



Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana, IL

## Sensitive Ears and Tired Feet Appreciate a Good Floor

When Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana, IL, embarked on a \$45 million state-of-the-art expansion to its North Tower, plans called for an enlarged and updated space for neonatal intensive care services. Today the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) is equipped to care for 28 critically ill infants. Although these patients are the tiniest in the hospital, they are also among the most demanding in terms of the care they require and the environment around them. So when hospital administrators searched for a floor covering for the 10,000-square-foot unit, their search included very specific criteria.

According to Doug Ballance, director of engineering services at the hospital, "NICU babies are very sensitive to sound, so we looked for a floor covering with good sound absorption qualities.

"Of course hygiene was extremely important, as it is throughout the hospital," he added. "Along with that, we wanted a floor that would be easy to clean and just as easy to maintain. Resiliency, too, was important because most of our professional staff spend long hours on their feet. Finally, we hoped to find a floor covering that worked well from an aesthetic perspective with the paint colors and design elements already in place."

To help them find the floor covering best suited to the needs of the NICU, the hospital turned to Karl Smith, president of Tile Specialists, Inc. in nearby Champaign, IL. Together with his nora account executive, Smith introduced hospital representatives to the advantages of noraplan environcare™.

Developed with insight and input from top professionals in both the design and healthcare communities, noraplan environcare meets the diverse demands of a healthcare environment while offering a broad color range that encourages and supports an emotionally refreshing and welcoming interior design.

"The nora<sup>®</sup> product appealed to us for several reasons," recalled Ballance. "First, it offered sound absorption qualities that are so important in a NICU, where the activity in the unit and the sounds associated with the equipment that operates there can be disturbing to infants."



Ballance also pointed to the maintenance benefits noraplan environcare offers. The floor covering is extremely dirt and stain resistant and never needs waxing or sealing. "The fact that the product does not require someone to strip the floor and re wax it was certainly a plus for us," said Ballance. "In a NICU, it's difficult to move isolettes, equipment and personnel to another location while a floor is stripped and re waxed. In addition, the smell of the chemicals associated with stripping and waxing floors is something we'd prefer our patients and staff not have to experience. Then there's the subject of noise again – this time the noise associated with stripping, waxing and buffing equipment."

The comfort of hospital staff also played a role in the decision to use noraplan environcare in the Carle Foundation NICU. According to Ballance, "I was looking for something that would be user friendly in terms of the amount of time that nurses in the unit spend on their feet – something that after a 10- or 12-hour shift wouldn't feel as if the staff was walking on bare concrete like a lot of sheet goods or VCT tile feel. The nora product seems to have the resiliency that makes the floor more comfortable for our staff."

Time was also important in the choice of a floor covering. "The hospital needed a product that could be ordered and installed in a relatively short period of time," said Smith. "nora and their sales rep did a fantastic job to get the product to us quickly."

To date, the hospital has not been disappointed with their choice; quite the contrary. "The floor is definitely easy to clean," said Diane Reed, manager of environmental services at Carle Foundation. "In fact, it's much easier to clean and maintain than our other hard surface floors that require stripping, waxing, scrubbing and buffing. With the nora floor, we clean it with a neutral cleaner once daily, using a mop, and we spot mop it as necessary – that's all."

"It's also very soft to walk on, and it's quiet. You almost feel like you're walking on carpet, but it's certainly more sanitary and easier to care for."

And according to Ballance, "The floor looks great! We were trying to match the floor to a space that was already designed, framed and painted. nora offered a selection of colors that blended with design elements in other parts of the building, which was a real plus."

noraplan environcare is available in 48 soothing, nature-inspired colors, providing a palette of colors that break new ground in design flexibility. "The product brought a fresh, new look to the NICU," said Smith, "while offering all the performance features that are important to that special environment."

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Director of Engineering  
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