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CEILING SATISFIES BOTH HEALTH AND FIRE CODES WITH STYLE

When the health department and the fire marshal have conflicting code requirements, it takes a product with special properties to satisfy both and still look attractive. The popular Nestlé Toll House Café by Chip foodservice chain faced this problem with their new in-mall kiosk design, and found a solution by using Ceilume thermoformed ceiling panels. Not only did the ceiling system resolve the health and fire code conflict, it reduced construction costs and provided a distinctive, brand-enhancing appearance.

Nestlé Toll House Café by Chip recently upgraded its stand-alone kiosk design for shopping malls. It includes counter seating plus a 200 sq. ft. seating area in front of the kiosk, with convenient electrical outlets for smart phones and computers, free Wi-Fi, and digital menu boards. It is designed to be a destination and gathering place. Of the 18 kiosks under contract with mall-owner Rouse Properties, however, four required modifications to meet code.

“Health departments require roofs or canopies over kiosks located next to escalators or under balconies,” explains Todd Panchuk, Construction Manager for Crest Foods, franchisor of the Nestlé Toll House Café by Chip chain. The roofs protect food preparation and display areas against items thrown or dropped from above.

Fire codes, on the other hand, mandate that fire suppression sprinklers be able to protect areas under canopies. Conventional ceiling panels would block a mall’s existing sprinklers and require considerable expense to install additional sprinklers under canopies.

Kiosk designer and fabricator Ikoniq reconciled the conflict by using Ceilume drop-out ceiling panels that can be installed beneath sprinklers. The panels are made of a special thermoformed material that softens at elevated temperatures. When exposed to heat from a fire, the lightweight panels drop out of a conventional ceiling grid and allow sprinklers to function properly.

“Drop-out panels were desirable so we could avoid sprinklers underneath the unit,” explains Ikoniq president Gregory Swistak, adding that, “We liked the styles that were available and the idea that the panels are easy to clean and maintain.”

Christine Burgasser, Project Manager for Ikoniq, was present at the Colin Creek Mall in Plano Texas when the first roof-equipped kiosk was installed. She recalls that the fire marshal

inspecting the project looked at the panels and quickly approved the kiosk. “He was like, ‘OK! All good!’” Ceilume panels can be used in most types of buildings because they are Class A rated for surface burning characteristics and approved or listed by UL, IAPMO-UES, ICC-ES, and other building safety organizations

In some of the malls, fire codes required a percentage of the kiosk area be left uncovered. Ikoniq’s designers were able to satisfy this demand by opening the roof over the center of the kiosk where the sales staff works, and keeping the perimeter covered to protect the food.

Ceilume panels come forty styles of 24 x 24 inch and 24 x 48 inch panels, some inspired by classic stamped metal ceilings of the 19th and early 20th centuries, others featuring contemporary patterns and geometries. They are available in translucent and transparent polymers, as well as opaque colors and decorative faux finishes, providing design options for every architectural style.

The Nestlé Toll House Café by Chip roofs utilize translucent panels to create luminous ceilings that spread a soft light on the food displays. By borrowing light from the mall’s skylights or overhead light fixtures, luminous ceilings eliminate the expense of additional lighting under the canopy. The glowing white panels are set off by brilliantly-painted steel framework in the signature Nestlé Toll House yellow. The distinctive appearance becomes part of the branding, increases kiosk visibility, and makes the cafés a more inviting island in open mall spaces.

“Our translucent panels are very popular for luminous ceilings,” comments Ceilume president Ed Davis, “Ikoniq’s creative use of the concept demonstrates how thermoformed ceilings can satisfy fire safety, lighting, hygiene, and other design constraints at the same time.”

According to Crest Foods, the new kiosk design has taken off. “Reaction has been very successful for us,” Panchuk comments. “We’re talking right now with another mall group to put the same kiosk in 30 locations. We will be using the roofs wherever needed.”

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ABOUT CEILUME

Ceilume is the leading manufacturer of thermoformed ceiling tiles and panels. The company's predecessor dates from the early 20th Century and was a pioneer in the invention of the modern suspended ceiling. The family-owned business is located in Graton, CA in the heart of California's wine country, and occupies a historic apple-packing warehouse. With an eye on the future, Ceilume has invested in advanced manufacturing equipment, including 5-axis milling machines to make its own tooling, and has an active research and development program to create improved ceiling systems to meet changing environmental, performance, and aesthetic expectations.