo., explaining why polyaspartics can help





between polyaspartics and traditional epoxies are significant enough to require training and a change of mind-set. Here are some examples:

Profile is extremely important. Polyaspartics perform at thinner applications and are not self-leveling like epoxies, so flaws or obvious repairs in the underlying floors will be reflected.

Polyaspartics are less sensitive to temperature and humidity, so they can be applied across a broader range of conditions than other coating materials. Also, they are not sensitive to alkalinity.

Of course, the factor that makes the biggest difference is cure rate. When the two components are first mixed, the coating is the consistency of water.

Within 20 to 30 minutes it will thicken to the point that wetting capability is diminished. "You really have to move fast to keep maximum wetting," Sheehan says. "The material is curing and changing even as you are using it." He recommends starting with an area of just 500 square feet and mixing and applying one batch at a time after that. With practice and the right roller techniques, he says, a contractor can work up to sealing 1,000 square feet in about 15 minutes. And, says Sheehan, "Every time you use polyaspartic, plan to throw away the roller."

Most manufacturers require customers to go through training and be approved or certified to apply their

products. "This is not a do-it-yourself product," says Harms. Advacoat requires training before a contractor can buy its Advacoat polyaspartic coatings. Flexmar Coatings and One Day Floors have the same policy.

### Decorative history

The first and still most common decorative use for polyaspartics is in tough garage floors with decorative color chips or flakes. This same technique has carried over successfully to industrial and warehouse settings. When color chips are used in the three-coat process described above, the color comes from the chips, not the coating. Harms recommends adding the chips to a

## Polyaspartics and Countertops

**F**or decorative concrete artisans, an exciting new direction for polyaspartic coatings is countertops and sinks. One contractor, Dave Paterson of Desert Canyon Epoxy Floor Coatings, based in Scottsdale, Ariz., has elevated the technique he uses for commercial

floors to counter level. He uses a prism-flake vinyl chip in the mid-coat to add sparkle and create counters that look like granite.

Of course,

a counter is different from a floor. Paterson adds a lot more chips to his counters. "Flood the chips to the point of refusal," he says, "then clean off the excess and apply multiple topcoats." Paterson also likes to add more topcoats to counters to get the surface shinier and smoother. He uses Advacoat polyaspartic coatings.

Chris Klipfel, owner of CK Concrete Design, in St. Louis, Mo., uses clear polyaspartic coatings with no chips to protect the beauty of colored concrete in sinks and countertops. He says they are ideal for commercial bar tops. "These are high-use settings, serving many people for many hours at a time," he explains. "They are exposed to a high number of acids — wine, lemons, limes — and are almost always wet. Polyaspartics protect concrete from all that."

He demands a high-quality formulation. "Counters are much closer to the customers' face than floors are. Failures and flaws are obvious."

For precast counters, Klipfel often applies the

material in a spray booth using a high-velocity low-pressure spray gun to eliminate roller marks. He uses glossy, matte and satin coatings from Flexmar Coatings.

Doug Bannister, founder of The Stamp Store and One Day Floors, first started using his company's polyaspartics on outdoor countertops because he wanted higher UV stability than other coatings offered. He has since taken the materials to new artistic heights, most recently creating two concrete tabletops sold to raise money for Native American art galleries. He created these unique pieces by applying the polyaspartic, buffing it with a buffer like those used to wax cars, sanding with wet sandpaper, then applying a heavy-cut rubbing compound and finally a fine-cut rubbing compound. The result is a waxy, smooth, soft-looking surface.

All the properties that make polyaspartics attractive for commercial floors — stain resistance, UV stability, abrasion resistance, fast cure — make them even more attractive for countertops. At the same time, the application challenges are magnified. "Counters are under close visual scrutiny," Klipfel says. "You have to have a smooth finish. It's two feet away from your face!"



Photos courtesy of One Day Floors of the Rockies





Photo courtesy of Advacoat

Applicators need to take new approaches to familiar techniques to apply polyaspartics. Many manufacturers require users to be trained in them.

pigmented mid-coat before it becomes tack-free, then scraping and sweeping up excess chips before applying a clear topcoat.

With quartz or other slip-resistant media substituted for the chips, polyaspartics are attractive for wet environments like commercial kitchens and food preparation operations. The quick turnaround, stain resistance and durability of polyaspartics are making them more attractive for retail and restaurant use as well.

Meanwhile, decorative contractors are moving beyond color chips to add excitement to polyaspartic concrete floors. "We are using sparkles, iridescent and metallics for the owners who want something more in their floors," says Bannister. "These are usually commercial spaces — retail and restaurants, bars and wine shops." Unlike chips or flakes that are broadcast, these new decorative materials are usually dry-powder material blended into the polyaspartic before it is rolled or squeegeed onto the floor.

