



University of Tennessee Medical Center, Knoxville, TN

nora[®] Nurtures Newborns at University of Tennessee Medical Center

The 581-bed University of Tennessee Medical Center has a long history of delivering quality healthcare across Eastern Tennessee. Headquartered in Knoxville, TN, The University of Tennessee Medical Center has evolved into a major contributor in the provision of healthcare services in the region, offering the area's only Level I Trauma Center, only academic medical center and only transplant center. The hospital is a tertiary facility, offering general, specialty and sub-specialty care in a full range of medical fields, including specialties with heart, lung, vascular, brain, spine, childbirth and cancer as well as many other conditions.

The medical center has been providing neonatal care since 1970 at the Tom and Katherine Black Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), annually caring for 800 babies and 450 mothers. Recently, the medical center's NICU underwent a multi-million dollar renovation and became one of only two hospitals in the state of Tennessee to feature a NICU that offers private rooms, and one of only a handful nationwide. Smaller nurse work stations positioned between every two rooms allow nurses to complete their work while also keeping a close eye on the babies.

Ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the medical center's interior design rests with Heather King, the on-staff interior designer. In that capacity, she oversees every design aspect, working closely with outside architects, contractors and suppliers. When it came time to select flooring for the nearly 15,000-square-foot NICU, it's no surprise that King chose nora[®]. The medical center had previously installed nora in its Ortho, Trauma, Neuro Unit. King was sold on many of its key attributes, including performance and design, ultimately choosing noraplan environcare™ complemented by noraplan[®] logic.

The favorable sound absorption properties of noraplan environcare was the most important aspect for King. "Noise was such a problem for the babies in our previous space. Chaotic nurseries can cause high-blood pressure in babies and create longer hospital stays. The sound reduction property from noraplan environcare was the number one selling feature for the NICU. Now, the staff can move around with a low-level of noise."



King compared the use of rubber flooring with the use of vinyl tile, which was also an option in the NICU. "In previous projects vinyl left a harsh odor that was distracting to staff, and would be too strong for the babies. The low level of volatile organic compounds (VOC) emitted by noraplan environcare was a very important factor in selecting nora because it would not contribute to indoor air contamination in an environment where babies are at risk." nora floor coverings are GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality Certified for Children and Schools™ and CA 01350 compliant, making them a favorable choice by healthcare facilities.

King likely found the noraplan environcare line of rubber flooring so aesthetically pleasing because nora consulted with interior designers from both the healthcare and medical communities when creating the flooring line. "The noraplan environcare line had so many colors and design possibilities to choose from, it was easy to select flooring colors to fit within our design scheme." Soothing blues, greens and beiges make up the NICU's flooring patterns, while cheerful butterflies, daisies and dogwoods adorn the walls, creating a pleasant and calming environment for patients and their families.

As the installing contractor, Mike Bonner, flooring specialist for Bonitz Flooring Group, Knoxville, TN, also agreed with King's decision to install nora products. "The durability and aesthetic look of nora is fantastic – nothing else on the market compares. Along with ease of installation, it is also very cost effective because it will last a long time." Bonner has recommended and managed hundreds of nora product installations for healthcare facilities for many of his clients.

noraplan environcare also has an extremely dirt and stain resistant surface, and, like other nora floor coverings, never needs waxing or sealing. "We wanted a no-wax product because our NICU is difficult to get into once you put wax down, because you have to let it dry. And, many times the wax has an odor in it. It was very important, especially in our NICU that we don't have outside chemicals coming in," King noted.

Because it is often difficult to clean a NICU without disrupting babies, a floor that was easy to clean was necessary. Vinyl and other flooring products can involve harsh chemicals and require the floor to be stripped and re-waxed, creating downtime. The noraplan environcare line was created with the healthcare industry in mind to avoid these issues.

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King said the staff loves the new NICU not only because it looks great, but because it greatly reduces the noise level. As renovation projects continue within The University of Tennessee Medical center and the NICU, King plans to use noraplan environcare in future projects.

"The sound reduction property from noraplan environcare was the number one selling feature for the NICU."

Heather King
 On-staff Interior Designer

