



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

November 2009 Report

The highlight of November was the launch of the Brussels 2010 conference registration package on the EFSN web site. Registrations have begun and there is great interest. A lowlight was the rejection by the European hotel association, HOTREC, of a hotel fire safety charter, proposed by its board. At a national level for the first time we will hold a Belgian meeting to discuss how to respond to the recent fatal care home fires in Belgium.

Brussels 2010

In November the conference registration package went live on the EFSN web site, www.eurosprinkler.org Within hours of the announcement registrations had begun. There has been considerable interest, not just in registration but also for advertisements in the conference programme and table-top exhibits at the networking event on the first evening. Despite the difficult economic conditions we will have strong participation.

HOTREC Hotel Fire Safety Initiative

In November the national associations which form the membership of HOTREC, the European hotel association, voted against the introduction of a hotel fire safety charter. It did endorse the supporting methodology to assess hotel fire safety. This was very disappointing and a set-back not just for hotel fire safety and sprinklers but also for the European Commission, which had hoped to show a successful example of self-regulation by a major European industry. It was also an embarrassment for the elected board of HOTREC, which had devised the charter and recommended it to HOTREC members. Many of us continue to believe that the hotel industry will only respond to legislation when it comes to fire safety.

On a positive note, the representatives of Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK said that their national associations would introduce the charter. I have arranged to meet the British Hospitality Association in December to see how this could be done. Stewart Kidd of BAFSA, who over the years has done a lot of work in the field of hotel fire safety for tour operators and others, will join me. Potentially if we can make the charter work in 6 countries, other national associations will join it.

In parallel we are exploring the introduction of a European Directive on hotel fire safety. I have circulated a draft based on the 1986 European Recommendation on hotel fire safety in existing hotels to MEPs and officials in Brussels. In December I will meet Commissioner Kuneva to discuss it. I also hope to meet MEPs to secure their support. On 1 February Commissioner Kuneva will be replaced in the new European Commission by John Dalli of Malta. He is a centre-right politician and

current Maltese Minister for Social Policy. I will seek to meet him as soon as possible and persuade MEPs to ask questions about fire safety during his confirmation hearing.

European Fire Academy

In November I attended a meeting of the European Fire Academy, which was set up by Fire Chiefs from several European countries and is an opportunity to make the case for sprinklers and make useful contacts. At the meeting I arranged for René Pons and myself to meet Colonel Pascal LePrince of the Val d'Oise fire brigade west of Paris, in December. I also learned of Dutch plans to promote sprinklers as an alternative in new, large housing developments to investment in new fire stations.

France

In November René Pons worked with Youcef Ouammou of Vinci to prepare several sprinkler training modules for ENSOSP, the French fire officer training school. He also discussed with officials in Biarritz a possible parallel burn demonstration in housing scheduled for demolition.

René joined me at the November meeting of the National Fire Sprinkler Network, NFSN, which was hosted by Staffordshire Fire & Rescue service. 46 people attended, mainly from the fire service, and René picked up many ideas on how to generate fire service support in France.

The next meeting of the French Sprinkler Network will be held at CNPP offices in Paris on 26th January. René has invited those who attended or had expressed an interest in attending 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.

UK

I attended a round table in the House of Commons, where I asked whether environmental considerations could be a basis for introducing new fire safety requirements in buildings such as warehouses. The answer was yes. British governments have refused to consider the imposition of sprinklers in warehouses to save property or the wider economy, but they will consider this measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of fire on the environment.

The Welsh Legislative Competence Order has been approved by the national parliament in London, meaning that the Welsh Assembly may now start work on a Welsh legislative measure to require sprinklers in all new housing in Wales. There is strong, broad political support so we are confident this will happen in 2010.

I and others have written again to government ministers in London to ask that they consider sprinklers as a means to make old high-rise buildings safe from fire. This is in response to the fire in Lakanal House, a social housing block, in London in July where six people died. Behind the scenes we are aware that civil servants are considering how to respond. Meanwhile journalists scented a scandal, in that fire safety was inadequate in the building and is inadequate in others like it. At my suggestion Ronnie King of the NFSN has been in contact with the journalists and has gained their

interest. In December Ronnie will attend the opening of the inquest into the deaths, to register a wish to give evidence.

There will be a general election in the UK next year, probably in May, resulting in a record number of new Members of Parliament and very probably a new government. We are considering how to reach the candidates during the election campaign.

Belgium

On behalf of the EFSN Sinikka Freidhof has organised a meeting of our Belgian members at Lubrizol offices in Brussels. It will be on 14 January and will discuss how to respond to the fatal care homes fires in Melle and Genappe. In addition to our Belgian members I have arranged for others with good contacts to attend, including representatives of the Belgian Burns Victims' Association.

New Members

In November three new companies joined the EFSN:

- AON, an insurer broker
- International Fire Safety Consultants, an American fire safety consultancy
- VSH Fittings, a Dutch manufacturer of pipe fittings

A list of all EFSN members and links to their web sites is on www.eurosprinkler.org under "Membership".

Next Steps

- 1) Meet Peter Skinner MEP, other MEPs and officials in Brussels.
- 2) Promote Brussels 2010 conference: seek registrations, advertisers, exhibitors and sponsors.
- 3) René Pons meet prospective French EFSN members and attend a French seminar on wooden buildings.
- 4) With René meet Colonel Pascal LePrince of Val d'Oise fire brigade.
- 5) Participate in EFSN council meeting and IFSA board meeting.
- 6) Attend Parliamentary launch of Association of British Insurers' fire safety report.
- 7) Meet Commissioner Kuneva in Brussels to discuss hotel fire safety.
- 8) Lead Belgian fire sprinkler network meeting in Brussels.
- 9) Meet British Hospitality Association to discuss HOTREC implementation.