



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

October 2009 Report

In October I met Meglena Kuneva, European Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, to ask her to apply pressure to the hotel industry to make its proposed voluntary fire safety scheme transparent to individual hotels. She agreed to do so. Meanwhile our French activities made good progress and René increased his contact base. I attended a seminar where some influential research on car park fire safety was presented. In Sweden the government announced that it will require sprinklers in new care homes and is under pressure to extend the requirement to existing care homes. All of these subjects will be presented in more detail by the speakers at Brussels 2010, for which registration will go live in November.

HOTREC Hotel Fire Safety Initiative

Last month I reported that several of the stakeholders participating in the HOTREC hotel fire safety project wished to see Meglena Kuneva, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, to raise our concerns about the direction the project was taking. Glyn Ford briefed two Members of the European Parliament, Arlene McCarthy and Linda McAvan. They then requested and were given a meeting in Strasburg, at which I joined them, as did a representative of ANEC, the Consumer Voice in Standardisation. HOTREC, which is the European hotel association, has proposed a charter which it will invite its national member associations to sign. A signatory national association commits to encouraging its member hotels to perform certain activities, such as training and risk assessments. The MEPs, ANEC, Tour Operators, EFSN and others are calling for the scheme to identify individual participating hotels. The Commissioner agreed that this was necessary and said she would write to HOTREC to emphasise that, reinforcing a previous communication from her officials. HOTREC will propose the flawed scheme to its members on 6 November and stakeholders will meet HOTREC at the European Commission offices in Brussels on 19 November to discuss next steps. The key step will be how to roll out the scheme to individual hotels. HOTREC does not wish to take on this task, nor, confirmed Meglena Kuneva, does the European Commission. We are therefore encouraged to find a third party.

I have been in contact with several members of the HOTREC working group and the Stakeholder Consultative Committee. Together we have found a proposal to identify hotels participating in the HOTREC scheme and will offer it as an option at the meeting on 19th November. If we can make this scheme work it will increase the use of sprinklers in European hotels, since the scheme includes a requirement for a third party risk assessment every three years. To ensure that the risk assessment is conducted in a consistent manner across Europe HOTREC has prepared a guidance document, which among other things recognises the benefits of sprinklers.

France

In October René Pons and I, joined by representatives from FM Global, Tyco and Vinci met Lt. Col. Jean-Paul Spiess, who heads the French Fire Officer Training School in Paris. We agreed the contents of the two-day government-sponsored sprinkler system training seminars to be run in June and November 2010. Since the meeting René has worked on the details of the system design, installation and maintenance modules he and Youcef Ouammou of Vinci will present. Tyco will cover water mist; FM Global will cover insurance; and Viking will cover the sprinklers and valves. The Paris fire brigade will cover the regulatory aspects and there will be a site visit. As more French fire officers learn about sprinklers we expect that they will be seen favourably in France.

Meanwhile René attended the annual French Fire Brigade conference, which this year was held in St Etienne. He made some useful contacts and next year we may have a stand at the event.

To bring sprinklers to local politicians we need to organise some parallel burn demonstrations and film them to show at meetings around the country. René through family connections has identified some houses in Biarritz which are scheduled for demolition. He has been in contact with the local authorities and I have written to the Mayor to ask for permission to run a demonstration.

The next meeting of the French Sprinkler Network will be held at CNPP offices in Paris on 26th January. Details will be circulated in November to those who were invited to the September meeting. Please contact me if you were not invited and would like to be added to the list. The meeting will be held in French.

Car Parks

I attended a seminar run by the Building Research Establishment north of London, at which the results of a three-year government-sponsored study on car park fire safety were presented. An official report is expected to be published on the government web site in January. 12 fire tests were run, using relatively new cars so that the data would be relevant to the cars in British car parks today. Existing fire safety guidance is based on fire tests run in the 1960s using cars built in the 1940s. As well as fire tests the researchers gathered and analysed statistical data on car park fires, and modelled the growth in heat release rate using data from real fires. Some tests were also run using sprinklers, including one paid by the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association on car park stackers. The key findings were:

- Fires can spread from one car to another in a car park, in some cases jumping over 5 metres between cars
- Sprinklers prevent fire spread between cars
- The second car burns faster than the first and the third faster still
- As a result the heat release rate for a car park fire is higher than previously assumed in the British Standard for ventilation, where it is 8MW for unsprinklered fires. A figure of at least 20MW looks more realistic, although in one recent real car park fire the researchers calculated a heat release rate of 60MW. Similarly the sprinklered heat release rate in the British Standard should be much less than the currently assumed 4MW. The chairman of the ventilation committee said that changes must be made to the standard.

- The rate of fire injuries from fires in car parks below accommodation is relatively high compared to other types of buildings
- A sprinkler system using conventional sprinklers and OH density as in EN 12845 is able to prevent fire spread in a car park stacker
- In many cases it will be too dangerous for fire-fighters to enter a stacker car park when it is on fire

This research will lead to more widespread use of sprinklers in car parks in the UK, and it could be used as a basis to make changes in other countries.

Swedish Visit

Jan Wisén, the Stockholm Fire Chief, and Gösta Holmstedt of Sprinklerfrämjandet, the Swedish Sprinkler Association and EFSN member, came to the UK to discover what progress is being made with residential sprinklers. I arranged for them to visit London Fire Brigade and Studley Green, a village where 212 social houses were built and fitted with sprinklers ten years ago. Steve Turek, the Assistant Commissioner of London Fire Brigade, discussed incentives for residential sprinklers in the UK as well as his native New Zealand and exchanged information on statistics. Andy Goves, the Fire Chief for Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service, welcomed us to Studley Green where the local housing association explained how the project was born. We heard of the positive experience and lessons learnt, toured the village and visited one of the houses. Jan and Gösta found the visit and meetings very useful and supportive of their campaigns in Sweden. Back in December 2008 I visited Jan and Gösta in Stockholm to discuss campaign plans, and in June this year I attended a seminar by the Stockholm Fire Brigade to promote the need for sprinklers in care homes. Jan and Gösta have since been campaigning behind the scenes and in October the Swedish government announced that it is about to require sprinklers in new care homes. Jan and Gösta will continue the campaign to include existing care homes. They are supported by the media: a prime-time one-hour television investigative programme called for sprinklers in existing care homes.

New Member

In October AWL Techniek, a Dutch supplier of sprinkler pipe welding machines, joined the EFSN.

CEN TC/191

I attended the plenary meeting in Paris of CEN Technical Committee 191, which is responsible for fixed fire-fighting system standards. In September Working Group 5 had met to agree what mandates it would seek as part of its ongoing work on the development of sprinkler system and sprinkler component standards. All the requests were granted.

Brussels 2010 International Fire Sprinkler Conference

In October I completed the registration materials for the Brussels 2010 Conference. The online registration pages will go live at the beginning of November.

Next Steps

- 1) Announce the opening of registration for the 2010 conference.
- 2) Participate in a round-table in the House of Lords on future fire safety measures.
- 3) Attend the European Fire Academy meeting in Berlin.
- 4) Participate in the HOTREC Stakeholder Consultation Group meeting in Brussels.
- 5) Launch the EFSN technical support network.
- 6) Attend the National Fire Sprinkler Network meeting at Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service on 25th November to introduce René Pons and give him some ideas.
- 7) Prepare for the EFSN Council meeting on 8th December.
- 8) Discuss with the Spanish sprinkler industry plans to find a Country Manager.