



# EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

## **July 2008 Report**

The highlight of July was the workshop of hotel safety. While the workshop was open to cover other safety issues, such as swimming pool accidents, on the day most of the discussion was about fire safety. I spoke at the workshop and suggested two of the three keynote speakers, Sultan Javeri of NFPA and Dieter Nüßler, the President of FEU, the Federation of European Fire Officers' Unions. There is support for a hotel fire Safety Directive from several groups and a certain amount of political support. In the autumn I will pursue this initiative and hold a reception in the European Parliament to raise the profile of sprinklers.

### **European Parliament Hotel Safety Workshop**

The workshop was hosted by Arlene McCarthy MEP, who is the Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Affairs committee within the European Parliament. Several groups including the EU consumer association (ANEC) and the International Federation of Tour Operators (IFTO) called for a Directive on hotel fire safety. I have since been in contact with both of these organisations. I have also submitted proposals to Arlene McCarthy on how to upgrade the 1986 Recommendation to make it flexible for existing hotels through the use of sprinklers. Meanwhile the European Commission has launched a call for tender for the gathering of statistics on hotel fires and other hotel accidents.

### **Reception in European Parliament**

Together with Glyn Ford's office, I have organised a reception in the European Parliament on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Nick Ross, a well-known British TV presenter, will speak at the reception. I have prepared posters to hang in the European Parliament to promote this event.

### **France – Aix-Marseille II**

At the June Council meeting I was instructed to become more active in France and in particular to find a fire-fighter to persuade French fire-fighters of the merits of sprinklers. In July I visited the University of Aix-Marseille II in La Ciotat. The university has a small test hall where sprinkler system demonstrations can be run. It also trains many fire-fighters and so has excellent fire service contacts.

### **France – French Burns Victims' Association**

In July I visited the Association des Brûlés de France (French Burns Victims' Association) to discuss how they could work with us on our campaigns to improve fire safety through the wider use of sprinklers in France. The association was very

interested in working with the EFSN. It has been centrally involved in the campaign to mandate the fitting of smoke detectors in all new and existing French housing, in the course of which it has acquired excellent political and regulatory contacts. Thanks to this campaign the issue of fire safety is now on the political agenda in France. To raise the profile of fire safety still further the association has engaged an eminent French economist to estimate how many people die each year in fires in France. At present there are no accurate statistics and so this will be the first such estimate. The figure is likely to be a multiple of the official figure of less than 500, which is widely believed to be a serious underestimate.

### **Jeanette van Dongen**

Jeanette is involved with the European Trade Union Confederation in Brussels. She is Dutch. I was introduced to her by Jim Mowatt of Unite, a British trade union. In the autumn we will meet again to see how she can help the EFSN in Brussels.

### **Nick Raynsford MP**

With Ronnie King of the NFSN and Stewart Kidd of BAFSA, I met Nick Raynsford MP to discuss how he could help us to communicate the benefits of sprinklers to other Members of Parliament. Nick is a former Fire Minister and while a Minister he introduced several new requirements for sprinklers. We learned that The Treasury (Finance Ministry) is against new requirements to fit sprinklers in buildings, because such requirements are regarded as a burden on the economy. We agreed to meet Nick again in October.

### **2010 Conference**

We have decided to hold the 2010 conference on 27-28 April in Amsterdam. I used web sites to research the possibilities for the relatively few sprinklered hotels in Amsterdam to host the conference. I then contacted three: the Renaissance, The Marriott, and the Holiday Inn. The meeting rooms in The Marriott are too small to host our conference. I suspect that the same is true for The Holiday Inn but am awaiting details. The Holiday Inn is near the RAI Exhibition Centre but that may not be sprinklered. The Renaissance hotel is sprinklered but its conference centre across the road may not be. Other sprinklered hotels are either not in Amsterdam but at the airport and/or are too small. I will visit Amsterdam in August.

### **Training**

NFSA will not host the registration and payment of fees for the EFSN online training seminars so I am working to set this up on the EFSN web site. My web site designer is designing registration pages and a system for me to enter new seminars. He is also going to update the web site to allow me to send out and post news bulletins in French and German, plus add logos, web links and several other features. Meanwhile I have spent considerable time on setting up the means to pay for seminars using Paypal. This is still not working but I hope it will be before the first seminar in September.

### **Thames Gateway**

The British Government is trying to increase the supply of housing and is encouraging large new developments. One is east of London along the Thames and is called the Thames Gateway. Here the plan is to build about 450,000 homes over the next ten years. At the request of the local fire brigades the Government is evaluating whether it would be cost beneficial to fit every home with sprinklers and build fewer fire stations. I attended a meeting with the economists engaged by the Government to perform this study. I suggested that they also look at whether planning gains could be made, so that dead end roads could be longer, roads narrower, hydrants further apart or houses closer together. These measures have paid for sprinklers several times over in Scottsdale by increasing housing density by 4%. The draft report is due in September.

### **London Fire Brigade**

I met London Fire Brigade. They have written to all care homes in London to remind them that they must conduct a fire risk assessment and act upon its findings; and make an emergency plan. The letter refers to two government guidance documents on risk assessments, both of which are positive about sprinklers but which unfortunately do not give any guidance on criteria for when they should be installed. In other countries similar documents recommend sprinklers if it is not possible to guarantee that residents will be evacuated within a certain time, such as five minutes.

### **Next Steps**

- 1) Inspect Renaissance Hotel and RAI in Amsterdam.
- 2) Distribute Backflow Prevention Report.
- 3) Meet Anthony Burd of Communities and Local Government.
- 4) Meet Councillor Brian Coleman, the new Chairman of the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority.
- 5) Run online training course.
- 6) Participate in WG5 in Brussels.
- 7) Participate in European Fire Academy seminar in Brussels.
- 8) Organise European Parliament Reception 17<sup>th</sup> September in Brussels.