

FUMIGATION UPDATE

An Unconventional Fumigation A powderpost beetle infestation in a convention center requires creativity

“This definitely wasn’t a typical fumigation job. Nothing could be done from the ground. Everything had to be done on lifts.”

— *Chris Alexander,
Above and Beyond Pest Control*

When Chris Alexander, co-owner and manager of Above and Beyond Pest Control in Lake Worth, Fla., was called in last November to inspect the Palm Beach County Convention Center, he knew it could be a tough job due to the massive size of the structure. However, he was confident his company could come up with the best solution for the client.

Upon inspecting the convention center’s wooden ceiling, his initial thoughts were verified. There was evidence of an extensive powderpost beetle infestation, requiring a fumigation.

The ceiling in the convention center’s main hallway was lined with custom-made, decorative exotic wood. The wood was installed about eight years ago, and the infestation was severe.

“The frass from the powderpost beetles was falling onto the carpet below,” Alexander says. “The ceiling was about 40 feet from the floor, and it had decorative glass lighting hanging 10 to 15 feet from the ceiling. Frass was falling onto the lights, and they had to vacuum the carpet every day to clean up the frass. It was a pretty bad infestation.”

Alexander says powderpost beetle fumigations are rare in his business, which focuses mostly on fumigating for drywood

termites and bed bugs. He estimated his company has done about 60 powderpost beetle fumigations.

To say the building is massive is an understatement. The center is used year-round for plays, exhibits, concerts and conventions. The entire building is about 7 million cubes.

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Due to the massive size and downtown, urban location of the building, as well as the limited scope of the infestation, tenting and fumigating the entire structure was not the best option. Therefore, Alexander presented three additional options: the wood could be pulled down from the ceiling, put in a pod, fumigated and then reinstalled; the wood could be completely replaced; or Above and Beyond could execute a tape-and-seal fumigation using Vikane® gas fumigant on the affected wood on the ceiling of the building.



Because the original wood was custom-designed and installed by specially trained artisans, removing or replacing the wood did not seem to be a good option for the convention center. The client ultimately chose to have a tape-and-seal fumigation performed.

“We’ve used this method on some smaller houses, but this was definitely the largest tape-and-seal job we’ve done,” Alexander says.

With a decision made, Above and Beyond had a lot of planning to do. Preparing the ceiling had to be done with the use of scissor lifts.

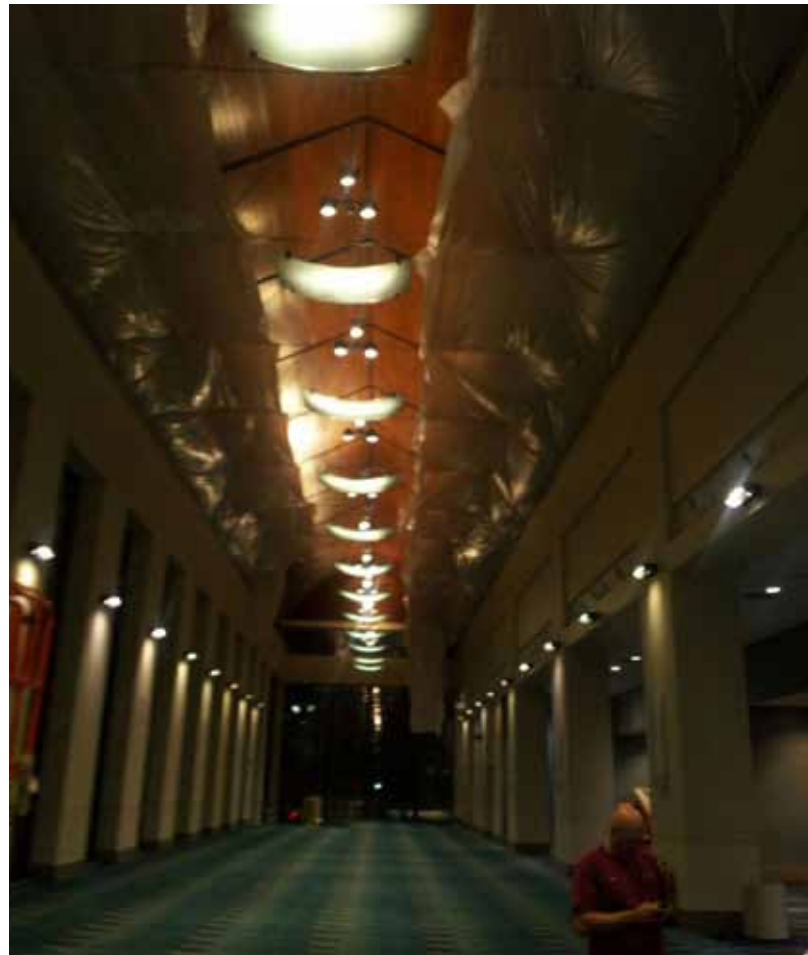
Adding further difficulty, expensive glass panels and light fixtures were installed beneath the ceiling, and a dropped clamp would result in broken glass and expensive damage.

“This definitely wasn’t a typical fumigation job,” Alexander says. “Nothing could be done from the ground. Everything had to be done on two lifts. We had to work together as a team to drape the 4mL polyethylene plastic and clamp it down. Being careful not

to tear the plastic with the clamps was another challenge. Taking down the job was really difficult, too. We came in early and worked late.”

In addition to the wood on the ceiling, the same wood had been installed on one part of the building’s exterior, which was taped, sealed and fumigated, as well.

“To prep the exterior wood on the building, we had to get a 125-foot articulating lift,” Alexander says. “There were a lot of obstacles on the outside, too, such as lights and trees. We ordered separate tarps just for the exterior areas to make sure they fit properly.”



With the preparation completed, the entire building was evacuated. They went through about four cylinders of Vikane and monitored to ensure they maintained the rate needed to kill all powderpost beetles and eggs.

Today, the Palm Beach County Convention Center retains its exotic wood and architectural beauty, without the destruction of powderpost beetles.