

FATAL FIRE THREATS REMAIN A BURNING ISSUE

Fatal house and apartment fires could happen at any time in any part of the country due to poor construction standards and hardly any enforcement of building regulations, according to a leading fire expert who is organising an international sustainable fire engineering conference in Dublin in September.

CJ Walsh of FireOx International has cited the cases of Longboat Quay and Priory Hall apartment complexes in Dublin as tangible examples of where the quality of construction was so inadequate that it gave rise to serious fire risk.

These two are just the tip of a very large iceberg, which remains floating on the Celtic Tiger Construction Ocean, he claimed. "If you want further proof, look at that terrace of houses in Newbridge where fire spread dramatically and very rapidly last year.

"And that fire would have kept spreading, without the physical separation between the two terraces. That simply should not have happened," said Walsh, who is organising a major international conference on Sustainable Fire Engineering in Dublin in September.

"Urgent and radical rethinking of how we build houses and apartments is needed, in particular, due to the potential serious risk to life. Only for the actual physical separation between the terraces in Newbridge, the fire would have kept spreading."

INDEPENDENT ENFORCEMENT

He added that regulations and control systems must be independently and stringently enforced by local authorities. "Self-regulation is no regulation," he stated.

Walsh, a registered architect, fire engineer and technical controller, said that related issues such as greater insulation and airtightness in homes, solar panels, and the increase in Passive House building actually contributes to a much higher level of fire risk.

"Has sufficient consideration been given to fire safety in these cases ... and in many other so-called Green Buildings? And in fire incidents, which have actually occurred in Green Buildings, frontline firefighters have faced unusual and life-threatening challenges."

Over 300 delegates from around the world are expected to attend the 2016 Sustainable Fire Engineering Conference at the Gresham Hotel, Dublin on 28-30 September.

FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICTS

The central theme of this benchmark conference – co-hosted by



Glasgow Caledonian University and FireOx International – will be how to marry the demands of sustainable building design, construction and operation with a transformed fire engineering which is fit for purpose in today's world.

Fire engineering which can respond, creatively and ethically, to current and reasonably foreseen threats, such as the recent Hive Attacks in Brussels, and rapidly changing social and economic needs.

"Unfortunately, a fundamental conflict exists between sustainable building design strategies and the fire safety approaches adopted in conventional fire engineering,"

Walsh explained.

He added: "A wide chasm separates the language and understanding of these two very different design disciplines. As a result, the performance of sustainable buildings can be seriously compromised.

If, on the other hand, adequate independent technical control is absent on site, it is the building's fire safety which will suffer."



An international panel of speakers will address these topics:

- Sustainable Fire Engineering: Design, Construction & Operation of Buildings.
- Firefighting in Sustainable (Green, Innovative, Smart) Buildings.
- Fire Incident Human Behaviour, Abilities and Perception
- Intelligent Passive & Active Fire Protection Measures.

For further conference information visit

www.sustainable-fireengineering.ie