



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

March 2008 Report

March was a busy month, beginning with the Annual General meeting in Brussels, at which we changed the Articles of Association to increase the maximum number of Contractor/Manufacturer Council members to five and approved a new schedule of membership fees. The next day we held a Technical Committee meeting, at which we committed to create a series of training courses, to be made available online. Also in Brussels we met European Commissioner Kuneva to discuss hotel fire safety. She was in favour of the drafting of a performance-based code of practice.

Annual General Meeting

The European Fire Sprinkler Network held its Annual General Meeting at the Renaissance Hotel in Brussels on 3rd March. Members from seven countries attended and voted to pay out the remaining months of Bernadette Hartley's contract to her children. They also formally adopted the audited accounts and voted to change the Articles of association to increase the maximum number of Contractor/Manufacturer members to five. Next they re-elected Mike Hagen of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service and Pascal Pfeiffer of AXA to the Council and elected Edward Lister of Tyco Fire & Integrated Solutions, Rick van Meesen of Anvil and Jürgen Teschner of Job Bulbs to the Council for the first time. The members also voted to adopt new membership fees as described in my November report. These involved a substantial increase for sprinkler manufacturers to compensate for a reduction in the IFSA grant; the introduction of a new contractor category with sales above €20 million; and 20% increases for most other categories.

EFSN Technical Committee

On 4th March the EFSN Technical Committee held its fourth meeting at Lubrizol offices in Brussels. There were 18 attendees. We agreed to set up an online training programme, made up of seven courses, each of which would be held on Monday afternoons at 15:00 Central European Time and last for 90 minutes. The first course would be on 8th September. The fee for the courses will be €100 for ESFR members and €200 for non-members. The courses will be: Introduction to Sprinklers, Sprinkler System Hydraulics, Commodity Classification, General Storage, ESFR, Earthquake and High-Rise.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 23rd June at 11:00 in Copenhagen, to coincide with the International Conference which will start there the next morning.

Meeting with Commissioner Kuneva

On 5th March Glyn Ford MEP, Peter Skinner MEP, Joachim Böke of Viking, Alan Brinson, Gösta Ian Gough of BAFSA, Brendan MacGrath of FM Global and Holmstedt of Sprinklerfrämjandet met Mrs Kuneva, European Commissioner for Consumer Safety and colleagues to discuss hotel fire safety. She had met representatives of some major hotel chains in February and they were supportive of a European approach. She is only prepared to make a proposal with a reasonable chance of approval by her fellow Commissioners and the Council of Ministers (the Member States of the European Union). Her preferred route was to produce a performance-based code of practice, which of course would recognise the benefit of sprinklers. She would first like to collect data on hotel fires. We agreed to have another meeting with her before the summer. Before that she will meet the hotel chains again, probably in April.

Presence in European Parliament

For a six month trial period, the EFSN will employ one of Glyn Ford MEP's administrative staff one day per week for £500 per month. This will provide us with someone who already has a pass into the building and who can chase up commitments from MEPs, distribute information, make appointments and so on.

SP Tunnels Conference

In March I attended a conference on tunnel fire safety hosted by SP, an EFSN member, in Stockholm. Of relevance to the EFSN were a comparison of the measures required under different jurisdictions; a report of the Burnley tunnel fire in Australia where the sprinkler deluge system prevented fire spread; an overview of water mist systems in road tunnels; a discussion of the rate of fire growth, speed of fire detection, delay to system release and resulting design fire which should be used to test a fire suppression system; a theoretical paper which suggested water mist droplets would be swept away by ventilation from the fire; two presentations of the results from fire testing of water mist systems in road tunnels (which showed the mist is not swept away); a comparison of the performance and cost of fire suppression against transverse ventilation; a presentation of the results of fire tests with HotFoam, which is a high expansion foam system, on a mock-up of a goods trains; and two presentations on different types of fire detection systems for tunnels. Fire suppression continues to gain acceptance as an appropriate measure for fire protection in tunnels.

SFPE French Chapter

The French Chapter of the SFPE held a study day where French employees of Arup UK presented a fire engineered solution they had prepared for two hotels combined into the same building. The solution was not formally presented to the French authorities for approval but I was concerned that it did not include sprinklers and that the Arup fire engineers would only consider sprinklers as a last resort, preferring structural measures because these do not require maintenance. This confirms our need to educate fire engineers, so that they understand the relative reliabilities, performance and costs of different active and passive fire safety measures.

Local Government Association Workshop

I led a workshop at the spring meeting of the British Local Government Association Fire Conference. The workshop was on sprinklers and the environment. The European Environmental Liability Directive 2004/35/EC is due to be transposed into national law across Europe. It strengthens the principle of the polluter paying to remedy environmental damage, either by paying to clean up the damaged area or by paying to enhance another area if the damaged area cannot be fully cleaned up. Liability is unlimited. At the same time in the UK a recent court case suggests that the standard insurance cover for damage caused to others does not include the costs for clean-up operations. It is interesting that the court case came from a fire in the Bartoline adhesives factory. Members of the LGA are very supportive of sprinklers but are unable to impose their installation. However, they can and do urge the Government to do so. Workshops such as this are raising awareness of the contribution of fire to environmental damage.

NFSN

I attended a meeting of the National Fire Sprinkler Network in Eastbourne where among other things a fire officer presented a conversion a building to apartments with common areas where sprinklers had been imposed as an alternative to passive fire protection measures.

BS 9999

I submitted 34 comments on BS 9999, for which the public comment period closed on 31 March 2008. I am in the committee which will consider the comments, which have come from about 60 responses. The first meeting will be on 29th April.

Next Steps

- 1) Attend CEN TC/191 WG5 TC2 meeting in Milan.
- 2) Follow up the meeting with Commissioner Kuneva and other activities in Brussels.
- 3) Give evidence to the Welsh Assembly on its proposal to require sprinklers in new dwellings.
- 4) Participate in the BS 9999 committee meeting to review the public comments.