Some polyaspartics are colored or can be pigmented by the contractor. For example, Variegate, new from Flexmar Coatings LLC, incorporates dyes and pigments that simulate the variegated look of an acid stain. The product is being tested by contractors in the field. "We're not positioning this to replace concrete staining," says Jack Bracco, sole owner of Flexmar Coatings. "We're just giving decorative concrete contractors a new product to add to their repertoire."

Polyaspartics have only been in use for decorative concrete for about five years, but they are evolving quickly past their use on garage floors. Several things are happening to move them into the mainstream. One is the weeding out of subperforming products so that consistent, quality formulations from reliable suppliers are widely recognized and available. Another is recognition by contractors that the benefits of polyaspartics are worth making changes in their techniques and habits. Finally, the market will really grow when contractors and their customers experience the durability and performance benefits of polyaspartics and find new decorative applications for them. 📱

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# Product Profile



Photo courtesy of Rick Richter

## SoyCrete Architectural Concrete Stain from Eco Safety Products

by Kelly O'Brien

**F**or a greener alternative to acid staining, SoyCrete Architectural Concrete Stain from Eco Safety Products offers the same variegated look in a product that's environmentally friendly in virtually every sense of the word. SoyCrete is nonhazardous, LEED-friendly, ultra-low in VOCs and is made using a rapidly renewable resource — soybean plants (as you may have guessed from the product name).

SoyCrete is based on soy ester dispersion technology, which Eco Safety Products acquired the license to use four years ago. The technology itself was developed by New Century Coatings president Tom Rauls, who discovered this new application for a soybean

byproduct while he was working with the United Soybean Board. The byproduct, soy methyl ester, was being burned as diesel fuel before Rauls put it to better use.

"Soy methyl ester emulsions [are] basically the vegetable-based substitute for motor oil," says Rauls, and like motor oil, the substance can penetrate porous concrete by as much as 1/8 inch. Rauls says that this technology represents the first vegetable-based alternative to acid and polymer staining.

After licensing the technology, Eco Safety Products built an entire line of sustainable coatings around it called EcoProCote. The line includes SoyCrete as well as a wide array of other soy-based paints, stains and sealers, which



it has been supplying to both the green building and the decorative concrete industry for the last several years. In that time, Eco Safety Products has also been working with Rauls to further develop and enhance the technology.

Eco Safety Products president John Bennett says that SoyCrete has been extremely well received. "Growth has exceeded triple digits each year since its release," he says. And little wonder — the technology has a lot to recommend it.

As Bennett explains it, SoyCrete is based on a "soy ester dispersion chemistry designed to deliver a non-film-forming, semitransparent stain effect that is absorbed into the substrate to provide a natural variegated look."

In addition to a unique aesthetic, SoyCrete also boasts a huge variety of coloring options. While the product is available in 16 premixed standard colors, that's only the tip of the iceberg. It is also available with field-applied pigment packs for customizing colors, or it can be customized to spec. All SoyCrete pigments incorporate a proprietary bio-based, UV-resistant pigment technology.

This color flexibility was put to the test when SoyCrete was chosen for use in the renovation of the Tovrea Castle in Phoenix, Ariz. "One of the major challenges was to match the original colors used in the [exterior] concrete," Bennett says. "The unlimited color flexibility of SoyCrete enabled us to do a perfect match of their desired colors."

Not only does SoyCrete offer a lot in the way of design options, but it's also very approachable in terms of application. After profiling your substrate and taking the appropriate steps (grinding or etching) to ensure that it's porous enough to accept the stain, the actual staining process is very straightforward. SoyCrete can be sprayed with either an HVLP or airless system, applied with mops or pads, or broomed with a soft-bristle brush. After applying, it can be ragged, sponged, buffed or even dry-polished to achieve a

desired effect. SoyCrete is also designed to be paired with Eco Safety Products' soy-based penetrating sealer, Acry-Soy, which "leaves a natural finish, with no topical film to change the coefficient of friction," says Bennett. Other sealers and finishes are also available depending on the desired appearance and protection.

Bennett can also testify to the performance of the technology. One particularly strenuous test of the product came for Bennett when his team had only 12 hours to stain and seal the floors of the Children's Museum of Phoenix before a party. "To be honest, I didn't know what to expect, other than letting them know we were doing a temporary install, fully expecting to begin repair the next week," Bennett says, but "eight months and some 300,000 people later, there are no signs of compromise or deterioration." Not bad for a 12-hour deadline.

