



# EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

## **May 2010 Report**

Work continued in May on the drafting of European guidance for the use of sprinklers as an alternative to existing code requirements for fire safety. The latest package of changes to EN 12845, the European sprinkler design standard, was completed but its implementation may be delayed. In Belgium the various stakeholders are beginning to work together under the Belgian Fire Sprinkler Network to campaign effectively for sprinklers in care homes, hospitals and hotels.

### **CEN TC/127**

CEN Technical Committee 127 Task Group 1 met in Oslo. TG1 is drafting some documents which could form the basis for European fire engineering standards. As a first step the Task Group is collecting data about European experience with fire engineering. I helped to gather data about the position in the UK. One of two priority subjects is the development of guidance on how sprinklers can be applied as an alternative to existing fire regulations. This CEN document would only be a model code but governments in Norway and Sweden want such a document and are likely to implement it in their legislation. Over time other governments may follow, so this is an important project for the EFSN.

### **CEN TC/191 WG5 TG2**

CEN Technical Committee 191 Working Group 5 Task Group 2 met at the British Standards Institute in London to complete its drafting of Amendment 3 to EN 12845, the European standard for the design, installation and maintenance of sprinkler systems. Amendment 3 will make many changes to EN 12845 and we were unsure if there is a limit to how much of a document may be changed. The secretariat of CEN TC/191 is contracted by CEN to BSI and since the meeting was at BSI we asked BSI for clarification. To our surprise we learned that CEN had cancelled the work item for Amendment 3 in November 2009. None of the 20 delegates at the meeting was aware of this. Nevertheless we finalised the amendment and our chairman will now pursue the options for it to be published by CEN, either as a re-instated Amendment 3 or as the first review of EN 12845. While this is a setback we are hopeful that in practice it will only cause a delay of 6 months in the implementation of the material drafted for Amendment 3. The options will be discussed at a Working Group 5 meeting in Belgium in June.

A further disappointment was that extended coverage sprinklers were dropped from Amendment 3. This was because the Task Group had not found the time to comment on the proposal developed by one of its members. The Task Group will meet again in late November and start work on the long list of items for the review of EN 12845.

## **Belgium**

In May the Belgian Fire Sprinkler Network met in Brussels at the offices of the Belgian burn victims' association, Pinocchio. The meeting was well-attended, reflecting growing interest and support for our efforts. We agreed to take a stand at the annual Belgian fire brigade show in September. We also agreed to set up a web site and develop a logo. I have since circulated a range of logo designs and a proposal for the web site. The Belgian government is in caretaker mode until a new coalition can be formed after the elections in June. Meanwhile we cannot focus our efforts on particular politicians so we have postponed the idea of a burn demonstration with major political and media involvement. However, at the show in September we will be able to run a small demonstration and reach out to the fire brigade.

At the meeting I was surprised to discover that it is not clear who is responsible for fire safety regulations in Belgium. There are national regulations but on top of that there can be provincial regulations as well as local council regulations.

Separate to the above I am arranging a meeting with the Brussels Fire Chief to follow up on a conversation at the Brussels 2010 conference in April, at which he spoke.

## **UK**

A new government was elected in May and has not yet determined its policy on fire safety. Despite that we had several meetings scheduled with officials as part of initiatives begun under the previous government. At the first, with Communities and Local Government, we discussed a proposal to evaluate whether sprinkler systems can be fitted at reasonable cost in high-rise housing. Officials had incorrectly stated in a report following the Lakanal House fire in July 2009 that this was not practical or economically viable. At the May meeting we were told that there was now no money to study the question but that officials would be prepared to participate in a steering group should industry fund a study. It has since been announced that this department will have its budget cut by 40%.

The second meeting was with officials for Building Schools for the Future, a government body overseeing the replacement or refurbishment of all 3,500 secondary schools. These officials reconfirmed the policy of requiring sprinklers in most schools and agreed to take a number of steps to remind relevant people of the policy. We do not expect the sprinkler policy to change under the new government but it is possible that the spending programme will slow.

The Business Sprinkler Alliance met twice in May. At the second meeting Dr Lou Gritz, who heads research for FM Global, gave us interesting overview of the work his team has done to look at the environmental impact of fires. Government officials have previously stated that under the existing regulatory framework it could be possible to mandate the fitting of sprinklers in industrial buildings to reduce the impact of fire on the environment. However, the case for doing so must first be made and a cost-benefit analysis must demonstrate that such a measure would not impose a net additional cost on society. Lou and his colleagues will explore how the data can be gathered and the environmental and economic cases made.

I submitted a section of draft text for BS 9991, a draft code of practice for fire safety in residential buildings.

### **Sprinkler Study Visit**

Glyn Ford and I are organising a sprinkler study visit to Washington and Boston for Members of the European Parliament. So far we have two British MEPs but are hopeful that we will find more from other countries.

### **Next Steps**

- 1) Participate in Belgian Fire Sprinkler Network meeting at the European Burns Casualties Association in Neder-over-Heembeek.
- 2) Participate in European Fire Academy meeting with Fire Chiefs in Brussels.
- 3) Meet Charles de Sneyder, the Brussels Fire Chief.
- 4) Attend a parliamentary seminar in London.
- 5) Attend the Interschutz conference in Leipzig.
- 6) Participate in the National Fire Sprinkler Network meeting in Sheffield.
- 7) Attend the Society of Fire Protection Engineers conference in Lund, Sweden.
- 8) Participate in Working Group 5 in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.
- 9) Participate in the French Sprinkler Network meeting in Paris.
- 10) Participate in a meetings of committee drafting BS 9991.