

SprinklerScene

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Nordic Chapter of NFSA Formed

The Board of Directors of the National Fire Sprinkler Association has authorized the formation of a Nordic Chapter, serving members in the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Members from the area petitioned the NFSA to form such a chapter at a special meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden on August 28, 1996. The meeting was held in conjunction with a seminar conducted by NFSA staff on the subject of fire sprinkler and water mist technologies.

The formation of a chapter will help to focus efforts aimed at expanding the proper use of sprinklers in the five Nordic countries. The chapter will provide a forum for promotion of new sprinkler technology as well as efforts to gain broader recognition of sprinklers within building regulations. The chapter hopes to coordinate efforts with those of existing fire sprinkler promotional organizations in Norway and Sweden.

The Swedish sprinkler organization, Sprinklerframjardet, has thirty-two members, approximately half of which are installers and the other half suppliers, designers, and inspectors. This group has been active since 1984, and each year targets a special occupancy group for information on the need for sprinkler protection. The Norwegian group has about half that number of members, and is working to develop similar program.

While the individual Nordic countries have different sets of building regulations and other unique aspects of their fire sprinkler industries, they have many things in common. Based on their cultural similarities as well as geographic proximity, the countries have approached a number of issues with a regional effort. One current effort is the Nordic Committee on Building Regulations (NKB), which is a coordinating agency for the central building authorities of the five Nordic countries. Their Fire Safety Committee has been charged with developing and implementing “the fire regulations of the next generation.”

The NFSA looks forward to working closer with its Nordic members in the promotion of properly designed, installed and maintained fire sprinkler systems!



U.S. Moving to Metric

Just hours before adjourning, the 104th U.S. Congress passed a greatly amended version of the “Cox Bill” as H.R. 2779. The bill was originally aimed at prohibiting federal specification of modular “hard” metric concrete block and recessed lighting fixtures, since those industries have been reluctant to retool to convert to metric sizes. As amended, the new law permits federal agencies to specify both products in modular metric sizes provided installed costs are “estimated to be equal to or less than the total installed price of using non-hard metric” products. The law applies to federal projects put out to bid after January 1997, and covers no other products. However, aside from block and lighting there have been no complaints on the metric federal specifications.

For the fire sprinkler industry, there is a recognition that modular products such as ceiling tiles are undergoing a “hard” conversion to 100 mm modules. A 2 ft X 2 ft grid will become a 600 mm X 600 mm grid. However, nominal pipe and fittings designations are changing from inches to millimeters through a “soft” conversion:

1/8 – inch = 6mm	1-inch = 25 mm
1/4-inch = 8 mm	1-1/4-inch = 32 mm
1/2-inch = 15 mm	1-1/2-inch = 40 mm
5/8-inch = 18 mm	2-inch = 50 mm
3/4-inch = 20 mm	2-1/2 inch = 65 mm

with 1-inch equals 25 mm for all larger sizes.

Ironically, the metric equivalents for piping do not match those for electrical conduit assigned by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association. The 1/2-inch conduit and 1-inch conduit, for example, will be designated as 16 mm and 27 mm tube.

British Report Supports Sprinkler Trade-Offs

The British Building Research Establishment (BRE) has issued a report on the cost of fire safety regulations in new construction. The report notes that fires in buildings protected by fire sprinkler systems are usually not severe, and that it may therefore be acceptable to reduce requirements (and costs) of fire resistance, fire stopping, and dampers. The report was prepared by the Davis Langdon Consultancy and Arup Fire for the Department of the Environment and BRE Fire Research Station. Copies of BRE312, *Quantifying the Cost of Meeting Building Regulations Fire Safety Requirements in New Buildings* are available for £ 27.50 (including postage and handling) from CRC Limited, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London, EC1R 4QX, England.

