



FETA NEWS

FETA Fire Extinguishing Trades Association

'PAN-EUROPEAN APPROACH TO FIRE SAFETY' CALL BY FIC

Under the umbrella of the Fire Industry Confederation (FIC), FETA is supporting the call for a Europe wide approach to fire safety. The FIC are proposing that a conference be staged in which key European stakeholders form a focus group to plan a campaign aimed at harmonising European fire safety legislation and regulations to create a common level of fire safety across the EU.

Brian Ward, Chairman of the Fire Industry Confederation, presented the proposals in response to the debate at Fire Safety Development Group's seminar

staged at Portcullis House, Westminster. UK fire losses stand at £7.5 billion per annum (an estimated 1 percent of GDP) and when those figures are extrapolated across Europe the economic consequences of not addressing fire safety issues become all too apparent. Added to this, the varying degree of fire safety for individuals travelling within the 15 member states and the difficulty in fire safety equipment "crossing borders" due to "local standards" makes the need even more apparent.

At present no unified EU fire safety or community fire policy exists. Various

disparate policies are spread over a number of EC directorates with the result that they are not operating effectively in terms of establishing a European fire safety strategy. By establishing a Central European Strategic Fire Safety Body to advise on European fire safety issues, ministers in Brussels will be able to base decisions on future fire safety legislation which take into account the thinking of all the major stakeholders.

A forerunner has already been established in the UK with the setting up of the Fire Safety Advisory Board.



MAKING SOCIETY SAFER FROM FIRE

In a recent supplement written by the Fire Industry Confederation (FIC), Ken Knight, Chief Fire Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service and CACFOA policy director for safety standards addressed some of the issues currently facing the fire safety community. Below are extracts from Mr Knight's article which demonstrated the vital role to be played by the BAFF approval scheme and the potential for an increased role for fire extinguishers in the home.

The BAFF approval scheme for fire fighting equipment, which ensures a standard of competence, is now well established. It is supported by CACFOA since to have confidence that such equipment is provided and maintained by a competent person is reassuring to the user and regulator alike. While it is important to extol the virtues of BAFF to commerce and industry, it is even more important that local authorities and fire authorities lead by example and specify such schemes in their own premises.

It is important that fire safety campaigns have a clear objective and the message is unambiguous. There

is general acceptance that the message regarding firefighting equipment for the home is less than clear. While standard messages such as 'get out - stay out' are commonplace, they seem at variance to fire services teaching the public how to use a fire extinguisher in the home and demonstrating how to extinguish a burning pan of cooking oil, in the event of a fire; a hazardous type of fire that requires training and equipment, even for the experienced firefighter.

FETA is right to challenge the existing mixed message and question whether the existing advice has clarity for the community. On the other hand, those finding a fire will tackle and often extinguish a simple fire in the home, having done their own risk assessment. We know this to be true by the small proportion of fires in the home that are actually reported to the fire service. Conversely, not making available a suitable fire extinguisher and therefore placing occupants at potential risk is a dilemma. The answer may be difficult to find, but the question will keep returning until we have a coherent message.

AGM ADDS TO FIRE DEBATE

There was much to discuss at FETA's 85th AGM and Luncheon for the record number of member companies and their guests at the Savoy Hotel, London on June 27th.

The Principal Guest Speaker at the luncheon was Mr Graham Meldrum, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services, who took the opportunity to discuss the new 'home' of the Fire Service Inspectorate following the announcement on June 11 that the Inspectorate was to operate within the new Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR). In his speech Mr Meldrum paid tribute to the advances that have been made in recent years, particularly in the development of the Fire Safety Advisory Board (FSAB), and

recognised that this development must continue within the new parameters of the DTLR - "I am confident that nothing will be done to reverse the steady improvement in the relationship between Government and the fire industry, and the fire service and the industry, which we have seen develop over recent years."

He also made reference to the role of third party certification and the potential for this to be made a statutory requirement which is now being addressed by The FSAB Third Party Accreditation Task-Group to be chaired by John Letts, Technical Manager of FETA and the Fire Industry Confederation (FIC). Mr Meldrum said - "The terms of reference of the group require it to establish whether there is a case for the introduction of

statutory requirement for the third party accreditation of fire safety products and the provision, design, installation and maintenance of fire protection systems. In doing so the group has been asked to consider, among other things, the need for such a requirement, the benefits to be derived, the impact on smaller fire protection companies, the implications for innovation and the ability of the approvals sector to provide a timely and cost-effective service. The group, which met for the first time on the 22nd of June, has been asked to provide a report to the Fire Safety Advisory Board by November this year."

