



# phc news

NEWS, PRODUCTS AND INFORMATION FOR PLUMBING & MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS



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## Developer unrolls radiant welcome for homebuyers

The new Bishopsgate condominium development near Powell, Ohio — a golf course community next to the exclusive Wedgewood Country Club — has rolled out the ultimate warm welcome to homeowners. As prospective buyers toured the homes this winter, they were encouraged to remove their shoes to feel that warmth in a way that leaves a lasting, positive impression.

Long before construction of the homes began, developer Terry O'Keefe decided that he would make Bishopsgate the first residential development in Ohio that provides radiant-heated floors for all of its homes. "Though we make a higher investment in the homes to provide radiant heat, we find that homeowners are enamored with it. That's one of the reasons *Better Homes & Gardens* calls one of the hottest trends in the home construction industry," said Terry O'Keefe.

"It's remarkable technology," said Kourtney O'Keefe, one of Terry's daughters; she and her sister Katie are actively involved in the firm's activities. "The floors of each home gently radiate the heat where you most want it — at your feet and toes. It's got an 'Oooh-ahhh' quality that's remarkable — it romances you from the start."

"We took a bit of a gamble with it, but we knew — especially at this time of year when temperatures are at their lowest — that when people felt it, they'd be struck by its comfort. There's really nothing quite like it for its coziness in the winter months," added Terry O'Keefe. "Of course, we also knew that by making this development exclusively radiant, we'd have a nice way to differentiate our development, and these homes, from those offered by others."

All of the homes are heated hydronically. Each slab-on-grade home has Watts Radiant RadiantPEX tubing in the concrete slab foundation. The tubing is connected to reinforcement wire just above a layer of Insultarp. The second story areas are all heated by staple-up application of highly flexible Onix tubing, an EPDM/synthetic rubber tubing also manufactured by Watts Radiant.

"We're pretty fixed on Onix because it's so easy to install," said Tony Fischer, project manager for Columbus-based Freeland Contracting Company, the firm that is installing all of the heating systems at Bishopsgate. "It has the feel and flexibility of installing a three-quarter inch piece of hemp rope — it's got substance and great flexibility at almost any temperature. Attempting to do PEX staple-up in the spring, fall and winter is like a wrestling match. Onix goes where you want it with



The 39 condos have 2,486 to 2,982 sq. ft. of floor space, with all rooms heated to comfortable levels using radiant floors and zone controls.

no fight at all. It comes off the spool perfectly."

"Another key advantage is that when Onix is stapled-up, it flattens slightly," continued Fischer. "That's exactly what it's designed to do. The flat-



Technicians with Freeland Contracting Co. staple up a radiant floor using Watts Radiant Onix tube. They chose Onix because its rope-like flexibility allows easy installation between floor beams where installing PEX would be a "wrestling match."

tening of the tubing against the subfloor above increases the surface contact with the wood, dramatically improving thermal transfer from the pipe to the floor above. That's why heat transfer plates aren't needed with Onix. That saves a lot of time and expense. Of course, we use foil-faced insulation from below to complete installation of the staple-up sections."

"Radiant heat is a great investment for homeowners," added Fischer. "Not only do you get incomparable comfort, and the highest heating system energy efficiency available, but with no air grates, radiators or baseboard to factor-in, there's also no interference with room function or furniture layout. That's something that the O'Keefe's and their prospective homebuyers took great interest in as well."

The radiant heat system adds about \$7,500 to the cost of each home, an investment that will — because of the higher operational efficiency — reward homeowners with full "payback" in six to seven years.

"Without question, warm floors are the most comfortable form of heat you can have," says Hanse Cromer, a manufacturer's representative for Steffens-Shulz, a Columbus firm that specializes in plumbing and mechanical components. "For years, we've been beating that drum in Columbus, and finally we're

seeing broad acceptance of radiant heat."

"We feel very good about our decision to go with radiant at Bishopsgate" added Terry O'Keefe. "We were introduced to it years ago when we installed it for an addition to our home. For me, it was like one of those 'love at first sight' experiences. We enjoy it for its comfort, and for the energy efficiency."

"It's an amenity that complements the feel and luxury of the 39 detached condominiums at Bishopsgate," said Katie O'Keefe. All of the homes are available as a ranch, one-and-a-half story or two-story models. Each has connected to it; a rear-entry, oversized, two-car garage. The price range is \$330,000 to \$350,000, and the interior space varies between 2,486 to 2,982 square feet.

Inspired by homebuyer interest in radiant heat, Terry O'Keefe recently broke ground on two new, Columbus-area condo developments that will also be exclusively radiantly-heated.

O'Keefe describes his interest in radiant heat as something of a conversion. "It's time that more people learn about it, and to discover the incredible comfort it offers," he concluded. "As a developer, I'm delighted to have 'found' it. Once I did, and set a path to offer it to homeowners, I knew it would be something that they would eagerly pay a little extra for."