



BFC

Bulletin

Spring 2008 Newsletter



BFC sets up Manufacturers Group

A sub group of the British Fire Consortium, the fire industry's largest trade association, has been established. The new 'BFC Manufacturers Group' comprises representatives from companies which assemble, manufacture and distribute products such as portable fire extinguishers, fire blankets and signage.

Roger Chamberlain, BFC General Secretary, said, "We felt it was important for the manufacturer members within the BFC to have a voice with which to raise the issues pertinent to them. For example, of particular concern to all of them at the moment is the impact on business caused by delays in the certification process. We also plan for the group to speak out about topics such as accreditation standards, national and regional government policies, EC directives and other current and potential trade issues."



The group covers a wide range of manufacturing areas and members include Steve Evans of Amerex Fire International Ltd, Ray Burgess of FPS (Fire Protection Ltd), Craig Halford of Jactone Products Ltd, Eric Richards of SAF-FIRE Products and Graham Newman of ECS (Midlands) Ltd.

Chairman's message

Dear members and fire industry colleagues,

Welcome to our new style newsletter!

I am now six months into my time as Chairman of the BFC and, for those who do not know me, I have been in the fire protection industry for 19 years, initially as a service engineer, working for both national and independent companies. In 1996 I formed Castle Fire, which offers a full range of fire protection services to a wide variety of customers.

It is my aim to try and circulate as much relevant fire industry information as possible to BFC members, and users of their services, via this newsletter and our new website - which we are currently developing.

I would also like to ask any Consortium members who have not yet attended one of our quarterly meetings to try and find the time to come along to the next one which is being held on July 22nd at Stratford on Avon. We always provide high quality speakers who present useful information to members on fire industry related topics. The meetings are also a great opportunity to meet the committee and to network with fellow members. All of us on the BFC Council look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the next meeting.

With best wishes

Colin Rhodes
Chairman
British Fire Consortium

A New Website!

The British Fire Consortium has launched a brand new website, designed to be a useful resource for fire officers, facility managers, local authorities, architects and private companies - in fact anyone who needs to specify or purchase fire safety services.



www.britishfireconsortium.org.uk

Between them, the 250 BFC member companies offer fire risk consultancy as well as the supply, installation and maintenance of fire extinguishers, fire alarms and residential sprinkler systems. Other services include the supply of emergency lighting systems, safety signage, dry riser maintenance and staff fire training including full evacuation exercises. Members are located all over the UK.

The easy to navigate site lists contact information for each member and there are also links to various fire related organisations as well as to the full text of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Dates and details of forthcoming BFC training courses are also listed.



Major council contract for Safelincs

BFC member, Safelincs Ltd, has won a major contract with Kirklees Council to supply up to 100,000 carbon monoxide alarms over the next three years. The deal forms part of the Kirklees' warm zone initiative that includes offering cavity wall and loft installation and low energy light bulbs free of charge to all households in the region. On top of this households can request a free carbon monoxide alarm.



"We are very pleased to be associated with this innovative scheme," said Harry Dewick-Eisele, managing director of Safelincs Ltd. "We were able to show that, as well as meeting or exceeding the required product specifications, we are able to handle the council's flexible supply requirements. Kirklees requires not only large bulk shipments to programme partners, but also thousands of individual shipment to many Kirklees residents. Safelincs also offers customer support which made it important that each of our telephone operatives can demonstrate full product knowledge and the ability to deal effectively with any queries that may arise." All alarms supplied by Safelincs display the Kirklees Council logo and each unit carries a unique seven year guarantee.

www.safelincs.co.uk

Cotswold Intumescent launches new division

Gloucestershire based company, Cotswold Intumescent Services Ltd, has launched a new wire free fire alarm division to complement its existing business of supplying and installing passive intumescent systems into all types of commercial, public and residential properties.



The BFC member company provides a complete range of fire stopping products to protect building, mechanical and electrical services including fire barrier curtains and barriers, ventilation grilles, fire and smoke seals, intumescent coatings for timber and steel and electrical fire protection. A key service offered by the company is the upgrading of panel doors and ornate ceilings in historic buildings for clients such as the National Trust and English Heritage, and works have recently been completed at Brasenose College, Oxford, Cardiff Castle and the Lord Mayor's residence in Cardiff where all the original ornate ceilings were upgraded to comply with BS476 Parts 21: & 22: 1987.

