

by Steve Hahn



Making the Right Pitch



Before retrofitting, most fire doors have complex systems of mechanical gearing, governing devices and release mechanisms.

Bases loaded, two outs, bottom of the ninth . . . That's a critical scenario that requires the right pitch. And believe it or not, baseball is not the only situation to which that can apply!

Sometimes, a rolling fire door – especially an older one with a traditional tension release and mechanical governor system – is still in overall good condition. But, it just won't pass that darn drop test! If only somehow it could be made to drop at less than the 24 inches per second average closing speed mandated by NFPA-80¹!

Or maybe an otherwise acceptable fire door has a small part of its operating and closing system either broken or missing. NFPA-80 also requires that repair parts be obtained from the door manufacturer . . . and the manufacturer is no longer in business, or that design has become obsolete and parts are no longer available. Now what?

Those are two possible scenarios that could result in the need to completely replace a fire door. That can be costly enough when the door is installed on an easily accessible warehouse wall. But how costly would that be if the door is installed on the third floor of a high-rise building . . . with the door guides concealed inside imported Italian marble columns . . . and with the door coil mounted above some exotically detailed ceiling?

Telling a building owner the bad news that there is something wrong with his fire doors – and it's going to take a lot of money to fix them – no matter how true it is, is not going to come across as a very good pitch.

But there may be a solution – and it's a much more economical alternative to the costly replacement of a complete fire door! Retrofit fire door operators² are available to bring state-of-the-art technology to many existing rolling fire

¹ NFPA-80 Standard for Fire Doors and Fire Windows is the standard regulating the installation and maintenance of rolling fire doors.

² Retrofit fire door operators are Labeled for installation on many types and brands of existing rolling fire doors in accordance with their product approval listings.

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doors that just don't operate properly. They eliminate awkward and unreliable spring tension release mechanisms and replace traditional operating and governor systems. They also provide for automatic closing without a loss of spring tension and eliminate the need for traditional mechanical reset.

Retrofitting is a relatively simple process. The door stays in place with access needed only to each end of the door coil. The tension release system is disabled. The old operating and mechanical governor system is removed. The new retrofit operator is installed.

When retrofitted, even older doors can be tested and reset easily, operating with the reliability and extraordinary descent control found in the most advanced "new generation" fire door systems available today. Retrofit chain, crank and motor operators can be easily reset by simply reconnecting the fusible link release and reopening the door. Systems are

available to close the door after detector or alarm activation, or are failsafe closing upon a loss of power, and can be reset by merely clearing the alarm, restoring power and reopening the door. The most advanced **detector / alarm** activated systems will even close the door through the motor operator, stop the door if it contacts an obstruction during closing, and continue closing when the obstruction is removed, or revert to failsafe operation if power is lost.

So make the pitch . . . for a retrofit fire door operator. Remember that it's not always the proper solution to all causes of improperly operating fire doors, but in most cases, it's a winner! 



After retrofitting, a fire door has a simplified self-contained system with a release and governor integrated into the retrofit fire door operator.

Steve Hahn is Product Manager for Lawrence Roll-Up Doors, Inc. He has been in the rolling door industry for more than 30 years, is a member of the NFPA-80 Standard for Fire Doors and Fire Windows Technical Committee, serves on three UL Standards Technical Panels, and is past-president of the American Rolling Door Institute.