Rauls also stresses that the technology affords a margin of error

that conventional stains do not. If you've put down your stain and decide that the color isn't what you were going for, all you need is soap, water and a scrub brush to pull it back out of the concrete, within about 6 hours of putting the product down, says Rauls. After that, of course, the stain is pretty well permanent due to the depth of penetration.

Also thanks to the depth of penetration, surfaces stained with SoyCrete are much easier to repair, says Rauls. If you wear the topcoat down, you can repair high-traffic areas by just grinding down and resealing, he says.

With such a laundry list of features, it's no wonder SoyCrete has found a foothold in the industry, something Rauls says is long overdue: "This technology is what the industry has been looking for now for the last 15 to 20 years."

☎ (877) 366-7547

🌐 [www.ecoprocote.com](http://www.ecoprocote.com)

Photo courtesy of AkarStudios



AkarStudios, of Santa Monica, Calif., used a custom color of SoyCrete at Earth Bar in Santa Monica.



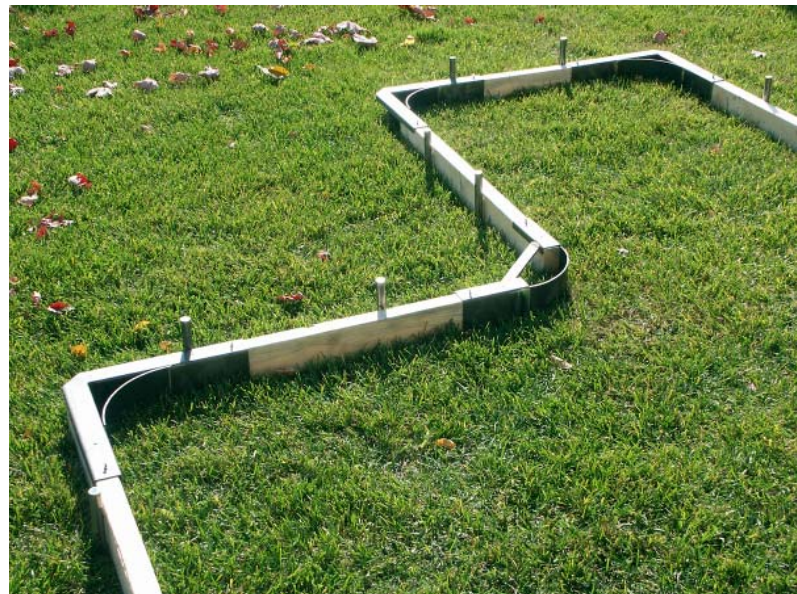
## Flatwork Forms

### Dee Concrete Accessories – Easy Curve

Dee Concrete Accessories' Easy Curve forms are radius corner forms for making rounded corners.

These forms are made out of durable steel and are available in inside or outside corners so the contractor can replace the use of Masonite for quick setup and an easy strip. They are reusable and can easily be configured for custom shapes. Easy Curve forms can work for any radius or height and can be used with wood, plastic or steel forms.


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



### Metal Forms Corp. – Poly Meta Forms

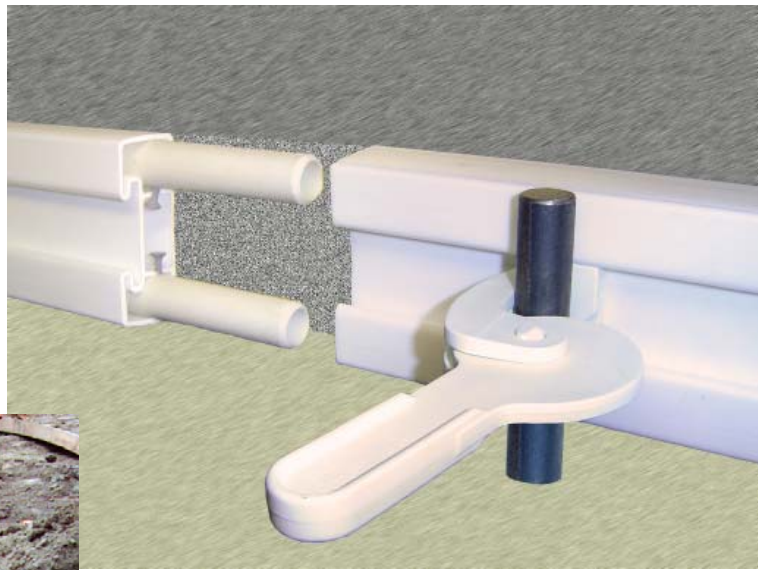
Poly Meta Forms from Metal Forms Corp. is a unique system that utilizes plastic forms in conjunction with steel stake pockets to place all types of concrete.

