

Facility Manager Project Profile

Timothy VanAcker

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How Kilwins Chocolates standardizes temperature control across its franchisee locations

What is your official title? How long have you been at Kilwins Chocolates Franchise I'm a construction project manager, and I've been here for one month.

How long have you been in restaurant facilities? For which company(s)? I was with Levy restaurants for four years, Wild flower Bread Co. for three and a half years, and Desert West Builders for one year as project manager.

What are the goals of Kilwins' facilities and construction department? We are a company that supports and builds stores for our franchisees. We maintain our facilities through lease agreements and product distribution.

How many stores are there, and where are they located? We currently have 120 stores with another 18 to 20 opening this year. In 2019, we plan to build 25+ stores. We are mainly on the East Coast, Midwest and Southeast regions. We are building five to eight stores this year in the Texas market. We are expanding in areas of resort traffic, as well as areas with rapidly growing population.

How many locations are company owned? Two.

How many locations are you responsible for? I will be handling/ building five to six stores this year. I'm currently responsible for buildouts in Virginia, Texas and Pennsylvania.

What support is given to your franchisees concerning facilities and construction? If the franchisee is building their own store, Kilwins will approve the location and facility design, provide a store opening team to facilitate the opening and periodically check with the general contractor on the building process. If Kilwins Corporate picks the site, they supply all professional services, including design, architecture, engineering, construction management and the new store opening team.

What input, if any, do franchisees have on their locations, buildings, products, etc.? Franchisees have direct decision-making for the types of products being sold depending on the specific location, demographics, etc. They also have input on site location and building design.

How do the stores prepare for the hot summer months? Quarterly maintenance on all the above equipment, plus service preventive maintenance reports need to be forwarded to us. All store operators must ensure that equipment is checked by a licensed, experienced technician who documents all equipment meets Kilwins temperature standards. This equipment includes ice cream dipping cases, fudge and chocolate cases, upright refrigerators and freezers, under-counter refrigerators and ice makers. They also must ensure a store temperature of 68-70 degrees. Also walk-in freezers must maintain -15 degrees Fahrenheit, with one 45- to 60-minute defrost cycle every six hours, generally at 12 a.m., 6 a.m., 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. They must ensure all lighting and ceiling fans are clean and operational as well. Basically, a complete store walk-through.

What temperatures are required for your refrigeration needs and what other specific equipment maintenance is required? The large walk-in freezer must be maintained at a -20 and the ice cream dipping units are maintained at a -5 to -10. The double-door reach-in freezers, warm product displays, gas fudge making copper kettle, exhaust hood, chocolate melter, waffle cone baker, fruit juicers, shake mixers, espresso machine, Manitowoc ice makers, three-compartment sink, mop sink and A/C units all have to be maintained in accordance with the equipment manufactured written procedures.

Since the products require constant cold temperatures, do the stores leverage energy-saving initiatives? Energy Star equipment is installed in all new builds.

What facility standards are included in the current franchisee agreements? Franchisees must maintain their store equipment and keep the store clean and neat every day. We visit all stores 10 times a year to perform our "5 Star" checkup to verify they are meeting corporate standards.

In your opinion, what is the most important task that best prepares your locations for the warm weather? Summer product stocking, properly trained employees and maintenance updates/filter changes on equipment.

Timothy VanAcker's construction and restaurant facilities career began more than 35 years ago. For 25 years, he owned and operated the Custom Homes and Commercial Building Co. in Michigan. He spent the next eight years in restaurant facility management and the last six in retail and restaurant construction management. He is currently the Construction Project Manager at Kilwins Chocolate Franchise Inc. in Michigan.