



# Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue



While preparing for a move that would provide much-needed space, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue toured leading organizations in the Portland area for ideas. What did most share in common? An open environment and informal collaboration zones. TVF&R designed both concepts into its new quarters—and employees quickly learned that working in a walled office isn't the only way to get things done.

**GOVERNMENT;  
TIGARD, OREGON**

**Topic:**

*Change  
Collaboration  
People*

**Application:**

*Collaboration/Team  
Open Office  
Private Office*

**Project Scope:**

*80 occupants; 20 private offices;  
66 workstations; 38,878 square feet*

**Herman Miller Product:**

*Canvas Office Landscape™  
Ethospace® System  
Aeron® Chairs  
Setu® Chairs  
Meridian® Filing and Storage  
Teneo® Storage Furniture  
Tu® Filing and Storage  
Geiger® Caucus™ Tables  
Nelson™ End Table*

**Alliance Product:**

*Bretford Plus® Chairs*

**Program/Service:**

*Mock-up Program  
Z-Axis®*

**Year Completed:**

*2010*



Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue fights fires and provides emergency response throughout Portland's western suburbs, an expansive service area covering 210 square miles and containing 21 fire stations.

[left] Vibrant Bretford Plus seating and classic Nelson tables anchor casual sitting areas.

Until recently, however, there was nothing expansive about its Command and Business Operations Center, the administration building that supports the entire outfit. Built in the '70s, remodeled in the '80s, and expanded a decade ago, the building was crammed with people and mismatched furnishings, feeling more cobbled together than carefully planned.

[right] Setu chairs surround a Geiger Caucus table in TVF&R conference rooms. Note the Teneo hospitality cart against the back wall.

"Over the years, we kept squeezing more and more people in," says Debra Guzman, chief financial officer for TVF&R. "We borrowed from the mailroom for workspace, we borrowed from a conference room, we jammed two and three people into private offices intended for one."

With a move to roomier quarters in the works, Guzman toured a couple of dozen Portland-area workplaces for ideas, paying special attention to the high-tech offices prevalent in the region.

"It became clear that the best workplaces had gotten away from private offices in favor of a more open approach," she says. "We also noticed a preference for a greater variety of collaborative areas, rather than just traditional conference rooms."

TVF&R resolved to incorporate both concepts into its new three-story Command and Business Operations Center. As for the furniture that would support the open, collaborative style TVF&R admired, Herman Miller became the early favorite.

"The mishmash of furniture in our old building included some Herman Miller that we had been using for at least 30 years," Guzman says. "We want to be prudent with taxpayer dollars, so longevity like that counted for a lot in our decision."

## TAMING THE TRANSITION

Before the move, every single TVF&R workspace had walls, so the shift from private office to open environment was a cultural jolt. "Our architect thought we'd never be able to make the transition," Guzman says.



The new building features 66 open workstations and just 20 private offices. To ease the adjustment, TVF&R's Herman Miller dealer—Pacific Office Furnishings in Portland—recommended strategies that would blur the distinction.

[left] Open Ethospace workstations orient occupants sideways for a private office feel.

For starters, workstations use the Ethospace frame-and-tile system, oriented so workers can face sideways in a simulated desk-credenza configuration, rather than feeling cornered in a conventional “L” or “U” setup.

[right] Multiple collaboration zones use plush Bretford Plus chairs to encourage informal meetings.

Workstations also offer an abundance of storage, anchored by a Meridian storage tower and a Tu lateral file/bookcase combo. For further personalization, occupants picked their preferred accessories to attach to an Ethospace rail tile. There's even ample guest seating, courtesy of a cushioned bench with integrated storage, part of a Herman Miller systems line called Canvas Office Landscape.

To help employees get used to the open concept, Pacific Office Furnishings used Herman Miller's Z-Axis space-planning software to prepare 3D renderings that showed exactly how things would look. Later, the dealer set up a workstation mock-up in a conference room so employees could check it out firsthand.

“We wanted to be sure employees knew what to expect before they moved,” says Karen Vandepol, account manager with Pacific Office Furnishings. “The idea was to tell them, show them, then show them again—so people had time to adjust to the change.”

## NEW PLACES TO WORK

To promote collaboration, TVF&R's new workplace includes half a dozen casual sitting areas, all furnished with Nelson tables from Herman Miller and Plus seating from Bretford, a Herman Miller alliance partner. The Plus chairs are upholstered in fire engine red (naturally), bringing a burst of energy to the often gloomy Oregon days.

Islands of Meridian lateral files also serve as collaboration zones. The three-high laterals are topped with a worksurface and located in circulation areas to encourage impromptu stand-up interaction.



"We're trying to nudge our people out of the mindset that the only acceptable place to work is in a private office," Guzman says.

[left] Private offices use the Canvas Office Landscape system, supplemented with Tu storage and Setu guest chairs.

Speaking of which, the few private offices are outfitted with Herman Miller's Canvas Office Landscape system. Each office includes a Canvas storage tower, a Tu lateral and pedestal, and a pair of Setu guest chairs.

[right] Meridian storage islands offer a convenient place to gather round and interact.

All work chairs throughout the building, in both private offices and open workstations, are Herman Miller's flagship Aeron model. TVF&R had experience with Aeron in several fire stations and was familiar with its ergonomic attributes.

"We also liked the availability of three sizes," Guzman says. "We have people who are under five feet, as well as fire chiefs who are well over six. With Aeron, no one had to settle for a chair that almost fit right."

And the architect's prediction that TVF&R would get burned adapting to a new work style? It's been thoroughly extinguished.

"The transition is working out just the way we had hoped," Guzman says. "Sometimes, we have to challenge ourselves to grow—and often, we need change to bring growth about."

Photo credit: Amy Close-Pepe

© 2011 Herman Miller, Inc., Zeeland, Michigan  
© Herman Miller, Aeron, Ethospace, Meridian, Setu, and Tu are among the registered trademarks of Herman Miller, Inc.  
™ Canvas Office Landscape and Nelson are among the trademarks of Herman Miller, Inc.  
© Plus is among the registered trademarks of Bretford, Inc.  
© Geiger is a registered trademark of Geiger International, Inc.  
™ Caucus is among the trademarks of Geiger International, Inc.