

Las Vegas CityCenter a ‘No Sweat’ Building Project



Tower cranes hover above MGM's CityCenter mega-project in Las Vegas. Photo courtesy of Viega LLC.

Over the past three years, the mammoth MGM Mirage CityCenter project—a 66-acre, \$14 billion new construction gamble in the heart of Las Vegas—has played out like a real-life cliffhanger novel.

Its main characters include a Hollywood movie empire, cash-rich Arab sheiks, high-rolling international financiers and some of the world's biggest casino operators. The project has teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, but with completion now less than a year away, it's about to pay off.

A city within a city, the project occupies some of the most valuable real estate on or off the famed Las Vegas Strip. Nearly 50 buildings, a few up to 70 stories tall, will provide 18 million square feet of space devoted to hotels, casinos, luxury condominiums, restaurants, theaters and retail shops, and even a private fire department and security police force.

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Miles of high-quality, high-value copper pipe and fittings have been installed to serve the water and air conditioning needs of this mega-project. But it is almost impossible to find a single soldered copper joint. The CityCenter project easily qualifies as the largest construction effort ever to use solderless, flameless pipe-joining methods—a testament to the trust the developers have placed in press-on fittings.

“You’re probably talking numbers in the hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of copper fittings in this project,” says Ted Atkinson, district manager for Viega North America, which supplied the pipe fittings and components used throughout the project.

Virtually every tube and pipe fitting from one-half to four inches in diameter was installed using the solderless Viega ProPress system. Developed in partnership with U.S. tool manufacturer Ridgid, this system has been used extensively in Europe and elsewhere for several years.

According to a Viega statement, the ProPress system saves up to 75 percent in job time, based on PHCC and MCAA labor calculators. The company also states that, because no solder or flux is required, the fittings are a “green” product that creates a safer work environment with better air quality—benefits that can help projects attain LEED certification. Copper pipe and fittings, which have a long service lifespan and are completely recyclable, are also compatible with LEED goals. For more information, visit www.copper.org.

The use of solderless fittings on this project is notable for its scale, and it points out the fact that solderless fittings have gained increased respect—and acceptance—throughout the plumbing industry. Subcontractors were eager to work with the system when CityCenter went up for bids, according to company officials.

“There may be a couple of HVAC contractors doing some soldering on the project, but very little—you won’t find it,” says Atkinson.

As for the dependability of the solderless joints, “The only issue this job has seen is installer error—not the fittings themselves,” Atkinson adds. “This is a very small issue, guys not inserting the pipe all the way into the fitting, things like that. If the fittings are installed correctly, there’s absolutely no problem at all.”

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