



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

January 2009 Report

In January the European Hotel and Restaurant Association presented its plans for a voluntary self-certification scheme for fire safety in hotels. The details have yet to be worked out. Plans to promote sprinklers in France made good progress, with the placement of advertisements for the role of Country Manager, a very positive training seminar with the Paris Fire Brigade and an agreement in principle to introduce a sprinkler module in the French fire officer training programme. The profile of the EFSN continues to grow, with a huge increase in web site traffic.

New Members

Salzgitter Mannesmann (System Virotec) joined the EFSN in January and the Finnish Sprinkler Engineers Society joined in December.

CEN TC/191 WG5 TG 2

Task Group 2 of Working Group 5 of CEN Technical Committee 191 drafts changes to EN 12845, the European standard for the design and installation of sprinkler systems. The first version of EN 12845, which is the current version, is a good start but omits sprinklers developed since the 1970s. It also contains some errors. CEN rules allow three amendments before a new version of the standard must be prepared. Amendments can be introduced relatively quickly. Amendments 1 and 2 to this standard were sent to the national standards bodies last year for a vote with the voting period ending on 21st January 2009. These amendments, which are mainly corrections, are expected to be adopted this year.

Amendment 3 is to include ESFR sprinklers; Control Mode Special Application (including Large Drop) sprinklers; extended coverage sprinklers; some changes to the tables for storage sprinklers; and more detailed specifications for the testing of pumps. It is to be ready by the middle of 2009 to go out for voting. Amendment 3 will be an important update to EN 12845 and bring it closer to a state of the art standard. However, it will not at this stage include residential sprinklers. The Nordic countries have developed a component standard and a design and installation standard for residential sprinklers, in the CEN format but based on NFPA 13R and 13D. These documents are being adopted by the Nordic countries and were presented to Task Group 2 as possible CEN standards.

Hotels Campaign

I and thirty others attended a meeting at the European Commission in Brussels to hear a presentation by the European Hotel and Restaurant Association, HOTREC, for a scheme to introduce better fire safety in European hotels. The HOTREC concept is to

introduce a charter which each national association will commit to encourage its members to sign. Signatory hotels will undergo a third party inspection and will have to demonstrate adequate fire safety through a combination of management processes, structural fire safety and installed fire safety systems. There will be guidance for the inspectors to ensure some consistency.

As a representative from the European Commission put it, at present all we have is a number of empty boxes. The details of the scheme and its uptake will determine its effect. Accor and Rezidor are committed to the scheme and if a number of other large chains adopt it, peer pressure may work on smaller hotel organisations. The European Federation of Tour Operators suggested that it could make compliance with the charter a contractual clause. Trade union representatives were also supportive.

The next meeting will be in June, by which time HOTREC is to have worked out the details of the charter and have prepared a first draft of a guidance document for the third party inspectors to follow. Since so many existing European hotels have poor fire safety, and an over-reliance on management is unrealistic in hotels with few or no staff on duty at night, sprinklers are a low cost way to achieve acceptable safety. It remains to be seen if this argument will be accepted. Self-certification schemes are favoured by those looking for a low cost approach to regulation but they have a mixed record of success. When it comes to hotel fire safety, it is likely that the most dangerous hotels will not participate in the scheme.

France

The EFSN Council has instructed me to increase efforts in France, to try to effect change. Funds are available to pay someone to bring the case for sprinklers to the French fire service and others of influence in the French fire safety community. In January I organised the placement of advertisements in the 2nd February edition of the Face au Risque weekly newsletter and in the March/April edition of Soldats du Feu.

I also organised a visit to the Paris Fire Brigade to give some basic training in sprinklers. Thirty officers attended. I was supported by Brendan MacGrath of FM Global, Jean-Claude Entz of Viking and Youcef Ouammou of Vinci, the largest French installer. Afterwards we had a discussion with management of the Paris Fire Brigade Prevention Office and of the national fire officer training school in Paris, ENSOSP. We agreed to repeat the seminar at ENSOSP in March and at that time to discuss inclusion of a sprinkler module in the French fire officer training programme. This is very encouraging.

Welsh Legislative Competence Order

I attended a meeting in the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff to discuss progress and next steps for the Legislative Competence Order that would give the Welsh Assembly the power to introduce a measure requiring the fitting of sprinklers in all new housing in Wales. There are still many steps in the complicated process. Currently the proposal is with civil servants in London for them to give an opinion to their Minister.

Baroness Royall

Through Glyn Ford MEP I met Baroness Royall, the Leader of the House of Lords in the British Parliament. She now knows more about sprinklers and was very supportive of our efforts to promote them in the UK and the rest of Europe. Earlier in her career she was an adviser in Brussels to Neil Kinnock, a former Vice-President of the European Commission. While Baroness Royall will not initiate legislation in favour of sprinklers she will see any such legislation drafted by others and can help or hinder its progress. An example would be the Welsh Legislative Competence Order, which must be approved by the House of Lords. It is therefore important that someone as well-connected as Baroness Royall is on our side.

LFEPA

Due to a timetable clash with the hotels meeting in Brussels I was unable to give a presentation to the elected Leaders of the London Boroughs. This was a long-standing commitment arranged with the Chairman of the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority, to whom I was introduced by Edward Lister, a member of the EFSN Council. Ronnie King of the National Fire Sprinkler Network kindly gave the presentation that I had prepared and reports that it was well-received, with Councillors keen to learn how they could use sprinklers to improve fire safety in their boroughs.

Online Seminars

On Monday, 12th January Brendan MacGrath of FM Global gave an online seminar on “ESFR Sprinklers”. This was the fifth online seminar and had the highest attendance so far. The next seminar will be at 15:00 Central European Time (14:00 UK time) on Monday, 9th February and will be given by Russ Fleming of NFSA on Sprinkler Systems in Earthquake Zones. Full details of all the seminars are on www.eurosprinkler.org. Participants can register and pay online using a credit card. Seminars cost €200 for non-members and €100 for EFSN members. All you need is an internet connection to participate. At the EFSN Technical Committee meeting we agreed to add two more seminars. The full list of seminars is:

- Introduction to Sprinklers
- Sprinkler System Hydraulics
- Commodity Classification
- General Storage
- ESFR Sprinkler Systems
- Design of Sprinkler Systems in Earthquake Zones
- High Rise Building Fire Sprinkler Protection
- Piping for Sprinkler Systems
- Pumps for Sprinkler Systems

Web Site Success

The new web site has generated a large increase in traffic, so much so that the designer wishes to use it as a reference. Over the past 30 days traffic has increased by 78% compared to a year ago and there were over 1,000 visits from 67 countries. I believe that the translations of news bulletins have helped to generate new traffic, with 92% of the French visits and 86% of the German visits being new.

Next Steps

- 1) Participate in NFPA 502 Committee meeting in San Antonio.
- 2) Participate in APICI/NFPA conference in Madrid.
- 3) Prepare for EU Sprinkler Forum Meeting in Strasbourg on 10th March.
- 4) Review applications for French Country Manager and plan interviews.