



CASE STUDY:

Ash & Soot Cleanup at Westminster Church



Challenge

Westminster Church, a historic building constructed in the 1930s, where the box office hit “The Wedding Planner” was filmed, spans an impressive 80,000 square feet. It includes multiple structures with various rooms and levels. Following the Altadena fire, the church faced significant concerns about soot and ash contamination, which posed risks not only to the health of the church’s occupants but also to the delicate stained-glass windows.

The Church Insurance Group contacted West Coast Fire & Water for an inspection, expressing their concern of the potential damage, necessitating an immediate and thorough cleanup effort to safe-guard the church’s historical assets. West Coast Fire & Water was able to provide a quick inspection, with upfront pricing, which ultimately won the bid.

Proposed Solution

West Coast Fire & Water devised a comprehensive three-stage cleanup process, designed to effectively address the soot and ash contamination while accommodating the church’s operational schedule.

1 Surface Cleaning

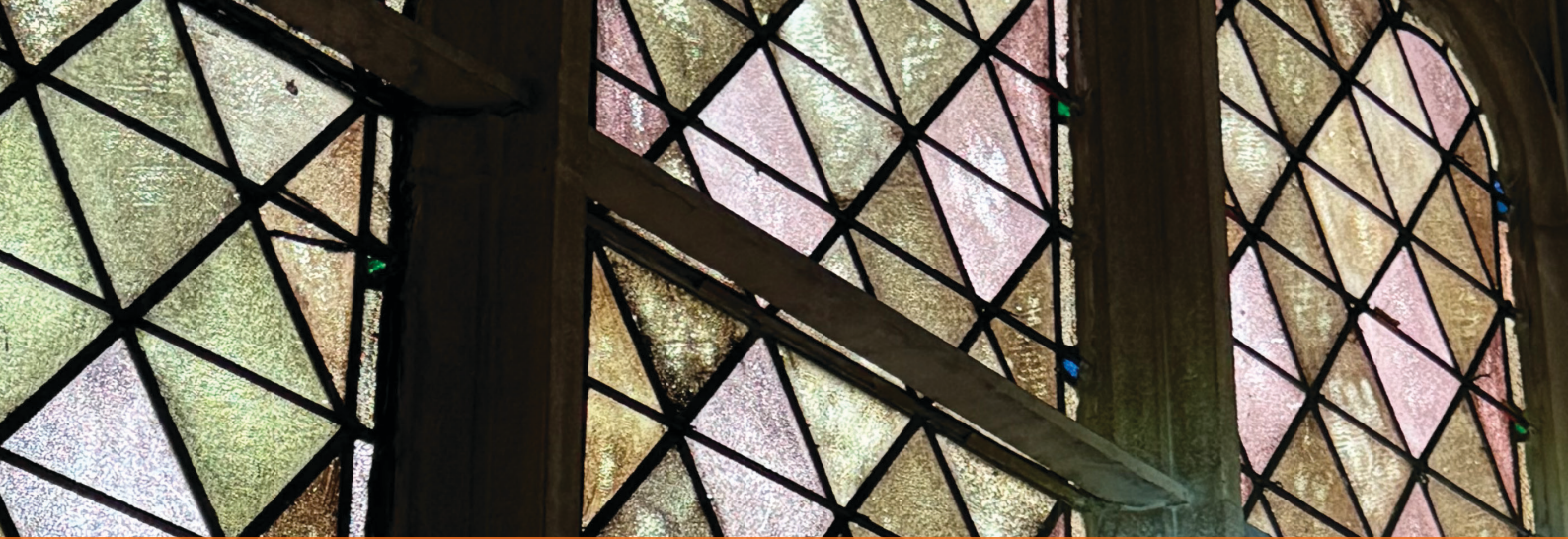
The first stage involved meticulous cleaning of all building surfaces. Utilizing air scrubbers and hydroxyl generators to neutralize odors, West Coast Fire & Water's certified team employed pressure washing techniques and carpet cleaning machines to ensure thorough removal of soot. The team worked around the church's schedule, conducting a lot of our work during nights and off-peak hours to maintain accessibility for worshippers and events.

Special attention was given to the sanctuary, where heights reached 60 feet and above. A specialized team, certified to work at heights, equipped with scaffolding, executed the cleaning while simultaneously inspecting the stained-glass windows to assess construction materials (steel, lead, copper). This evaluation was crucial for determining the appropriate cleaning methods that would preserve the integrity and lifespan of these historic features.

Duct Cleaning 2

The second stage focused on the church's ductwork. The team replaced filters and conducted deep cleaning using brushes and vacuuming. Given the age and size of some ducts, the technicians even crawled inside to ensure a comprehensive cleanup. This process was vital to eliminate any lingering soot and ash from the air circulation system, further protecting the church's environment.





3 Stained-Glass Window Restoration

The final stage involved the careful cleaning and restoration of the stained-glass windows. Given the acidic nature of the soot, the primary concern was to maintain the correct pH balance during cleaning to prevent any damage. The goal was to restore the windows while ensuring their long-term preservation, recognizing their historical and artistic significance.

Results

The three-stage cleanup process culminated in a successful restoration of Westminster Church. The thorough surface cleaning, meticulous ductwork maintenance, and careful stained-glass restoration effectively eliminated the soot and ash contamination, preserving the church's historic features and ensuring a safe environment for its congregation.

Feedback from the Church Insurance Group was overwhelmingly positive, acknowledging the professionalism and efficiency of West Coast Fire & Water throughout the project. The church was able to resume its activities promptly, and the stained-glass windows retained their beauty and structural integrity, showcasing the success of the tailored approach to restoration in the wake of a natural disaster.



This case study showcases West Coast Fire & Water's commitment to excellence, while tackling complex challenges and prioritizing the needs and schedules of the client.