



Episode 647 | December 3, 2021 | 12:00 PM EST

Patrick McCarty

Interesting and Unusual Restoration Projects

This week on IAQradio+ we welcomed Patrick McCarty Director of Client Solutions at First Onsite Restoration to discuss some interesting and unusual projects he has been part of over the past almost 20 years. The audience learned about how to manage difficult projects and work with large teams to help customers get back to normal.

Patrick began as a field Project Manager for the National Response Team at Interstate Restoration Group in Jan of 2004. He ran numerous large projects both domestically and internationally over a span of about 5 years before being promoted to Operations Manager for the Restoration Division. He served in that capacity for about 8 years and was then promoted to Director of Operations in 2017. Over the course of his career, he's contributed to the growth of Interstate, now First Onsite Restoration, and helped it to become the company it is today.

Patrick holds a Bachelors of Interdisciplinary Business with emphasis in Engineering Technology from Tarleton State University in Texas and has over 12 industry certifications. He has led on some of the largest and most complicated projects the company has been involved with. His hyper focus on FIRST ONSITE's clients' needs has been a hallmark of his leadership style.

**Nuggets mined from today's episode:**

***How did you get into the disaster restoration industry?*** You know, a guy knows a guy, who knows a guy. He interviewed with Stacy Mazur and got the job. Stacy is CEO of FIRST ONSITE.

***What is the duration of the average project?*** While some projects take considerably longer, FIRST ONSITE's average project is completed in 1-2 weeks.

***What is a restoration road warrior?*** Patrick spent 5 years as a road warrior bouncing from project to project and spending as much as 10-11 months per year on the road. He was always dedicated and eager to get to the next project.

***Is there a common skill among project managers?*** Communication is a big part of the job: communicating with clients, insurance adjusters and subs.

***Define Client Services?*** FIRST ONSITE's national response system is called Client Solutions, because their mindset is focused on creating and implementing solutions for their clients. The Client Solutions Field Team is comprised of 150 people, management and supervision coupled with operations.

***Pay attention to the man behind the curtain.*** As a man behind the curtain, Patrick's job is to support the field teams with everything they need to get the project done (e.g. human resources, procurement, transportation, freight, lodging, pairing field teams with subcontractors, etc.). Another part of the job is troubleshooting when things go wrong in the field (e.g. road closures, labor delays, equipment problems, etc.)

***Technical department?*** FIRST ONSITE has an in-house technical department augmented by outside experts. In-house expertise includes: construction, structural drying, HVAC cleaning, freeze drying, contents restoration. FIRST ONSITE's technical capabilities are actively expanding.

***In order to oversee a large restoration project must the overseer first know how to run a large project or are project management and project oversight two different skills?*** It depends if the job involves just numbers, then a numbers guy can do it. Field experience provides an invaluable foundation. On a \$150,000 project, a project manager may be expected to do it all. On a more complicated \$10,000,000 project, the project manager isn't always walking the line and must rely on his team to function well in his absence, as they spend most of their time in meetings and administration.

***How is the labor situation?*** The labor situation is getting better. The core qualities Patrick looks for are dedication, integrity, willingness to put in the time and effort and sacrifice their personal time when needed. When a new hire has this, we can train/teach them the rest. Ex-military know the drill, when the bell rings off they go and don't know when they'll be coming home. Women are more detail and paperwork orientated.

***Formal best practices?*** FIRST ONSITE has a Playbook of Best Practices and worker safety is always a priority. When something falls outside of the playbook the Field Team needs to call an audible and improvise. 'Sometimes the answer isn't the answer', due to extenuating circumstances the field team must complete the job with only the tools they have. On international projects when they can't wait days for a \$150,000 bulldozer to arrive to remove fallen trees, improvise by using an army of laborers with machetes. Think outside the box. Roll-up your sleeves and get it done.

***First restoration project?*** Patrick's introduction to disaster restoration began with a flight from Texas to Mexico, an eight hour boat ride out to sea and being lifted in a basket from a boat up onto an oil platform. The oil rig suffered a fire in the command and control center. The project involved structure cleaning and electronics reclamation. The project was done by a crew of eight over ten days. An estimating team had made a prior site visit and prepared a materials list and considered what-if scenarios.

When a large **document storage facility** in Washington, DC was concerned about lead contamination, FIRST ONSITE performed a "mass extraction project". 2,400,000 boxes of books needed to be removed, decontaminated and placed into their original position. The project required hundreds of people for months. The job involved detailed planning. Patrick explained their project implementation chart.

**Government facility** in New Jersey suffered flash flooding from Hurricane Sandy. FIRST ONSITE's emergency response was delayed 24 hours due to road washout. Patrick worked 36 hours straight. A super high security conference room with lead lined walls took on 3 feet of floodwater. Using only tenting, heat and dehumidification FIRST ONSITE successfully dried the materials in-place.

***What was your most heart wrenching project?*** Disaster restoration provides a firsthand opportunity to see what others don't see, the full force of Mother Nature. A humbling reminder of how fortunate we are. A violent tornado struck the town of Enterprise, Alabama. When the tornado warning siren sounded the students and faculty inside the high school hunkered down in the designated safety zones. The tornado caused a wall of the school to collapse resulting in the loss of life of 9 people (8 students, 1 man). The losses of life and widespread destruction of property required special communication skills on the part of FIRST ONSITE whose message was 'we are here, it will be okay'. The project involved debris removal and cleanup of the library, building and grounds.

**Working on islands or internationally is more complicated and logistically challenging.** Logistics for tractor trailers, shipping containers, renting cargo aircraft or landing barges is complicated because ports are closed. Customs, import prohibitions, permits, licenses, taxes are among the added logistical challenges of doing emergency work on the islands and internationally.

Before Hurricane Katrina struck the US it devastated parts of the Caribbean. The basement of a **Caribbean island hospital** was flooded with sea water necessitating replacement of electrical panels and cleaning of the interior and exterior of the conduit and replacement of the electrical cable. Due to surgeries and ICU units, power switchovers had to be closely coordinated. The cable replacement took 8 months.

## **Roundup**

### Patrick McCarty final comments:

FIRST ONSITE has clients who are concerned about COVID and require vendor employees be vaccinated and tested.

### John Downey's comments

- The International Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate (ISIAQ) HEALTHY BUILDINGS (HB) plans to hold its conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, January 18-21, 2022; hosted by the Cleaning Industry Research Institute (CIRI).  
<https://hb2021-america.org/>
- COVID vaccination is required to attend the event.
- COVID infection numbers in Hawaii are down.
- COVID hospitalizations numbers are also down.

## Trivia

Question: Which hurricane caused the most damage to the US?

Answer: Hurricane Katrina, 2005

Answered By: Bruce White

*Z-Man signing off*