



FETA NEWS

FETA Fire Extinguishing Trades Association

GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

For some 30 years Halon 1211 was the 'stalwart' of the fire extinguishing industry but with the signing of the Montreal Protocol in 1987, many manufacturers withdrew Halon extinguishers from their product ranges, thereby minimising the implications of the final deadline for their withdrawal by 2003. David Bonnett, Chairman of FETA, looks at some of the alternatives.

EC Regulation 2037/2000 has the same implications for portable halon extinguishers as for fixed extinguishing systems ie they must not be refilled from the end of 2002 and they must be taken out of service by the end of 2003. The only exceptions are their continued use in some applications in civil aircraft, by the armed forces and by the emergency services.

There is no single direct replacement for Halon 1211 and it is unlikely that there

will be one. So far only three agents have been developed which display the necessary qualities: Halotron, FM-200 and FE-36, all of which are manufactured in the USA. As a hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) the use of Halotron is not permissible in the UK and other EU countries. FM-200 and FE-36, as hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), are not subject to the same restrictions.

Although both FM-200 and FE-36 have been tested and listed by Underwriters' Laboratories (UL), the viability of their use in economic terms is yet to be proven. Customers are unlikely to be willing to pay a premium for a product that only performs as well as its predecessor.

However, on the plus side, extensive R&D into the more efficient use of existing agents has brought some impressive

results. There are now a whole new range of both water and foam extinguishers on the market which, through the development of chemical additives, are far more efficient in fighting fire.

The new extinguishers are smaller (6 litre capacity rather than 9 litre), making them easier to handle, and have improved fire ratings. Advances in nozzle design also means that these extinguishers pass the 35kV dielectric test of the European Standard EN3 and are thus much safer to use on fires involving electrical equipment (although it is important to note that no manufacturers have thus far stated that such extinguishers are safe for use on fire involving electrical ignition sources).

Accessibility is a problem with portable extinguishers. They need to be located in positions where they will be at hand for use by anyone who may need to use them and

this, of course, can lead to the misuse of the equipment. If and when HFCs are introduced in the UK market, steps must be taken to limit the chances of accidental or irresponsible discharge of extinguishers containing HFCs or other regulated substances. To this end a voluntary code of practice (VCOP) is already drafted which is based on a 'lifetime care' approach.

It is important that the fire protection industry continues to adopt a responsible and sensible approach to the phase-out of halon extinguishers which are still in situ through the recommendation of replacements which match the fire risk involved. In addition, low cost, safe and effective means for the reclamation or destruction of the gases involved must also be employed.



FETA LAUNCH CAMPAIGN WITH HARD-HITTING MESSAGE

FETA are developing a campaign aimed at raising awareness of the importance of portable fire extinguishers (PFE's) in the protection of life and property from fire.

One of the main targets of the campaign is the business owner with 100,000 leaflets being distributed featuring a hard-hitting message regarding the number of businesses that never recover from a fire. Companies need to be aware

that a swift intervention with a fire extinguisher can prevent a minor incident becoming a major conflagration. It is not only the more obvious damage to the building and its contents that needs to be built into the equation - there are also the consequential losses such as business interruption, laying off employees and the customers forced to go elsewhere who never return that can contribute to a company's demise. Estimates suggest

more than 75% of companies that experience a serious fire go out of business either directly as a result of the fire or within 3 years of reopening - a sobering thought for any business that thinks fire extinguishers are not important.

Another focus for the campaign is to raise the profile of PFE's in community fire safety programmes and members of the FETA Council are currently working hard to get extinguishers on this particular agenda.



GET THE FACTS...

FETA have published three new Fact Files which are available in printed form or on the FETA website (www.feta.org.uk).

The 3 topics covered are:

- Legislation Relating to Pressurised Fire Extinguishing Products and Systems
- The Pressure Equipment Regulations 1999
- Care & Maintenance of Portable Foam Inductors

While it is important to remain abreast of legislative developments, reading the documentation and appreciating the implications for a business can be a daunting prospect. The purpose of the Fact Files is to give a clear and concise précis of the subject matter, identifying the most important points and providing an invaluable guide to the legislation directly affecting manufacturers, suppliers and maintainers of portable fire fighting equipment.

