

Pennsylvania School Project is a Lesson in Cleaner, Greener Design

The new entranceway at a school in Pennsylvania teaches a lasting lesson in environmental responsibility.

Originally fronted with a humdrum institutional entrance, the Governor Mifflin Intermediate School in Shillington, a suburb of Reading, was recently renovated. The school now welcomes students, teachers and visitors with a gracefully curved structure cast in a new type of concrete that reacts with sunlight to fight air pollution while also cleaning its own surfaces.

The product keeping the school's new entrance cleaner and greener is called TX Active, a photocatalytic cement, manufactured by Essroc Italcementi Group, headquartered in Nazareth, PA. When exposed to sunlight, concrete surfaces formulated with TX Active accelerate the natural decomposition of many organic and inorganic atmospheric pollutants through oxidation.

"The oxidation processes that can reduce these pollutants have always existed in nature," explained Dan Schaffer, TX Active Product Manager for Essroc Italcementi Group. "The photocatalytic process enabled by TX Active promotes far faster decomposition of these pollutants, preventing them from accumulating on the surfaces while also reducing their presence in the surrounding air."

Project Designer Heather Rizzetto Schmidt, Associate Principal of The Architectural Studio, based in Allentown, PA, envisioned the innovative pollution-busting cement into her design for the Governor Mifflin School District. "I'm passionate about designing with concrete, but standard concrete gets dirty over time," said Schmidt. "TX Active enabled us to incorporate white concrete into the monumental wall, achieving a dramatic, monolithic color without concerns about unsightly streaking or other variations due to weathering."

According to the project description issued by Schmidt, the concrete used in the wall is "a self-cleaning product that is also capable of removing significant amounts of environmental air pollutants."

Berks Products of Ontelaunee, PA was the concrete producer for the project. According to Schmidt, the concrete was poured into the forms in August and was completed in time for the start of the 2009-2010 school year. This was the first on-site pouring of the environmental concrete in Pennsylvania. "All aspects of the pour went smoothly and the final results are astonishing."

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Italcementi Group is the fifth largest cement producer in the world. The Group companies combine the expertise, know how and cultures of 22 countries in 4 Continents, boasting an industrial network of 63 cement plants, 13 grinding centres, 5 terminals, 614 concrete batching units and 125 aggregates quarries. In 2008 Italcementi Group had sales amounting to almost 6 billion Euro.