

CUSTOM FIREPLACES



FIREPLACE SURROUNDS

| | |
|--|----|
| The Fireplace: A Must-Have for Most Homeowners | 1 |
| Fire and Concrete: | |
| A Perfect Blend | 2 |
| Color Choices are Endless. | 3 |
| Surround Yourself in Style | 5 |
| Traditional | 5 |
| Contemporary | 6 |
| Ornate | 7 |
| Other specialties. | 8 |
| Frequently Asked Questions | 9 |
| Eight Tips for Hiring a Concrete Contractor . | 11 |
| About The Concrete Network | 12 |

Read More Online about [Concrete Fireplaces](http://www.ConcreteNetwork.com) at www.ConcreteNetwork.com

The Fireplace: A Must-Have for Most Homeowners

There's no denying it — the fireplace is one of the must-have amenities for today's homeowner. Not only does a fireplace provide warmth, but it also serves as the centerpiece of a room, is the symbol of family togetherness, and adds value to your home.

About 50 percent of all homeowners — some 53 million households — have at least one hearth appliance, according to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association.

What's more, the association in a recent study found that homeowners in general believe that hearth products add value to their home.

“Seventy-six percent of homeowners who installed a fireplace after they moved into their home believe that the value of their home went up after installation ...”


— STUDY, HEARTH, PATIO & BARBECUE ASSOCIATION

And while 18 percent said the primary purpose of their fireplace is for heat, some 46 percent said the chief function of the fireplace is for atmosphere. Nothing emits a more welcome feeling than a roaring fire on a frigid winter day. And when days are warmer, the fireplace, adorned by a beautiful surround enhances the architecture and depth of a room.

Fireplaces are most popular in family rooms, but they're also gaining momentum in the bedroom.

In fact, at the 2003 International Builders Show, Joan McCloskey, editorial marketing director for Better Homes and Gardens magazine, said that along with luxuries like heated floors and steam showers, fireplaces in the master bedroom are on the list of must-haves among new-home buyers.





“The stonelike look and feel of a concrete fireplace surround adds dimension and excitement to any living space. A wide range of style options from Old World ornamentation of Baroque or Victorian to the Spartan lines of Post Modernism gives the homeowner an array of standard feature choices. Also, concrete offers the unique role as a strong mediator to bring out the best features in complementary materials such as stone, tile or metals; fusing them together in a dramatic marriage of texture and shape.”

—WANDA ELLERBECK, GROTTO DESIGNS

Fire and Concrete: A Perfect Blend

When it comes time to choose a material for a fireplace surround — the structure that envelops the firebox — many can't fathom the true potential of concrete. The material has come a long way from the driveway. It's making a huge splash as a popular countertop material for its durability, versatility and attractiveness.

Now, combining the qualities of fire resistance, heat retention, and moldability, concrete is fast becoming a popular material for fireplace surrounds, mantles, and hearths. Artisans can replicate virtually any look, ranging from ornate to contemporary.

Few materials can compete with concrete when it comes to versatility. It can be molded into any shape, integrally colored or stained to match

nearly any hue, and exhibit textures ranging from rough to highly polished. Because of these chameleon-like qualities, concrete adapts to a wide range of decorating styles, from contemporary to classic.

Concrete melds seamlessly with rustic cabin settings where simple, natural-looking styles and earth tones are key, contemporary surroundings where straight lines and perhaps bold colors are desired, traditional homes where elegance is key, and more artistic styles where ornate styles are preferred. Most importantly, concrete can be molded to mirror your personality and style.

"I think there are two main reasons people choose concrete: first is the look. They can look like real stone and are built in few massive

pieces, rather than a dozen pieces cut and mortared. Second, the cost — concrete is significantly less than carved stone or marble slate."

— MARCO LUCIONI, *Lucioni Arts*

The possibilities for creative expression with concrete are endless. Each concrete artisan approaches the craft differently, achieving a distinct "signature look" by building their own forms, developing special casting techniques, and using proprietary materials and coloring methods.

"The benefits are obviously the moldability of the material, lending itself to inlays, curvature, etc. that would be cost-prohibitive, if not impossible with standard slab materials."

— GERRY SANTORA, *Soupcan Inc.*



Color Choices are Endless

Concrete is also a great choice because of the vast color possibilities. When it comes to brick, stone or marble, there are only a handful of color options. Not so with concrete.

