

Updated Operation: University of Iowa Hospital, Iowa City, Iowa



Challenges

The existing ceiling on the main corridor of the operating-room floor at the University of Iowa Hospital had deteriorated beyond repair. The snap-in, aluminum metal-pan system had been accessed frequently for maintenance over the years, and the pans had become dented, while the grid system no longer could support the panels' weight.

Administrators needed a new system that was bright, contemporary and washable—more so than other projects may require, due to it being installed on the operating floor. That meant the ceiling needed to be kept especially clean of dust and other stains, which could include blood. As a result, the ceiling is cleaned frequently and needed to stand up to a lot of handling.

To find the best solution, Randall J. Zbanek, president of Harger's Acoustics Inc. in Ely, Iowa, worked with various suppliers to determine benefits and pricing for several options. These were reviewed by administrators to find the best products for their needs.

Solution

Zbanek and the administrators decided on Nudo's Elements decorative ceiling panels, which feature a brushed-aluminum finish to provide a high-end aesthetic at a competitive cost. The panels feature a composite core sandwiched between two sheets of aluminum, making the panels lightweight, durable and easy to maintain. The rigidity of the panels allows them to lay flat and resist humidity.

"The owners wanted a bright but simple-looking design that was highly durable so it could be washed repeatedly," Zbanek explains. A standard 2- by 2-foot lay-in grid with rubber gaskets for a sealing edge was used, he notes, "and it fit perfectly." Installers used electrical shears to cut panels as needed. "They worked well, as they didn't create any dust and allowed us to cut panels exactly as we needed on site."

The biggest challenge came in keeping the operating rooms working throughout the installation. The work was performed on the weekend, with crews coordinating their activities to install 1,200

University of Iowa Hospital

Location: Iowa City, Iowa

Specifier/Installer: Harger's Acoustics Inc., Ely, Iowa

Distributor: Gypsum Supply Inc., Bettendorf, Iowa

Product: Elements decorative ceiling panels by Nudo

Project Square Footage: 12,000

square feet of ceiling each week. The designated section was closed down on Friday evening, and hospital crews removed electrical and mechanical lines above the plenum to provide space for construction.

At 5 a.m. on Saturday, Harger's crews arrived. They removed the existing ceiling panels and grid and then installed the new framing and panels. Once the work was completed hospital crews returned on Sunday to reinstall electrical and mechanical lines, and housekeeping finished up so the operating rooms were ready on Monday morning.

The work progressed smoothly, with no real challenges beyond coordinating the schedule. "We've done a lot of hospital work, so we knew what would be needed," Zbanek says. It took several meetings to coordinate the schedule and ensure the proper sections would be empty for use over the required weekend, he notes. Due to that scheduling, the installation progressed through the 8-foot-wide corridor one linear section at a time and was completed in 10 weeks.

Result

Although it was the first time Zbanek had used the Elements product, the project moved smoothly. "The hospital administrators were very pleased with the installation and the finished look." That bodes well for Zbanek using more of the product in the future, he notes. "The hospital has miles and miles of those steel ceilings, so I expect we'll be using Elements again."