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## Historic Office Building and Flag Company in Chicago Requires Emergency Services from Downtown Fire Catastrophe

Chicago, Ill. – March 26, 2013 - In January 2013, Paul Davis National, the large loss specialists for Paul Davis, responded to an emergency services call to provide building stabilization, structural clean-up, water and fire damage restoration and drying services at Advertising Flag Company. The 52,000-square-foot, two-story office and warehouse space is located in the Bridgeport neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. Originally built in 1912, the structure experienced significant damage as the result of a fire that occurred at a vacant and neighboring Chicago warehouse.

The fire broke out at the former Harris Marcus Group warehouse on January 22nd around 9 p.m. A fire chief passing by noticed the flames and phoned in the emergency. The Chicago firefighters put forth a massive effort in putting out the largest fire the city had seen since 2006. More than 200 firefighters battled the 5-11 alarm fire in sub-freezing conditions. Ultimately, it took four hours to get the fire under control. A [safety](#) zone was set up around the building to protect against injury and damage to neighboring structures.

The next day, firefighters were called back to the scene as the fire had re-ignited, causing more damage to the flag company building. The warehouse fire continued to burn in "hot spots" for the next two weeks.

"The fire at the vacant building across the street was hot and intense enough that it significantly damaged the flag company building. Both the exterior and interior experienced significant damage including burned brick and [windows](#) along with damage to their production, [shipping](#), and materials storage areas," said J. Murphy, Paul Davis National office owner. One-hundred percent of the materials used for making flags suffered from smoke and water damage. Parts of the building were damaged by water from the sprinkler system triggered by the fire.

"The Advertising Flag Company project is one that we don't see very often," said Murphy. An older building, the [construction](#) consisted of wood timber [framing](#), 12 to 15-foot high wood ceilings, and hardwood floors throughout. "Some of the unique design elements included exterior and interior walls with multiple wayths or layers of brick, and many original wood casement [windows](#), and the original entry doors that still open inward," he said.

According to Murphy, what made this loss unusual is that the damage did not occur as is typical of a building fire. In this case, the fire started across the street in another building that burned for more than two weeks.

The damage to the flag company building included direct flame damage to windows and masonry, and heavy smoke permeation throughout the structure. "It's the extreme smoke contamination and the elusive nature of smoke that makes this loss challenging," said Murphy. "Due to the style of building, the building materials,

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and the nature of their manufacturing processes, eliminating the smoke odor will be a significant undertaking.”

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The older wood surfaces provide very good hiding places for smoke odor. And, to further complicate the restoration process, the building across the street was so severely damaged, that it will need to be demolished. This will take several months to complete and affects the removal of the smoke odor from the flag company. “Each time the wind blows from a specific direction, more smoke odor is transmitted into the flag company building. This will be an on-going issue for quite some time,” Murphy said.

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After a thorough assessment of the Advertising Flag Company’s damage, Paul Davis implemented a simple “dry” cleaning process consisting of HEPA vacuum of ceilings and walls, damp mopping floors, wiping down flat surfaces including shelves, counter tops, and more, along with cleaning the office [windows](#). As part of the overall cleaning process, Paul Davis also removed the floor covering in the company’s showroom.



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With the loss occurring in Chicago in January, most of the outside repairs will not begin until spring when the weather is more conducive to working outside. The odor issues are largely unknown and will have to be addressed as an ongoing concern.



While crew members, technicians and local subcontractors worked throughout the building, the Paul Davis team worked with Randy Smith, owner of Advertising Flag Company, his staff, and [insurance](#) adjusters to ensure that everyone involved was well informed about the damage, crew schedules, and equipment needed.

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According to Smith, he is thankful that the Paul Davis team quickly surveyed the initial damage and started work just two days after the emergency call. “We are proud of the fact that since our company was established in 1936, all of our production materials have come from sources in the United States,” he said. “We wanted to quickly start our regular work schedule again to serve customers around the world with corporate, promotional and other flags and banners that are still hand produced in our factory,” he said.



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“This was a challenging project dealing with an unpredictable fire emergency in the neighboring old warehouse. We had to act immediately, but at the same time be mindful of the difficulty in ensuring the fire was out in the neighboring property,” said Murphy. Ultimately, we had to quickly assess the damage, start the work and complete critical parts of the job to keep the business up and running,” he said. “To add to the benefits of working with the Paul Davis network, we had the expertise of Paul Davis Restoration of Southwest Cook County and owner Robert J. Kramer along with his team of professional technicians on the job. This helped with accessing local equipment and tradesmen in a fluid situation.”



With the uniqueness of this loss, the response plan had to be meticulously supervised. Paul Davis’ experience in handling large losses was an advantage on the job, plus the company’s documentation practices served as a valuable deliverable. Cost containment and technical accuracy was a critical goal while managing the project. The company’s main objective was to manage and complete the work on time while overseeing the loss site. Implementing the correct tactics and techniques in advance of implementation included a proposed plan of action to stabilize and restore the site. All appropriate parties at the customer’s place of business along with the insurance company accepted the proposed plan of action and pricing structure. This allowed the team to establish an agreed upon course of action and the work necessary to make effective and efficient decisions, and ensure that all resources were in place to meet deadlines.

Smith was satisfied that his insurance company and Paul Davis were involved in the project from the beginning, and were aware of the proposed actions and cost estimates to implement the restoration plan and to stabilize and restore the structure. “Time was critical for us and the course of action had to be implemented immediately to prevent additional facility and operational problems. Having a close relationship

with our insurance company assured us that effective and efficient decisions were made. Paul Davis made sure resources were there to meet the demands of the situation," he said.

For more information, contact J. Murphy at (281) 358-4077 or email [jmurphy@pdnational.com](mailto:jmurphy@pdnational.com). Visit the website at [www.pdnational.com](http://www.pdnational.com). For more information about Advertising Flag Company, contact Randy Smith at (773) 523-3524 or email [randy@flagpro.com](mailto:randy@flagpro.com). Visit the website at [www.flagpro.com](http://www.flagpro.com).

### About Paul Davis National

Paul Davis National specializes in large loss and is part of the Paul Davis franchise network. Paul Davis is a franchise system made up of more than 320 full service emergency services and restoration [contractors](#) providing site stabilization, emergency water mitigation, fire restoration, mold remediation, document restoration, contents cleaning, and remodeling services. Paul Davis National owns numerous tractor trailers and support equipment that are deployed throughout the U.S. to support their national clients as well as their fellow franchisees in the case of a major disaster. The company is headquartered at 2010 South 4th Street in Milwaukee, Wis.

### About Advertising Flag Company

The Advertising Flag Company has been manufacturing flags and banners in Chicago since 1936. They carry a full line of flagpoles and flags, including US, state, International, [sports](#) team and other stock items. Custom-made flags and banners are a [specialty](#) product line offered by Advertising Flag, and their team of experts work hard to provide excellent products and solutions to meet the needs their customers.

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