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MONSTER HOUSE

Home improvement show "monsterizes" Los Angeles fire department; local HVAC supply house, contractor donate equipment and services to effort

By Gilbert Rivera, Indoor Comfort News Editor

What do you get when you put together a crew of five highly motivated contractors, a handful of radical home improvement plans, and just five working days to complete them?

You get the Discovery Channel's hit cable television show "Monster House," of course.

That's the ongoing premise for the extreme remodeling show's latest venture, which took it to the hallowed grounds of some of Los Angeles' finest.

In late July, the production crew of "Monster House" and its indefatigable host Steve Watson set up shop at Los Angeles Fire Station #37 on the West side of the bustling city. With a "firefighter" theme in mind, show producers drew up an eye-popping laundry list of makeover projects for the expansive facility and its crew of 42 firefighters.

Some of those plans called for the construction of an outdoor patio on top of the station's roof, a complete remodeling of the kitchen and dining area, and a stylized outdoor barbecue grill.

Also, as an added luxury, show producers made plans to upgrade the fire station's HVAC system—or lack thereof, in this case.

"They didn't have any type of central air conditioning whatsoever," said Brian Knappmiller, show producer. "All they had were a few window units here and there."

As is the case in every episode of "Monster House," five contractor "contestants" were hand-picked to work together in a joint effort to carry out the makeover projects—each with hopes of winning \$4,000 worth of tools upon successful completion of the project.

The catch? They were given just five days to pull it off. And they did—with flying colors.

"They were a really, really great team," Knappmiller said. "There were no major problems, and they actually finished ahead of schedule."

For the air conditioning installation, "Monster House" contacted Tarzana, Calif.-based Kreimer Air Conditioning, a family-owned and operated contractor that specializes in residential, commercial and industrial installations and service.

"They called us in June and asked if we were willing to do the work," said Javi Kreimer, owner of Kreimer Air Conditioning. "When we got the call, we were all pretty excited, of course."

Kreimer agreed to do the work, even with the show's stipulations that his company wasn't going to get paid for the installation, nor was it eligible for the \$4,000 tool prize, something that each of the five contestants received after successfully "monsterizing" the fire station.

In exchange for the installation work, however, Kreimer said his company would get some publicity when the "Monster House" episode airs on television. Knappmiller said the segment is scheduled to run on Monday, Oct. 4, on the Discovery Channel.

"We basically donated the labor for free," Kreimer said. "But since it was for a fire station, we thought it would be a good idea so that's why we decided to go with it. Plus, it's free advertising."

After agreeing to work on the show, Kreimer contacted ACH Supply, a California-based HVAC equipment wholesaler.

"Javi called us and asked if we were interested in donating some equipment to the 'Monster House' project," said John London, branch manager for ACH Supply's Sun Valley, Calif., location, which carries major product lines such as Heil, Tappan, SpacePak and JP Lamborn. "Javi's one of our top Heil dealers, so we thought it would be helpful for both companies. And of course, we'd be helping out the cause of the fire station."

ACH Supply agreed, and in the end was generous enough to donate all of the HVAC equipment needed for the upgrade. Some of the major products used for the air conditioning project included: A 3-ton Heil packaged heat pump (10 SEER PHF Series); JP Lamborn flexible air duct; Tru Aire registers; Hycy Metals sheet metal; and a Braeburn 5000 Model thermostat.

Kreimer and three of his employees were brought on to complete the installation, which he described as "smooth."



(L-R) Javi Kreimer, owner of Kreimer Air Conditioning; Gary Hunt, outside sales at ACH Supply; and John London, branch manager at ACH Supply's Sun Valley, Calif., location. ACH Supply donated a Heil Packaged Heat Pump to the Los Angeles Fire Department.

"It basically was a simple two-day installation," he said.

On day one, while "Monster House's" five-man crew of contestants worked at a frenzied pace on tearing down the kitchen and dining area, a crane was brought in to lift the Heil unit to the station's rooftop. Most of the installation was completed on the first day, while on the second day Kreimer Air Conditioning's crew wrapped up all the ductwork.

The unit is for the kitchen area, conference room and office space—about a 1,200-square-foot area, Kreimer said.

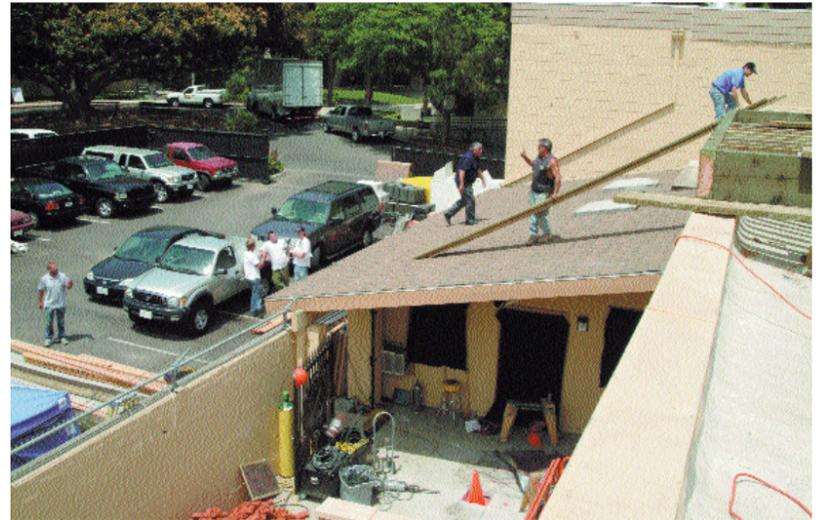
"What they did was awesome," Knappmiller said. "These firefighters are put into situations where it's constantly hot. Now they're in a building where they can keep cool when they're not putting out fires."

At the episode's "reveal," when the station's firefighters got a chance to see the finished product for the first time, several of the city's dignitaries were present at the event, Knappmiller said. Even L.A. Mayor James K. Hahn made an appearance, and media members from several major television networks were there to cover the moment.

The list of amenities and improvements to the station drew praise and applause from the large crowd that gath-



Above (L-R): Javi Kreimer, owner of Kreimer Air Conditioning in Tarzana, Calif.; Brian Knappmiller, producer of "Monster House;" John London, branch manager for ACH Supply's Sun Valley, Calif., location; and Gary Hunt, outside sales for ACH Supply. (Inset) A Heil 10 SEER packaged heat pump (PHF Series), donated by ACH Supply, was installed at the fire station free of charge by Kreimer Air Conditioning.



Above: On location at a Los Angeles fire department, the cast and crew of Discovery Channel's "Monster House" home improvement show work at a frantic pace with hopes of making the five-day deadline.

ered at the "reveal."

"The firefighters were ridiculously excited," Knappmiller said. "Everything was more than what they had expected."

In the kitchen, all the cabinets were replaced and painted with a stylized "flame" design. The contractors also knocked out a wall adjacent to the courtyard, reframed it and installed an old-fashioned firehouse door with a brick-style exterior.

The outdoor, 20 by 20 feet roof patio, which rests 28 feet up from the ground, comes complete with a ladder to climb up and a fire pole to slide down.

The five-man team also built what may turn out to be the most unique amenity at the fire station—a 12-foot-long, mobile fire engine that transforms into a dining table. The engine comes complete with lights, gauges, blinkers, and a working siren. It also has real tires, so the firefighters can roll it out to the courtyard for outdoor dining.

For more information about "Monster House," visit www.origprod.com/mh.htm.