



Case Study

BlazeMaster® Fire Sprinkler System retrofits easily into retirement complex.

Type of Construction:
Retirement
Community

Installation Type:
Retrofit

Location:
Hartford,
Connecticut

Scope of Project:
Heads: ≈2,000
Sq. Feet: ≈260,000
Stories: 8

Fire Sprinkler Contractor:
Crest Mechanical
Contractors
& Engineers



Retrofitting a fire sprinkler system into an apartment complex for the elderly (Photo 1) presents a unique set of issues. In fact, the anticipated problems in installing such a system in the 144-unit Capitol Towers complex in Hartford, Conn., (Photo 2) was enough to convince Towers' previous management company to delay the project for years.



When the project could no longer be delayed, a BlazeMaster® Fire Sprinkler System was selected for installation. To the delight of everyone associated with the installation process, careful planning and the easy-to-use BlazeMaster® products made the Capitol Towers fire sprinkler installation easier than had been anticipated.

Criteria for Pipe Selection

Because the system was to be installed over existing construction, Jow Gargiulo, of Barnhart, Johnson, Francis & Wold Consulting Engineers, who engineered the Capitol Towers project, decided that CPVC pipe would be the best choice.

"I might have recommended steel pipe if it had been a new building going up, but since they had to hang this over existing walls, I felt that BlazeMaster® pipe was the way to go," said Gargiulo.

Ed Fournier, project coordinator for Crest Mechanical Contractors & Engineers, the contractor who installed the system, had used CPVC pipe before in other projects, and was very impressed with the advantages of BlazeMaster® pipe over steel.

"It's very easy to work with," said Fournier. "BlazeMaster® products are especially suited for high-rise projects like Capitol Towers."



"We set up a workshop in the basement, where we did all of the cutting, (Photo 3) and we were able to transport the pipe in the elevator up to the floor where we were working," Fournier explained. "We didn't have to worry about it marring the walls of the elevators or the hallways, either, unlike steel pipe," explained Fournier.

Rick Berg, Building Superintendent at Capitol Towers, was extremely pleased at the ease of installation. "The installers and our residents got along great, which was something I had worried about at first, but we didn't have any problems. The pipe went up easier and faster than I expected, too. [The installers] started on the eighth floor and went down from there. By the time they got down to the seventh floor, they were more familiar with our layout, and they cut off about 25% of the installation time."

Installation Challenges

Still, the installation was not without its difficulties. One unexpected problem that initially slowed the project down was the steel studs in the walls of Capitol Towers. To combat this, Fournier brought in two additional men whose job was simply to get



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ahead of the installers and drill the holes necessary for hanging the pipe. Fortunately, most of the problems had been anticipated, and careful planning helped to keep these under control.

"Since most of the people living in the building are elderly, the installation presented unique challenges of its own," says Berg. "Specifically, we were worried about any disruption that the installation would create in these people's lives."



To combat this, the Capitol Towers staff held meetings with all its residents and posted a schedule in the lobby of the building showing where work would be performed in the building for the following two weeks (Photo 4). This advance notice allowed residents to plan ahead for installation in their individual units. Another concern addressed during project planning was the odor of the primer and solvent cement.

"Since our residents are older, they're more sensitive to fumes, so we wanted to do all we could to keep the vapors from the primer and adhesive from causing problems," said Berg.

The proposed measures included leaving windows open in hallways and individual units where work was being performed, use of fans in hallways to help dissipate the odor, and turning on the ventilation systems in individual units in order to keep fresh air moving throughout.



"As it turned out, all we really had to do was leave a window open," said Berg. "The vapors dissipated very quickly as the cement dried, and the odor problem was really no problem at all."



Berg, who has been an employee with Capitol Towers for 19 years, had only positive comments about the BlazeMaster® Fire Sprinkler System installation.



"Installing the BlazeMaster® Fire Sprinkler System was much easier than I had expected," he said (Photos 5 and 6). "And, the pipes are covered with Decoshield,® so it looks great. If you didn't know what it was, you would probably think it was just a decorative molding. I'd recommend BlazeMaster® products to anybody who had to install a fire sprinkler system" (Photos 7 and 8).

1. In 1993, One Step Solvent Cement was introduced as part of the BlazeMaster® system making the installation process even easier. In terms of environmental impact, One-step cement is a low VOC (volatile organic compound) emissions product, meeting all California air quality standards – the most stringent in the United States.

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