Each concrete contractor offers his or her own unique standard and premium col-

ors. And many will create custom colors to help you match or complement other materials in the vicinity of the fireplace, whether it's a cherished rug, your favorite piece of art, flooring, or your furniture.

If it's taupe or mushroom or khaki you're after, your concrete contractor will work with you to achieve the exact shade you're seeking.

Samples will always be different because each contractor has their own secret rec-

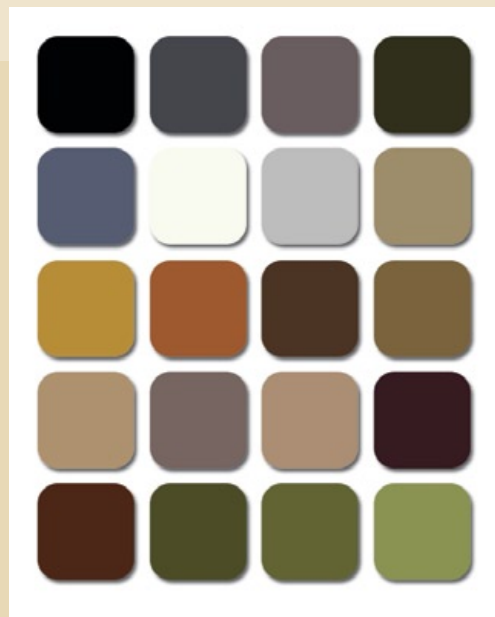
ipe and different types and amounts of cement and aggregates. In fact, cement will vary in different parts of the country. There are different brands of pigments, stains, and aggregate colors, so concrete sinks, vanities, and surrounds will always be one-of-a-kind.

“Colors and finish assist in making concrete the most versatile choice for fireplace surrounds. There is something about colored concrete that yells out ‘touch me’ and in this focal point, what a statement.”

— DANIEL ARVELO,
Concrete Tops of Winter Park L.L.C.

Today color is an important element in the design of a room. Similar to being able to select your wall color from hundreds of paint chips, concrete artisans offer standard and custom colors, their range far surpassing that of other fireplace surround materials.

Sonoma Cast Stone, for example, offers more than 100 colors. Their top 20 are:





Surround Yourself in Style

One of the greatest draws of incorporating concrete into your fireplace surround is the material's potential to be molded, colored and adorned into any style imaginable, whether yours is contemporary, chic, eclectic, rustic, country, traditional, Early American, or a combination.

The main components of the fireplace — the hearth, mantel, pillars, and corbels — can be made of lightweight concrete in any texture. Sonoma Cast Stone will even incorporate Christmas stocking ledges into the mold.

Many companies, like Sonoma Cast Stone, will ask for a dimensioned sketch, and will provide you with an estimate, color samples, and a scaled drawing of the fireplace surround.

Concrete is a great material for a classic-looking hearth. In rich, natural colors, gentle curves and sporting a traditional mantle, these styles of fireplaces exude warmth and invite family and guests to gather around. They're also serve as a timeless centerpiece of the room.

If your home is cloaked in traditional

design elements, then concrete is the answer when it comes to your fireplace surround. Your contractor will work with you to achieve the exact hearth you envision — down to the edge detailing on the mantel to the texture of the hearth to the vertical lines and curves that will grace your firebox and the precise color you desire.



Contemporary styles

One of the most popular styles of concrete fireplace surrounds is the contemporary look, whether it's a natural look with simple colors or streamlined architectural features blended with rich, vibrant colors.

Many concrete companies work with homeowners and designers to help bring their vision to life. Looking at a company's prior projects and getting a basic understanding of the style you're looking for is a great first step.

If your home has a contemporary edge to it, then concrete is the perfect material to grace your fireplace. Perhaps you want an overmantel that extends to the ceiling or smooth, clean hearth and panels, or maybe you're looking for that perfect, funky color to bring some added zip to your room. Perhaps you're looking for a material to complement your wood or tile floors. Concrete is the answer.

Scandinavian design: Simple and clean

"A client wanted a fireplace with clean lines that worked with their open living room and Scandinavian design. We created a simple, pale gray surround, hearth and mantel. The mantel extended to form shelves on the built-in bookcase... This clean, compelling design is one of the most popular in our portfolio."

