

Voices

News for and from the Holcim (US) community



New Distribution Terminal Opens in Albuquerque 8

Extreme Pour: Providing Concrete Help

Design. Demolish. Set up. Pour concrete for the foundation and footings of a house that will be built from full basement to rooftop in one week. Construct. Decorate.

With the hit TV show “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” the only way to slow the super-speeded action of a house being built in one prime-time hour is to record the show and replay it in slow motion. And that fast action even applies to the Holcim (US) cement donated for the project to air on January 11 on ABC.

If you have not yet seen “Extreme Makeover,” this popular reality show gathers legions of volunteers to help a worthy but needy family by building and furnishing a dream home. Workers and vendors, inspired by the show’s feel-good message of helping those in need, flock to donate talent, time and materials.

During the taping of an episode in Pekin, IL in October, Holcim (US) Market Manager and “Extreme Makeover” fan Larry Mohundro responded enthusiastically to a donation request from his customer Mike Blunier, General Manager of Roanoke Concrete Products Company. The project involved building a custom home for Stephen and Jean Grys, foster parents to 250 children over 25 years, and their adopted son, Jake, a precocious eight-year-old with Osteogenesis Imperfecta, or Brittle Bone Disease, and dwarfism.

Ingenuity of cement

Mike’s crew from Roanoke Concrete would put in the footings and foundation walls of the 4,000 square-foot house. Holcim (US) agreed to donate cement and a mix design to achieve a minimum 2,500-psi rating in four

hours. Holcim delivered more than 750 pounds of 1 SM Envirocore™ cement (type 1 cement with 20 percent slag), and a mix design containing 2 percent calcium chloride, polycarboxylate super, and instructions for no more than a 6 to 7 inch slump.

“That’s a very rich mixture with high cement content,” Larry says. “We wanted to achieve a low water-cement ratio to increase the strength, speed the set time and make sure the concrete flowed through the walls.” The experience, he notes, “demonstrates the ingenuity of cement.”

Ready. Set. Go.

With the clock running, Mike’s crew set and squared the wall forms in one hour. At midnight Roanoke Concrete began pouring concrete. Then there came a heart-stopping moment—the unique mix design was realizing its potential. However, the concrete seemed to be setting in the chute.

“As it turned out,” Mike reports, “the concrete wasn’t setting too fast, but we did have to retemper toward the end of the load because it was getting too stiff to come down the chute.”

Larry arrived the following morning at 10 AM to see workers putting on the upper floors on top of the basement foundation. On October 28, six days after demolition, the Grys home was complete.

“Extreme Makeover” creates extreme construction conditions, Larry says, but it also brings out the best in people and products.

Epilogue

Since using the 1 SM cement for the “Extreme Makeover” project in Pekin, Roanoke Concrete Products Company—a brand new Holcim customer in 2008—plans to switch to this cement/slag product for all its future projects. Larry adds, the product sold itself after performing so well for the Grys’ home.

Photo by Ian Schwartz

