

Spiral ductwork helps store for outdoor enthusiasts hit bull's eye

FORT WORTH, Texas — Cabela's, one of the nation's largest direct marketers and specialty retailers of hunting, fishing, camping and related outdoor merchandise, is in the midst of a sizzling growth spurt.

But its latest retail store, in Fort Worth, Texas, is keeping cool thanks to spiral ductwork.

Cabela's decision to build in Fort Worth was a high-profile coup for the nation's 20th largest city. It was also a big deal for Spiral Pipe of Texas, which is also based in Fort Worth.

It was also a fast-paced one.

"They had the drawings the first of the year (2005). Once they decided to open by May, we had to move fast," said Steve Dockery, vice president of sales at Spiral Pipe of Texas, which goes by the acronym "SPOT."

"The 120,000 pounds of ductwork pretty much was done by March," Dockery said. "That's a job that normally would have taken months longer."

History

The Cabela's project was just the latest in the company's long history of fabricating specialized, high quality ductwork. The company, founded in 1981, has spread its ducts from the Bahamas to Alaska, from prisons to libraries, and has steadily grown to become one of the leading spiral-duct fabricators in the business. Included in its portfolio are convention centers in New Orleans, Oklahoma City and Austin, Texas, and the University Medical Center in Jackson, Miss.

Steve Dockery has been with the company since May 7, 1986. After so many years, he acknowledged that there "may be no secrets to the sheet metal business," but noted the exposed portions of the ductwork on the Cabela's project are in high-profile areas that required exact locating and installation of the factory-mounted grille taps. The most difficult aspect was mounting the taps parallel to the floor with the duct following 17 1/2-degree and 5 1/2-degree roof pitches.

SPOT was involved in all phases of the ductwork fabrication, from furnishing drawings to final unit connections. Products furnished included round single-wall and double-wall spiral duct and fittings in sizes up to 52 inches in diameter in galvanized, paint grip and aluminum materials. Also



Making some of the 78-inch-diameter galvanized ductwork the Fort Worth, Texas, Cabela's store would use.

supplied was rectangular duct, lined and unlined, in galvanized, paint grip, aluminum and type No. 304 stainless steel.

Unusual design

The unusual building lines, coupled with the exposed glulam timber truss system, made for an arduous task, according to Mike Murphy, owner of Team Sheet Metal, the sheet metal contractor that installed the ductwork.

"Spiral Pipe of Texas is a first-class fabricator that we felt more than comfortable would deliver a quality product in a timely fashion," Murphy said. "The work was exceptional and SPOT maintained a very difficult fabrication schedule that fluctuated throughout the course of this project because of the extraordinarily fast construction pace."

And anytime you're dealing with exposed ductwork, there are added challenges, according to Jim Salter, president and owner of Infinity Contractors, the mechanical contractor for the Cabela's project.

"With exposed ductwork, every little flaw is noticed," he said. "It's like seeing a dent in the car on a showroom floor. In the garage, with the lights out, nobody cares. When it's exposed, it has to be perfect. SPOT was on time and the work was at a very high standard. We usually do our own work, but when we go outside, we like to use SPOT. I like their response. They don't ignore problems and hope they go away. They deal with issues."



An unidentified Spiral Pipe of Texas employee welds a 58-inch-diameter, 90-degree elbow for use in Cabela's.



The spiral ductwork mounted in the Fort Worth, Texas, store. The taps were shop-mounted parallel to the floor at a 17 1/2- and 5 1/2-degree roof pitches.

Deadlines

SPOT officials said they were able to meet the deadlines because they're used to handling multiple projects at once.

"The fact that we had 40 jobs on line enabled us to re-allocate resources for Cabela's," Dockery said.

During the average year, SPOT works hundreds of jobs. Most are put into fabrication and shipped without much fanfare, but the Cabela's project was one that resonated with SPOT's employees.

"We encourage our employees to visit jobsites to see their craftsmanship whenever possible," said company President Reid Boydston, a graduate of Baylor University. Boydston became Spiral Pipe's president and CEO July 1, 2005. "Since many of SPOT's sheet metal workers are hunters and outdoorsmen, they were eager to pay the store a visit."

Dockery described SPOT's capabilities as "everything from the common to the extraordinary. It's custom-type work, not like buying it off the shelf."

SPOT offers spiral ductwork up to 84 inches in diameter and longitudinal seam to 108-inch round. The company fabricates a complete line of HVAC spiral, oval and rectangular duct and fittings. Other product offerings include snap-lock pipe and fittings, sound attenuators, acoustical and thermal panels, industrial duct and custom sheet metal work.

On-site work

Fabrication efforts on site "help make installation easier and help contractors save on labor costs," Boydston said. "We provide the whole job — unit to the flex — instead of piecemeal buying. And we provide assembly (computer-aided drafting) drawings with every job. Providing CAD-assembly drawings is one measure we take to assist our customers with the installation of our

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ductwork. Most find that the drawings enable them to be more efficient during the installation process."

After his recent promotion, Boydston sees his role as "setting the direction of the organization as well as over-



The finished, visible spiral ductwork from ground level.

seeing all facets of the company's daily operations. SPOT will remain committed to the same fundamental concepts: Providing high quality products and valuable services at competitive prices."

That commitment has enabled the company to grow into one of the highest volume producers of ductwork in the United States.

Another of SPOT's recent projects is a chemistry lab at Texas A&M University in Commerce, Texas, where workers will use type No. 316 stainless steel TIG-welded duct to help combat toxic fumes.

"Geographically, we are well positioned to serve most markets," Boydston said. "I'm excited about the opportunity and our future. I will continue to focus on what has made SPOT a success over the years — providing customers with high-quality products and valuable services at competitive prices. At the same time, we will look to maintain our competitive edge in the industry by continuing to invest in the latest software and fabrication equipment technologies that will allow us to provide timely job quotations and meet short delivery schedules.

"Our goal is to grow our business by taking care of each customer as if they were our only customer. We are confident that contractors who are doing high-profile proj-



The ductwork hangs far above the store below.

ects such as Cabela's will continue to select SPOT as their ductwork fabricator to ensure that their projects come in on time and within budget."

This article and its images were supplied by Spiral Pipe of Texas Inc.