Poly Meta Forms are lightweight and moisture-resistant, withstand harsh construction conditions, and are reusable. Available as straight and flexible forms, Poly Meta Forms are ideal for both flatwork and curb and gutter construction.

 (414) 964-4550

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





### **The Plastiform Co. – Forms**

Plastic concrete forms by The Plastiform Co. are reusable for years and hundreds of concrete pours. The flexible formwork can form a 3-foot bend radius and are excellent for free-forming radius and curved projects. They are also lightweight, and their smooth surface is easy to clean.

The forms are available in four sizes (3 1/2-inch, 4-inch, 6-inch and 12-inch face height) and come in 12-foot or 16-foot models.

☎ (800) 358-3007

🌐 [www.plastiform.com](http://www.plastiform.com)



### **The Plastiform Co. – SuperBend**

For tight radius and curved forming, SuperBend plastic forming material can facilitate down to a 10-inch bend radius and are excellent for free-forming curves.

SuperBend is lightweight, with a smooth surface that is easy to clean, and sets up quickly via nailing or screwing to stakes. The forms are 3 1/2 inches in height and available in 12-foot or 15-foot long rolls. 🛠️

☎ (800) 358-3007

🌐 [www.plastiform.com](http://www.plastiform.com)



## H&C debuts new stains

The latest from H&C Concrete Coatings, Semi-Transparent Decorative Stains provide an alternative to reactive acid stains. The new stains allow contractors to achieve a layered, faux or single-color look in significantly less time and without any acids or harmful chemicals.



Intended for commercial applications such as retail stores, malls and other business settings, the stains also provide unique looks for patios, walkways, pool decks, driveways, garage and basement floors and other residential projects. Besides being environmentally friendly to apply, they are UV resistant, can be applied indoors and out, require no neutralization and allow for easy cleanup. The stains are available in 28 colors, and these colors can be built up without the worry of spending all a slab's alkalinity, a common issue with traditional acid stains. Because these new semitransparent stains create no chemical reaction, there is no time spent waiting for color to reach full development.

These waterborne or solvent-based sealers can also be applied as topcoats.

☎ (800) 867-8246

🌐 [www.hcconcrete.com](http://www.hcconcrete.com)



## Densifier from W.R. Meadows

W.R. Meadows Inc. has introduced Liqui-Hard Ultra concrete densifier and chemical hardener. The ready-to-use, colorless liquid hardens and dustproofs concrete at a molecular level. A properly finished surface boasts substantial improvement in abrasion and chemical resistance. Liqui-Hard Ultra will significantly improve durability as well as enhance sheen.

As Liqui-Hard Ultra is applied and penetrates into the concrete surface, a chemical reaction takes place, producing a byproduct that fills in the pores of the concrete one molecule at a time. The product solidifies the concrete, eliminating dusting and pitting. Chemically engineered to provide timely, quick, sustainable performance, the product is simply sprayed on, and then left moist on the surface for 20 minutes. Unlike traditional densifiers, Liqui-Hard Ultra does not require brushing into the surface or rinsing.



Liqui-Hard Ultra is part of the W.R. Meadows Green Line of earth-friendly products and will contribute to credits for LEED-certified construction.

☎ (847) 214-2100

🌐 [www.wrmeadows.com](http://www.wrmeadows.com)



### Anvil releases urethane sealer

Anvil Paints & Coatings has introduced its new 1800 Two-Part Water-Based Clear Urethane Concrete Sealer. The new Anvil 1800 is comparable to solvent-based systems, but without the intense odor or high VOC levels. The applicator can use the product during normal business hours and still get the benefits of the physical properties of high-performance clears.

Anvil 1800 is a high-gloss urethane coating that exhibits excellent wear, abrasion resistance and UV stability. Breakthroughs in water-based technology have enabled Anvil to formulate a two-part system that is much higher in solids with full cross-linking. It's low odor, nonflammable, and gives off low amounts of VOCs (10 grams per liter). Additionally, Anvil 1800 has outstanding chemical resistance and excellent gloss retention, which make it a perfect high-gloss clear coat when applied over properly installed acrylic color coats on concrete.

Anvil Two-Part Water Based Clear Urethane is available in 1-gallon and 4-gallon kits.

☎ (727) 535-1411

🌐 [www.anvilpaints.com](http://www.anvilpaints.com)

### Three from Concrete Coatings

Concrete Coatings Inc. has introduced an alkali reactive stain called GemStain. Developed as an alternative to acid stain, GemStain gives concrete an aged mottled look without the use of acid. The stain has an accelerated reaction with concrete that creates a deep and brilliant color. It's available in 10 standard colors. Training for

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GemStain is held at distributor locations and at CCI Headquarters.

