

# SAFEGUARDING HERITAGE

## Progressive Mechanical's Impact on the Historic Ford Engineering Laboratory



**T**he team at Progressive Mechanical takes pride in their proactive approach to challenges and their desire to make a lasting impact. The veteran-owned mechanical, plumbing, and fire protection contracting company has been servicing industrial, commercial, institutional, and governmental clients since 2006. When presented with the opportunity to contribute to the restoration of the Ford Engineering Laboratory building, they recognized it as a unique and important project.

The Ford Engineering Laboratory (FEL), located in Dearborn, Michigan, holds significant historical importance in the realm of automotive innovation. Originally constructed in the early 1920s as part of Henry Ford's vision for cutting-edge research and development efforts in automotive engineering, the Albert Kahn-designed structure "was the true heart of Ford Motor Company," according to The Henry Ford.

Despite the challenges that came with the overall goal of preserving the FEL's original construction and architectural charm, the team at Progressive Mechanical embraced the challenge with enthusiasm. "Walking through its corridors feels like stepping into a time capsule of automotive innovation," explained Charles J. Hosler, Owner of Progressive Mechanical.

Progressive Mechanical's team was given the responsibility of installing a top-of-the-line fire suppression system within the historical structure. They also handled various other assignments to ensure the building's infrastructure met modern standards while preserving its historical integrity. The installation encompassed natural gas piping to a rooftop unit and generator, along with compressed air piping for tool usage and lab rooms, equipped with air hose reels and filters.

Additionally, domestic cold-water piping was installed throughout the building. For drainage, the team installed floor drains connected to sanitary piping, ensuring efficient wastewater management. Vent lines were installed for proper drainage, and acid waste piping was added in the basement for lab rooms.

"Mahogany Row," a renowned hallway adorned with rich panels of wood, is a focal point within the building. As the team worked on modernizing the fire suppression system, they were reminded of the pioneering figures who once walked the halls. The presence of plaques honoring legends such as Thomas Edison and Henry Ford underscored the significance of the project and the responsibility entrusted to Progressive Mechanical, Inc.

Upon its anticipated completion in 2024, the Ford Engineering Lab aims to reestablish itself as a cornerstone of Ford's innovation and engineering legacy, showcasing the company's classic designs and housing Ford's latest technologies. Participating in the restoration project was not merely



Photos courtesy of  
Progressive Mechanical



another job for Progressive Mechanical, Inc., according to Hosler. It was an opportunity to contribute to a legacy larger than themselves, ensuring that this piece of history remains safe and secure for generations to come. 🏠

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