

SprinklerScene

Volume VII No. 2 May-August 1998

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3rd International Fire Sprinkler Conference A Great Success

The 3rd International Fire Sprinkler Conference, held July 1-4, 1998 in Glasgow, Scotland, is being heralded as the most successful international sprinkler industry event of all time. Sponsored by the British Automatic Sprinkler Association (BASA), the Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association (CASA) and the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA), the event combined the best attributes of a solid program and exceptional social events. With representation from Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and the United States, the conference was truly an international affair.

The conference began with a reception at the beautiful Glasgow City Chambers on the evening of July 1st, where the delegates were given a special welcome by the Lord Provost of the city. The two-day speaker program began the following morning at the Glasgow Hilton, and focused on the development of new sprinkler markets and the role of new sprinkler technology. The first day featured reports by the chief executives of the three host associations, along with special addresses by Member of Parliament Tess Kingham and NFPA President George Miller. The second day was more technical in nature, with presentations ranging from new water mist technology to the use of sprinklers in performance-based designs. Along with the presentation of information, the conference offered some lively discussions from the floor, ranging from the maximum reasonable allowable size of nonsprinklered retail areas to product test criteria for glass bulb sprinklers.

The highlight of the conference was no doubt the formal reception and dinner at Stirling Castle on the evening of July 2nd, where beautiful weather enhanced a classic setting. The Potter Electric Signal Company sponsored the event in celebration of its 100th anniversary. The Strathclyde Fire Brigade Pipe Band provided an inspirational touch to a memorable evening.

In his remarks, NFSA President John Viniello challenged the conference registrants to move forward with an international effort to promote the fire sprinkler concept, and announced the formation of a task group to spearhead this effort. Those interested in participating as part of the task group for the international effort should contact John Viniello at NFSA headquarters.



New Consolidations Among HPR Insurers

Old friends of the fire sprinkler industry are undergoing considerable changes. For many years, Factory Mutual and Industrial Risk Insurers have existed as associations of insurance companies, pooling their resources to meet the engineering needs of loss prevention activities. Now both HPR (highly protected risk) property insurers are effectively moving from association status to corporate status as part of streamlining strategies for market effectiveness.

On July 30, 1998, the boards of directors of the three Factory Mutual companies, Allendale Mutual Insurance Company, Arkwright Mutual Insurance Company, and Protection Mutual Insurance Company, announced their intention to merge effective January 1, 1999. The merger, if given regulatory and policyholder approvals, would result in a new company named Factory Mutual Insurance Company (FM Insurance Company). Allendale Mutual, Arkwright Mutual and Protection Mutual respectively trace their origins to 1835, 1850, and 1887 and together employ more than 3500 individuals. With assets of over \$5 billion and policyholders' surplus of \$2.3 billion, the new company will continue to direct the activities of the current Factory Mutual organization, which employs more than 1500 professionals worldwide. The Factory Mutual companies were originally formed by groups of manufacturers, banded together for lower rates through superior protection. This is the final consolidation of what was once as many as 35 separate companies.

At the beginning of 1998, GE Capital Services's Employers Reinsurance Corporation (ERC) assumed 99.5% of Industrial Risk Insurers (IRI), purchasing the assets, reinsuring the in-force policies, and assuming the renewal rights. At the same time, Hartford Steam Boiler (HSB) reduced its interest from 24.5% to 0.5%, but added its brand name to the new organization: HSB Industrial Risk Insurers. ERC is a global life and non-life reinsurance company with assets of more than \$25 billion. Industrial Risk Insurers traces its roots to a syndicate of insurance companies formed in 1890 to provide fire insurance for manufacturing risks with superior protection features, and known as the Factory Insurance Association.

It is hoped that the new organizational changes will not diminish the longstanding commitment and contributions of these two organizations to improved fire protection through the effective installation of automatic sprinkler systems.