Concrete Coatings has also added a powder dye called QuickDye to its product offerings. Developed for use as a touch-up to acid stain or as a stand-alone product, QuickDye leaves a look similar to Concrete Coatings' acid stain and GemStain. When added to acetone, QuickDye allows quick color application. It's available in 11 standard colors that can be combined to create almost unlimited color variations.

Last but not least, Concrete Coatings has released AquaShield, a 100 percent solids water-based epoxy designed to be used as a primer or topcoat. AquaShield was developed to have a longer pot life than standard epoxy — approximately two hours. Applied with a roller, AquaShield is available clear or pigmented in five standard colors.

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

### New epoxy primer

Stonhard Inc.'s new Green Concrete Primer can be installed over concrete as soon as five days after pouring.

Green Concrete Primer, a two-step, epoxy-based priming system, is compatible with most Stonhard flooring and lining systems and only varies from system to system in the application process. Besides drastically speeding up installation, the primer is impervious to water, solvent-free, low in odor and, due to contrasting color coats, easy to apply, since the user maintains visual control of uniformity.

[\(800\) 257-7953](tel:8002577953)

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

### New tools from Buddy Rhodes are available online

Buddy Rhodes announced the launch of Buddy Rhodes Concrete Tools at the 2009 World of Concrete show. Now, there is a new e-commerce site for the line of tools.

The tool line includes both wet and dry polishers, including an industry-first detail polisher. The line is rounded out with diamond polishing pads and a variety of wood and steel hand trowels. A hand mixer is also planned for the line.

The BRTW6800 wet polisher, together with 4-inch and 5-inch inch diamond tools, effectively grinds and polishes finished concrete surfaces.

The BRTO3700 is a vacuum-ready, low-vibration, dual-action orbital dry concrete polisher. This revolutionary polishing system features the ability to polish concrete up to 3,000 grit dust free and without the need for water. Use with Buddy Rhodes 6-inch dry diamond polishing pads for polishing concrete, or choose from Buddy Rhodes 6-inch foam and wool accessories for applying wax and sealers.

Grind and polish concrete in areas once considered impossible with the new BRTD2400, the only diamond detail polisher of its kind. Designed to dry-polish areas unreachable with standard diamond power tools, the BRTD2400 can grind and polish concrete from 50 grit to 3,000 grit without the use of water.

[\(877\) 288-3398](tel:8772883398)

[www.buddyrhodes.com/store/tools](http://www.buddyrhodes.com/store/tools)

### Blade features lower noise

Husqvarna Construction Products has developed a high-speed blade for the K 3000 Electric power-cutter series. Whether used dry or with the K 3000 Wet, the STE3 blade provides smooth cutting of construction materials such as hard brick and concrete.

The STE3 combines the technology used to create the turbo segments of the BHT blade with a new noise-reducing steel core. The geometry of the blade has been altered to decrease air turbulence and high-pitch whistling created by blades spinning at high rpms. The noise-reducing geometry complements a vibration-dampening system embedded in the steel core.

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

### Mold for fire rings

Verti-Crete has introduced a new mold for precasting fire rings with stone patterns.

The mold produces a texture with no tie rods or blemishes, creating a realistic stone surface. The form is made of steel with a flat base and a steel cylinder. A polyurethane liner fits inside the cylinder to create the texture of real



stone. The inside of the fire ring uses a consumable corrugated steel insert to help protect the concrete from the heat of the fire.

[\(801\) 571-2028](tel:8015712028)

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

### Cleaner takes out oil

The new eco-friendly Oil Eater cleaner and degreaser from Kafko International Ltd. eliminates the need for solvent or acid cleaners.

Oil Eater quickly and safely gets rid of grease, oil and grime from concrete, asphalt, walls and tools. It is also ideal for pressure-washing and parts cleaning, and it will not harm the skin. The nonflammable cleaner is water-based, biodegradable and contains no acid, abrasive or petroleum solvents. It penetrates rapidly, rinses off easily and leaves no residues.

Oil Eater is available in a 1-gallon bottle, a 5-gallon bucket, and 30-gallon and 55-gallon drums.

[\(800\) 523-0334](tel:8005230334)

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



### Repair epoxies from Mapei

Mapei has introduced four new epoxy products to aid contractors in making interior and exterior concrete repairs. Planibond AE, a nonsag epoxy anchoring gel, was developed with extreme bonding capabilities, allowing it to adhere to masonry, concrete, steel and other structural materials. Planibond CR 50 is a very low-viscosity injection



resin that deeply penetrates the finest cracks, restoring the structural integrity of concrete. Planibond JF has been designed as a high-strength, self-leveling epoxy joint filler for use on industrial-grade concrete floors, providing ideal sealing protection and support for joint edges.

