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CASE STUDY

Straughn School District | Andalusia, Alabama

Alabama School Project Includes Smoke Vents with White Powder Coat Finish

A new auditorium for the Straughn School District in Alabama will be an important piece of the community fabric.

Work on the \$8.2 million project in Andalusia, Ala. started in 2022 and was completed in February 2024. The auditorium, built by Whaley Construction, includes seating for 906 and features a large state-of-the-art sound and lighting system. The building also includes classrooms for band, string band, drama and dressing rooms for theater productions.

"It will be a special addition here at Straughn that has been needed for a long time," Covington County Schools Superintendent Shannon Driver told The Andalusia Star-News. "To have this facility to serve the three schools at Straughn is something special, and it will serve this community and schools well for many years to come."

Prior to the new auditorium, the district held assemblies in a gymnasium, cafeteria or library or at nearby Lurleen B. Wallace Community College. Three schools – an elementary school, middle school and high school – are located in the complex in Andalusia, Ala. More than 1,300 students attend classes in the three schools, including nearly 400 in grades 9-12. The auditorium will also be used for meetings and as a storm shelter.

One of the unique aspects of the auditorium is a 23,000-square-foot all-white roof. The roof includes four smoke vents manufactured by BILCO with a white powder coat finish.

"The benefit of the white roof is the reflectivity of the white, so it reflects heat," according to Walter McKee, architect at McKee & Associates.

White roofs are becoming more commonplace, especially in school construction. A white – or "cool" – roof absorbs less solar energy, thereby lowering the temperature of the building. Conventional roofs can reach temperatures of 150° or more on a hot summer day. Under the same conditions, a reflective roof could stay more than 50° cooler. The roof can reduce energy costs and enhance comfort and safety in air-conditioned buildings by minimizing heat transfer from the roof into the occupied space.

Smoke vents assist firefighters in bringing a fire under control by removing smoke, heat and gases from a burning building. BILCO's smoke vents are the most economical way to add fire venting protection in large areas and are equipped with powerful gas spring operators to open covers in all conditions.



The gas springs have integral dampers to ensure covers open at a controlled rate and are also constructed with corrosion-resistant materials.

"BILCO was listed in the spec book as a supplier for the smoke vents, and we use BILCO whenever we need roof hatches," said David Hollis of KC Construction, the contractor who installed the roof and the smoke vents. Emack Slate, BILCO's manufacturer's representative, procured the hatches.

The powder coat finish on the smoke vents is a unique touch. The paint, frequently used on BILCO's basement doors for residential customers, offers a superior finish to conventional paint. Products with the powder coat finish retain their exterior color for longer. The company's steel vents are typically finished with an alkyd base red oxide primer.



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