The Fact File on the Pressure Equipment Directive is a good example of how the files operate, with a series of FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) and the respective answers from technical experts within FETA.

Copies can be printed from the FETA website (www.feta.org.uk) or obtained by faxing a request to the Kingston office: 020 8547 1564.



NEW SERVICE GUIDE RISK ASSESSMENT - THE WAY FORWARD?

FETA have produced a new Guide for the servicing of portable fire extinguishers which is an essential tool for anyone involved in the supply and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers. The Guide has been written to take account of the revised British Standards BS 5306 Parts 3 (Code of Practice for the Maintenance of Portable Fire Extinguishers) and 8 (Selection and Installation of Portable Fire Extinguishers).



Copies are available from FETA priced £45 (FETA members) and £60 (Non-FETA members).

The Guide covers a wide range of extinguishers including:

- Water gas cartridge
- Foam gas cartridge
- Water/foam stored pressure
- Carbon Dioxide
- Halon
- Wet chemical

FETA ON SHOW



FETA exhibited at International Fire Expo 2001 as part of the Fire Industry Confederation (FIC), sponsors of the exhibition and conference.

The NEC in Birmingham was the venue and 21-24 May the dates for what proved to be a busy four days.

Visitors to the stand were able to get the latest information on the work of the association and many also took the opportunity to visit the arena where FETA were amongst those putting on live demonstrations of fire fighting and rescue.

Much has been written recently about the concerns within the fire industry of employers' lack of awareness regarding their duties on fire risk-assessment. A paper by John Molloy, a graduate of the School of Civil Engineering at Kingston University, examined the problems inherent in the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations (as amended) 1997, concluding that many employers

"...are unaware of the existence of the Fire Regulations, or their duties under them."

FETA members are also recognising that the level of knowledge of the Regulations is lacking in many of their customers. Furthermore, those that do undertake a risk assessment often employ the services of a consultant and while many do an excellent job, there is a groundswell of support for a scheme that would provide

an industry recognised qualification. FETA are amongst the organisations currently considering the establishment of a BAFE registered consultants scheme which would provide a benchmark for those offering risk-assessment services. The FETA secretariat would welcome input from interested parties - written comments should be addressed to the FETA offices in Kingston-Upon-Thames for the attention of David Bonnett.

THE JURY'S OUT

The outcome of a court case is currently being awaited which could prove to be a landmark judgement for building owners and occupiers in terms of their approach to ensuring effective fire safety under the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

The appeal case of County Fire Officer v City Logistics Ltd followed a case at Northampton Crown Court on 19 May 2000 in which Northampton Fire Authority had refused to issue a Fire Certificate until a sprinkler system was installed in the warehouse of City Logistics. The 'Notice of Steps', issued in accordance with the Fire Precautions Act 1971, had identified a requirement for in-rack sprinklers but City Logistics challenged the notice and originally lost the case in the magistrates court. City Logistics then made an appeal to the Crown Court, which they won, but in a

subsequent appeal by the fire authority to the High Court, Mr Justice Turner overturned the original appeal decision and found in favour of the authority.

One of the central issues upon which the case has hinged (and continues to hinge since leave to appeal has been granted by the Court of Appeal to City Logistics) is whether the Fire Precautions Act is concerned only with means of escape from a building or whether it has a wider remit which should take into account such public interest issues as the risks to fire fighters, environmental damage and economic consequences. Mr Justice Turner ruled that the latter was the case.

This decision has implications not only for the installation of sprinklers but for many products employed in protecting a building and its occupants against fire.

WWW

The FETA website (www.feta.org.uk) continues to prove a popular resource for information relating to fire extinguishing issues.

The site is easy to navigate and includes a news page, publications produced by the association, dates and venues for the FETA examinations and useful information regarding standards. It also features a database of member companies with a search facility by name or geographical



region and direct website and e-mail links.