In addition to these repair materials, Mapei has added Planiseal Traffic Coat to its line of repair epoxies. This moisture-tolerant two-part epoxy bonding agent and binder is engineered to provide a waterproof and skid-resistant overlay on the surfaces of bridges, elevated slabs, parking garages and balconies.

☎ (800) 426-2734

🌐 [www.mapei.com](http://www.mapei.com)

## Quality quartz

SpectraQuartz Colored Quartz is permanently pigmented high-purity quartz that provides color, texture and slip resistance to concrete floors and walls.

SpectraQuartz is UV and chemical

resistant and retains its color and hardness for years. Available in a wide range of standard colors and blends, SpectraQuartz is produced with environmentally friendly pigment dispersion technology that uses no harsh solvents. The thermal bonding process permanently binds the pigment to the quartz grain surface, resulting in vivid colors that won't bleed or fade. SpectraQuartz is easy to apply and is compatible with most floor and wall resins.

☎ (800) 255-7263

🌐 [www.spectraquartz.com](http://www.spectraquartz.com)

## New mother-of-pearl overlay

Crown Polymers' Mother-of-Pearl creates stunning results in environments where a sophisticated pearl effect is desirable.

Crown Mother-of-Pearl overlays feature a beautiful luster created from semitransparent pigments that exhibit a silky luminous shine. It's perfect for salons, fashion retailers, spas, pool decks, hotels, residential settings and

other environments where beautiful and dramatic flooring is a must. Crown Mother-of-Pearl is available in numerous colors.

☎ (888) 732-1270

🌐 [www.crownpolymers.com](http://www.crownpolymers.com)

## A stain that mixes with beer

GG Beer Concrete Stain from GG Innovative Products Inc. is a stain that may be mixed with water, alcohol, beer, wine, acetone or lacquer thinner.

Mixing the stain with beer or wine helps create unique effects. Mixing with water helps to keep the product in line with a greener standard. Mixing with lacquer thinner or acetone speeds the drying process to less than 10 minutes.

Another benefit of the stain is its ability to penetrate through previously sealed substrates when mixed with acetone or lacquer thinner. When applied, it automatically penetrates through the sealer, and after it dries, the sealer is once again intact (assuming the previous sealer was in good shape to begin with).



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This product is UV-protected to keep a floor from fading over time. After the color is dry and buffed, there is no wait time needed before applying a sealer.

☎ (541) 550-6537

🌐 [www.gginnovativeproducts.com](http://www.gginnovativeproducts.com)

### Angle grinder from Blastrac

Blastrac, NA has debuted a new angle grinder, the BL-233. This hand-held grinder, after undergoing rigorous tests for safety and reliability, has won UL approval — one of few in the surface prep industry to do so.

Manufactured specifically for concrete prep and coatings removal, the BL-233's heavy-duty design offers solid performance when grinding along walls, around protrusions, and in hard-to-access areas. A 120-volt, 15-amp motor runs at 6,600 rpm and handles diamond cup wheels as well as grinding disks. The angle grinder is designed to accept a 7-inch diameter disk on its 5/8-11 threaded spindle. For user preference, the grip handle can be positioned at one of three places on the gear housing. The

BL-233 is 19 inches long and weighs 9 pounds without shroud or grinding wheel attached.

☎ (800) 256-3440

🌐 [www.blastrac.com](http://www.blastrac.com)

### Hyde scrapers and brushes

New dual action scrapers and brushes from Hyde Tools will help save time and effort when scraping paint and pulling up flooring.

The new Maxxgrip Pro scraper blade is available on the tapered nose of two industrial-quality brushes. The first is a long-handle large-brush design for large-area prepping, and the second is an offset-handle small-block design for smaller-area prepping.

With this tool, there is no need to scramble for a separate scraper on the job because the durable steel carbon blade is right there on the brush.

☎ (800) 872-4933

🌐 [www.hydetools.com](http://www.hydetools.com)

### Kemiko wax is back

Epmar Corp. is pleased to announce the rebirth of the solvent-based Kemiko

Stone Tone Wax.

The solvent-based wax is specially formulated to produce a low-sheen finish with high protection and durability. It is designed for interior use over Kemiko Stone Tone Stain, pigmented colored concrete, tile, brick, or any masonry surface. Although this product has a slower drying time than its waterborne counterpart, it leaves a low-satin, durable finish.

🌐 [www.epmar.com](http://www.epmar.com)

🌐 [www.kemiko.com](http://www.kemiko.com)

### Radio-controlled power trowel

Tibroc-Radio Controlled Concrete Finishers has released its RPT-55 Radio Controlled Power Trowel.

