Uponor Case Study | 2023 | Jason Gaspard Residence | Maple Grove, MN | Xpress Trak

**Radiant Contractor Gains Multiple Benefits**

**Installing New Radiant Panel System in His Own Home**

BY BROOKE ROBERTS

When Jason Gaspard, owner and project manager at Select Mechanical Services, was looking to finish the basement of his Maple Grove, MN, home, he knew he wanted radiant heating in the space. He had heard about the new Uponor Xpress Trak radiant panel system and decided that was the best installation method for the job.

The 730-square-foot basement included three rooms: a living area, a bedroom, and a bathroom.

“We had yet to finish our basement, and our goal was to create a comfortable place to be,” says Gaspard. “Xpress Trak gave us an opportunity to put radiant in an area it traditionally couldn’t go, at least not very easily. We already had the slab poured, so there were obstacles to putting it there.

“Xpress Trak was an easy solution that offered the insulation and the aluminum surface to distribute the heat,” he continues. “It looked like it would be easy to install — and it was.”

**Long-Time Radiant Heating Expert**

Since the establishment of Select Mechanical in 2004, Gaspard has used many different radiant installation methods for nearly two decades. But long before his business came into existence, he was working with Uponor radiant systems.

“My folks put radiant in their house in 1996 or ‘97. It was a great option for heating their basement,” he says. “They were doing a new build, and our family business at the time was handling the heating system installation.”

In 2009, Gaspard remodeled his home’s garage and decided to install in-slab radiant heating. He has enjoyed that system so much, he’s been waiting for the right opportunity to bring radiant into one of the living areas in his home. However, the idea of breaking up floors or doing large-scale remodels was daunting.

This is where the benefits of Xpress Trak come into play.

**Xpress Trak = Easier Installation**

“All installation methods have their purpose and advantages,” Gaspard notes, “but I really like Xpress Trak for this application over a concrete slab. I think it’s probably one of the best solutions out there.”

Gaspard had several challenges: He didn’t want the mess or the hassles of removing the existing floor, nor did he want to add much height to it. He also wanted to avoid having to use “a bunch of special tools” to perform the install.

Finally, the floor area itself was a bit of a challenge. Rather than a clean and simple rectangle with only four corners, it involved numerous angles into which the Xpress Trak sheets would need to be cut and neatly fitted. But, in the end, all those angles and cutouts proved no problem for Gaspard.

“Xpress Trak was easy to apply to this layout,” he says, noting that a router or a utility knife can be used to cut new grooves for the piping loops if necessary. “It’s a very forgiving installation method.”

While installing Xpress Trak for the first time, Gaspard noticed an immediate change in the room temperature as he laid out the panels. Before the eight loops of PEX piping installed into the Xpress Trak sheets delivered any heat, the panels themselves provided a thermal break that warmed the space and made it more comfortable.

In fact, the panels are so effective in this regard, Gaspard ultimately decided not to run PEX tubing in the smaller room: The panels alone will suffice to warm the space. “I’m excited for winter,” says Gaspard, like a true Minnesotan. “I could tell right away the positive difference this is going to make.”

The basement flooring will consist of tile or carpet covering different sections of the newly installed radiant system. Tile, especially in Minnesota winters, can pull the heat away from your body very fast, making a space uncomfortable when the weather turns frigid. But Xpress Trak radiant heating readily solves that problem. The same insulated foam core and laminated aluminum surface that make Xpress Trak so easy to install also deliver excellent comfort benefits to the home.

**Ready for Flooring in Only Two Days**

Gaspard did the installation himself in just two days, which included prepping the space, installing the Xpress Trak panels, and installing the PEX tubing. And he needed only a few simple tools for the job, including a utility knife, a caulking gun for the adhesive, and a tape measure. After carrying seven boxes of panels down the stairs into the basement, Gaspard was impressed with how little they weighed.

Not only was the task of setting the panels easy, but it also generated less waste. Gaspard intentionally started with full panels, blanketing as much of the space as possible before cutting them to fit into all the angles and corners.

Gaspard appreciates the benefits of a total Uponor system, using not only Xpress Trak and Uponor PEX-a tubing, but also Uponor ProPEX fittings. “The expansion fitting system is fantastic,” he says, stressing the importance of avoiding the potentially disastrous problem of unfinished pipe connections.

With ProPEX, he continues, “You must make the connection all the way, or it’s not done at all. Plus, you can visually confirm that the connection is done. With other systems, you might dry-fit the connection and forget to clamp it. Or maybe the phone rings and you walk away. A big problem can occur if you walk away from one of those systems. With Uponor, you don’t have that risk.”

“I would definitely use Xpress Trak again,” Gaspard concludes. The product was as easy to install as he had hoped, and the installation was simple to figure out, plan for, and execute.

In sum, Gaspard felt confident throughout his entire home project and is looking forward to the next opportunity where he can use Xpress Trak.

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