



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

July 2010 Report

In Norway as of July all new hotels, hospitals, care homes and housing of more than two storeys must be sprinklered. Meanwhile the British and French governments are weakening fire safety requirements in response to producer pressures. Against this background, I organised a very successful sprinkler study visit to the United States for Members of the European Parliament.

Sprinkler Study Visit to US

In July I organised a visit by David Martin and Richard Howitt, two British Members of the European Parliament, to the United States. We had a very productive visit, beginning in Washington with a meeting with Congressman Bill Pascrell, followed by a meeting with Senator Jack Reed. These politicians explained how they and their colleagues work together to advance the use of sprinklers, giving the MEPs useful ideas. Outside Washington we visited NIST, where the Director explained the many activities of this federal research institute and we learned in detail of its work in support of sprinklers in homes. We then flew to Boston from where we visited the FM Global R&D Campus and Tyco R&D Center, both in nearby Rhode Island. At these facilities the MEPs learned a great deal about how sprinklers work and at FM Global witnessed sprinkler performance on a rack storage fire. The visit ended the next day at NFPA, where its president and senior management team explained how NFPA influences state fire safety codes and how it is leading the current campaign for sprinklers in homes. The MEPs came away much more knowledgeable about sprinklers and ready to lead sprinkler campaigns in the European Parliament. I would like to thank all those who helped make this study visit such a success.

France

The French government has announced that it is considering a delay and modification to retrospective hotel fire safety measures introduced after the fire in the Paris Opéra Hotel in 2005, in which 24 people died. The government claims that the cost of the measures would cause 25% of small French hotels to close. These measures did not mention sprinklers so we are coordinating a response both in France and at the European level in Brussels to express our disappointment at this backward step and to point out that with sprinklers there is a more practical and economic way to achieve better hotel fire safety.

UK

The new British government has announced a proposal to scrap Local Acts which require sprinklers in warehouses. These acts cover some large cities, including London, and are up to 70 years old. Companies have complained that they introduce

inconsistency across the country. The new government is looking for symbolic reductions in regulations so this is scheduled to be rushed through during August. Under the Business Sprinkler Alliance, BSA, we will nevertheless campaign against reductions in fire safety and argue that a common, improved level for the whole country would be more appropriate. The BSA has meanwhile commissioned independent research to assess whether there is an economic case to fit sprinklers in large warehouses and factories.

On a more positive note, I attended two committee meetings for the drafting of BS 9991, a fire safety code for housing which will include incentives for sprinklers.

IFP Article

I wrote an article for the August edition of International Fire Protection Magazine.

Next Steps

- 1) Respond to the French government hotel announcement.
- 2) Respond to the British government Local Act announcement.
- 3) Prepare for the EFSN Technical Committee meeting.
- 4) Continue the hotel search for the 2012 conference.
- 5) Attend a meeting of the BS 9991 committee.
- 6) Prepare the Council meeting for November.