NFSA Publishes MIC Corrosion Report

The National Fire Sprinkler Association has issued a technical report on the subject of Microbiologically-Influenced Corrosion (MIC). The 16-page report, developed by staff engineer Tariq Bsharat, summarizes what is known about the corrosion process and what is currently available with regard to identification, treatment and prevention measures. The report can be ordered by NFSA international members for US\$12, including postage and handling.

World Sprinkler News

- ◆ On July 28, 1998, a new group named the National Fire Sprinkler Network (NFSN) was formed in the United Kingdom. The primary objective of the organization is lobbying the Department of Environment and the Regions (DETR) into making the installation of sprinkler systems compulsory for all new single story supermarket and superstore buildings over 2,000 m² (20,000 ft²). The current government proposal calls for sprinklers in such buildings exceeding 4,000 m² (40,000 ft²), which would affect only 10 new superstores per year. Supporters of the group include the Institute of Fire Engineers, the London Fire Brigade, the Loss Prevention Council, Wormald, and the office of MP Tess Kingham.
- ◆ The New Zealand Fire Service Commission, proposing a “complete break with the past”, has asked 1600 firefighters to apply for new positions. The commission believes that more time should be spent preventing fires in lieu of the current 95 percent spent on firefighting and response.
- ◆ An effort is underway to permit the use of NFPA 13R for installation of sprinkler systems in low-rise residential buildings in Denmark.
- ◆ The National Fire Protection Research Foundation has formed a Research Advisory Council on Fire Suppression Futures. Under this concept, up to 20 invited expert leaders will meet once or twice per year to review research and research needs in fire suppression worldwide, and make independent recommendations for further research that will be published annually. The Council will not recommend or make proposals on standards, and is not intended to generate research only to be undertaken by the Foundation. It is anticipated that the Research Advisory Council will provide input into a segment of the NFPRF’s Fire Suppression & Detection Research Application, held in February of each year in Orlando, Florida.
- ◆ Seven people have been charged with culpable homicide in an October 1997 hospital fire in Italy that killed 11 people in an oxygen-enriched hyperbaric chamber. A 1,000-liter water tank feeding a fire extinguishing system within the chamber was completely empty at the time of the fire.
- ◆ The Residential Sprinkler Association became legally recognized in the United Kingdom on January 2, 1998. Sir George Pigot was designated secretary general, and Jeanette Baxter, the managing director of Actspeed, Inc. was elected to the position of chairman.
- ◆ The National Fire Protection Association has issued the first edition of NFPA 301 – *Code for Safety to Life From Fire on Merchant Vessels*. Requested by the U.S. Coast Guard, the standard applies to all types of vessels other than pleasure craft, and may someday replace existing U.S. federal regulations. The standard requires sprinkler protection for all vessels with overnight accommodations for passengers, but contains more flexible ship design and construction provisions than existing international (SOLAS) requirements.

Upcoming Meetings, Seminars, and Exhibitions of Interest

August 31-September 2, 1998 – 1st International Symposium on Human Behavior in Fire, University of Ulster et al, Belfast, Northern Ireland (FAX 44-1232-366060).

September 7-10, 1998 – “Fire ‘98” Conference & Exhibition, Glasgow, Scotland, UK (FAX 44-1827-61530).

September 17-20, 1998 – “Community Planning with Sprinklers”, NFSA Annual Seminar, San Antonio, TX, USA (FAX 1-914-878-4215).

October 13-16, 1998 – China Fire '98, China Fire Protection Association, Beijing, China (FAX 852-2890-2657).

November 15-18, 1998 – NFPA Fall Meeting, Atlanta, GA, USA (FAX 1-617-984-7030).

November 18-20, 1998 – Fire Australia 1998: “Caring for Our Community”, FPA Australia and the Institution of Fire Engineers, Sydney, Australia (FAX 61-3-9890-1577).

June 9-11, 1999 – “Second Conference on Firesafety Design in the 21st Century,” Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA (FAX 1-301-718-2242).