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Our sales companies and representatives ensure local customer support in over 100 countries.

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Adding Quality to People's Lives

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Mont Blanc 3835 m with JRG Sanipex MT



Perched on a ledge on the north face of Mont Blanc – the highest mountain in the Alps – a futuristic refuge for mountaineers has been taking shape since 2010. In a spectacular project, the plumbing for this sustainable new building was supplied by building technology specialists from GF JRG.

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Total commitment for the “White Lady”

Every year, as many as 30,000 mountaineers attempt to conquer Mont Blanc. As of 2012, the climbers will be able to take refuge in a new, futuristic mountain hut. With piping systems from GF JRG!

Megève/France

The long-awaited rumble of the rotor blades sounds like music to the ears of Bernard Maget. For weeks, Maget, who works for GF JRG, has been waiting for this moment, but the flight had to be delayed time and again because of poor weather. But now on this mild September morning the long wait is over. Maget is seated in the helicopter, on his way to Europe’s highest construction site, situated at 12,582 feet. A ten-minute flight brings him to the Goûter hut, which is being built on the north face of Mont Blanc. “What a view, what a tremendous feeling,” enthuses Maget, looking back.

HARD LAB OR HIGH UP

The 44-year-old Swiss man worked up in the high Alps for a full week. “Because of the thin air at that high altitude, physical labor was a real challenge for us,” said Maget. “We spent the time receiving 500 kilogram (1,100 pound) bags containing building material that the helicopters flew up from the valley.” Maget’s job was to assist the pipefitters from the plumbing companies in handling and installing the products of GF JRG.

The help was definitely needed because the partner companies “were not familiar with our piping systems,” as Alexis Schaeffer, Head of Sales at GF Piping Systems for the Rhône-Alpes region in France, reports. Schaeffer was involved in this unusual project from the very beginning, and he knows the installation challenges involved like the back of his hand. “The building will only be used by mountaineers during the three summer months. Outside the season, it’s too cold up there to keep it open on a regular basis.

“This was one of the reasons that Georg Fischer landed the order in the first place, because the JRG Sanipex-MT system, which has no water pockets, ensures that “there’s no more water in the jointings in winter.”

A SUSTAINABLE PILOT PROJECT

While the local plumbing company Gaubicher laid the waterpipes, JPMaintenance from Marseille was responsible for outfitting the toilets of the Goûter hut with solutions from GF JRG.

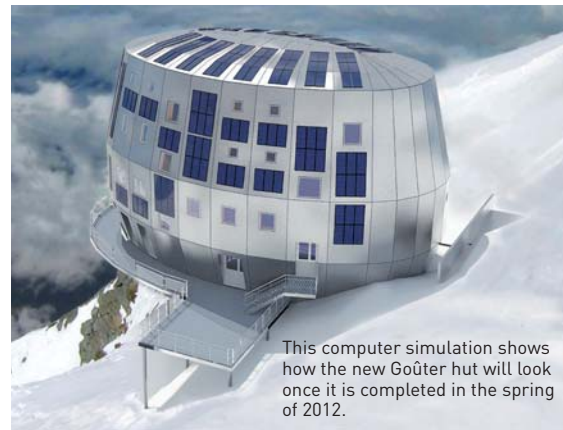
But what are pipefitters from a port city on the Mediterranean doing up on Mont Blanc? Alexis Schaeffer knows the answer:

“This company specializes in the installation of closed vacuum toilet systems, the kind that are installed, for instance, on luxury yachts. Since the Goûter hut has no wastewater piping, a vacuum system of this type is being installed there.” The new Goûter hut will, in fact, be independent not only in terms of wastewater, but also as regards its fresh water supply, which will come from snow melt. Solar panels installed on the hut’s stainless steel skin will deliver the electricity needed.

Environmental considerations were taken into account in the process of designing the Goûter cabin. The entire structure of the four-story cabin is built with local wood. The structure was largely preassembled in the valley in order to reduce the number of helicopter flights as much as possible. Starting in 2012, the Goûter hut will give sustainable refuge to as many as 120 mountaineers. For Alain Berger, Managing Director of GF JRG in Sissach, the project breaks new ground: “If we can build sustainably at over 12,000 feet, it should also be possible further down.



The helicopter first transports fitters and construction workers up on the mountain. No passengers may be taken when material is transported.



This computer simulation shows how the new Goûter hut will look once it is completed in the spring of 2012.



By September 2011 the work had progressed so far that the plumbing facilities were ready for installation.



Mont Blanc rises majestically in a massif that bears its name.

-40

DEGREES CELSIUS at the peak is not rare in winter.

120

PEOPLE can stay in the new Goûter hut and collect their strength for the last 1,000 meters climb up to the summit.

4810

METERS (15,782 FT) HIGH – the Mont Blanc peak. Whether it is the highest peak in Europe depends on how you define Europe. If the Caucasus is included, the highest mountain is Elbrus at 5,642 meters (18,510 ft).

1786

WAS THE YEAR IN WHICH Mont Blanc was first climbed, by Jacques Balmat and Dr. Michel Paccard. In 1808 Marie Paradis was the first woman to reach the peak.