Mr Meldrum paid testament to the vital role played by fire extinguishers in reducing fire losses, including community fire safety programmes, an area which FETA are currently addressing - "we believe that portable equipment will always have an important role to play in the overall fire safety arrangements for workplaces, leisure premises and also the home." (This is a subject discussed in more depth by David Bonnett in the article entitled 'Fire Extinguishers in the Home' and by Ken Knight in 'Making Society Safer From Fire' both in this issue of FETA News.)

In his address at the luncheon, David Bonnett, FETA Chairman, also spoke of the importance of the Fire Safety Advisory Board - "The Board is a dedicated forum. Included in its terms of reference is the need to maintain a strategic overview of all general fire safety matters - both legislative and non-legislative - and, to develop and monitor policies and support initiatives aimed at improving standards of fire safety and raising public awareness of fire safety issues. This is a huge and vitally important task, which is why the FSAB must succeed."



Left to right: David Bonnett, Chairman of FETA, Graham Meldrum, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services and Brendan Gately, General Manager of FETA at the 85th AGM and Annual Luncheon

INDUSTRY-WIDE MARKET SURVEY

Anybody looking for an insight into the market for fire alarms and fixed extinguishing systems is reminded that the BFPSA have available an industry wide survey. The 50 page report commissioned by the BFPSA and researched by i+i Proplan entitled 'The United Kingdom

Market for Fire Alarms & Fixed Extinguishing Systems 2000' provides some in-depth research into what constitutes the estimated value for FD&A and FES of some half a billion pounds. Copies are available from the BFPSA at the discounted price of £195.

FIRST ADDRESS FOR MINISTER AT FIC SEMINAR



Dr Alan Whitehead MP, the recently appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the DTLR with responsibility for fire safety policy

FETA members were amongst some 110 attendees at the Annual Fire Industry Confederation (FIC) parliamentary seminar staged at Westminster on 11 July.

Dr Alan Whitehead MP, the recently appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the DTLR with responsibility for fire safety policy, used the seminar for his first public address to the fire protection community. Mr Whitehead spoke of the logical move in bringing fire

safety under the umbrella of the DTLR - "We now have in one Department policy responsibility for the fire service and fire safety legislation, the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations and general health and safety." He also spoke of a change in emphasis "...from cure to prevention" and of an approach which will see "...more effort put into fire safety as the means of driving down the number of deaths and injuries resulting from fire, and reducing the damage it inflicts on property and the environment."

Under the title 'Shouldering the fire safety responsibility - whose role?', speakers addressed a number of issues currently facing those involved in fire safety. Speakers included Ken Knight, CBE, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association (CACFOA) policy director for safety and standards;

Professor Rosemarie Everton, Chair of Fire Law at the University of Central Lancashire; Ken Hughes of British Airways, and Tony Thorne, Head of the Fire Policy Legislation Group, Fire Policy Unit, DTLR

BAFE ELECTS A NEW CHAIRMAN

Ken Knight CBE, QFSM, Chief Fire Officer of West Midlands Fire Service and CACFOA Policy Director, has been elected to serve as British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE) Chairman. He takes over from Graham Butler who retired from the post earlier this year.

Ken who was awarded the CBE in June this year for his work within the Fire Service commented: "My appointment as Chairman comes at a time when BAFE are making great strides in pursuing their aim of increasing the quality and effectiveness of fire protection equipment and service.

"The successful introduction of the Registered Technicians' Scheme for portable fire extinguishers and the imminent launch of the Fire Protection

Systems Scheme are just two of the initiatives that as Council Chairman I will be taking a keen interest in"

Mr Knight heads up a Council that includes representatives from both local and national government departments as well as other interested bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive, Trading Standards and ABI. He added ... "whilst it is important to extol the virtues of BAFE to commerce and industry it is even more important that local authorities lead by example and specify such schemes in their own premises.

