



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

March 2009 Report

Highlights in March were the Annual General Meeting, held in Paris, and a meeting in Strasbourg of the EU Sprinkler Forum which was attended by MEPs and Meglena Kuneva, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs. At a meeting with the French Fire Brigade training school in Paris we agreed the format of sprinkler system seminars, which will last two days and be offered by the school from September 2009.

Annual General Meeting

On 31st March 2009 the EFSN held its sixth Annual General Meeting, this time in Paris. Despite the tough economic times we had the same number of participants as last year. Among the official proceedings, Iain Cox representing the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Bo Hjort representing Sprinklerfrämjandet were elected to the EFSN Council. Karl-Heinz Stahl of VdS was re-elected for a second term. The members also voted in favour of the engagement of Keith MacGillivray to coordinate sprinkler campaigns in Scotland. Jesús de la Torre of Anber Globe gave a presentation on how Spain could set up a sprinkler network with 50% funding from the IFSA via the EFSN. The members voted in favour of the plan and instructed me to make a request for funds from the IFSA next month for this purpose.

To give added value to the day we agreed at the last Council meeting to hold a small seminar in the afternoon. Excellent presentations were given by Bill Feeley, Chief Fire Officer of Kent Fire & Rescue Service, on the latest Channel Tunnel fire, which cost insurers over €480 million; and by Eric Cesmat of the Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment on the French fire safety building regulations and the role of sprinklers within them.

Meeting with Commissioner Kuneva

On 10th March the EU Sprinkler Forum met in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Five MEPs attended, as did Meglena Kuneva, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs. The meeting discussed fire statistics and in particular the voluntary fire safety initiative from the hotel sector. Glyn Ford MEP and others expressed their concerns that a voluntary scheme may not bring about real improvement. As an alternative we presented Commissioner Kuneva with a draft Directive. She could not commit to take this draft forward, since European Parliamentary elections will be held in June and a new Commission appointed after that. Thus she may not be in her current position for more than a few months. However, she did agree to have her officials look at the draft and comment on it.

ENSOSP

In March I visited the French fire brigade training school, ENSOSP, at its Paris site. I was accompanied by Youcef Ouammou of Vinci, Brendan MacGrath and David Hourtolou of FM Global and Jean-Claude Entz of Viking. We met Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Paul Spiess of the Paris Fire Brigade, who is seconded to run the Paris site of ENSOSP, and Lieutenant-Colonel Olivier Gaudard of the Paris Fire Brigade, who runs its prevention department which enforces the fire safety building code in the Paris area and approves any project-specific deviations.

The Paris site trains senior fire brigade officers from all over France. We discovered that senior fire brigade officers only receive 30 minutes of sprinkler training and that other ranks receive none at all. We therefore agreed to set up a two-day training module on sprinklers, to be run by ENSOSP and endorsed by the French government. Training would mainly be given by EFSN members, although the Paris fire brigade would give input on fire brigade interventions in sprinklered buildings. Over time more training of fire officers on how sprinklers work will lead to a change in how they are viewed in France. This initiative is therefore a central part of our strategy to bring about change in France.

Political Lobbying in France

I discussed with Paul Villain of the French Burns Victims' Association how to use his contacts to bring political attention to the need for sprinklers. He has been very involved with French campaigns for smoke detectors in homes and fire retardants in furniture and sees sprinklers as another tool to reduce fire deaths and injuries. I have written an article which will appear in the April edition of his association's magazine. After Easter he and I will meet a lobbyist he has used in the past to raise issues in France.

NFSN

I attended the Annual General Meeting of the National Fire Sprinkler Network, which includes every British fire brigade among its members. Ronnie King of the NFSN is coordinating our lobbying efforts to persuade the British water companies to allow sprinkler systems to be connected to the mains. Some allow this and some do not; the conditions for connections vary widely as do the charges imposed. We drafted a proposed change to the water regulations to include formal recognition of sprinklers. These regulations are undergoing a review so there is an opportunity to make a step change in the status of sprinklers.

Online Seminars

On Monday, 9th March Brendan MacGrath of FM Global gave an online seminar on "High-Rise Building Fire Sprinkler Protection". This was the seventh online seminar. Since the EFSN was formed six years ago about half of the countries in Europe have introduced new requirements to fit sprinklers in high-rise buildings. There was considerable interest in this seminar. The next seminar will be at 15:00 Central European Time (14:00 UK time) on Monday, 20th April and will be given by Sinikka Freidhof of Lubrizol and Rick van Meesen on Anvil on "Piping for Sprinkler Systems". Sinikka will cover CPVC and has her part of the seminar registered for

CPD hours, while Rick will cover mechanical piping systems. 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. 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

Next Steps

- 1) EFSN Technical Committee meeting in Paris.
- 2) IFSA meeting in Orlando.
- 3) Meet Sadiq Khan, British Fire Minister.
- 4) Presentation in Greece on the need for sprinklers to protect the disabled.