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Educational facilities embrace permeable pavement

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Educational institutions throughout the country are demonstrating their commitment to the environment by employing sustainable design practices in new building and site initiatives.

Porous pavements comprised of permeable interlocking concrete pavers (PICP) are quickly becoming one of the innovative technologies embraced by many schools and universities for mitigating the effects of stormwater runoff. Some, such as the University of New Hampshire, are using the installation sites as outdoor demonstration labs for classes focused on environment and energy.

In addition to meeting LEED, LID and stormwater run-off standards, permeable pavers offer a host of other benefits to educational institutions. Financial benefits are naturally a primary focus. Because permeable pavers can function as pavement, stormwater infiltration, and detention/retention all-in-one, valuable land is conserved. Winter ice hazards are lower than with traditional pavements thus providing savings on the costs of de-icing salts and sanding.

Aesthetic improvements are another prime benefit gained through the use of PICP. The most obvious is the attractiveness of the available colors, shapes, and patterns as compared with asphalt or concrete. The beauty of the property can be preserved and enhanced because PICP promotes tree survival and growth, and wooded areas that would otherwise be cleared for stormwater detention or retention ponds can remain undisturbed.

Maintenance personnel enjoy the benefits of less sanding and de-icing mentioned above and the ease of regular maintenance which only requires periodic inspection and cleaning with standard street cleaning equipment. If access to underlying structures such as pipes or utilities is necessary, the pavers can be lifted and subsequently reinstated after the work is completed to restore the pavement to its original appearance without leaving the undesirable look of a patch that would occur with other paving materials.

Schools generally must work projects around tight academic schedules. Permeable pavers are factory-made and ready to install year-round. No curing is required. The paver surface may be used immediately upon installation. Larry Nicolai is sr. vice president of Ideal Concrete Block Company, Westfield, Mass.

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