



The Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle, WA Five Diamond ePIPE® Project

Featuring a collection of fabled castles, secluded lodges and modern retreats, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts proudly operates 51 distinctive hotels – some of the world's most celebrated addresses in 12 countries. As the only AAA Five Diamond hotel in the Pacific Northwest, and crowned "Fairmont Hotel of the Year for 2006," The Fairmont Olympic Hotel is Seattle's premier luxury hotel and certainly qualifies as one of the finest hotels anywhere.

The Problem

At The Fairmont Olympic, everything is secondary to exceptional levels of guest service and satisfaction, so when faced with the disruptive problem of recurrent copper pinholes in their domestic hot water supply, hotel operations and management agreed that a problem so serious required the best possible solution. Director of Engineering, David Gault was charged with the initial responsibility of finding a solution to the problem. Mr. Gault went to great lengths to understand the problem including the extraction of samples which were sent for metallurgical examination by a corrosion engineer. "We were trying to understand the nature of the problem, but the only certainty seemed to be that the problem was getting worse." Fortunately, Mr. Gault was familiar with past ePIPE® projects completed by ACE DuraFlo at neighboring Seattle hotels in previous years. "Based on our evaluation, ACE EnviroTech was the only company with the certifications, solid references and past hotel experience to give Fairmont the confidence to move forward with the ePIPE project." Once the decision was made to go with ePIPE®, the challenge became how to complete the work with a minimum of impact on guest services, on a very tight time-line, and without a significant effect on revenue.

The Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle WA - Continued

Project Tailored to Fit

When you are Seattle's home-away-from-home to royalty, dignitaries and celebrities, only the very best will do. To tailor this project to a 5 Diamond level, ACE EnviroTech went to great lengths to disguise the evidence that a major renovation project was taking place in the midst of occupied guest areas. Outside, a sound deflecting wall was built and painted to hide the compressor and to minimize noise for the haute couture, street level boutiques. Inside, "decorative hose socks and hangers" were manufactured to match corridor wallpaper so that air hoses could be hung like a scalloped work of art.

Operationally, the restoration schedule was set for the winter low-season and was developed on a Thursday to Tuesday cycle for much of the project so that the Olympic could actually sell out 100% of their rooms on their two busiest (and most valuable) nights of the week. As well, the ePIPE project had to be scheduled around special holiday events, holiday street use restrictions and a bathroom renovation that was taking place on the third and fourth floors.

The Best Laid Plans

Adding an element of difficulty to the project was some of the worst winter weather that Seattle has ever seen. When a mid-December storm knocked out power for days to over 1 million residents in western Washington, the downtown core with an underground power grid was one of the few areas to remain operational. "Mid-December is typically a lower occupancy period and we had scheduled to restore a block of 60 rooms over that period", explained Gault, "but when the power went out, the city's hotels immediately sold out. The ePIPE crew instantly went into overtime mode and quickly returned 30 of those rooms to our inventory for an unexpected four night sellout."

This would not be the last schedule adjustment for the project. With software giant Microsoft hosting their mammoth Comdex conference in Seattle, the city was once again oversold. With the certainty of a week-long sell-out, every additional room-night sold makes a significant contribution to the bottom line. Fairmont contacted ePIPE management to discuss an adjustment to the schedule for the 30 rooms to be restored that week, without an option to extend the completion date! With some collaboration and a few creative adjustments the schedule was revised to return those rooms to inventory. Altogether, ACE DuraFlo was able to adjust and give back a total of some 250 room-nights during unscheduled sell-outs over the course of the project.

A Job Well Done

Despite all of the challenges encountered, ACE EnviroTech successfully completed the project with no extensions to the original schedule. As a token of appreciation, Fairmont management hosted an appreciation luncheon for the ePIPE crew and management at the end of the project. According to General Manager Dennis Clark, "with a project of this magnitude, we try plan for every conceivable problem, and then prepare to handle the inevitable guest complaints – but the phone never rang! We truly appreciate the care and commitment which the ACE DuraFlo crew showed to complete this important project."

