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CASE STUDY

Salisbury Theatre | Fairbanks, Alaska

Road to Code-Compliant Includes BILCO Smoke Vents for Alaska College

Fire protection codes and equipment have evolved significantly since the Salisbury Theatre opened at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1968. An inspection by the local fire marshal revealed to the University just how much had changed.

The University completed the first phase of a multi-year renovation to implement code corrections that covered nearly 11,560 square feet at the 450-seat theater. The project cost \$962,000 and addressed deficiencies in fire rated assemblies throughout the project footprint. Fire suppression coverage was improved, fire alarms were tied into theater lighting controls and detection for fire door activation was expanded.

In addition, corrections to smoke vent sizing and improvements to maintainability were made. Workers also made corrections to egress signage and emergency lighting.

"Our fire marshal had discovered a number of code defects from the original 1968 construction as well as some from changes made over the years," said Nicholas Middelstadt, Project Manager for the Design and Construction team at UAF. "The theater was closed down until corrections were implemented."

The project took just four months to complete, and work was done while students were on campus.

"The project was a fast-track project to reduce downtime and impact to the theater department," Middelstadt said. "The scope of work was split off the larger project during design to get those features contracted out and completed while the larger design was finished, bid, and awarded."

The project included nine double leaf smoke vents manufactured by BILCO. The vents included two inches of polyisocyanurate insulation in the cover and curb to help reduce energy costs. They are also engineered with gas spring operators to open covers in snow and wind.

Fairbanks receives an average of more than 65 inches of snow every year. The average temperature in January is -19° and warms up to -14° in February.

The smoke vents, which measure 5-feet x 10-feet, include Honeywell indicator switches for each leaf and motorized operation. GHEMM Company procured the hatches for the project from Architectural Hardware Supply, BILCO's representative in Alaska.



"The BILCO vents were selected during bid time as these were the only vents that provided the highly desired motorized operation within the project timeline," Rachel Bruesch of GHEMM said. "In this building, the roof is located 70 feet above the stage floor, which would make manually operated vents rather troublesome for the users. Having the control panel allows them to easily confirm which vents are open/closed, test prior to large performances, and easily activate them in the event of an emergency."

Smoke vents assist firefighters in bringing a fire under control by removing smoke, heat and gasses from a burning building. The double leaf models are the most economical way to add venting and protect large buildings.

The smoke vents also include a Thermolatch® II positive hold/release mechanism that ensures reliable vent operation when a fire occurs. The vents also automatically release upon the melting of a UL-listed fusible link.

Along with other measures, the vents helped the University bring the facility up to code and safe for all people who visit the popular theater.



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