



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

May 2007 Report

In May the Network secured funding from the IFSA for its new financial year, beginning on 1st July. The Network brought the message about sprinklers to conferences Germany, Slovakia and the UK. In Germany the draft high-rise model building code has halved the maximum area for unsprinklered compartments in buildings higher than 22m but lower than 60m to 200m². It has also introduced a requirement for these buildings to have protruding balconies to prevent external fire spread. The discussion about reducing the upper limit for unsprinklered buildings from 60m to 30m continues. In Glasgow a campaign to see sprinklers fitted in new housing gathered pace and a name: Fire-Safe City. Local newspapers ran a series of articles about the need for sprinklers and each time the Network secured a mention.

IFSA Funding

At its meeting in Las Vegas the International Fire Sprinkler Association voted to grant \$300,000 to the European Fire Sprinkler Network in July 2007. This will secure the financial position for the Network in its next financial year.

vfdb Annual Meeting

I gave a presentation at the German Fire Protection Association annual meeting in Leipzig. My aim was to show that Germany leads Europe with its requirements for sprinklers in industrial buildings but that it is behind when it comes to commercial and residential buildings.

At the conference we heard the latest thinking on the model high-rise building code. This will require sprinklers in all buildings higher than 22m, with the exception of buildings below 60m if they are divided into compartments smaller than 200m² and have protruding balconies to prevent external fire spread from one floor to another.

The limit of 60m or 30m below which it is possible not to fit sprinklers is still under discussion and will be decided in September. In an earlier draft the area limit for unsprinklered compartments in buildings higher than 22m but below that threshold was 400m² so a reduction to 200m² is a positive step. This effectively means that offices above 22m will have to fit sprinklers. It would be possible to design apartment buildings higher than 22m but lower than 60m (or we hope 30m) without sprinklers but they will need protruding balconies, which are rare in new high-rise apartment buildings.

In The Netherlands the authorities are reviewing the current threshold of 70m for sprinklers in high-rise buildings, with a view to lowering it. The evidence from Germany and other countries is influencing a similar discussion in France.

EU Health & Safety Document

Bernadette and I have reviewed the European Union five year health and safety strategy programme, drafted by the European Commission. This is a very general document but it does not presently consider fire safety, let alone sprinklers. In June Bernadette will meet Members of the European Parliament to discuss our proposed changes to the document.

Glasgow Fire-Safe City Campaign

In May the Glasgow Fire-Safe city campaign was launched, with a series of articles in the local press. Each time there has been a mention for the European Fire Sprinkler Network. This campaign is led by Strathclyde Fire & Rescue Service and Glasgow City Council. Bernadette Hartley has been closely involved in coordinating efforts and securing the additional support of politicians, trade unions and the local press. She has produced a leaflet which invites citizens to write in to show their support and has also spoken to house-builders, several of whom have begun fitting sprinklers in the houses they build. The aim of the campaign is to win support among Glasgow's citizens and house-builders for sprinklers in new housing, so that it will be easier to introduce a requirement. At the end of May a parallel burn test took place in two flats scheduled for demolition, one of which was fitted with sprinklers. Interest snowballed and several television channels, including the BBC, came to witness the event. BBC radio conducted its own research, interviewing fire chiefs from Vancouver on air to hear and confirm how sprinklers had helped cure Vancouver's fire problem.

On 20 June a recording of the live burn will be screened in George Square, which is the main square in the centre of Glasgow, and shown on large screens at eleven other points in the city. Bernadette will introduce a series of politicians and fire service speakers, who will express their support for sprinklers in the home. Among the invited guests at this event will be representatives from London, which is planning its own event in November, and Umeå in Sweden, which like Glasgow is considering a requirement for sprinklers in all new housing. We also hope to see representatives from Finland and The Netherlands. In the medium term we will look to see whether this could develop into a European Commission-sponsored project.

Healthcare Facilities in the UK

I gave a presentation at the National Association of Healthcare Fire Officers in Glasgow. Healthcare facilities are not included in the building codes but have their own codes. In Scotland the existing code is very complimentary to sprinklers but does not as yet require sprinklers. It will be reviewed next year and I will be invited to contribute.

Slovakia

Due to multiple conferences being held across Europe on the same dates I was unable to attend a conference organised by the fire service in Slovakia. However, I prepared a presentation on how sprinklers make buildings safer, their record of success in doing so and legislative requirements in different countries to fit them in different types of buildings. Peter Thomas of Tyco gave the presentation on my behalf and it was well-received.

Next Steps for Alan and Bernadette

- 1) Both to meet Department for Education and Skills to ensure implementation of new sprinkler policy for UK schools
- 2) Alan to give a presentation at a press conference organised by German Copper Association.
- 3) Alan to act as secretary at the European Fire Sprinkler Network Technical Committee meeting in Paris.
- 4) Bernadette to meet politicians and officials in Brussels to discuss the health and safety strategy document and our hotels and care homes campaigns.
- 5) Both to attend the screening of the live burn in Glasgow.
- 6) Both to meet Hungarian fire code officials in Budapest to discuss options for sprinklers.
- 7) Both to prepare for Council Meeting in Cologne.