



FireOx International

PRESS RELEASE

Sunday, 1 February 2015

URGENT ACTION NEEDED ON FIRE SAFETY FOR THE DISABLED IN BUILDINGS

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR DUBLIN

Getting disabled people safely out of burning buildings will be the main topic at an International Fire Conference to be held soon in Dublin.

According to the organizers, while building fire safety codes and standards exist in almost every country (including Ireland) ... on this issue, they are technically inadequate, rarely implemented and discriminate against people with disabilities.

The Dublin 'Fire Safety for All' Conference will take place at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Golden Lane, and will see over 300 experts and interested parties from Ireland and all over the world attending the two-day event.

A key focus of the conference – which takes place on 9 and 10 April – will be the launch of the 2015 Dublin Declaration on 'Fire Safety for All' in Buildings.

Mr. Sean Sherlock, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for Overseas Development Aid, has agreed to open the event on the evening of Thursday, 9 April 2015.

"What we are talking about here is effective accessibility of buildings ... in other words, people can enter, use and exit shopping centres, apartment blocks or offices safely and with ease, particularly people with activity limitations, which includes people with disabilities, children under five years of age, frail older people, women in the later stages of pregnancy, and people with a health condition", said CJ Walsh, Chief Technical Officer, FireOx International.

Mr Walsh, the conference organizer, pointed out that Ireland is one of only a few remaining countries which have yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the principal aim of which is to

... / ...

ensure that the Built, Social, Economic and Virtual Environment are sufficiently accessible for people with activity limitations to participate actively in their local communities ... a basic human right, which everybody else takes for granted !

"This is not just a national disgrace, it is a huge embarrassment for the country when you consider that the European Union itself and most of the EU's Member States have already ratified this UN Convention."

Mr Walsh, a registered architect and a fire engineer, added: "In Ireland, we pay lip service to providing an accessible built environment for people with disabilities. In reality, accessibility is either non-existent or very deficient."

Accessibility of a building encompasses the complete cycle of independent use, in a dignified manner and on an equal basis with others ... and includes the approach, entry and use of a building and its facilities, egress during normal conditions and removal from its vicinity ... and, most importantly, safe evacuation during a fire incident to a place of safety which is remote from the building and reached by way of an accessible route.

Mr Walsh said the target of the Fire Conference – which is supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Fáilte Ireland – is to ensure that people with activity limitations, which includes children under five, frail older people, women in the later stages of pregnancy, and people with health conditions, can safely evacuate from a burning building to an accessible place of safety.

The Conference is co-sponsored by the International Council for Research & Innovation in Building & Construction (CIB), and Rehabilitation International's International Commission on Technology & Accessibility (ICTA).

Speakers at the conference will be coming from Hong Kong, Spain, Scotland, Canada, Belgium, Austria, Holland and Ireland, and they will be presenting papers on issues such as 'Accessibility for All', 'Fire Service Awareness & Training', 'Corporate Social Responsibility', 'Fire Safety for All in Buildings', and 'People Rescue & Other Challenges for Firefighters.'

PRESS RELEASE ENDS

For further information on this International 'Fire Safety for All' in Buildings Conference, go to: www.fire-safety-for-all.ie

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