A quiet testimonial to sealants

Sound control designed into wall system for tower addition to Chicago’s Hyatt Regency Hotel; sealant the key

Rising 34 stories above Wacker Drive in Chicago is a $78 million hotel tower that more than doubles the size of the existing Hyatt Regency Hotel.

One of the largest luxury convention hotels in the world, the Illinois Center complex features two towers containing 2,041 guest rooms, abundant exhibition and meeting space, two large ballrooms, a spectacular glass-enclosed atrium lobby, and a glass bridge spanning the street separating the two towers.

The addition to the Hyatt is designed to complement the present hotel tower -- both in appearance and operating convenience. “Mezzanine and below-street level enclosed walkways will enable the complex to operate efficiently as a single hotel,” notes Walter Basich, a vice president and project manager for A. Epstein and Sons, Inc. The firm was the architect and engineer for both towers.

While the structures and exhibition facilities are impressively luxurious and imaginatively designed, the key to the success of any fine hotel is guest rooms that offer visitors a good -- and quiet -- night’s sleep.

Quiet rooms don’t happen by accident. Sound control, once a factor determined primarily by wall thickness, has become a very precise science.

“Our goal was to keep sound levels inside the rooms to a minimum,” says Basich.

The goal was achieved by using the latest sound control technology. Basich specified a wall system for the new tower that reduces noise from and to other rooms, corridors and all sources. The amount of reduction is by 50 decibels, which meets all STC-50 requirements.

Installation of the interior drywall system was handled by the McNulty Brothers Company, one of the nation’s leading plastering, drywall and acoustical contractors. (And an AWCI member firm.)

Dana Thorne, McNulty’s project foreman on the Hyatt addition, reports that the installation went smoothly. As a result, future guests at the hotel will be enjoying a sound -- soundless -- sleep.

“To achieve the necessary sound rating, we used sound control sealant around the perimeter of the drywall,” Thorne reports. The product used was a latex-based sealant manufactured by the W.W. Henry Company, Product 313. “It is easy to work with, even in cold weather. It doesn’t shrink, provides a permanently resilient seal and can be cleaned

Checking on plans for the new tower that more than doubles the size of the Chicago Hyatt Regency Hotel are Linda Diedrich — assistant to the general manager and regional vice president of Hyatt Regency Hotel, Chicago; Donald J. Porter, the hotel’s general manager and regional vice president; and architect/engineer Vladimir W. Basich. The tower utilized a full sound control system built into wall assemblies done by the McNulty Brothers Company.
up with water while still wet.” Thorne explains. In all, McNulty Brothers used more than 5,000 30-ounce cartridges on the project.

The use of the sound sealant to achieve the architect’s goals is one ‘silent’ testimonial to the development of sealing and fastening products for the wall and ceiling industries. In the past, a normal drywall application would not meet the sound control standards, because it would not create a thick enough wall space to deaden sound. McNulty Brothers has found the combination of drywall and sound sealant an effective system.

In addition to sound sealant, the company also used a Henry mastic bond product (more than 5,000 cartridges) to secure the drywall to steel studs. Thorne said the mastic was used because of its ease in handling, its fast tack strength and its holding power.

While the work was going on, Metropolitan Structures, Inc. -- general contractor for the job -- kept a close eye on the drywall installation. During construction, sound control checks were run on entire wall sections. During the first installations, some sound ‘leaks’ were found, but Thorne says they were easily corrected by varying installation techniques slightly. Subsequent checks have turned up only minor -- and correctable -- sound discrepancies.

As a result, when the new tower beds down its guests, there may be appropriate celebrations of the new facility conducted in lobbies, ballrooms and other areas of the hotel. But the opening of each guest room will be a quiet affair -- thanks to the sound control built into the wall system.

Drywall stud mastic was used to bond drywall to steel studs in the new tower. Paul Quinn (W.W. Henry Co.) here inspects application of the mastic.