



OUT OF SIGHT BUT NOT OUT OF MIND

One of the UK's leading hospitality management groups who we have worked with for the last nine months contracted us to test the fire dampers at one of their upper mid-scale hotels close to Gatwick airport.

During the course of testing, our team discovered a widespread problem, but used its experience and expertise to put things right with minimum disruption to the hotel management, staff and most importantly, its guests.

CHALLENGE

Connected directly to Gatwick Airport North Terminal and via free transit to the South Terminal, the hotel is a 24/7 hotel with a continual flow of guests to and from its 194 bedrooms. The NFDI team was on site to inspect and service the 469 motorised fire and smoke dampers which served the bedrooms, bathroom extracts and back-of-house areas while the hotel continued to operate normally. Despite the size of the task, this is actually a fairly normal job for team.

However, a new challenge was soon discovered: the actuators for a large number of the fire dampers were disconnected from the actuator spindle itself. This meant that dampers 'connected' to this spindle were fixed in the closed position, preventing air flow into many guest bedrooms and creating a stuffy atmosphere that could encourage the build up of mould.

To make matters worse, the areas the team needed to reach to fix the problem were extremely difficult to access as they are located in tight risers with the key grub screws out of sight.

SOLUTION

With 56 of the 469 dampers identified as being in the closed position, the NFDI engineers took the decision to fix this problem immediately, rather than file a report and address it at a later date.

The team needed all of its skill and specialist knowledge to attach the dampers to the spindle 'blind' in very cramped conditions. But despite the high degree of difficulty, NFDI fixed 54 of the 56 dampers whilst on site.

This not only provided an immediate and significant improvement to airflow and guest comfort in the affected rooms, but the cost to the client was minimal as the work was identified and completed at the same time as the main scheduled test – no additional visits to the hotel were needed and the whole process was completed on time, despite the additional workload.

Craig Willis, NFDI Operations Manager said
“testing motorised dampers is no different from testing mechanical dampers. There is the additional task of managing the test interface through the control panel as well as at the damper but this is all standard work. What was different and not standard was that fire dampers were closed and could not be re-opened without manual intervention. Our engineers were quick to address this with hotel maintenance staff and the managing company and proceeded to rectify the situation with speed and efficiency. Looking for the fix and executing it during our planned visit is what we expect from our engineers and it's what our engineers always deliver.”