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**Innovative Use of Protection Screens Manages Debris at Medical Site in Nashville**

*More commonly used in building construction, Doka protection screens also deliver for demolition safety*

On the compact Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) campus in Nashville, Tennessee, crews were challenged to safely demolish the Oxford House, a 12-story administrative building. The demolition was part of VUMC’s expansion of the Vanderbilt University Hospital, which includes the construction of a 470,000-square-foot tower and connected parking structure.

Spirtas Worldwide based in St. Louis, Missouri, was awarded the demolition project.

**Challenge**

VUMC is one of the busiest health systems in the Mid-South, recording more than 3.2 million patient visits per year. It was critical that all demolition material from the Oxford House be safely contained and removed without impact to the nearby active work zones or the adjacent hospital.

To further complicate the effort, the Oxford House structure was built in the 1960s using a jack-slab or lift slab technique. In this method, each floor is cast on top of a previous slab and then raised by hydraulic jacks into position. Unfortunately, the steel reinforcements within the Oxford House slabs had deteriorated over time, a weakness that had the potential to cause a slab to fail during demolition.

In addition, the compact site came with limited space to set up equipment and stage protective screening materials. In some areas, crews on nearby projects were only inches away. As planning progressed, it became clear that the screens would need to be delivered, installed, and removed in stages as demolition progressed from floor to floor, requiring considerable coordination.

A tight timeline added another layer of complexity. All protection screens had to be designed and approved by the engineer-of-record and the first screens installed within two months.

**Solution**

While protection screens are most often associated with construction – not demolition – Spirtas Worldwide found them to be the ideal safety solution for the Oxford House project.

“This demolition job does not provide any room for error,” said Chris Hancock, project manager for Spirtas Worldwide. “We have hospital pedestrian and vehicle traffic incredibly close and, at times, under the building we are demolishing. Controlling material during the demolition process is essential to keep our workers and the public safe in a highly sensitive environment.”

Doka developed a protection screen solution that essentially climbs down, from top to bottom — not up, like the more familiar high-rise screen systems. The screens were designed in 40-foot-long segments that could be lifted by the onsite crane then connected together to reach the required 100-foot height. Deliveries were often scheduled at night to minimize the impact to tradespeople working onsite during the day.

As a demolition contractor, Spirtas had limited experience working with formwork or protection screens. Doka experts facilitated hands-on training, guiding the Spirtas team through the step-by-step installation. Doka’s dedicated field supervisor continued to check in to support the crew as additional layers were installed and they became more familiar with the process.

By closely partnering with the Spirtas team, Doka was able to deliver an effective, efficient, and high-performing solution that met the unique safety needs of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center jobsite.

“The protection screens from Doka have done exactly what we intended throughout the demolition sequence,” concluded Hancock.

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**Project Team**

Engineering Consultant: Thornton Tomasetti

General Contractor: Robins & Morton

Demolition Contractor: Spirtas Worldwide

Protection Screens: Doka USA

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