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## 25 years of IWMA

The beginning was rather provisional and informal. In the early days of the International Water Mist Association (IWMA) there was neither an office, nor any employees – let alone major activities. “However, there was a target which was to promote the water mist technology, to bundle what was happening on an international level and to communicate matters of common interest”, says Bettina McDowell, IWMA’s General Manager.

She adds: “The first two years were a phase of initiation during which the few members merely worked together on joint research projects. The task of the first working group was to collect existing guidelines for standardization worldwide.”

Then, in 2001, the 1st International Water Mist Conference took place in Vienna, Austria. This was the first step into the public eye. Many things have happened since then. In 2023, IWMA can look back at crucial developments, learning curves, turning points and the odd moment of glory.

In the early days, when the first water mist companies were founded, water mist was only applied offshore. However, the list of applications has grown substantially over the last three decades and now includes many land-based applications. Many manufacturers of sprinkler systems have added water mist to their portfolios. And at Fire Sprinkler International (an event of EFSN, the European Fire Sprinkler Network) one of the many sessions is dedicated to water mist.

The first standards were released over 25 years ago. FM 5560 and IMO Resolution A.800 in 1995 and NFPA 750 in 1996. In December 2020, the first part of the European Standard EN 14972 was published. Its Title: “Fixed firefighting systems - Water mist systems - Part 1: Design, Installation, Inspection and Maintenance”. The other 16 parts (all fire test protocols) have either been published or are in the pipeline.

IWMA members have taken the approach to base all applications on real-scale fire test. This has been particularly successful when it comes to convincing authorities having jurisdiction that the systems are safe.

Among the various fire protection technologies, water mist is the eco-friendliest. The systems are easy to install, save space and materials, and it is no big issues to retro-fit and extend systems. The mist reduces heat and oxygen and does not harm humans.

Since 2016, IWMA bestows the IWMA Young Talent Award. In 2023, it will go to the author of the best Ph.D. thesis. In 2024, the best master thesis will win the prize.

IWMA co-operates with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Expert Group on Marine Safety of the European Commission, the NFPA technical committees 25 and 750 and of course CEN, the European Committee on Standardization. IWMA is also involved in updating the water mist chapters of the SFPE and NFPA handbooks. And an IWMA task group has developed The Matrix: a chart showcasing all current water mist applications and associated fire test protocols that have been published by certification/test agencies.

IWMA was the first and still is the only organization dedicated to water mist and is looking forward to continuing to promote the technology.