

Miami Beach Convention Center Installs City's First Water-Free Urinals

RANDALL GOBLE

The Miami Beach Convention Center has an eclectic history of firsts. It was there that Cassius Clay (later known as Muhammad Ali) defeated Sonny Liston to win his first Heavyweight Championship of the World in 1964. Nearly a half century later, the convention center is the first facility in the city of Miami Beach to install water-free urinals.

While the latter may not make headlines, the urinals are a bold step for a convention center that hosts some of the nation's largest public events. More than half a million people attend some of these events, which include America's largest consumer show, the Miami International Boat Show. A large number of these spectators will have their first encounter with a water-free urinal at the convention center.

Water savings convinces city

It wasn't an easy sell for Ari Sklar, president and chief designer of SKLARarchitecture, the architectural design firm that was brought on board for a major renovation to the convention center in 1999. At the time, water-free urinals were practically unheard of in the Miami area, so the idea was greeted with skepticism from the city.

Sklar first saw the urinals installed north of Miami at Pro Player Stadium, now known as Dolphin Stadium, and was curious about the technology.

"I did some research and found out it made a lot of sense for the environment and in terms of saving money," said Sklar. "Maintenance is simple and the urinals actually have nice designs."

Still, it took some effort to convince the city of Miami Beach to give it a try. According to Sklar, it was the water savings that eventually won the city over. Southern Florida has suffered through several droughts during the past decade, and water conservation has become increasingly important. Each of the 100-plus urinals installed at the convention center will save the city of Miami Beach approximately 40,000 gallons of water per year.

No more maintenance headaches

For Angelo Grande, A/C supervisor and assistant chief engineer for the convention center, the water savings is just one reason the urinals were a smart decision. Like any high-traffic public facility, the center's restrooms take a beating. From hard water stains to clogs, conventional urinals require a tremendous amount of maintenance.

Each of the 100-plus urinals installed at the convention center will save the city of Miami Beach approximately 40,000 gallons of water per year.

"Back-ups were really a problem," said Grande. "Paper towels get flushed, urinal cakes, you name it. Since installing the water free units, we've cut out all our clogs."

Other maintenance tasks such as replacing flush valves and cracked gaskets are no longer necessary. These were daily events prior to the installation of the water-free urinals. Now, the only maintenance is regular cleaning and the occasional replacement of cartridges which takes about three to four minutes per urinal. This is required after approximately 7,000 uses in typical installations.

How it works

The key to water-free urinals is a biodegradable liquid sealant which floats on top of any fluid beneath it and essentially seals off any odor from the depths of the urinal. The sealant is contained in a replaceable cartridge that is installed at the bottom of the urinal into a fitting that is connected to a drainpipe.

More sanitary restrooms

The water-free urinals are also part of Grande and Sklar's plan for a cleaner, "touch-free" restroom, which includes electronic towel dispensers and dripless foam soap. All of these changes have made for a restroom environment that is more sanitary and easier to keep clean.

The sanitation benefits of water-free urinals have been substantiated by reports from two independent laboratories. The first study, conducted by the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University

of California Los Angeles, indicated that the cell count for organisms on the interior surface of Falcon Waterfree urinals to be lower than that of a standard flush urinal. The findings were similar to a much more recent study conducted by the Public Health and Human Services Department of Saint Louis County in Minnesota. Test results from this study suggested a large difference in colony forming units (CFUs) with average numbers for waterless urinals at 3-CFUs and the flush urinals at 17-CFUs.

“Those unfamiliar with water-free urinals are often concerned about a trade-off between water savings and odor or cleanliness,” said Bill Stierner, director, customer experience for Falcon Waterfree. “However, our own studies, as well as independent studies, have shown that water-free urinals are as sanitary, if not more sanitary, than flush urinals.”

Another common concern, says Stierner, is that water-free urinals will require special drain lines. However, Falcon Waterfree urinals connect to any existing standard two-inch drain system, so retrofits are usually quite simple.

“We haven’t heard a single negative thing from the public,” said Angelo Grande, who has been delighted with the performance and maintainability of the urinals at both the theater and the convention center.

“I’ve recommended water-free urinals to several other managers of SMG facilities,” said Grande, who has worked at the convention center for 17 years. “I think we’re going to see a lot more of these installations.” **FMJ**

About the Author:

Randall Goble has designed and directed corporate and marketing communications programs for 28 years. These programs have included hydraulics and pneumatics applications at Aeroquip-Vickers (now Eaton Corporation) for aerospace and industrial industries; software and measurement instrumentation at X-Rite for retail and industrial applications; and as the VP, Marketing at Falcon Waterfree, Randy develops and directs programs for marketing and customer services.

What’s Good for the Convention Center is Good for Jackie Gleason

The Miami Beach Convention Center is one of more than 170 facilities operated by SMG, the world’s leading private facility management company. SMG employs Angelo Grande and his staff, and controls more than 1.45 million entertainment seats worldwide and more than nine million square feet of exhibit space. This portfolio of facilities includes the historic Jackie Gleason Theater, located next door to the Miami Beach

Convention Center. The restrooms at the Gleason Theater are also installed with water-free urinals at Ari Sklar’s recommendation, who designed the restrooms. It’s an unusual tribute to the late comedian, who filmed the last years of his hit variety show at the theater. Nevertheless, Gleason would be pleased to know that the reviews of the new urinals are positive. At least there are no hecklers.



Taking that extra step to ensure a great floor installation could mean the difference between a satisfied customer and a frustrating situation.

SPECIFY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

INSTALL is in:

- Delaware
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- New England
- New Jersey
- New York
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Wisconsin
- Toronto
- Vancouver

Don’t take chances.

Specify Quality...Specify INSTALL.

Choose the highly trained, skilled professionals of INSTALL. Ask for an INSTALL contractor for your next project. Contact the INSTALL business office nearest to you and learn how INSTALL can go to work for you today. Visit www.INSTALLfloors.org.



INSTALL is endorsed and supported by dozens of the leading mills and manufacturers of the floor covering industry.