

PASSION FOR MIST

THE INTERNATIONAL WATER MIST ASSOCIATION WILL BE 15 YEARS OLD IN APRIL – *IFJ* TALKS WITH CHAIRMAN RAGNAR WIGHUS AND ASKS WHAT THE RIDE HAS BEEN LIKE FOR A TECHNOLOGY THAT IS STILL REGARDED BY MANY AS THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK.



The Watermist Hymn

Oh Watermist, Oh Watermist
Is all that we desire
With Watermist, with Watermist
We combat every fire
With smaller droplets, thinner pipes
We walk the smarter way
And if you have a good idea:
You join IWMA

(By Ragnar Wighus, first released in London 2009)



Ragnar Wighus, IWMA Chair.

IWMA is 15 years old in April, what have been the association's main achievements to date?

IWMA has become the world leading forum for manufacturers, laboratories, classification institutions, academic institutions and users of water mist fire fighting systems.

The IWMA brings these parties together in an association and organises scientific and market activities as well as social gatherings. This combination is the pronounced purpose of the association, and the reason for the world-wide acceptance.

Are you happy that water mist is accepted in the fire market?

Yes, especially when I look back at the first years after the foundation of the IWMA. We were met with a great deal of skepticism and there was also internal disagreement between the different manufacturers about the water mist technology and its applications.

The work with standards and test methods within IMO which led to the acceptance of water mist systems in the marine sector was of great importance, and it still is an important part of the market even today.

What preconceptions regarding water mist has the IWMA had to fight? Is the battle over?

One of the most pronounced preconceptions was – and still is – that water mist tested for the marine sector (according to IMO standards) could not be used for land-based applications.

The second one was that water mist could replace all other fire fighting systems and that it was some sort of 'magic' system.

The approach that IWMA and the member manufacturers have chosen – to base all applications on real scale fire testing of the different systems – has been successful when it comes to convincing the authorities having jurisdiction that the systems can be trusted and are safe.

However, the battle is not over in all parts of the world and with all applications. There are still myths about what water mist can and cannot do.

What are the next challenges for water mist and the IWMA?

Our biggest challenges are to get acceptance for a European standard for water mist systems and to enter the market of industrial fire protection.

This work on a European standard started approximately 15 years ago – about the same time the IWMA was founded. During the last two years, however, the work has picked up speed and a revised draft standard is expected this year.

Another challenge is to meet the requirements of insurance companies of inspection and maintenance systems. Such a system is included in the draft for a European standard.

To expand the association into the Middle East and Asia is also one of the plans we are currently working on. The seminar which the IWMA held earlier this year in Dubai during the Intersec fair was one of the first steps into that direction. (See page 42)

Does the IWMA have any future plans regarding its activities and membership?

We intend to arrange more educational seminars in regions where there is a market for water mist technology. For example this year there will be one seminar in France in April, and another one in May in Denmark. We will be present in Chicago at this year's NFPA Conference & Expo with a booth. And of course there will be our annual conference in Paris in October. There are no definite plans for 2014, but one or two seminars or possibly even the International Water Mist Conference itself could be held outside Europe.

As far as the issue of membership is concerned we are always happy about companies, institutions as well as private persons involved in water mist technology joining the IWMA. By organising more activities outside Europe we hope to attract new members from regions such as the Middle East and Asia.

Does the IWMA still start its meetings with a song about water mist? Can you sing it?

Yes, I think that singing together makes life easier and funnier, and I try to sing a song with relevance to the conferences and meetings. The Water Mist Hymn was made up for the 2009 IWMC in London, and is sung by all members at the annual meetings. It is just like fans singing for their favorite team in sports!