



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

July 2009 Report

In July a tragedy in London which led to the deaths of six people, including three children caused a media and political storm. I have had contact with several politicians and am urging them to ask whether sprinklers could have prevented the tragedy. Already there is some political support for sprinklers to be required in all new housing, with over 40 Members of Parliament signing a petition to that effect.

Fatal High-Rise Fire

On 3rd July a fire in a 14 storey high-rise social housing block in London killed six people, including three children. The fire started in the afternoon and although people were awake they were unable to get out of the building because fire and smoke had spread through it, including up the sole staircase. I wrote letters to national and local politicians, as well as to national newspapers. I also spoke to certain politicians, officials and to the London Fire Brigade, which has been supportive of sprinklers for many years. I had replies from Harriet Harman, who is the local Member of Parliament and the Deputy Leader of the governing Labour Party; from the Chairman of London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority; and from members of the Greater London Authority. All were interested to hear that sprinklers could have prevented this tragedy. Harriet Harman and members of the GLA are calling for a public enquiry. There are hundreds of buildings of this design in London. It is only since 2007 that new residential buildings higher than 30m, which is about 10 storeys, have had to be fitted with sprinklers. We will push for a retrofit programme.

Early Day Motion

A few days after the London fire a Member of Parliament submitted an Early Day Motion calling for sprinklers in all new housing. An Early Day Motion is a kind of petition by Members of Parliament and if enough of them sign it the Government would normally add the initiative to the legislative programme. In this case the Parliamentary session ends on 21 July so the EDM will not get enough signatures in time. However, its sponsors intend to submit a similar EDM soon after the next Parliamentary session begins on 12 October.

French Country Manager

Contractual details have now been agreed with René Pons and he has begun to make preparations for his start in September. I have called a meeting with French-speaking members of the EFSN in Paris on 9th September, so that they can meet René exchange contacts and put forward suggestions. FM Global has kindly offered to host the meeting at its offices in La Défense. Apart from plans for René to influence the consensus regarding sprinklers in the French fire safety community, we will also

discuss political lobbying. In July I met a French lobbyist who has been very effective in winning political support for flame retardants and smoke detection in France. The French Burns Victims' Association is also supportive.

Glyn Ford

In June Glyn Ford did not get re-elected as a Member of the European Parliament. Over the past five years has helped us to raise the profile of fire and sprinklers in the European Parliament and European Commission. The HOTREC hotel fire safety initiative is one consequence; another is an initiative to collect fire safety statistics in a consistent manner across Europe. Glyn also helped us to get fire safety and sprinklers considered for health and safety in the workplace. Subject to clarification of his plans for us, the EFSN Council has agreed that we will pay Glyn to continue to help the EFSN spread its message in the European Parliament. Glyn was a Member of the European Parliament for 25 years so he knows the system very well and has many contacts with politicians and officials.

ANEC

ANEC is the European Consumers' Association. It has seen my comments on the HOTREC hotel fire safety initiative and supports them. It has written to me to ask for a meeting to coordinate a response.

Fire Safety Engineering

CEN TC/127 Task Group 1 is to work on fire safety engineering. My request to join this task group has been successful. It is important that any standards which emerge to give guidance on fire safety engineering should recognise and give appropriate credit to sprinklers.

News Bulletins in Dutch and Spanish

In July I began to send out news bulletins in Dutch and Spanish, to add to English, French and German. The web site now shows the news bulletins in all five languages.

2010 Conference

Over half of our preferred speakers for the conference have already confirmed their availability. A link and a notice are now up on the web site. I will add to this over the summer and in the autumn, so that it will be possible to register and pay online from late autumn.

IFP Magazine

I wrote an article, "Sprinklers as a Core Fire Safety Measure" for International Fire Prevention magazine. The article will appear in the autumn.

Next Steps

- 1) Conclude arrangements with Glyn Ford.
- 2) Continue preparations for the 2010 conference.
- 3) Meet European Consumers' Association ANEC to discuss response to HOTREC hotel fire safety initiative.
- 4) Finalise new programme of online seminars.
- 5) Attend EFSN Technical Committee meeting in Brussels in September.
- 6) Coordinate French campaign meeting in Paris in September.