

Everything's Bigger in Texas

Tired of being in a Houston facility it had outgrown, international freight forwarding company Panalpina wanted a building it could grow with.

With an assist from Burns & McDonnell, the Swiss-based company now has it – a 410,000-square-foot consolidated distribution facility from where it can ship, truck, and process thousands of packages a day, ranging from power plant boilers to luxury automobiles.

Background

With 12,000 employees in 70 countries, Panalpina has a need for large storage and personnel facilities in major commercial hubs around the globe.

Challenge

Panalpina needed a storage facility in Houston with the flexibility to house a wide variety of cargo, and the flexibility to expand if needed. And they needed it fast.

Enter AMB International Airport Centers. The world-class property developer and owner of airport facilities had successfully sited a facility for Panalpina in Miami, and was called upon to repeat the task in Houston. AMB selected a 34-acre site near George Bush Intercontinental Airport. Burns & McDonnell provided engineering, architecture and construction-phase engineering services for the facility.

Solutions

The building's design incorporates maximum flexibility while at the same time addressing Panalpina's need for specialized space.

Burns & McDonnell worked with Houston fire department officials and local code consultants to design two 1,200-square-foot rooms for handling hazardous materials. The rooms have drains in the floor that travel to concrete wells beneath to capture spills.

A 14,000-square-foot carpentry shop is used to repalletize items that pass through the distribution facility. Special exhaust equipment was installed in proximity to work areas to reduce buildup of sawdust, a material that is considered a safety hazard by code.

Flexibility, Reliability

About 66,000 square feet of the building consists of office space for the facility's administrative and warehouse employees.

The office space includes blue-tint reflective glass storefront and high-end finishes in the executive areas and lobby.

The building was designed with an eye toward expanding warehouse and office space. The area where additional office space would go includes wall panels that can be easily knocked out to create windows.

Burns & McDonnell addressed several unique requests from Panalpina for design revisions. For example, the facility boasts a 1500 kW/1875 kVA generator capable of providing power to the entire facility in the event of a power outage.

Speed

The fast-track schedule took the building from notice to proceed to occupancy in less than a year. Design documents were completed in 12 weeks. To speed the process along, design documents were completed in packages, with each package getting necessary permitting approval as the design for subsequent stages was completed. During construction, tilt-up walls were poured as pre-cast slabs, then lifted into place by a crane. The technique compresses construction costs and schedules, and tilt-up walls not only replace perimeter columns, but can be custom detailed to the client's desired facade.

Results

No longer in an old, cramped facility, Panalpina is now enjoying an expanded, consolidated Houston facility. The company moved into the building on schedule – July 1, 2004.

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