

Raising awareness of water mist technology

Bettina McDowell, General Manager of the International Water Mist Association discusses the organisation's plans to raise the profile of water mist technology at Intersec 2019

Can you tell us what the IWMA does please?

The International Water Mist Association was founded to promote water mist technology and that is what we do. There are of course different paths that we take in order to do this. One of them is to provide the water mist community with a networking platform and a knowledge exchange centre, that is what we use the annual International Water Mist Conference for as well as our website.

We also organise educational and topical seminars, for example early in 2019 we will be in Dubai at Intersec with our general educational seminar and in March 2018 we were in the UK to focus on fire protection with water mist for high rise buildings.

Apart from events we also take part in different initiatives. IWMA has a liaison with CEN, the European Committee for Standardisation, and some of our members are currently working on the establishment of the European standard which will hopefully be published very soon.

We have this liaison with CEN, we have a consultative status at IMO, the International Maritime Organisation in London, and we also have an observer status at EMSA, the European Maritime Safety Agency which is a committee within the EU. We have also made contact with FIEP, that's the Fire Information Exchange Platform which is also part of the EU and we are currently evaluating all possibilities to cooperate with them.

Have you seen an increase in the number of water mist suppression systems since the IWMA was founded?

Yes, most definitely. The interest has increased a lot over the past 20 years and there are

countless famous buildings around the world that are now protected with water mist, for example the Clock Tower in Mecca and La Scala in Milan.

Interestingly enough I have also heard that the British government is about to spend an impressive sum to have the Houses of Parliament protected with water mist, so once that project is finished we will of course add that to our Hall of Fame page on our website.

Why do you think water mist suppression systems aren't accepted as much as they should be within the industry?

I think the fact that there isn't a joint European standard is definitely an issue. I was in Berlin recently for a few days because we had a meeting there of the CEN TC191 working group. We met to work on the document and we made good progress.

Water mist is very well established in the marine and offshore sector. The IMO has made it very clear that water mist is the fire protection and suppression system of their choice, for example it is mandatory to carry water mist lances on container ships. On land there have been issues regarding requirements for fixed systems. I think with a joint European standard, people will have a document in their hands and that should push water mist forwards.

How many members do you have and how quickly is your membership growing?

We have just under 50 corporate members and just under 30 private and honorary members. Within the corporate members, there are manufacturers, suppliers, installers, distributors, Institutes and universities. I am confident that these numbers will go up further

once the European standard is published. Membership isn't growing as quickly as I would wish it to grow but I think things will develop once we have that document, because then the market will grow.

Can you tell us what you will be offering at the Intersec 2019 seminar?

The seminar in Dubai will be a general education seminar. It will be our fourth seminar at Intersec which shows that the audience appreciate a variety of topics. The first part of the seminar will include me introducing the organisation and explaining how the technology works. I will then let people have a look at our Hall of Fame so that they can get an idea of who is involved within the organisation and what applications there are for water mist.

The second part of the seminar will be the other speakers presenting case studies from different angles, to show the full spectrum of the technology. I am also hoping that we will have a speaker who will discuss system maintenance.

In any case, the basic idea of such an event is the attendees will have a much better idea of what it is all about.

Do you have any more seminars organised for 2019?

There will be one more seminar in Milan on 11th April, which is also a general educational seminar. After that I will be organising the conference which in 2019 will take place in Berlin on 23rd and 24th October. The two seminars will both be free of charge to attend; people just have to register beforehand.

Are there any new technological trends within water mist suppression systems that you think our readers should be aware of?

Manufacturers are always working on enhancements and further developments. With high pressure systems for example, it could be architects that set the trend by designing strangely twisted and angled buildings which the manufacturers of water mist systems are then required to provide suitable fire protection systems for. If you are somebody in a situation where water consumption is an issue then it might be best to choose a low pressure water mist system.



Could you tell us a little bit more about what the IWMA Scientific Council does please?

The members of the council have three tasks. The first task is that they evaluate presentations for the International Water Mist Conference, to make sure that they contain a certain level of information and to make sure they are not too commercial, they also ensure that there is a variety of topics.

Their second task is to evaluate the submissions for the IWMA talent awards, which in 2019 will go to the author of the best PhD thesis. The award alternates between the author of the best Master's thesis and the following year it goes to the author of the best PhD thesis.

The third task is to present their findings on day two of the conference. The conference is divided into two parts with the first day of the conference being applications day. The second day is very scientific, the members of the scientific council and other scientists have a chance to show their findings.

What are the plans for IWMA over the next five years?

To grow! We want to attract many more members and to promote the technology even further. There are still a lot of architects and building engineers that do not know enough about water mist technology so we are aiming to raise awareness within those particular groups. I think if you work in fire protection you have to be aware of every single technology there is. Water mist may not be the best choice for every single application but there are some applications where water mist makes a lot of sense, for example in museums or data centres where you want to avoid water damage by sprinkler systems. So our one main goal is to spread the word.

WE WANT TO ATTRACT MANY MORE MEMBERS AND TO PROMOTE THE TECHNOLOGY EVEN FURTHER. THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF ARCHITECTS AND BUILDING ENGINEERS THAT DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT WATER MIST TECHNOLOGY SO WE ARE AIMING TO RAISE AWARENESS WITHIN THOSE PARTICULAR GROUPS.



Bettina McDowell, General Manager - International Water Mist Association