Director Martyn Young said, "The supply and installation of wire free alarm systems sits perfectly alongside our existing operation as we have already built a strong relationship with specifiers and local fire services who call on us for technical advice over the upgrading of historic and other buildings where wire free systems will deliver huge benefits."

www.fireproof.co.uk
www.wirelessfirealarmsystems.co.uk



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The **JOB** Group

Graham Newman, President, British Fire Consortium, reports:

As BFC members know, I have been concerned over one or two small issues in the two standards Service Technicians work to, i.e. BS 5306 parts 3 and 8. I had expected these to be discussed and if agreed, put through as amendments, but my request resulted in all the other Trade Associations putting forward their little niggles as well. The result was a full blown revision of the two standards, even though one was not due. That was two years ago and we now have an almost complete part 3, with part 8 being ready in the next six months. The changes to both documents are considerable, I have to say that I think the Committee has done a good job and we will have two much improved standards to work to. Unfortunately part 3 is currently stalled, as there are a couple of major points that cannot be agreed.

One of those major points is the proposed introduction of a National Examination Board. You may have heard all sorts of rumours about this, but the original concept, as I proposed, was intended to create parity between qualifications awarded by ourselves, IFEDA and the FIA. This proposal has now mushroomed out of all recognition, as other interested parties have become involved and I am sorry to say that at the time of writing, I (representing the BFC) cannot go along with the current proposals for the NEB. Although I believe the NEB would have been beneficial in the form I originally proposed, I also accept that our members are happy to continue to work within the current BFC examination framework.

Extinguisher manufacturers should be aware that BS EN 3 – 8 has been updated and re-issued. BFC members who work to this standard can of course obtain copies through our Secretary with a 50% discount.

Finally, I have said before that I could never see a European standard on the servicing of extinguishers "in my lifetime". Maybe that was a bit strong, as a European Technical Committee has now been formed at the request of one member of the EU, to "unofficially" look into this possibility. With that in mind, five countries sent technical experts to a recent meeting in Paris. Unfortunately I was unable to attend this meeting on the Consortium's behalf, but colleagues who did attend advised me that they did have a nice chat. I think that's euro speak for not getting anywhere, but they have arranged another meeting for November and I will ensure that I attend and report back.



British Fire Consortium President, Graham Newman, has been the Consortium's Standards Advisor since 1986, its Technical Officer since 1990 and also represents the Consortium on the BSI Technical Committees responsible for the development of standards for portable fire extinguishers and portable gas cylinders.

In Europe he represents the UK as Principal Expert on various CEN committees and is Secretary to the CEN/TC 70/WG5 committee which wrote the newly published EN3 standard for portable fire extinguishers. Last November, Graham was also appointed Convenor of a new European Technical working group – CEN/TC70/WG6.

BFC TRAINING COURSES

The British Fire Consortium has been reviewing its training services and can now provide the following courses:

EXTINGUISHER TECHNICIAN TRAINING

4 day course including accredited Examination

EXTINGUISHER TECHNICIAN REFRESHER COURSE

1 day – requirement to attend 3 yearly

FIRE ALARM COURSES

Modules 1 and 2 Commencing June 2008 additional modules will be rolled out according to demand. All modules are 1 day unless otherwise indicated.

Module 1 Foundation Course in Fire alarm system design

Module 2 Maintenance of Systems to BS5839:1

Module 3 Installation of systems to BS5839:1

Module 4 Commissioning of systems to 5839:1

Module 5 Advanced design of systems to 5839:1

Module 6 Design of systems for dwellings to BS5839:6 (Half-day)

EMERGENCY LIGHTING COURSE

Emergency Lighting Systems to BS5266 parts 1, 7 & 8 – 1 day

TRAIN THE TRAINER COURSE

3 day course designed to assist you in presenting good quality Fire Warden courses.

DRY RISER MAINTENANCE

1 day course including practical onsite exercise

FIRE SAFETY MANAGER

Module 1 Fire Risk Assessment 5 days

Module 2 Managing Fire Safety 4 days

Successful completion of both modules will qualify for membership of the Institute of Fire Safety Managers at Technician Grade – Tech IFSM. Holders of the NEBOSH Fire Safety Certificate may also upgrade to TechIFSM by completing Module 1.

