



EUROPEAN FIRE SPRINKLER NETWORK

November 2006 Report

November was another busy month, in particular in Brussels where Bernadette Hartley persuaded two more MEPs to sign up to join the EU Sprinkler Forum and where I met fire chiefs from several countries. At the Council Meeting in Madrid we agreed to form a technical committee, which will hold its first meeting in January.

Council Meeting

In November the European Fire Sprinkler Network Council met in Madrid. I presented my report of activities since the last Council meeting in Helsinki in June. Next the latest statement of accounts from the treasurer, John Viniello, was approved by the Council. There then followed a long discussion about how to address technical matters, which ended with a vote in favour of forming a technical committee. The first meeting of the technical committee will be held in January 2007. The intention is that this committee should act as a resource to support the sprinkler industry in Europe and the lobbying activities of the Network. It is expected that some countries will draw on it more than others. One of the first steps for the technical committee will be to seek representation on various standards committees.

At the Council meeting I presented a proposal to hold the next Annual General Meeting in Brussels. The format would be a morning meeting followed by lunch with a speech from a Member of the European Parliament. This concept was approved but I need to confirm the date because many Council members could not make the date I had proposed.

The next Council meeting will be in Cologne on 29 June 2007.

IFSA Meeting

The IFSA held a board meeting in November at which I presented an overview of recent Network activities. The IFSA board was very appreciative and re-affirmed its commitment to financial and technical support.

European Parliament Questions

Through the efforts of Bernadette Hartley, various Members of the European Parliament will ask questions of the European Commission about the collection of statistics on fire deaths and injuries, the economic cost of fire in Europe, what is being done to promote the use of sprinklers, what is being done to reduce environmental damage caused by fire and what is being done to reduce the loss of Europe's cultural heritage to fire. These questions must be answered by the European Commission and will raise both the profile of fire and the benefits of sprinklers.

Bernadette Hartley visited Brussels in November to follow up on the successful reception held in the European Parliament in Strasbourg in October. Udo Bullmann MEP, from Germany, and Jim Higgins MEP, from Ireland, both agreed to join the EU Sprinkler Forum. Bernadette also visited Kyprianos Sifunakis MEP, from Cyprus, who is the Chairman of the Culture Committee, to discuss our next reception which will focus on heritage fire protection. That reception will be hosted by Swedish MEPs and will be held on 6 March in Brussels.

Bernadette also persuaded Stephen Hughes MEP, from the UK, to speak at a seminar organised by the National Fire Sprinkler Network in the House of Commons in London on 26 February. Stephen Hughes is very influential in health and safety in the European Parliament, where he leads European Parliamentary oversight of OSHA.

CTIF Meeting in Brussels

The CTIF is the international association of firefighters. It has formed a committee to address legislative issues in Brussels. This committee organised a meeting in Brussels in November, which was addressed by representatives from the European Parliament and European Commission. I attended this meeting as one of the British delegates and met officials and firefighters from a number of European countries. At this meeting I learned that the head of fire safety in the Interior Ministry in Finland would like to require that sprinklers be fitted in all new housing. This is because Finland has one of the worst fire death records in developed countries (110-120 deaths each year in a population of 5 million). He was very influenced by the positive experience of Vancouver. I have supplied him and his colleagues with information to strengthen the case for this step.

The next meeting of the CTIF committee will be in the British Parliament in January and will be addressed by the president of the French federation of firefighters and the vice-president of the German association of firefighters.

SFPE

In November I attended a seminar organised by the French Chapter of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, where I met several insurers and consultants. I also attended a board meeting of the Chapter, where we agreed to host a seminar on 15 March 2007 on the potential for sprinklers to improve fire safety in hotels and care homes. We hope to persuade French legislators, who come from the fire service, to attend this event and to include a British firefighter among the speakers who will make the case for sprinklers to his French peers.

The Chapter also plans to organise a study visit to Washington in September in 2007, with visits to NIST and other institutions in the Washington area.

DD9999

DD9999 is a draft for development, i.e. a draft British Standard. It sets out standard architectural freedoms that are permitted if fire safety measures such as sprinkler systems are installed. These freedoms can make it cheaper to design a building with

sprinklers than without. Moreover they give the architect much more freedom in design. Under the draft for development system a review is made after two years, which would be in the middle of 2007. Our hope is that this process will lead to the draft becoming a full standard. That would give the document much greater status and give designers and building control officers more confidence to work with it. I organised a meeting with various interested parties to go over the draft, identify areas where we would like to suggest changes and prepare for a request that the sprinkler industry be at the table when the draft is reviewed.

UK Schools Campaign

In November Bernadette and I met officials from the Department for Education and Skills where we agreed that the typical cost for a sprinkler system in a new school is 2.4% rather than 7% as the officials had originally estimated. Moreover they were presented with evidence that a typical two storey new school that is designed with sprinklers as part of the fire safety concept can save 1% in other fire safety measures, so that the net cost of sprinklers is 1.4%. In addition there will be savings in insurance premiums. With this evidence it is becoming hard to justify a position against the installation of sprinklers.

We also had a private meeting with Jim Knight, the Secretary of State for Schools. He has agreed to speak at a sprinkler seminar in the House of Commons on 26 February at which we hope that he will make a positive announcement about sprinklers in schools.

Next Steps

- 1) VdS meeting in Cologne.
- 2) Tyre manufacturer's meeting in Paris.
- 3) Prepare first meeting of technical committee in January.