— LANE MAGNUM, *FormWorks*

Ornate

If your house is filled with sculptures, art and classic architecture, then you may crave a fireplace surround with similar ornate characteristics.

Because concrete can be molded, the intricate designs that would be impossible with stone or marble can be achieved and gracing your living room, thanks to concrete.

To create fireplace surrounds with intricate designs Lucioni Arts will sometimes carve the designs in reverse in clay and then use the clay mold to do the casting. The unusual bearded-face surround was reproduced for a customer from a magazine picture. Lucioni used white cement and marble chips in the mix to replicate the look of fine Carrera marble. The fireplace on the right is by Pedroni's Cast Stone.

"Almost every fireplace I cast is a unique experience. My favorites are when the client comes to my shop with a clip from Architectural Digest and point to a picture ... A giant face 'mouth of hell' was the most challenging project I've done ..."

— MARCO LUCIONI, *Lucioni Arts*

Other specialties

Many concrete artisans are adept at adopting their client's vision and bringing it to life — that's possible because of the malleable nature of concrete. There's no other material like it.

This dynamic original design concrete fireplace by Architectural Concrete Specialties demonstrates concrete's versatility. A contemporary style with a touch of "art deco" flair, it was handmade to the exact specifications of the client. Corrugated panels and concrete tiles adorn the piece.

"Concrete empowers designers and provides creative latitude ... So many techniques, so many different design possibilities."

— MAT ROGERS,
Flying Turtle Cast Concrete

Concrete's possibilities are limitless. Here, Tom Ralston Concrete created a hard-troweled burnished natural gray surround with a 100-foot radius front.

Selkirk Custom Concrete created a hearth and mantel project, below, where the face was stamped and acid stained

for the natural texture and feel of real stone. The top surfaces were polished and sealed to give the pieces the feel of large basalt stones.

"Using concrete for fireplaces has the same benefits as using concrete for countertops — it can be any color or shape, and it is completely custom and unique to the client."

— LANE MAGNUM, *FormWorks*





Frequently Asked Questions

FROM BUDDY RHODES STUDIO:

Does the concrete ever crack?

Yes, hairline cracking may occur. These are not structural and are part of the character of concrete.

Does the concrete stain or is it waterproof?

The concrete is sealed making it water and stain resistant (spec sheets can be sent on request).

What if I want a color

that is not in the sample package?

We can make custom colors attempting to match almost any color, there is a \$75.00 charge that is applied to your order.

Does the color ever vary?

Yes, every order is custom, which lends to the products uniqueness.

