References

Fairway Village



Uponor involvement

Project highlights

- Re-piping of underground plumbing, heating and cooling system
- Mechanical contractor: HHCC, Austin, TX
- Ecoflex® pre-insulated piping system

Products used

- 10,000 feet of Ecoflex
- Ecoflex insulation kits

Uponor's Ecoflex® solves complex retrofit job

Learn how the challenge of replacing 45-year-old underground plumbing, heating and cooling system in an...
The owners of a 45-year-old, 172-unit apartment building in Austin, Texas, decided to replace their underground plumbing, heating and cooling system after years of leaks and insulation problems. They turned to HHCC, a local Austin general contracting and plumbing firm, to install the new systems.

Project Facts:

Location	Completion
US - Southwest, Texas	2015
Vertical markets	Application categories
Multifamily	Plumbing, Hydronic Heating & Cooling, Pre-Insulated Systems
Project Type	
New building	

Replacing aging underground piping

Bill Fowler, president of HHCC, had read about the benefits of pre-insulated piping in hydronic repiping jobs, but had not personally used it in any previous projects. Fowler, whose company has installed PEX piping for plumbing solutions for many years, turned to Uponor after reading about the benefits of Ecoflex®, Uponor's pre-insulated piping system. Both flexible and durable, Ecoflex is equipped with a layered, closed-cell, polyethylene-foam insulation and HDPE corrugated outer jacket providing long-term and efficient solutions for retrofit projects.

"This project is one of the most challenging and difficult underground jobs we have ever done," Fowler said. "It was a priority to keep residents living in their apartments during the installation, so we had to keep the existing plumbing systems functioning while installing the new systems." To further complicate the installation, Austin saw an unprecedented amount of rain during the three months of the initial installation, making the installation more challenging. With the saturated and soaked grounds, the piping had to be put in immediately after a trench was excavated, and then quickly backfilled before the trench would collapse.

In addition, the installers had to weave over and under existing underground utilities. "There were so many existing water, sewer, hydronic pipes and hi-voltage electric, telephone and cable TV lines buried, forcing us to hydro-excavate most areas," Fowler said. "Ecoflex allowed our installation crew to weave over, under, around and through this maze of existing utilities."

HHCC took advantage of Uponor's Design Services department to design the most economical way to install the system. According to Fowler, the most labor-intensive part of the job was the excavation and back-filling while the Ecoflex pipe installation was the easiest part of the job. "We saw large savings in labor costs," Fowler said, "beating our initial labor estimate by quite a bit."

Ecoflex is available in long lengths – up to 600-foot coils, and Fowler said this was another advantage for them during the installation. "The long rolls eliminated the need for additional joints that go along with a conventional piping job, providing a smaller installation crew and better flow qualities," he said.

And with nearly two miles of Ecoflex going into this project, Fowler admitted that he was a bit overwhelmed when the large amount of pipe needed for the hydronic and potable hot-water installations showed up on the job. "The 600-foot rolls are quite large," Fowler said. "But Uponor's support staff visited the site and showed us best installation practices, and their engineering staff was readily available to answer questions and provide flow calculations for our mechanical engineer when he needed help."

"I have come to believe that Ecoflex is a superior product in underground hydronic and domestic-water installations," Fowler said. "The insulation, the flexibility, the large-diameter expansion fittings and the long lengths that virtually eliminate the need for underground joints, all contribute to make this the most viable product of its kind on the market today."

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