

## *As One of the Largest Cancer Research Centers Grows, RJA Grows Along with It*

**Problem.** University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, which is on the campus of the Texas Medical Center in Houston, is one of the largest and most renowned cancer research centers in the U.S. M.D. Anderson employs more than 16,000 faculty and staff members, who work in more than 25 buildings in Houston and Central Texas, and expects to provide care for more than 79,000 patients in 2008. The physical plant includes an inpatient pavilion with 521 beds, five research buildings, three outpatient clinic buildings, a faculty office building, a proton radiation clinic building, and a hotel for patient families. The Pickens Academic Tower, currently under construction, will provide additional faculty and administrative space, while an ongoing expansion of Alkek Hospital will accommodate about 300 additional inpatient beds, adding nine floors to its current 12.

Rolf Jensen & Associates (RJA) has enjoyed a long and storied history with M.D. Anderson. RJA has grown its responsibilities and workload as the institution has grown. The fact that M.D. Anderson has tapped RJA time and time again for its various consulting needs speaks to the trust that RJA has earned in providing valuable, professional expertise.

RJA serves as an extension of three groups within M.D. Anderson. For the clinical group, which is in charge of clinic spaces for patient care, RJA does statements of conditions, consulting on new expansions, and assistance with master plans for firewalls and life safety features. The second group with which RJA has worked is the construction and operations side for the research group, making sure they are in compliance with code.

The third group, which is the department of environmental safety and health, acts as the fire marshal for the facility and is exempt from local fire and building department compliance. The department relies on RJA for its specialized fire and life safety expertise, such as a recently completed assessment of laboratories for risk level per NFPA 45.

**Challenge.** Keeping up with the demands and requirements of such a diverse and rapidly growing client means that RJA is constantly sought out based on both the breadth and width of its fire and life safety consulting expertise. M.D. Anderson has everything from linear accelerators and laboratory facilities on the research end to very delicate patient care on the clinical side, making it a complete medical city with a wide range of needs. Although the center is on the top of its game in the healthcare field, its professionals are not well versed in some technical aspects of assembly space life safety exiting or the fire hazards of a linear accelerator. For RJA, however, that is just an extension of its normal consulting business.

Although RJA has a modest size office in Houston that regularly works with M.D. Anderson, RJA has at times brought in professionals from multiple RJA offices to provide additional support. The flexibility to accommodate project needs with extra staffing has proved critical for meeting tight deadlines.

Flexibility is also the key to RJA's working relationship with M.D. Anderson, which is unique in that RJA works in various capacities for the center. Sometimes M.D. Anderson will hire RJA to do code and life safety assessments for a building. Other times, RJA is working for the architects and engineers whom have been contracted by M.D. Anderson. RJA's demonstrated abilities on different levels have paved the way for developing these multifaceted working relationships.

**Result.** RJA has earned a reputation for quickly and efficiently completing its projects within the budget and on time. And RJA is nimble enough to bring a project along from the early stages on, as well as to augment M.D. Anderson's team when a critical need arises along the way.

Whenever there is a need for fire protection and life safety services, RJA is a prime candidate for providing those services. An initial project some 20 years ago has blossomed into a long-term working relationship that has grown and developed with time. RJA has built a high level of trust in the quality of work and services it offers. Moreover, RJA has shown that it comes through as promised every time.



- Code Consulting
- Fire Protection Design

 **RJA**  
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