The machine features a 5.5-horsepower Honda GX 160 engine, five trowels per spider, trowel speed of 50 rpm to 150 rpm (controlled from the transmitter), trowel pitch of up to 35 degrees (controlled from the transmitter), and the capability for forward, backwards, rotation right and left, and slide right and left movement. Once the engine is started, the direction of movement, trowel pitch, and speed are all controlled from the transmitter. The RPT-55 remote trowel is equipped with an onboard generator. The machine was designed for commercial and residential finishing applications.

☎ (619) 309-5015


🌐 [www.tibroc.com](http://www.tibroc.com)

### New riding trowels and power screed from Allen

Allen Engineering Corp. has developed two new riding trowels, redesigned another, and launched the Power Screed Pro.

The MSP 415 riding trowel and HDX 740 hydraulic-powered riding trowel are the two new power trowels. The MSP 415 features a 35-horsepower air-cooled Vanguard gasoline engine, two 46-inch, five-bladed nonoverlapping rotors, and rotor speeds of up to 145 rpm. Meanwhile, the HDX 740 is powered by a 60-horsepower Cummins Turbo Diesel engine, joystick power steering and joystick blade pitch controls.

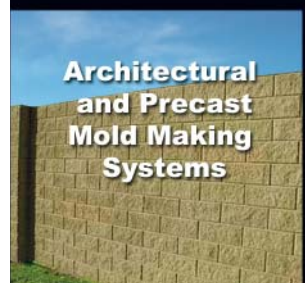
In addition, Allen has redesigned




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the popular MSP 460 riding trowel. Improvements include better rider responsiveness, improved visibility from the seat,



more operator comfort and updated body style. The 44-horsepower machine sports five-bladed 46-inch nonoverlapping rotors.

Allen has also introduced the Power Scream Pro to its floater screed product line. Power

Scream Pro is perfect for enclosed areas where gas fumes are not allowed. No gas or oil maintenance is required, and contractors can screed more than 2,000 square feet of concrete on one battery charge. Blade sizes range from 4 feet to 20 feet.

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



## ProSpec additive fights shrinkage and cracking

ProSpec has introduced Expansion Stabilization Technology for its line of Level Set underlayment and wear toppings, providing added protection against shrinkage and cracking.

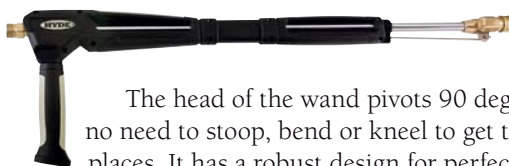
EST is an additive designed to reduce the potential for cracking and shrinkage through controlling pre-cure chemical and physical reactions during underlayment's plastic stage, when up to 80 percent of shrinkage occurs. EST works in conjunction with ProSpec's Rapid Cure Technology, which was introduced earlier this year.

[\(800\) 738-1621](tel:8007381621)

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

## Pivot-head wand for washers

The new Hyde Pivot Nozzle Wand is matched to medium-duty (up to 4,000 psi) pressure-washer guns used by commercial painters and homeowners.



The head of the wand pivots 90 degrees, so there is no need to stoop, bend or kneel to get to hard-to-reach places. It has a robust design for perfect handling and has been drop-tested to ensure rugged durability.

The wands are available in 28-inch and 40-inch models.

[\(800\) 872-4933](tel:8008724933)

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

## New compressor/generator units

Jenny Products Inc. has introduced two compressor/generator combination models.

The K11HGA-17P-3000W features Jenny's renowned "K" pump, a heavy-duty, single-stage cast-iron compressor pump. The unit is powered by an 11-horsepower Honda GX series OHV engine with electric start and produces 8.9 cfm at 100 psi or 8.6 cfm at 125 psi for quick recovery.



Featuring a "G" pump and a 13-horsepower, electric start Honda GX engine, the G13HGA-17P-3000W delivers 16.2 cfm at 100 psi or 15.6 cfm at 125 psi.

Each model includes a 3,000-watt, 115-volt/230-volt generator. The compressor/generator units are also offered with 17-gallon ASME-certified air tanks.

[\(814\) 445-3400](tel:8144453400)

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

## Werk and Onyx team up

Werk Industries, manufacturer of the WerkMaster Ultra Floor Systems line of hard-surface grinders and polishers, has formed a joint venture with Onyx Environmental Solutions to develop and market "WerkMaster powered by Onyx" solutions that will be powered by Onyx's proprietary propane engine systems.

Equipment and solutions will be available in the United States through Onyx's sales and service network.

