



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

September 2009 Report

September was a very busy month. The highlight was the first meeting of our French network, where René Pons made introductions and we discussed how to campaign for sprinklers in France. It was also a standards month, with several CEN meetings and a meeting of NFPA 502. All are progressing well, with new technologies becoming recognised by CEN; work on new CEN product standards being launched; CEN fire engineering exploring how to recognise sprinklers; and incentives for sprinkler in the new version of the NFPA 502 tunnel standard.

René Pons

René Pons had an excellent first month beginning with participation in the Technical Committee meeting in Brussels. In Paris FM Global kindly hosted a meeting, held in French, at which 14 EFSN members and associates discussed and agreed strategy, exchanged information and suggested initial activities. Our French campaigns will focus on care homes and hotels. We will also look at the proposed new university cities. In September René visited the Laboratoire Central de la Préfecture de Police de Paris, which investigates fires and carries out research for the government to aid the understanding of fire. He also attended a conference organised by the Centre Scientifique et Technique du Bâtiment, a laboratory with close government ties. René will seek to meet people who influence fire safety thinking in France, to offer local training to fire services and to find new members to support our French campaigns.

EFSN Technical Committee Meeting

At the Technical Committee meeting we agreed a new programme of online training seminars, in French, German and Spanish. The committee also gave input to the proposed 2010 conference programme. We agreed that each six months a sub-committee would field technical questions from members. This scheme will be launched in October.

CEN TC/191

I attended CEN Technical Committee 191 Working Group 5, where we agreed which new work items we would request at the plenary of TC/191. All were granted at the plenary, which I also attended. Specifically, work items were agreed for:

- EN 12259 Part 2 – wet alarm valves
- EN 12259 Part 3 – dry alarm valves
- EN 12259 Part 6 – pipe couplings
- EN 12259 Part 8 – pressure switches

- EN 12259 Part 9 – deluge valves. The document is expected to be ready by November 2009.
- EN 12259 Part 12 – sprinkler pumps. This document is now ready to go to the national standards bodies for their comments. WG 5 was asked to propose a new Part 13 for sprinkler system pump sets.
- TS 14972 Water Mist – deep fat fryers. This will go for a ballot of the national standards bodies. At the next meeting of WG5 in September 2010, we will discuss whether this Technical Specification 14972 should become a European Standard. Task Group 3 of Working Group 5 is also looking at water mist system components. Once the scope of this work is better defined it will become clearer whether a separate Technical Specification is needed.

I also attended Task Group 2 of TC/191 Working Group 5, where we went through the details of how to update EN 12845 to include CMSA sprinklers. At the next meeting in February we will work on EFSR sprinklers.

CEN TC/127 TG1 Fire Engineering

I attended the first meeting of CEN Technical Committee 127 Task Group 1, which is to work on a standard for fire engineering. ISO is already far advanced in this area, with multiple parts of ISO 23932 covering different aspects of fire engineering. The committee agreed it should not duplicate the ISO work but add value in areas that are not addressed by ISO. Specifically, it will request to the plenary of TC/127 that it first work on:

- Assessment methods and acceptance criteria: when to use deterministic or probabilistic methods, and which performance acceptance criteria to use
- Design fire scenarios: how to select design fire scenarios and fire size, bringing in some guidance on fire scenarios for common hazards
- How to use fire engineering to demonstrate equivalence to a prescriptive standard including the trade-off between active and passive fire protection

Fire engineering opens up prescriptive fire safety codes, which in Europe rarely call for sprinklers, to alternative approaches which often include sprinklers.

HOTREC Hotel Fire Safety Initiative

After pressure which we organised in the European Parliament the European Commission applied pressure to the European hotel industry to propose a voluntary fire safety scheme. HOTREC, the European hotel association, has come up with a scheme but not proposed a way for individual hotels to sign up to it and to be seen to sign up to it. I have suggested that the Commission set up a database much as is done by FEMA in the US. EFSN and several other stakeholders consulted by HOTREC have expressed their concern at this fundamental flaw. We are now seeking a meeting with the Commissioner.

NFPA 502

I attended the final committee meeting in this revision cycle of NFPA 502, which covers fire safety in tunnels, bridges and related structures. In this cycle the following changes have been introduced to encourage the use of water-based fire-fighting systems (FFS):

- FFS is now conditionally mandatory (which means an engineering analysis is required) in tunnels longer than 914m or with a high peak traffic flow
- Means must be included to protect the tunnel from structural collapse and to minimise economic impact (the committee intent is that FFS can be part of those means but this is not stated)
- An engineering analysis to determine the temperature-time curve can allow FFS to modify the curve (again this is the committee intent but it is not stated in the main body of the text, only in an annex related to another section)
- There is a new chapter for FFS. In the past FFS was covered in an annex. The new chapter removes all the old negative references to sprinklers, gives a balanced summary of the benefits of FFS, introduces four categories of FFS based on their performance and calls for a performance evaluation of any proposed FFS using fire test protocols.
- In an annex it is stated that FFS can be used to ensure that the operational temperature limits of fans are not exceeded

Combined with the changes in the previous cycle we are now getting closer to a fair representation of the benefits of FFS in tunnels. NFPA 502 and PIARC have moved together and if this continues we will see increased incentives for fire suppression in PIARC, which is used in Europe. I cannot get nominated to PIARC so NFPA is an alternative way to influence it. There are several tunnel projects under consideration in Europe at present, so this is set to become an interesting market.

Eurofire

I gave a presentation at this conference in Bruges on 24 September. The conference was hosted by NFPA, SFPE and other organisations. Among the attendees were senior fire officers from Belgium, France and the UK. A speaker from Centerparcs showed that sprinklers are a core part of that company's fire safety philosophy. There were also some interesting presentations from BRE on its government-sponsored car park fire tests and from Efectis on an actual car park fire and the mechanism of concrete cracking in tunnel fires. During the conference I received an update on the Polish fire safety code, which I will place on the web site.

London Fatal High-Rise Fire

Following the fatal high-rise apartment building fire in July, the BBC has discovered that there are hundreds of high-rise buildings in London without a fire risk assessment, which is a legal requirement, or which are classed as high risk. We will attempt to contact the BBC journalists to make them aware of the role sprinklers could play in making these buildings safer.

Meanwhile I have written to Members of Parliament about this fire to advise them that for a relatively small investment it could have been prevented.

Sustainable Homes

The British Government has proposed a way for homes to be graded according to their environmental impact. The scheme gives a builder credit for installing a washing line but does not even mention measures to prevent fire from destroying the home. I

attended a meeting with all sectors of the construction industry and will propose changes to see fire addressed.

Online Seminars

On Monday, 14th September I gave the first in our new series of online seminars. The title was, appropriately, “An Introduction to Sprinklers”. The next seminar will be given on Friday, 16th October in French by Pascal Pfeiffer of AXA and will cover “Commodity Classification”. It will start at 15:00 Central European Time and last for 90 minutes. All you need is an internet connection and if you show the slides on a screen you can have several people take part at the same location. To register for this seminar go to www.eurosprinkler.org and click on “Seminars”. Registration is €100 for EFSN members and €200 for non-members. Online training is an efficient, low cost way to learn. There are no travel costs and the time is all spent on training.

Next Steps

- 1) Support René Pons in France with his initial activities.
- 2) Encourage HOTREC to propose how its scheme could be implemented.
- 3) Continue preparations for the 2010 conference.
- 4) Launch EFSN technical support network.
- 5) Discuss with the Spanish sprinkler industry plans to find a Country Manager.