

# CHAIN STORE AGE®

NEWS AND ANALYSIS FOR RETAIL EXECUTIVES

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## High Sheen, Low Maintenance

Eneref Institute examines how Chief Super Market refashioned its produce and bakery sections with an easy to clean, high polish concrete surface in its Napoleon, OH store.

When Chief Super Markets undertook a remodel of its 20 year-old, 40,000-sq.-ft. store in Napoleon, Ohio, the regional grocer opted to try something new: a polished concrete flooring surface. The results have left the company up for trying it again.

The supermarket used the concrete selectively. It removed an 8,000-sq.-ft. section of VCT tile in the produce and bakery section, refurbishing and polishing the underlying concrete. It stayed with VCT in the other parts of the store.

“We made the decision to remove the VCT not because it was in bad condition, but because we wanted to try polished concrete as an alternative,” said Mark Diller, facility manager, Chief Super Markets, Defiance, Ohio, which operates 13 grocery stores in Ohio.

Chief was attracted by the appearance of polished concrete, as well as its reduced maintenance needs and eco-friendly attributes. (Concrete floors can contribute to points for LEED certification.)

“The green factor was part of our decision,” Diller said. “We’re trying to go green in everything we do.”

Supplied by Canonsburg, Pa.-based QuestMark flooring, the new system – called DiamondQuest – involves a multi-step fine-grinding process that trans-

forms an existing concrete floor into a high-sheen surface. Despite the floor’s sheen however, it is safe to walk on. DiamondQuest has been certified by the National Floor Safety institute to meet the co-efficient of friction for safety.

Because the flooring change at the Napoleon store was restricted to produce and bakery, the supermarket was able to remain open during the week-long process, which was important as the location is open 24 hours. Questmark removed the VCT tile during the

nighttime hours; ground away the glue residue; and patched, filled and polished the concrete. The entire process “caused very little inconvenience to our customers,” according to Diller.

In keeping with the overall store design, a brown-toned color dye was added to the concrete, followed by a protective coating application to preserve the hue. The new floor has a shiny, smooth, wax-free surface texture.

“Customers like it,” Diller said.

The retailer is also encouraged by the reduction in maintenance.

“We have found that the average cost of maintaining the polished concrete is about 25 % of that of maintaining tile because the routine wax-stripping, buffing and shinning are eliminated,” he said.

Unlike other types of flooring, polished concrete has no joints or seams to hold dirt. Consequently, the floor re-



The remodel of Chief Super Markets’ Napoleon store included polished concrete flooring.

quires less cleaning because the flat, smooth surface keeps dirt on top, according to Diller.

“There is very little maintenance involved other than mopping,” he added. “It even requires less soap.”

Polished concrete isn’t a perfect flooring solution, however. Acid, such as what you might find in a jar of pickles, may stain the concrete if dropped on the floor and not neutralized or cleaned shortly after the spill.

“Stains are an industry challenge,” said Joseph Urbanic, president of QuestMark Flooring. “The challenge is how to maintain polished concrete floors when it comes to stain removal.”

As a solution, QuestMark recom-

mends a quarterly maintenance system to recondition problem areas.

According to Diller, while there are no firm plans currently in place to retrofit other chief stores with the new flooring system, the polished concrete will be used again at some point.

“We are happy with it, and we are going to do it again,” Diller said. ●



commercially viable.

This article is an excerpt of the future Enerref report which assesses the impediments to building zero-energy urban communities in the US. A companion film documentary, The Enerref Project, will seek to demonstrate to key decision-makers how zero-energy communities can be