

SprinklerScene

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Russell P. Fleming, P.E., Editor

European Fire Sprinkler Network Up and Running

The European Fire Sprinkler Network, jointly conceived by the International Fire Sprinkler Association and the Sprinkler Section of Eurofeu in March of 2002, has been legally formed and has begun operations under the direction of Mr. Alan Brinson, effective 1 February 2003.

The Network was formed to promote the fire sprinkler concept throughout the European continent. It is expected to provide the mechanism through which the fire sprinkler industry will work alongside fire service leaders to promote the wider use of automatic fire sprinkler systems. Start-up funding for the Network is being made available through the IFSA grant program. The website for the new organization can be found at www.eurosprinkler.org

Mr. Alan Brinson was named Executive Director of the new organization. Having worked for such companies as Wormald Scandinavia, Total Walther Feuerschutz GmbH and most recently Tyco Fire & Building Products, Mr. Brinson comes to the Network with an extensive background in fire protection and knowledge of the European market. In commenting on the appointment, IFSA Managing Director John Viniello said, "Alan Brinson is the ideal candidate to lead the European Fire Sprinkler Network", adding "He has the skills, background in the industry, and the energy and enthusiasm to make an immediate impact in having fire sprinklers more widely accepted throughout the continent. We are very fortunate to have him on board."

Mr. Brinson, who is fluent in four languages, is based in London, England. He can be contacted at brinson@eurosprinkler.org or using the following numbers:

Tel: +44 20 8877 2600

Fax: +44 20 8877 2642

Fleming Speaks at VdS Conference

IFSA Technical Director Russ Fleming was one of numerous speakers to address water-based fire suppression systems at the VdS conference on Fire Extinguishing Systems held 5-6 December 2002 in Cologne, Germany. Fleming spoke on the wide acceptance of the fire sprinkler concept in the United States. Other speakers addressing sprinklers included Peter Thomas of Tyco Fire & Building Products discussing dry system water delivery, Maarit Tuomisaari of Marrioff Hi-Fog with a presentation on water mist systems as an alternative to gas systems, Matthias Pohl of Minimax on the subject of water mist guidelines and standards, and Joseph Hankins of FM Global on sprinkler protection of plastics risks.



7th Annual Fire Suppression and Detection Research Applications Symposium Held in Orlando, Florida

For the 7th year in a row, the NFPA's Fire Protection Research Foundation sponsored a Fire Suppression and Detection Research Application Symposium in Orlando, Florida. More than 100 registrants were on hand for the keynote address given by J. Thomas Chapin, the newly appointed General Manager of the Fire Protection Division of Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.

Mr. Chapin came to UL following a career as a chemical engineer in the telecommunications industry, and he was able to share his views as one who made the switch from a consumer of fire research and test information to a provider of such information. Speaking on the subject of "Gaps in the Fire Continuum", he stressed that better knowledge was needed on the part of stakeholders with regard to the fire challenges in the continuum from raw materials to products to building systems to the buildings themselves. In his summation he stated two concerns. One was that the trend toward international harmonization of standards could lead to the use of the lowest common denominator, creating the potential for protection that is mediocre at best, perhaps even unsafe. And, as someone who was formerly on the side of product development, he warned "we can not cross the line between sound science and aggressive marketing."

Most of the 33 papers presented dealt with research or related developments in the United States and Canada. Fire sprinklers were prominently featured in papers on measurement of sprinkler water distribution, dry system performance, warehouse protection, fire modeling efforts, and case studies of fire protection engineering efforts.

At least three papers provided overviews of activities outside North America. Anders Wallin of the Swedish Brandforsk provided a description of that organization's new three-year research plan, in which "active fire protection systems" will be one of seven major work areas. Within that area, efforts will be made in studying alternative extinguishing agents, better relating system design to function, looking at fire detection mechanisms, control systems for combustion products, and development and validation of computational fluid dynamics models.

Randy Tucker, Senior Vice President of International Development for the RJA Group, provided a description of historical and current fire protection efforts in China. The RJA Group has been involved in several cooperative relationships with Chinese organizations and is in the process of establishing a representative office in Beijing.

Jamie Moncada of International Fire Safety Consulting provided a paper that focused on a unique fire problem in São Paulo, Brazil. São Paulo, with a metropolitan area population of 25 million, is the second largest city in Latin America (after Mexico City). However, the city itself is very densely populated as well, six times more so than Chicago, Illinois. Past fire disasters have led authorities to outlaw the construction of very tall buildings, and so the tallest building, built in 1960, is 50 stories in height. However, São Paulo has over 1650 buildings more than 35 m (115 ft) in height. Most of these are residential towers 20-30 stories in height, built with relatively small footprints and only a single stairway.

World Sprinkler News

Fire Deaths Decline in U.S. Homes – The National Fire Protection Association announced that there were 3,110 fire deaths in homes in the United States in the year 2001, a drop of 9.1% compared to the year 2000, and credited the drop to a combination of public fire safety education and advances in fire safety technology. Latest NFPA statistics indicate that while only 0.7% of one and two-family homes are protected with residential sprinklers, the percentage of multi-family residential dwellings protected with sprinklers has increased to 21.9%.

