

University Student Residence Tower Nashville, Tennessee



Team Effort Salvages Student Residence Hall and Air Handling Unit Replacement in Record Time after Fire

When one of a Nashville-based university’s student residence halls suffered a two-alarm fire in March 2017, the first thought of the University was gratitude that no one was injured and that damage had been quickly contained. Their thoughts turned quickly to cleaning up the damage and replacing the air handler severely damaged by the fire.

The fact that the fire had occurred the Friday before Spring Break was a lucky break for the University. First, most of the students residing in the tower had already left. Secondly, the break provided a short window in which to clean up the fire and water damage, replace the air handler and then get it operational without any disruption to residents. But was there anyone who could provide a suitable air handler and have it operational in one week?

Countdown to Recovery

The director of Engineering at the University made a call on Sunday night to Matt Fruetel of Mechanical Resource Group of Nashville. On Monday morning Matt met the director in the basement mechanical room of the building to assess the situation for a replacement air handler. “I saw that replacing the fire-damaged portion of the old air handler would be a challenge due to the limited access to the mechanical room and the available space for a unit.”

“We discussed several options and came down to two choices, either a knockdown air handler that we would have to dissembled on site and then reassemble in the mechanical room, or a site-assembled unit,” Matt said. The University had previously used a ClimateCraft ACCESS™ site-assembled replacement air handler in one of their medical centers and was happy with both the speed of installation and the quality of the ACCESS unit.

ClimateCraft Takes the Challenge

The University contacted several air handler manufacturers for proposals and pricing – and delivery timetables. Matt estimated that his best option was another ACCESS unit from ClimateCraft, leading him to contact Andrew Hillis, the ACCESS product manager at ClimateCraft. Recognizing the emergency situation, Andrew and the ACCESS team worked with Matt to develop a 25,000 cfm unit design by late Monday afternoon. The ClimateCraft engineering and production team committed to building the unit so it could ship on Thursday.

“We were blown away by the response from ClimateCraft to meet the needs of our customer,” Matt said.

The facility staff of the University was amazed and encouraged to learn that it was possible to replace the

damaged section of the air handler while students were away for Spring Break week. ClimateCraft was the only air handler manufacturer who would commit to building and shipping a replacement unit so quickly. The University issued a purchase order to ClimateCraft on Tuesday. ClimateCraft made their production deadline and the ACCESS unit was delivered to the job site on Friday, as promised.

In order to prepare for site assembly of the ACCESS unit, the installer received the step-by-step, pictorial ACCESS instruction manual several days ahead of time to familiarize themselves with the product and the assembly process. When the air handler was delivered to the job site, the installers were grateful to learn that all unit components were clearly labeled for easy staging at the job site.

Designed for Quick Installation

All ACCESS unit components were designed to fit through standard 3-foot wide doors and into elevators, allowing the install team to immediately begin the process of getting components into the cramped basement mechanical room. As the unit was being assembled, it became clear how well the unit design by ClimateCraft was accomplished. As Matt Fruetel said, "It was remarkable how near perfect the ACCESS unit design was for this job. Considering how fast everyone on the design team had to work, we were still able to make exact connections and ship as planned."

The installer finished the installation on Sunday and the unit was immediately started up.

Team Response

The engineering director of the University extended a special thanks to Mechanical Resource Group for sourcing and installing the new air handler over the weekend. "I still



The FanMatrix™ fan array section ready for installation in the ACCESS site-assembled replacement air handler.

can't believe that they were able to have a new unit built, delivered and installed in five days," he said.

The director also recognized the important roles of everyone else who helped to get the residence tower ready again for the students: the cleanup contractor as well as the in-house teams from the University.

The University's Associate Vice Chancellor added his praise. "Thanks to all for contributing to a fantastic team effort in dealing with such a difficult situation."

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— Director of Engineering and Technical Support at the University



Assembling the panels on the framework of the ACCESS air handling unit



The final result—the ACCESS air handler replacement section installed and operational.