A training diary is currently in production and will be circulated to members and posted on the website at: www.britishfireconsortium.org.uk. In the mean time, enquiries should be addressed to Ken Day, Training Officer on: Telephone: 01743 248045, Mobile: 07801 388377 Email: bfc@florianfire.com

Bullet train depot armed against fire thanks to EJP Fire Protection



BFC member, EJP Fire Protection, has supplied a range of portable fire extinguishers to Hitachi's new world class train maintenance facility in Ashford, home to the famous Hitachi 'Bullet Trains' which are set to run on the high speed link between St. Pancras, Ashford and into the Olympic village from 2009.

Managing Director of Tonbridge based EJP, Andrew Portlock, said, "Out of the blue we received a call from the consultants managing the project for Hitachi, asking us to supply a quotation for the provision and servicing of fire equipment for the Ashford maintenance facility. We've subsequently supplied a range of mobile fire points combining foam and CO² extinguishers along with 45 litre foam trolley units for the main workshop where they will prep the trains. Wall mounted foam and CO² units were provided for the offices and electrical sub stations. We were delighted to be involved in such a prestigious project and particularly pleased that Hitachi chose a local supplier."

www.ejpfire.com

COMMENT by BFC Training Officer, Ken Day, FIFSM MCIPD MIIRSM

Portable fire extinguishers in common areas of flats

Following the inevitable excitable media headlines arising from the risk assessment which resulted in the removal of fire extinguishers from a block of residential flats in Bournemouth, there is a danger that property managers who do not possess appropriate fire safety qualifications and experience, may misinterpret the circumstances of this particular case and may make an assumption that portable fire extinguishers are not necessary in common parts of flats. Such an assumption would of course be manifestly incorrect and would fail to recognise the fact that a fire risk assessment is unique to each individual premise and to individual circumstances applying at the specific time of the execution of the risk assessment.

One has only to look at statistics for fires within flats to see that fire is a serious issue in this type of building. An examination of the origin of fire, cause of fire, fire spread and occupants' reactions will, in many instances, demonstrate all too clearly the benefit of having first aid firefighting equipment available. Special consideration may of course have to be given in some instance to the potential misuse of this equipment and appropriate security measures applied – these measures can be simply and effectively achieved.

In the event, however, of fire/smoke spread and subsequent injuries to occupants in such a building where first-aid firefighting provisions have not been made, or have been removed, it is likely to be very difficult for the responsible person to demonstrate due diligence. It is likely that a case of having 'failed to provide the premises to the extent that is appropriate with appropriate fire fighting equipment' could be proven.

The conclusions of a fire risk assessment will depend upon the skills and experience of the assessor and it is the duty of the responsible person to ensure that the assessor has the appropriate knowledge and degree of professionalism to complete the task effectively. It is quite inconceivable that in other than very simple premises anyone is capable of carrying out such an effective assessment on the basis of having completed a course of just a few days duration. We should equally be aware of the capable professional who sees his primary role firstly and foremost as short-term protection of the corporate purse – a dangerous stance indeed.



Run Roger Run!

For the third year running, BFC General Secretary, Roger Chamberlain, completed the London Marathon in a very commendable time (5.40). Roger who started running marathons at the age of 63, ran this year to raise money for the National Osteoporosis Society.

Training success

The British Fire Consortium has linked up with Vulcan Fire Training and the Institute of Fire Safety Managers to provide a pathway to professional fire safety qualifications. The first successful delegates to complete the Fire Safety Manager Course, Phil Harrison of Fire Protect and Peter Cook of Cams Fire & Security, have been presented with their certificates and have also been granted Membership of the Institute of Fire Safety Managers at Technician grade with the entitlement to use the post nominal TechIFSM. On receiving his certificate Phil said, "I found the course to be very well presented, constructive and informative and would strongly recommend it to BFC members who wish to develop professionally in Fire Safety Management".



BFC Training Officer, Ken Day, presents certificates to Phil Harrison (top) and Steve Best

Steve Best [Jnr] of Newflame, Peterborough, has successfully completed his Extinguisher Technician Course and was recently presented with his certificate from BFC Training Officer Ken Day. Steve, who obtained a merit in his examination, is the third generation of his family to enter the business which was founded by his grandfather (a founder member of the BFC) in 1972.

