

TIEMS Benelux 2nd International Workshop on “Oil, Gas, Chemicals Safety and Disaster Management”

Once again, clear skies and a bright sun, this time over Antwerp, Belgium. In the shadow of its famous cathedral lies the beautiful Hilton hotel, in the historic city centre. For a second year in a row, the Hilton offered a quite exquisite venue for the second edition of this two days workshop on 25th and 26th September 2009.

Also this year, TIEMS Benelux used the same and successful format of one day conference lectures and presentations followed by a second day attending a practical demonstration, on this occasion a visit to a PIBA Fire College, Ranst, Antwerp. Again, this proved to be a pleasant and instructive mixture of theoretical and practical approaches to safety and disaster management.

The main areas that were covered at the workshop this year were explosion, fire and spillage, in oil, gas and chemical industries, given that the port of Antwerp holds one of the largest concentrations of these types of industries world-wide with dozens of COMAH classified industrial production and storage sites.



After a brief introduction from TIEMS Benelux President Mr. Koen Druyts, the, President of TIEMS International Mr Harald Drager kicked off the workshop outlining the status and the future plans of TIEMS International.

The first part of the morning session was closed by identifying what satellite support can do for the protection of critical infrastructure and the need for an international certified education program, supported by TIEMS, for Emergency Managers.

The second part of the morning showed different ways of “authority-to-citizen-communication” during emergencies and crisis situations. All three Benelux countries demonstrated in a most interesting way their approach and the application of new technologies to facilitate this.



A group photograph was taken just before lunch.

The first speaker in the afternoon explained his model for determining what the best refuge locations for vessels in distress are along the Croatian coast, depending on a number of parameters. He was followed by lessons learned with the Belgian fire departments after the huge and mass casualty gas explosion in Ghislenghien in 2004. This was followed by a very interesting and lively presentation from Oil Spill Response, where real examples of major spillages on land and water were presented. The presentation demonstrated the difficulties encountered when spillages occur in the most unusual locations around the world and the importance of being able to call on international support to minimise the safety and environmental impact.

Finally, the last part of the workshop was introduced by a presentation and a movie on an innovative oil spill into water exercise, followed by an insight in a very interesting technology for tank bottom restoration and improvement was an excellent end to the first day of the workshop.

Mr. Drager closed officially with words of thanks for all attendees, who left with a TIEMS Benelux rucksack and a gift. He also gave special thanks to the TIEMS Benelux board for organising this event.

The second day, as bright as the first, was a visit to Belgium's major developed Fire College in Ranst. The visit started with an overview of the activities that currently take place at the college and details of some encouraging investment projects that are ongoing at the college by its General Manager, Mr. Leo Verschueren. A tour of the site followed, looking at the facilities at the college for simulating incidents involving trains, plane, motor vehicles and village/hotel evacuation.



The highlights of the visit were live demonstrations of a flashover (picture above) and a backdraft (left picture).



The visit and workshop were closed by lunch and words of thanks to Mr. Verschueren.

Jan Berghmans
Secretary TIEMS Benelux

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