ADVERTORIAL

NEW ANGUS DIRECT

Angus Direct is now the fastest way to buy fire hose. For the first time, top brands like Duraline are available ex-stock in popular sizes ready for overnight despatch.

Angus Fire has launched this new series in response to growing demand among hose buyers for guaranteed fast despatch. "Our research shows that fire hose is increasingly needed urgently by fire and safety departments, the marine sector, and the fire trade" says David Russell of Angus Direct.

Angus Direct is the first company to offer despatch options tailored to need, including next-day guaranteed delivery. Based at the world's largest layflat covered fire hose factory in Yorkshire, it delivers throughout the UK and Europe from a new purpose-built warehouse.

The company has invested in over £100,000 worth of hose inventory as well as the latest stock control computer systems to ensure that it has the hoses its customers need when they need them. It is also working in close partnership with Tuffnells Parcel Express to ensure a reliable and speedy delivery service.

This latest initiative from Angus Fire is not limited to fire hose. Hardware including couplings, standpipes, hydrant key and bar sets, hydrant valves, and branchpipes are also available ex-stock.

"Angus Direct is like having your own fire hose warehouse" says David Russell. "There's not an automated answering machine in sight - just people happy to help! So if you need some fire hose quickly, just pick up the phone and call us!"



Angus Direct Contact Information
 Post: Angus Direct, Station Road, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7NA, UK. Phone: +44 (0) 1524 261611. Fax: +44 (0) 1524 261580
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SMALLER WATER DROPLETS FIGHT FIRES FASTER

TVF to distribute ULTRA FOG® intelligent fire suppression system

Reinforcing their second to none reputation for cutting edge technology solutions, leading fire protection services and systems company TVF (UK) plc has added the ULTRA FOG® high pressure water fog system to their portfolio. This is claimed to be the most environmentally acceptable fire suppression system available today.



The principles of extinguishing fires using fine water sprays were first realised back in the 1930's but now with the benefit of 21st Century technology TVF has a system that fully exploits the benefits of an intelligent fire fighting system. Manufactured in Sweden and first employed to meet the ultra demanding specifications of passenger ships, ULTRA FOG® is lighter, cheaper and easier to install than comparative non-water spray based systems.

ULTRA FOG® is entirely chemical free and uses up to 90% less water than conventional systems, so that in the event of a fire incident, equipment damage and the aftermath trauma are kept to an absolute minimum. This results in less down time and less cost. Maintenance costs are also low, with virtually no day-to-day budget implications.

The characteristics of the fine water spray mean that ULTRA FOG® is particularly suited to more extreme and high tech environments such as kitchens with deep fat fryers, plant rooms, computer rooms and laboratories. As it produces no harmful chemicals the system is also perfect for more conventional public spaces. Fires are extinguished rapidly and damage is effectively localised as the spray immediately cools the surrounding environment whilst starving the fire of oxygen as it turns the spray to water steam.

For further information, visit TVF (UK) Plc at www.tvfplc.co.uk or call Peter Kemp on 01494 450641 or email info@tvfplc.co.uk

THE COMPLETE SERVICE PACKAGE

Walker Fire has been protecting industries for over 40 years. The company was established in 1945 by a Mr Eric Walker of Chester. Starting as a small family business, the company has grown into one of the largest suppliers of fire fighting equipment in the British Isles. The purpose built manufacturing plant is fully commissioned to producing fire extinguishers, fire hoses, hose reels, cabinets, foam making equipment, branchpipes and ancillaries to meet the ever increasing demand from domestic and world markets.



A dedication to quality of service and products coupled with a registered quality system to BS EN ISO 9002 ensures that Walker Fire maintains a high reputation in their field.

All service personnel are independently certified by a BAFE recognised body to service fire equipment to BS 5306. This standard recommends that your fire extinguishers are serviced at least annually to ensure that they will always function in an emergency. Walker Fire supplies a superior range of extinguishers that will provide many years of reliable fire protection.

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