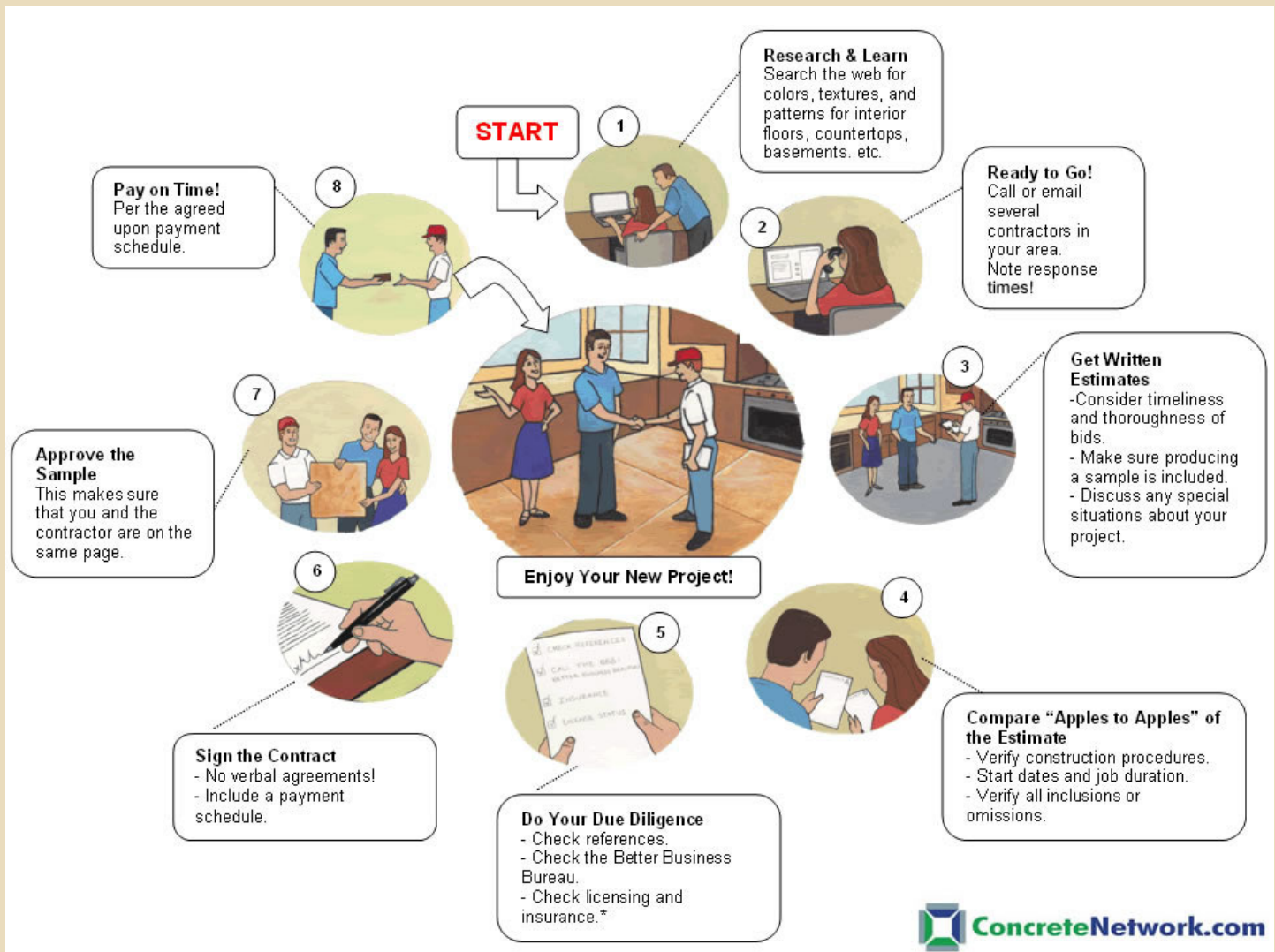
FROM SONOMA CAST STONE:

What should I expect from concrete?

All concrete products made by Sonoma Cast Stone are made of the finest natural ingredients with the highest degree of craftsmanship in this industry. These products are made of all natural products. As such they are subject to slight color fading and small hairline cracking over the years. Being a porous material, concrete will also have a tendency to pick up stains. Like an old painting, this is all part of the patina and is to be expected. All of the standard products are warranted for 30 years against structural cracking or breakage.



EIGHT TIPS FOR HIRING A CONCRETE CONTRACTOR



Use this guide to make sure you're prepared when it comes to hiring a contractor. These 8 simple steps are your key to knowing what information you should look for, what questions you should ask, and to understanding some vital do's and don'ts during the process. Your preparedness can make a difference in how smoothly your project gets installed. Print a copy of this diagram and refer to it through each step of your project. Before you know it, you'll be enjoying your new concrete too!

About The Concrete Network

The Concrete Network (www.concretenetwork.com), located in Yucaipa, Calif., is the largest and most comprehensive resource online for concrete information. Over 1 million people visit the site each month to read articles, get design ideas, and to search its extensive directory for a concrete contractor in their area.

Established in 1999, The Concrete Network's purpose is to educate homeowners, contractors, builders, and designers on popular decorative techniques and applications. With thousands of articles, photographs, and a comprehensive directory of concrete contractors, The Concrete Network is

a repository of information about the industry's products and services, including stamped concrete, stained concrete floors, concrete countertops, polished concrete, and much more.

The site excels at connecting buyers with local contractors in their area through its Find-A-Contractor service. The service provides visitors with a list of decorative concrete contractors throughout the U.S. and Canada, and is fully searchable by 23 types of decorative concrete work and 200 regional areas throughout North America. The directory is organized by area and specialty, such as patios, pool decks, driveways, countertops, floors,

stamped concrete, and water features, among many others.

Site visitors can choose their local area and view concrete contractors and concrete products, obtain full contact information for the listed businesses, and contact them directly.

The Concrete Network was founded by Jim Peterson, a former Vice President of a major concrete company in Riverside, Calif. During the 1999 World of Concrete Trade Show in Las Vegas, Peterson had the idea to create an industry portal on the World Wide Web for all things related to concrete.



