



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

January 2010 Report

January was unusually busy. The Brussels conference continued to attract many new registrations. We held our second meeting of the French sprinkler network, where interest is growing and our networking is improving. Meanwhile in the UK several initiatives made promising progress.

Brussels 2010

Registrations for Brussels 2010 continued to come in strongly in January with over 100 people already registered and many more yet to register who will certainly be present. All the stand spaces have been taken and there is a waiting list for cancellations. There are a record number of advertisers for the conference programme and the gala dinner looks likely to be a sell out. While the economic climate is tough many recognise that the medium- and long-term outlooks for sprinklers are bright.

New Members

I am delighted to report that the Belgian sprinkler contractor AquaSecurity and the insurance company Generali joined the EFSN in January. A number of other companies have expressed an interest and I expect we will continue to gain one new member each month.

European Lobbying

In January I attended a reception in the European Parliament organised by FOCOPE, the Forum for the Construction Industry in the European Parliament. One of the MEPs I met, Paul Rübiger, has a family business in Austria which is protected with sprinklers! The European Commission has contracted a consultancy, Golder Associates, to study the collection of European fire statistics. The report should be finalised in the spring.

French Network meeting

16 people attended the second French network meeting, which was held at CNPP offices on 26 January. Colonel Philippe Duflos of the Val d'Oise fire Service, who is also a member of the Commission Centrale de Sécurité was present and provided an insight into the work of that committee. The French fire safety code for public buildings is expected to be revised this year but as yet a committee has not been formed. This could be an opportunity to look at fire safety in underground car parks, in view of the recent history of major fires. He also indicated that the commissions de sécurité in each département could consider whether to accept a sprinkler system as a compensatory fire safety measure in small hotels.

Paul Villain of the Association des Brûlés de France said that in June his association will present its study of the costs of the victims of fire in France.

A committee is looking at fire safety in refrigerated warehouses. These are currently exempt from the requirement to fit sprinklers in warehouses. A fire-fighter died in a fire in a refrigerated warehouse in January, which may influence the debate.

René is working to run a parallel burn demonstration in Biarritz in April.

There are plans to run some full-scale fire suppression tests for the Mont Blanc tunnel but the French and Italian governments must first approve the test programme. *If you would like to attend the next meeting or would like a copy of the minutes, which are in French, please contact me.*

Scotland – BAFSA/IFE Conference in Edinburgh

Keith MacGillivray, whose part-time work for the sprinkler cause in Scotland is itself partly paid by the EFSN, organised a seminar in Edinburgh in January. BAFSA and the Institution of Fire Engineers jointly hosted the free seminar, which was held in the fully-sprinklered National Library of Scotland. 120 people attended the seminar, which was opened with a speech by the Scottish Minister. He was unusually well-briefed on the sprinkler campaign and promised to open a dialogue to see how sprinklers could be used more widely in Scotland to help reduce the burden of fire.

Wales

The Welsh Legislative Competence Order, under which the British government in London will give the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff the power to introduce a measure to require that sprinklers be fitted in all new housing, made progress in January. Formal transfer of the power is expected in March. The Welsh Assembly will then have six months to pass a measure. I attended a meeting in the Welsh Assembly to help draft the measure. A large social housing association was present, as was the Federation of Master Builders, both of which have accepted that all new housing in Wales will soon be sprinklered.

England

Following the high-rise fire in London in July, in which six people died, we have campaigned to have it recognised that sprinklers are a cost-effective means to make such buildings safe from fire. In January we met a senior civil servant and had a very open, positive discussion. We agreed that we would draft a proposal for the government to engage an independent consultant to look at the feasibility of fitting sprinklers in an existing high-rise social housing building. If the study indicated it is feasible, the next step would be to fit sprinklers in one building, collect and disseminate the learning. Our proposal was submitted in January. In February we will ask the government for its reaction.

Separately the government presented to us the results of a study of the economic case for fitting sprinklers in the Thames Gateway. This is an area east of London where 160,000 new homes are to be built by 2020. We had argued it may be cheaper to fit

them with sprinklers than to build new fire stations. The government study found that there was no need for any new fire stations even without sprinklers because the homes are to go in areas that already have fire stations. This meant that sprinklers could not be used to offset the cost of fire cover.

TC/127 Task Group 1

I attended a meeting of this task group, which is working on documents to codify fire engineering for Europe. We agreed to prioritise three areas: assessment methods and acceptance criteria; design fire scenarios; and the use of fire safety engineering in conjunction with prescriptive regulations. The focus of this last item is on sprinklers. At the meeting we learned of the work under way to produce a Nordic standard. Using a combination of statistical data, experimental data and engineering analysis, it will be possible to show how sprinklers can be used in a standard way in many relatively simple buildings to compensate for relaxations in other fire safety measures.

Next Steps

- 1) Participate in CEN TC/191 WG5 Task Group 2 meeting on EN 12845.
- 2) Give a presentation at a Parliamentary seminar in London.
- 3) Participate in the Technical Committee meeting in Cologne.