World Sprinkler News

- ◆ The NFSA web site is now accessible on the World Wide Web at www.nfsa.org. With new information being added on a weekly basis, use of the web site is increasing exponentially. Log on to sign the guest book – the welcoming fire sprinkler suppression graphic alone is worth the effort!
- ◆ The Republic of Panama has acted to require the installation of fire sprinkler systems in all new and existing high rise buildings, and has officially adopted NFPA 13 as the applicable installation standard. Resolution No. 264 of the Panama Fire Safety Office, dated October 8, 1996, calls for sprinkler protection for all new buildings over 7 stories in height, and for existing buildings over a 5-year period. Although the country has a population of just under 3 million, the National Fire Protection Association reports that nearly 60 new buildings of 30 stories or more have been built in Panama in the past few years.
- ◆ The City of Hamburg, Germany, has determined that sprinklers can be successfully installed within railway passenger cars. An article in the October 1996 Journal of the (British) Institute of Fire Safety Officers reports that a series of fire tests were conducted for the Hamburg Public Transportation System using pendent glass bulb sprinklers with piping incorporated into the ceiling of the passenger car. Small roof-mounted water storage tanks were protected with antifreeze, and pressurized by the train's brake system. All of the test fires were reported to have been extinguished quickly, with the exception of one simulated arson fire set in an unfavorable position, which was nevertheless controlled to permit manual extinguishment.
- ◆ Republic Automatic Sprinkler Company, reported in the previous issue of *SprinklerScene* to be a manufacturer of fire sprinkler devices in Pretoria, South Africa, is no longer operational.
- ◆ Sixty-three people representing 22 nations attended the 1996 meeting of the Confederation of Fire Protection Associations – International (CFPA-I), held in May in conjunction with the 100th anniversary meeting of the National Fire Protection Association in Boston. As part of the program, they discussed new fire suppression technologies, including water mist. The CFPA-I will next meet in Egypt in 1999.
- ◆ Shell Chemical Co. and Hoechst Celanese, two of the companies that supplied raw materials for the production of polybutylene (PB) pipe, have agreed to pay a minimum of \$95 million to repair damage caused by leaky plumbing systems. The settlement is the largest ever in a property-damage class-action suit in the United States. Homeowners in an estimated six million homes equipped with the plumbing systems in the 1970s and 1980s have been given the opportunity to apply for recovery of damages. The leaks were attributed to deterioration of pipe and fittings in hot chlorinated water or poor design and installation of crimped connections. While the problems did not directly involve fire sprinkler systems, the end result is the loss of polybutylene pipe and fittings from the marketplace.

- ◆ The August 1996 issue of Fire Safety Engineering reported on the installation of a CPVC fire sprinkler system in a warehouse and two-story office block in the West Midlands, England. This is the first industrial use of CPVC in the UK and possibly the world. Although under NFPA standards the CPVC is limited to light hazard occupancies, the British LPC approval allows broader use.
- ◆ The new home of the British Library in St. Pancras, London, is fully sprinklered with 5000 fast response sprinklers. Even though the library was of new construction and not yet open to the public, the sprinkler installation was considered a retrofit, due to the fact that the building had already been furnished and equipped with a book-storage racking system. Original plans for a preaction system were scrapped due to drainage problems, and the installation proceeded with the fast response sprinklers on a wet pipe system a High Hazard classification for the “warehousing” of books.

Upcoming Meetings, Seminars and Exhibitions of Interest

February 12-14, 1997 – Fire Suppression and Detection Research Application Symposium, Orlando, Florida, National Fire Protection Research Foundation, USA, FAX 1-617-984-7030

March 3-7, 1997 – 5th International Symposium on Fire Safety Science, World Congress Centre Melbourne, Australia, International Association for Fire Safety Science, Fax 61-3-9690-7155

April 23-25, 1997 – Fire Africa '97 Conference & Exhibition, Johannesburg, South Africa, FAX 27 (0) 12-348-2859

May 12-15, 1997 – International FIREX '97, NEC Birmingham, England, FAX 0181-747-3856

May 18-21, 1997 – Annual Meeting and Exhibition, National Fire Protection Association, Los Angeles, California, USA, FAX 1-617-984-7030

July 1-2, 1998 – 3rd International Fire Sprinkler Conference, Glasgow, Scotland, FAX 1-914-878-4215

September 11-13, 1997 – NFSA Annual Seminar and Exhibition, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, FAX 1-914-878-4215