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Healthcare – And High Performance Precast.

Welcome to the New Year! Hopefully, this year will be prosperous for you and the construction industry. Projections for construction this year are up about 7%, with select market segments doing better than others.

One thing clear is the amount and rate of change that occurs. For example, in a reasonably short time, we went from one of the greatest building booms to the lowest economic point in more than 60 years. Another example is components that once were options for obtaining LEED Certification are now code requirements.


Healthcare has probably experienced more changes than other field and will continue to do so, with the Affordable Care Act taking effect, people living longer, and even a shortage of medical professionals predicted.

One question designers obviously ask when they see these trends is: How will this effect facility design and construction? This issue of *Ascent* focuses on the healthcare industry, examining what designers are doing today and what healthcare professionals and owners think will happen in the future.

One consistent element in our articles is that precast concrete was selected for the envelope of all of these healthcare facilities. The benefits of doing so are extensive and are presented in each case. But why do we seldom see precast used for the structural system of healthcare facilities?

Some of the challenges include coordination of openings for mechanicals, flexibility for changing future needs, varying load conditions for new equipment, and vibration control. Some of these concerns have already been overcome in projects such as the Medical Center in Lincoln.

No matter what solutions are found, involving a precaster early in the design not only creates better coordination but also project optimization. This often results in reduced time of construction and costs while improving energy efficiency and building performance. Look for more articles on this subject in the near future.

The articles this time focus on the inherent versatility of precast concrete, especially as it applies to the healthcare industry. They showcase projects from around the country that have used precast concrete systems to meet high-performance needs and improve the overall optimization of projects performance, both during construction and operation. They serve as great examples of what is being done and as an inspiration for what can be done. Let's discover High Performance Precast! 

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On the cover: University of Kentucky Hospital (see page 26).

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