

RITZ CARLTON - COMPLETE STORY



There are certain luxuries we expect when we stay or reside at a Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York City. We expect exceptional service and an array of amenities. We expect breath-taking views of Manhattan and New York Harbor. We expect five-star restaurants, grand ballrooms, high-tech appliances and audio-visual equipment, and sumptuous furnishings in every room.

There are luxuries we expect, and then there are necessities we demand. Advanced security and fire safety systems are recognized to be more important than ever before, especially in public buildings -- and especially in public buildings as the new \$144.5 million Ritz-Carlton & Residences at Battery Park, located just five blocks to the south of the World Trade Center site. There may have been a time when these systems were taken for granted by visitors and residents, but that time has passed.

A project rife with challenges.

To put it mildly, the opening of The Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park was quite an accomplishment. For one thing, the 40-story, 575,000 sq. ft. combination hotel and luxury residential tower was originally scheduled to open in September of 2001. Obviously the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center would delay this opening.

But there were many other challenges the building's architects, builders, managers and suppliers had to face. The building's proximity to the harbor presented numerous difficulties. Built on landfill from the old World Trade Center, the site had to be sheeted to keep the water out. The foundation required 80 tie-downs and 650 piles, each with a 200 ton capacity. And, as the basement was actually 12 ft. below the water level, a special membrane had to be built around the building's periphery.

Another challenge facing the building and the people working on it was the weather. With its constant powerful winds, Battery Park is always a tough place to build.

There were complications inside the building as well. Because of a three-month delay after September 11, vendors working inside The Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park had to move very quickly – problems had to be addressed quickly with no time for one-the-job training. This was one of the reasons why low voltage system specialists, Classic Designed Systems Inc. of Floral Park, NY, was selected as the supplier and installer of the building's fire protection and security systems. Due to the magnitude of the project, Classic Designed Systems opted to use fire alarm systems from Fire Control Instruments (FCI) of Westwood, MA.

FCI engineers a solution.

Part of the Honeywell Fire Group, FCI is recognized as a performance and technology leader in the life safety systems industry and has provided solutions for commercial, industrial and educational applications around the world.

"I didn't consider any other fire safety system companies for the job," said Alan Glassman, principal at Classic Designed Systems. "We've sold their products for quite some time now and their systems have always been extremely reliable, plus we know they'll get us the products very quickly."

But it was the custom-engineering capabilities of FCI that were particularly important for the installation at The Ritz- Carlton New York, Battery Park. Fire codes in New York City mandate that all residences over 300 ft. high have to be equipped with a "strap-key" system, a firefighter's gong-based communication system that needs to be located in the building's elevators. As The Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park is part-residence and part-hotel, it was required to have this system, in addition to a voice evacuation system. There are very

Case Study - Ritz Carlton

few companies that offer both of these types of systems, plus have the engineering capabilities to make these systems work together. FCI met all requirements.

As explained by Dick Aldrich, Project Engineer with FCI, "Our engineers and technical support team work closely with our distributors to custom-program and configure our products to meet specific market requirements. In Boston, our installations have to comply with a special audio message sequence requirement. In New York, you have to incorporate the strap-key system."

A complete system for complete safety.

The comprehensive FCI system that Classic Designed Systems installed at The Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park includes a Distributed Fire Alarm/Voice Evacuation System and an Addressable Monitor Module, as well as Analog Addressable Photo-Electronic Smoke Sensors, Analog Addressable Heat Detectors, Fixed Temperature Heat Detectors and other notification appliances and initiating devices.

The heart of the system, FCI's Distributed Fire Alarm/Voice Evacuation system, provides distinctive signaling, fire fighter telephone communications and automatic/manual HVAC control functions. With its addressable module, it is able to track down and pinpoint the address of any problematic or initiated detector device.

Alan Glassman said of this system, "It has a built-in redundancy that makes for a much more reliable fire safety system. Every part of the system has its own brain. So it will work even if parts go down as a result of damage to the building. It can accommodate up to five auxiliary command 'shadow' centers located in remote cabinets. These auxiliary command centers will duplicate the functions of the main Central Command Unit."

All the various smoke and thermal detectors in the building feature programmable sensitivity capabilities that far surpass conventional detectors. This sensitivity is continuously monitored and reported to the control panel.

Another element that Classic Designed Systems and FCI had to factor into this installation was the particular aesthetic requirements of a luxury hotel.

"We tried to make all visible elements of the fire safety system as aesthetically pleasing as possible," said Glassman. "For example, rather than keeping the panel in the lobby red, we attached custom doors that matched the wood that was a prominent part of the lobby's décor. Also, we picked detectors that have a sleek, low-profile design. In addition, because most of the walls in the hotel are marble, we had to be extremely precise in our drilling – marble is not easy or inexpensive to repair."

Today's guests and residents of The Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park may never notice the FCI fire safety system; their focus will likely be on the hotel's luxurious fixtures and extraordinarily comfortable furnishings. But guests will certainly sleep even more comfortably at night knowing they are protected by a system that was provided by the performance and technology leader in the life safety industry.