Cotton rises to Herculean task after fire in a historic downtown high-rise

Background
Fire broke out on the 27th floor of a historic downtown building in Southern Texas. Nearly 200 firefighters tackled the blaze high in the 36-story Art Deco landmark tower, built in 1929, and the fire was contained within about 3 ½ hours. The total damage, however, extended well beyond the area of the fire. Water damage occurred all the way from the 27th floor to the 2nd floor and in the basement, while the entire building suffered smoke odor or fallout. All of the building’s tenants were evacuated until remediation was complete.

Challenges
Restoring a building that was more than 80 years old brought a unique set of challenges for Cotton, which had to deal with antiquated construction practices, methods and materials as it set about drying out the high-rise building, removing the smoke damage and odor and cleaning the structure and contents. The sheer size and scale of the tower also complicated the restoration process, while the need to allow tenants to return to the high-profile office tower as quickly as possible added extra urgency. While no precise deadline was set for completion of the remediation work, the property’s owners and the management company, wanted tenants to be allowed back in the building - just one week after the fire.
We have been working with Cotton Restoration for several years now and they have always taken great care of the managers and the assets that we manage. They are especially good in the early stages of an event when their experience, resources and professionalism come through.”

Mark N.  
Property Management Director

Solutions
Cotton was on the scene within hours on the night of the fire and set to work immediately. The first step in getting the office tower back into working order in one week was to install 30 to 40 HEPA air scrubbers to filter smoke out of the air, and portable water extractors and drying equipment to take care of water damage. In a mammoth effort, 200 workers labored for a solid week removing and replacing ceiling grids and ceiling tiles from the 20th floor to the 33rd floor, using trash carts and elevators to move debris and carry materials, and cleaning the structure and office contents. Additional cleanup work continued for about two months, and reconstruction work continued for five months after the fire.

Proven Experience, Powerful Results
Thanks to Cotton’s expertise and rapid response the entire 36-story, high-rise office tower, apart from floors 26, 27 and 28, was dried, cleaned and the smoke odor and damage eliminated within one week of the fire on the 27th floor and the devastation it caused throughout the entire building. As a result, the tower’s many high-profile tenants were able to move back in and resume normal operations with the minimum possible disruption.