



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

November 2007 Report

In November the sprinkler manufacturers agreed significant direct membership fees of the European Fire Sprinkler Network so that the International Fire Sprinkler Association could reduce its annual grant to the EFSN. This will leave the EFSN less dependent on the IFSA, although there will still be a relationship, and frees the IFSA to fund initiatives in other parts of the world.

Following a tragic fire in which four fire-fighters died in a large, unsprinklered warehouse in England there is more visible support for a campaign to introduce a requirement to fit sprinklers in new warehouses there.

EFSN Council Meeting and IFSA Board Meeting

During meetings of the European Fire Sprinkler Network Council and International Fire Sprinkler Association Board in Hamburg significantly higher membership fees were agreed for sprinkler manufacturers, so that the annual IFSA grant to the EFSN could be greatly reduced and the IFSA could begin to look at funding initiatives in other regions. At the same time sprinkler contractor fees were reduced for the smallest contractors but increased for large contractors. There were also inflation-adjusting increases for some other fee categories. These proposals need to be formally approved at the Annual General Meeting, which was set for 3rd March 2008 in Brussels.

At the EFSN Council meeting it was also agreed that I would more actively support the campaigns running in The Netherlands and Sweden, and work with members in Spain to start a campaign there.

Administration

During the EFSN Council meeting the audited accounts were presented to the EFSN Council and approved. They have since been submitted to Companies House, as has a corporation tax return and a confirmation of the name, address, directors and other details that must be filed with the authorities each year.

New Members

During November VKF (Association of the Swiss Cantonal Insurance Companies) and Norbulb (a glass bulb manufacturer) agreed to join the EFSN.

VKF

In November I visited VKF, the Association of the Swiss Cantonal Insurance Companies. VKF writes model fire codes whose first aim is life safety. If the majority

of Cantons accept the codes they are then adopted by all 26 Cantons in Switzerland. VKF approves installers of fire protection systems and the components used in those systems. It also trains installers and inspectors of fire protection systems. The last major revision to the fire codes in Switzerland was in 2005, so there are no plans at this stage for more changes, although VKF is very interested in the work of EFSN and its campaigns in other countries and in Brussels. Even though the codes may not change, practice may change in advance. There was a fire in an historical building, the Zunfthaus, in Zurich in November. The plan is to rebuild the Zunfthaus with sprinklers.

In Switzerland all buildings must be insured with the cantonal insurance company. Sprinkler systems that are fitted at the insistence of the cantonal insurance company must be connected to the water mains and are registered and checked for inspections by VKF. In some cantons the cantonal insurance company will subsidise up to 30% of the installed cost of a sprinkler system. This system of careful control of sprinkler systems has meant that they are close to 100% reliable. The last time VKF analysed sprinkler system reliability was in 2000, when all 22 fires in sprinklered buildings were controlled or extinguished by four or fewer sprinklers.

EFSN Technical Committee

In November the EFSN Technical Committee met in Amsterdam. I have already circulated the minutes to all members. There were nineteen participants. The main points were that the committee will:

- Seek representation on CEN and other standards-writing committees
- Prepare a training package on seismic bracing
- Write a position paper on corrosion
- Write a position paper on backflow prevention

Pascal Pfeiffer will represent the committee on the new NFPA 3 standard on commissioning of fire protection systems.

The next meeting will be at 10:00 on 4th March at Lubrizol offices in Brussels.

BS9999

This is a British Standard which will provide standard relaxations in prescriptive, passive fire safety measures if other measures, such as sprinklers, are fitted. I attended a committee meeting which looked at changes in the classification of risks if sprinklers are fitted. The standard is due to be released for public comment in January. Architects who follow this standard will often find it is cheaper to design a building with sprinklers than without.

City Hall Seminar

London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority organised a seminar in City Hall in November, at which I was a panel speaker. The keynote presentation was from Mukund Patel, the national Chief Schools Architect, who presented the new BB100 document on fire safety guidance for schools. He emphasised the benefits of sprinklers and explained that the new policy provides a self-assessment tool which is expected to lead those purchasing new school buildings to identify a need to fit

sprinklers. Two years ago he was set against the idea of fitting sprinklers in schools; now he is prepared to visit other countries to talk about and recommend the new policy in England and Wales.

UK Fire Summit

In mid-November I attended the UK Fire Summit, which brought together Fire Chiefs, property developers, building operators and government officials to take stock of the fire safety building codes and ask whether they are adequate. The Fire Service Minister gave a speech and took questions from the participants.

Less than two weeks before this event, four fire-fighters sadly died in a warehouse fire in England. The 14,000m² building was unsprinklered and it collapsed on them. Unlike in many other European countries, in the U.K. there is no building code general requirement to fit sprinklers in new warehouses. I was interviewed on national news and made the point that there has never been a multiple loss of life in a fire in a building fitted with a properly working sprinkler system. Many organisations publicly stated their support for sprinklers in warehouses and this has accelerated the campaign for a threshold of 2,000m² above which sprinklers must be fitted in new warehouses.

Next Steps

- 1) Give a presentation at the Pavus fire safety seminar in Prague.
- 2) Attend the Sprinklerfrämjandet meeting in Stockholm.
- 3) Meet the UK Fire Minister and Building Regulations Minister.
- 4) Prepare a presentation for a fire service training seminar in Paris in January.
- 5) Prepare a presentation for the European Fire Brigade Academy meeting in Paris in January.