In congratulating Ken, Graham Butler commented "...having someone with the experience and standing of Ken is quite an honour. I know his enthusiasm and drive



Ken Knight CBE, QFSM, Chief Fire Officer of West Midlands Fire Service, CACFOA Policy Director and now Chairman of BAFE.

will be invaluable at a time when so much is happening within the organisation"

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS (PFES) IN THE HOME

The successful use of portable fire extinguishers (PFE's) in commercial environments continues to be a focus for FETA but a growing awareness of their potential in the domestic environment is the subject of an open letter by FETA Chairman David Bonnett.

"The whole subject of how to tackle the problem of deaths and losses from fire in domestic premises is one that is occupying the minds of a large number of people, from Government and Local Government to insurers, fire brigades and fire protection equipment manufacturers.

The problem is a significant one which we all know. Some five hundred lives lost every year through fire should be giving us, including the public at large, a great deal of concern. But the problem is that death through fire is an everyday occurrence that happens in ones and twos and hardly grabs the headlines, unlike, for example, the Hatfield rail crash or an aeroplane crash which are much higher profile. In the case of Hatfield, the disaster sparked an immediate programme of much needed investment, attempting to rectify years of under spending.

The attendant problem with death from fire in the home is that the majority occur in those homes occupied by people who are least able or willing to afford to take precautions from the risk of fire. And it is in this area that attention is now being focussed to devise ways and means of tackling the problem.

The message from most fire brigades to the public on discovering a fire in their premises is currently to 'Get out, stay out, call the Fire Brigade'. This prescriptive advice takes no account of the seriousness of the fire at the time. It implies no assessment of the situation by those present and if followed to the letter could result in a minor incident, that could have been dealt with quite safely, becoming a major one.

We know of the changes that have occurred in the approach to fire safety in the workplace as a result of the EU Framework and Workplace Directives which have resulted in the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, as amended. This change in emphasis from fire fighting to fire prevention has caused the fire brigade to re-assess the allocation of their resources as a result and although response times have not and cannot be allowed to deteriorate, the chances are that there will be no improvement in these areas in the future.

Therefore, the messages that go to individuals about fire safety in their homes must be along broadly similar lines to those that they receive in the workplace. If a fire risk assessment is deemed necessary for the office, why not one for the home? If fire fighting equipment is necessary in the workplace, why not in the home? Indeed training in the workplace should make direct reference to fire safety in the home. After all, risk from fire is not something

that is left behind at work when you go home.

FETA has collected evidence from its members about how useful and successful portable fire extinguishers are in stopping small fires from becoming large ones. A very large number of small fires are extinguished with little drama by largely untrained people using a modicum of common sense and these fires are not recorded in any statistics because the fire brigade is not called.

Smoke alarms are now fitted as a matter of course in new homes and are shown to save lives. The message to people confronted with a fire situation must be changed to allow and even encourage a sensible approach to putting the fire out. A domestic fire extinguisher seems the most sensible approach being far safer and more effective than a wet tea towel or bowl of water.

The debate has already started in the DTLR and fire brigades. The debate should be widened to encourage other points of view to be raised."



Above right: The burnt out remains of a home in which a fire has taken hold. Having a domestic fire extinguisher might have helped the residents prevent this.

FETA EXAMS

Exam dates for the remainder of 2001:

8th October at Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, Reigate

22nd November at West Midlands Fire Service, Smethwick.

To reserve a place at either venue contact Janet Willingham on 020 8549 8839

DIARY DATES

The FETA Annual Conference and Dinner will take place at the Windmill Village Hotel, Coventry on 28 November. Topics will include the New Leadership Statement that is intended to replace the existing Code of Conduct. Details will be sent to all members. Non-members wishing to attend can obtain details from the FETA website www.feta.org.uk or by contacting Leila Bascal on 020 8549 8839.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The following 3 companies have all joined the Association this year and FETA wish them well and look forward to their active involvement:

T&P Electrical Fire Division Ltd

Mainline House, Roudham Industrial Estate, East Harling, Norfolk, NR16 2SN

Eric Walker (Chester) Ltd

Unit 440/441 Walton Summit, Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancs. PR5 8AT

Macron Fireater Ltd

Fireater House, South Denes Road, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR30 3PJ