British Fire Engineering Standard Introduced – The official introduction of BS 7974 – *The application of fire safety engineering principles to the design of buildings* took place at the Institution of Fire Engineers' Engineering Council Division on 29 May 2002. The document began as a draft in 1997 (BS DD 240: 1997), and is intended to provide a framework for use of a fire safety engineering approach to building design.

Canary Islands Conference Highlights Hotel Fire Safety – A *Segurhotel 2002* conference held in the Spanish Canary Islands 13-15 June 2002 to bring together hotel managers, tourist representatives and fire officials highlighted the fact that sprinkler systems offer the most effective fire protection available to hotels. The conference also noted that there are two billion stays in 180,000 European hotels each year, creating a clear financial incentive for fire safety standards. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Federation of European Fire Officers' Union (FEU) to promote the SafeHotel fire safety initiative, which would assign a quality label for fire safety similar to the star system presently used to rate comfort and quality. More information on the SafeHotel proposal is available at www.f-e-u.org

Morocco Fire Kills 50 Prisoners – A fire that took place on 1 November 2002 at the Sidi Moussa prison in El Jadida, Morocco, left at least 50 dead and 40 injured. Following the fire, human rights groups accused authorities of failing to attend to the poor safety conditions in the country's prisons, noting that a fire had taken place three months earlier at Morocco's Kanicha prison in which two prisoners died and 20 others were injured.

British Firefighters Still Threatening Strikes – Although an 8-day strike planned for December of 2002 was cancelled, the British Fire Brigades Union has announced plans for additional walk-outs in 2003 if their demand for a 40% pay increase is not met.

CEN Delays Implementation of CE Marking Deadlines – The Comité Européen de Normalisation (CEN) has agreed to longer transition periods for the harmonized Fixed Fire Fighting Systems standards. The proposed 1 January 2003 implementation of CE markings for wet alarm valves and 1 April 2003 date for fire sprinklers will be delayed 15 months. The new effective dates for implementation of the CE mark for the various products are as follows:

For wet alarm valves, dry valves and water motor alarms – 1 April 2004

For sprinklers and flow switches – 1 September 2005

For deluge valves, multiple controls, and sprayers – 3 years from “date of availability”

There have also been recent clarifications that such markings are permitted to be on the packaging rather than individual products such as sprinklers.

Numerous Club and Disco Fires Reported

Indonesia Bar Fire Claims 42 – A fire that started in a karaoke bar in July of 2002 is reported to have killed at least 42 people on the Indonesian Island of Sumatra. No sprinklers were provided.

Peru Nightclub Fire Yields 25 Deaths – 25 people were killed and 40 injured when a bartender's stunt accidentally ignited curtains and wood fixtures within a disco at a shopping mall in Lima, Peru on 20 July 2002. The facility did not have automatic sprinkler protection.

More Than 60 Dead From Vietnam Disco Fire – A 29 October 2002 fire that started in the Blue Disco nightclub on the second floor of the 6-story Saigon International Business Centre killed at least 60 people and injured at least 100 others in the Vietnamese capital of Ho Chi Minh City. The fire raged for five hours in the nonsprinklered shopping/office complex.

Venezuela Nightclub Fire Kills 47 – A 30 November 2002 fire at the Goajiri nightclub in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas killed 47 people and injured at least 28 others. The cause of the blaze was unknown, although there were some reports of arson involving use of a flammable liquid. The building was not protected with an automatic sprinkler system.

U.S. Nightclub Fire Kills 100 – A fire ignited by a rock band's pyrotechnic display ignited combustible foam lining the walls of a stage for sound insulation, leading to a fast-developing fire on 20 February 2003 that left 100 people dead. The Station, located in West Warwick, Rhode Island, USA, was not protected with automatic sprinklers.

Sprinklers Effective in U.S. Nightclub Fire – On 17 February 2003, three days prior to the tragic fire in Rhode Island, another fire was ignited by a rock band's pyrotechnic display at the Fine Line Music Café in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. The combustible interior ceiling finish was ignited, but automatic sprinklers operated to control the fire, and there were no deaths or injuries.

Upcoming Meetings, Seminars, and Exhibitions of Interest

1-3 May 2003 – NFSA Annual Seminar & Exhibition, Westin Savannah Harbor Resort, Savannah, Georgia, USA (www.nfsa.org)

13-16 May 2003 – Fire Guangdong 2003 (International Exhibition for Fire Prevention Equipment and Technology), China Foreign Trade Center, Guangzhou, China (www.unionft.com)

18-21 May 2003 – NFPA World Safety Conference, Dallas, Texas, USA (www.nfpa.org)

19-23 May 2003 – International Fire Expo 2003 – “The Fire Experience”, NEC Birmingham, UK, (www.fire-expo.co.uk)

3-5 June 2003 – Fire Australia 2003 – “The Anatomy of Building Firesafety”, Fire Protection Association Australia and the Institution of Fire Engineers Australia, Sydney, Australia (Fax 61-2-8585-0802 or events@fpaa.com.au)