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Meharry Medical College Living- Learning Center

REHAU plumbing system allows for speed, surety and savings at multi-purpose facility in Nashville.

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Faster installation and zero leaks: REHAU RAUPEX plumbing pipe and EVERLOC+ fitting system wows installers and stakeholders at new six story facility

When installing a plumbing system in a facility, the costs for the plumbing contractor often break down primarily into two categories: one, the materials—the initial cost of the piping and fittings, and two, the labor—the installation time, and the time to repair any leaks and finish the job.

When Aaron Trask, vice president of family-owned Parkway Construction Services of Nashville and St. Louis, won the bid to plumb a new multi-purpose building on the campus of Meharry Medical College, he knew that replacing the original spec for copper piping with PEXa piping would provide high-quality performance while saving money in the initial materials cost. But even he was pleasantly surprised by the extent of the savings he accrued in labor costs—both in installation and final inspection—with the PEXa brand he selected.

“We turned on the water to more than 4,000 connections with the REHAU RAUPEX pipe/EVERLOC+ fitting PEXa system and there were no leaks. None. Zero,” he said. “It was amazing. We gave Meharry a highly reliable system and we were out of there in record time.”

Not all PEXa pipe and fitting systems are the same

Chris Richey of Kenny Pipe & Supply was pleased when his contractor partner—Parkway Construction Services—won the bid for the new 6-story facility on the campus of Meharry Medical College in downtown Nashville, which features 126 apartment-style units, flexible teaching spaces, a parking garage, retail spaces, offices and more. And, when Trask came back to Richey for a quote on PEXa piping, he knew which system to suggest: REHAU RAUPEX UV shield crosslinked polyethylene pipe with the EVERLOC+ compression-sleeve fitting system.

“There are other PEXa piping systems available, but I think RAUPEX pipe combined with EVERLOC+ fittings are not only the fastest installing and best performing PEXa system there is, they are also very competitively priced,” Richey said. “Better price and better product, so it’s definitely my go-to system. I knew that Parkway, Meharry and all the stakeholders down the line would be pleased.”

The EVERLOC+ fittings are installed with a fast, consistent, nearly foolproof process requiring only two expansions and one compression, utilizing an easy-to-use proprietary tool. Basically, the installer expands the pipe, puts the fitting in, and the sleeve compresses the pipe over the fitting to create the seal. Further, the fittings have a textured PEXa compression sleeve with four sealing edges that protect against leaks.



While Trask is very familiar with PEXa products, he had never used RAUPEX pipe or EVERLOC+ fittings, but was confident in the recommendation of his supplier. Once he and his team got rolling, they immediately noticed differences compared to their many prior PEXa installs, quickly gaining confidence in the speed and surety of the REHAU system that they were soon plumbing four rooms per day.

"With the EVERLOC+ fitting, it just takes a few steps to create a true mechanical joint that doesn't solely rely on the memory of the pipe, so you can immediately see that the connection is made successfully and is leak-tight," he explained. "With other brands, you can't tell by looking if the crimp is made properly and have to wait for the pressure test to know if it worked."

Trask additionally noted, the RAUPEX pipe with EVERLOC+ fitting system allows you to do a pressure test *immediately* without waiting for the pipe to naturally reform after expansion, which must be done with other expansion systems he has used.

"All of that saved us a lot of time on the job," he said.

Zero leaks

The real difference, Trask noted, came with the pressure test.

"The REHAU system had 100 percent no leaks. That's very unusual," he said. "I would say with this number of fittings, 126 units with bathroom, kitchen and water heaters, and all the other spaces, that's a lot of plumbing, and 50 or so initial leaks would be pretty normal. No problem, we'd go back and fix them. But zero leaks means zero rework, and that's money in your pocket."

Trask mentioned that other tradespeople on the site, such as drywallers and the general contractor, often watch the pressure test and prepare to help mitigate any typical ancillary damage that might occur from initial system leaks.

"They seemed to be aware that there were no leaks at all, so people were surprised and talking about it," he said. "And that reflects well on me and my company."



High-quality pipe for long-term performance

Although Trask explained that the failure points in plumbing are almost always at the fittings, and not at the pipe, he and his team have also been impressed with the robustness and quality of the RAUPEX pipe, joining his supplier Richey in that assessment.

"We toured the REHAU manufacturing facility and were struck by the cleanliness and meticulous quality control they had at every step," Trask said. "They also did a 'torture test' on the pipe and we watched it hold steady through like 850 psi. The pipe would never see that level of pressure in use most likely, but it was good to see how tough that pipe really is. It boosts my confidence as an installer even more knowing that I'm giving my customers a quality product that's going to last a long time."

"The REHAU pipe manufacturing operation is very efficient and professional—very impressive," agreed Richey, who had also been a guest of the REHAU Cullman, Alabama plant.

"REHAU not only makes the pipe, they also make the EVERLOC+ polymer fittings in their own facilities—no other PEXa manufacturer does that that I know of," he explained. "But it's clear that the EVERLOC+ polymer fittings and RAUPEX pipe are created to be a complementary, locking system, and they both benefit from the same first-rate quality control. Together they form the best system on the market in my experience."

Always going the extra mile

According to Richey, another unique and valuable feature of RAUPEX pipe is the REHAU UV shield coating, and related UV-conscious handling. While RAUPEX UV shield pipe is not intended for permanent exposure to sunlight, it is the only PEX pipe with a 1-year UV rating to protect from exposure during installation.

"Other than someone putting a nail through it, UV rays are probably the most damaging thing that can happen to PEXa pipe. If it's sitting in the bed of a truck or outside at a job site for months before it's installed, UV rays can cause hidden degradation and pin hole leaks down the road," Richey explained. "No one works to fight UV damage like REHAU. They not only have a UV shield coating on their pipe, they also package the pipe sticks and the rolls in cardboard to keep out the UV. Other manufacturers use plastic wrap and the sun beats right down on it. REHAU really goes the extra mile—and even with all the extra handling, they are still better priced!"

Although not as often seen by the contractors, Richey noted that REHAU reps "are a real class act" as far as providing any needed service in the field.

"That helps our customers like Parkway really keep things moving on the job site," he said.

Trask said he believes that, thanks to Kenny and REHAU, Parkway has a valuable new product at their disposal that will in turn help them please their customers.

"General contractors don't often get into the details of brands, they just know that we were done quickly and that there were no leaks and no problems, and I think that impressed them, which is good for business," Trask said. "Hopefully it will lead to new projects, and, for sure, going forward, I won't be using anything other than REHAU RAUPEX pipe and EVERLOC+ fittings if I can help it."

Project: Meharry Medical College Living-Learning Center, Nashville, TN

Construction type: Educational facility, opened 2022

Project scope: 25,000 ft (7,620 m) of RAUPEX pipe, 4,000 EVERLOC+ fittings

General contractor: Whiting-Turner

Plumbing contractor: Parkway Construction Services

Manufacturers' rep: Hydro Spec Inc.

Distributor: Kenny Pipe & Supply

REHAU systems used: PEXa plumbing system (RAUPEX® UV shield pipe, EVERLOC+® compression-sleeve fitting system)

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