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

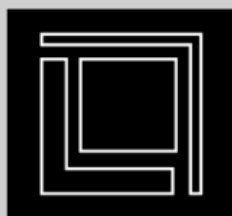




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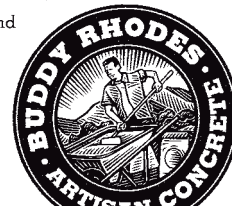
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# Association News

## American Concrete Institute

### Presentations sought for 2010 convention

The American Concrete Institute is currently seeking presentations for sessions taking place during the ACI Spring 2010 Convention in Chicago on March 21-25, 2010.

ACI Committee 118, Use of Computers, seeks presentations for its technical session, "Building Information Modeling in the Concrete Industry." Participants are invited to submit abstracts on topics including, but not limited to, successes, failures, problems or the potential of using Building Information Modeling for concrete structures in any or all phases of a project, including design, detailing, fabrication, construction and operation.

Also, ACI Committee 118, Use of Computers, and Joint ACI-ASCE Committee 447, Finite Element Analysis of Reinforced Concrete Structures, seek presentations for their technical session, "Practical Applications of Numerical Analysis." Participants are invited to submit abstracts on topics including, but not limited to, practical applications of numerical analysis used to facilitate the design or analysis of concrete structures.

For both topics, abstracts of up to 500 words, along with presentation title, author names and contact information, are due no later than Sept. 1.

 [www.callforpapers.concrete.org](http://www.callforpapers.concrete.org)

### Student fellowship and scholarship program opens

The ACI Foundation, a wholly owned, nonprofit subsidiary of the American Concrete Institute, has announced the opening of its student Fellowship and Scholarship program for the 2010-2011 academic year.

The ACI Foundation is offering eight fellowships for undergraduate and graduate students and five scholarships for graduate students studying concrete. Funds come from private and corporate donors.

ACI Foundation Fellowships range from \$7,000 to \$10,000 and are awarded to high-potential undergraduate and graduate students who are studying engineering, construction management, or other concrete-related fields of study. To be considered, fellowship applicants must be nominated by a faculty member who is also an ACI member.


ACI Foundation Scholarships, in the amount of \$3,000, are awarded to graduate students studying concrete-related subjects.


Applicants must study at a United States or Canadian university during the award year. The application process is open through Oct. 30, 2009.

 [www.scholarships.concrete.org](http://www.scholarships.concrete.org)

### More new ACI publications

The American Concrete Institute has announced the availability of four new publications.

They are "Guide for the Use of Volumetric-Measuring and Continuous-Mixing Concrete Equipment (304.6R-09)," "Guide for Cementitious Repair Material Data Sheet (364.3R-09)," "Guide for the Use of Polymers in Concrete (548.1R-09)" and "Report on Polymer-Modified Concrete (548.3R-09)." 

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# Final Pour



## Medieval Texas

**B**ruce Williamson, of Carrollton, Texas, and a team from French manufacturer Decopierre used a unique limestone veneer to give this bell tower a historic look.

The tower is the centerpiece of Adriatica, a new residential development in McKinney, Texas, built to look like a 15th century seaside Croatian village. The 128-foot structure is modeled after one in Supetar, Croatia, and has three working bells.

Decopierre of North Texas LLC, based in Addison, Texas, was commissioned by Adriatica developer Blackard Group to coat the tower with the veneer, made from natural limestone mined at two quarries in France. Williamson is creative director for Decodesign, a creative division of the French company's American operations.

"Veneer is almost not a term I would use — it's blown stone," Williamson says, noting that the material is shot in thicknesses of 3/4 inch to 1 inch. "You touch it, it feels solid and cool to the touch. It's lightweight, and it allows for a dome or vaulted ceiling over sheetrock or plywood."

The first 10 feet of the tower is real stone, but the Decopierre crew coated it with limestone the rest of the way up. Applied with a hopper gun, the veneer goes up quickly. "A two-man crew can start-to-finish 200 square feet a day," Williamson says.

The limestone was tinted with Decopierre's



water-based Olive pigment, among other colors. The pigment was sprayed onto the limestone coating while it was still wet, allowing the tints to soak in.

For one side of the tower, Williamson designed reliefs of a "great seal" and an 18-by-18 cross flanked by symbols representing the four gospels of the Bible. All were inspired by decorative flourishes common to 15th century Croatia. "The designs are a little rough and primitive, and that's exactly what they wanted," he says.

Williamson carved the reliefs in his studio out of architectural foam using an electric kitchen knife, then coated them with primer. He installed the pieces on the tower and covered them with limestone veneer in three days. "You can tell everybody I did all the work with one hand because I wouldn't let go of the scaffold," he jokes. 🛠️

📞 (214) 773-8087 (Bruce Williamson)

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Photos by Bruce Williamson



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