5

HOURS are needed by an experienced climber to reach the peak from the Goûter hut. Many climbers start at one o’clock in the morning in order to experience sunrise on the summit.

6 500 000

EUROS was the cost of constructing the hut. It was financed by the association of French Alpine clubs and French government.

KILOMETER-AN-HOUR winds blow across the ledge on which the Goûter hut stands. The cabin’s egg shape enables it to withstand this tremendous force.

3000

CONSTRUCTION TEAM

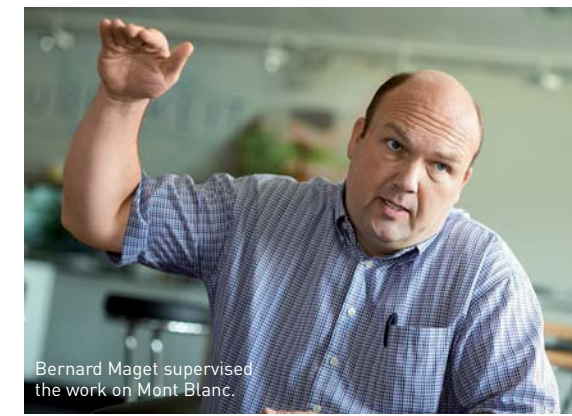
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Architect
Groupe H –
Hervé Dessimoz (CH)
Wood construction engineer
CHARPENTE CONCEPT –
Thomas Büchi (CH)
Planner
STREM (F)
Piping
GF Piping Systems (CH)

Every last detail counts!

At GF JRG, located in Sissach, Switzerland, delivery of the products for the Mont Blanc project was preceded by feverish preparations. Kurt Bürli, who is Head of Research & Development, put the products through their paces in close cooperation with Paul Walder, Head of Technical Customer Support. “The biggest challenge here was the climate up there on Mont Blanc. Even in the summer, conditions can be pretty rough at over 12,000 feet. From the very beginning, we had to make sure that our products functioned perfectly – even at temperatures that can fall as low as minus 20°C [minus 4°F] or go up to 30°C [86°F],” explains Walder.



Kurt Bürli (left) and Paul Walder put the tools and products through their paces before they are delivered to France.



Bernard Maget supervised the work on Mont Blanc.

The Sanipex-MT system was found to work perfectly after thorough testing in cold storage installations. Even the special tools were exposed to minus temperatures in freezers in Sissach in order to check whether they were up to the demands that would be made on them on site. The tools passed the test with flying colors. The two installation firms also had to be trained in the use of the piping systems: “That was pretty easy considering how simple it is to use the products from GF JRG. “At the end of July,” says Walder, “we organized a one-day training session for the fitters in Megève. After a few hours, they had no trouble at all handling the Sanipex products.”

Interview: Meticulous preparations

The Managing Director of GF JRG on the showcase project and the potential of the building technology market



Alain Berger, Managing Director of GF JRG in Sissach

Alain Berger, is a project like this one a special challenge for you and your team at GF JRG?

The entire project was based on teamwork from the word go. The sales company in France received an inquiry for this unusual building, and we worked closely together on it with our French colleagues. Our technical customer support checked all of the options and the materials that might be used. The issue was one not only of functionality, but also of weight. After all, every additional flight incurred extra costs for the companies that were involved.

You were closely involved in the project. Why is each and every detail so crucial in this building?

Equipping a building with plumbing at an altitude of over 12,000 feet demands meticulous preparations. Our teams that work up there are more or less cut off from the world, almost as if they were on a desert island. You have to get it right the first time: all the parts that are needed for the project have to arrive at the right time, and the products have to be correctly installed. If a part is missing – or if it is installed incorrectly – you can’t just send off a helicopter to fetch another box of components.

Were special measures taken in order to prepare for this project?

Everyone who was involved in the project met once a week to review the situation so that we could be a hundred percent sure that the coordination was working. We monitored every detail – everything from quality assurance all the way to logistics and technical customer support. We defined clearly which person or team was responsible for which aspects. We wanted to ensure that nothing went wrong, and we succeeded in doing so.

Is the Goûter hut a prestige project?

Yes, it is. However, it wasn’t the prestige that attracted us, but rather the opportunity to demonstrate what our products are capable of doing. Many of GF JRG’s key markets – Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and the Scandinavian countries – have a close link with the mountains. We were especially motivated to participate in this project because of the underlying sustainability concept.

The building technology field has gained in importance at GF Piping Systems in recent years. How do you see it developing?

Our business is different from that of Industry and Utility – in these areas, most of the business is project-related. That’s why close customer relations are crucial for us. Building technology products are less vulnerable to cyclicality. But that also means that we have to get large numbers of planners, dealers and fitters excited about our products. Through our involvement in the Goûter project, we are generating attention in the sector that will certainly help us reach the targets of Strategy 2015. With this project we’ve already reached one of the goals: “One Team”!

A total of about 1,500 helicopter flights were necessary to transport the construction material up to the building site on Mont Blanc. The GF JRG products required only three flights.