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SF Fire Protection sponsors major construction industry event

BFC member SF Fire Protection, has sponsored an important 'Construction Lunch' organised by the Bradford and Leeds Chambers of Commerce. The annual event brings together Leeds and Bradford construction industry moguls who, this year listened to guest speaker, Stephen Talboys, Director of Bradford Centre Regeneration, as he updated them on the progression of the regeneration scheme.

SF's Marketing Manager, Charlotte Castle, said "We saw the event as a major opportunity to get close to members of the construction industry based in, or interested in, the Bradford and Leeds area. The construction industry is an important target for us and this year there were 300 delegates at the lunch – the biggest number ever – and all possible specifiers of our services."

To celebrate its 35th anniversary this year, the company is also planning a busy programme of events with local clubs and businesses to raise money for Cancer Research UK, including a balloon race in conjunction with Brighouse Town Football Club which the company sponsors.

SF was set up by Stanley Fluin, the uncle of the present MD, Kevin Stock, and has grown from a one man operation into a 14 strong team which offers a raft of fire safety services including fire extinguisher supply and maintenance, fire alarms, fire risk assessments and most recently - CCTV servicing.

www.sffireprotection.co.uk



Engineer, Glen Harding, is part of the SF Fire Protection team

BFC MEMBER PROFILE

H Roberts & Co Ltd

British Fire Consortium member, H Roberts & Son, is one of the oldest fire extinguisher companies in the country and celebrated its centenary last year. It was established in 1907 by Henry Roberts to supply and maintain fire extinguishers on Merseyside. The present MD, Arnold Humphrey, took over in 1967, by which time it had customers all over the North of England. The company employs 12 staff including Arnold's wife, Hilda, and their two sons, Mark, who is General Manager and Paul who runs the Liferaft Cylinder operation.

Arnold can remember some significant moments in the history of H Roberts including how he and Hilda used to sit in their garden shed making up their own chemical foam extinguisher charges! "These were for export abroad," he says. "We had our own special formula of liquorice root powder, bicarbonate of soda and sulphate of alumina. I can still remember the exact formula!"

H Roberts became members of the British Fire Consortium in 1987. Arnold says he joined because it's an association which is committed to improving standards within the fire extinguisher servicing trade. He adds, "It also keeps its members up to date with changes in legislation which is invaluable and the regular meetings provide opportunities to network and exchange ideas with similar companies."

Business is still, primarily, the supply and service of a full range of portable extinguishers and fire hoses to public, commercial and retail premises, universities, schools and hotels etc. Although many of the docks in Liverpool are now closed, H Roberts remains Lloyds registered and approved for the service of ships' fire extinguishers. "We're experts on ships' fire hose and fittings," says Arnold, "and we still service portable fire extinguishers for many vessels including Mersey tugs." The 1990's saw a diversification for the company into the supply and service of inflation cylinders for inflatable liferafts and escape chutes.

Arnold says it's a totally different industry now from when he first took over the business and the challenges are enormous. "There are now thousands of fire extinguisher service companies providing very stiff competition. We have to compete with the one-man business with very little overheads and we have to have the necessary approvals and qualifications in order to be able to compete with the large National Companies. We are BFC members, BAFE Approved, we operate Quality Assurance Management System to BS EN ISO 9001:2000, we have a Health & Safety Policy and we have Public & Products Liability Assurance yet, when I recently asked a long-standing customer why he was changing to a company who have no approvals, he said it was because they were cheaper. Fire extinguishers remain a 'grudge' purchase for many people and price will always be the most important factor to them but, where health and safety is concerned, I firmly believe that quality should be the prime consideration."

He also says he is saddened by the way British manufacturers now have to manufacture to a price to compete with imported extinguishers and how this has meant that product quality in general is poorer. "This has led to a change in the service we provide. Extinguishers used to be good enough to recondition. Now we just provide service exchange units, we no longer strip down and re-spray. There are still high quality British manufacturers but the price they have to charge makes it difficult for us to be competitive."

H Roberts is surviving in today's difficult business environment through a policy of providing a high quality service to customers who demand expertise and professionalism. Like many Consortium members, this company is planning to meet future business challenges without compromising traditional values.

www.hroberts.co.uk



Top: Paul, Arnold and Mark Humphrey

Bottom: The company has diversified into the supply and service of inflation cylinders for liferafts



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