

Tuesday, 20 June 2006

Our moderator, Diana Robinson of the New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control/Academy of Fire Science indicated that Bo Edström of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency brought copies of a DVD created by SRSA on lessons learned from the tsunami response for the attendees. Again, the generosity of the SRSA is greatly appreciated!

Risk Perception in Sweden

Håkan Axelson, Head of Department, SRSA, Sweden

Sweden has approximately 9 million individuals, 290 municipalities, and 21 county administrative boards. The perceived risks in Sweden are to some extent influenced by the generally cool to cold temperature.

The Civil Protection Act placed responsibility for all accidents on the municipalities. Each municipality must complete a risk analysis and create accident plans. The county administration has the authority to take over operations during an emergency, but this authority is rarely exercised. Likewise, the national government can take over, but they have never exercised this authority and it is anticipated that they never will.

There are many risks that are not typical in Sweden, including: earthquakes, large hurricanes, tornados, “big” disasters, wars (there hasn’t been a war in Sweden since 1814) and dangerous animals. There are, however, quite a few risks that are present: forest fires, snow storms, floods, wind storms, landslides, dam leaks and breaks, hazardous materials incidents, nuclear power accidents, and incidents in other countries involving Swedish nationals, like the tsunami in December of 2005.

At any given time, there are approximately 300,000 Swedish citizens in other countries. At the time of the tsunami, there were approximately 30,000 Swedes in and around Thailand. This presented a major problem for the Swedish government, and citizens were very critical of the perceived lack of care by the government in the first day following the event.

Some of the other emergencies that illustrate the types of response required of the rescue services include the Gudrun windstorm in January of 2005, where there was a years worth of deforestation in the area hit by the storm in a single day. The main concern of the rescue services in this situation is to maintain services to citizens, including phones and electricity. Parts of Sweden are also prone to floods, and of particular concern are flash floods. Sweden also has forest fires, although they are not as severe as those in the western and southern United States. There is typically a major forest fire every ten years.

A flood was actually the situation that constituted what was quite likely the most expensive and possibly largest rescue operation in Sweden’s history. Arvika is a 1,975 km² area of Sweden with 23,000 people and 365 lakes. 20% of the area is water, and it is primarily summer homes, farms, and industry. In October and November of 2000, the

area received the equivalent of their typical yearly rainfall, causing extensive flooding. While lifesaving efforts were clearly an important part of the rescue, the major problems of the effort really were maintaining sewer and electrical service. It was determined that the electrical service had to be maintained, even underwater, or the sewer system would fail, allowing sewage to rise into buildings. The event took people by surprise – it was determined that flooding like that would probably only occur in the area once every 500 years.

The response to the Arvika flood required cooperation on every level – from communities and municipalities to Birka Energy and the Board of Shipping. The actions taken in the response included: development of an action plan and erection of a temporary 4 meter barrier during the flood. There has been resistance in the area to the erection of a permanent barrier.

Oklahoma Burning, Winter 2005-2006

Susan Walker, Fire Protection Publications, USA

The state of Oklahoma is in the midst of an extensive drought, creating a serious fire risk problem across the state. Of particular concern are Cedar trees, which burn readily in forest fire conditions. The extensive fires of the winter 2005-2006 had many causes, including prescribed burns and trash fires that were left unattended.

Fortunately, due to recent fire grants from the federal government, the firefighters were better equipped than they have been in the past. The ranks of the volunteer firefighters swelled as neighbors came out to help. Some of the challenges presented in fighting these fires were the need to bring water to the fires, because the state is even drier than usual, the risks of oil storage and propane, and the tendency of people to try to return to their homes, in particular to save animals.

The Oklahoma Department of Forestry set up a command center, out of which operated the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the local volunteer departments. In addition to these agencies, there were volunteers from 36 other states and 21 Native American tribes. There was extensive and impressive control of the situation from the command center, which was able to readily provide information for both the firefighters and the public, with a website to notify residents of changing situations. Daily runs were taken by the Civil Air Patrol to spot new fires.

Susan was personally affected by the situation when someone burning brush ignited a fire that passed very near her home. Everyone in Oklahoma was alerted to the concern, and special instructions were issued to perform certain tasks with extreme caution. Welders, oil field workers, road crews, and construction workers were asked to be especially careful, and residents were asked to refrain from cooking or grilling outside. Residents were also asked to clear all brush within 50 feet of their homes and trim trees up 15 feet above ground level.

The Simple Complexity of Digitization. How to Plan a Digitization Project – A Swedish Example.

Anne Scherman, Department of Special Collections, The Royal Library, Sweden

The Suecia antiqua et hodierna was chosen as a digitization project by The Royal Library because of its status as a literary, scientific and cultural magnum opus – the quintessential brag book for Swedes. In the mid-90's efforts were begun towards digitization. The primary concern was that the quality of the digitized document needed to be such that the digitized work was truly useful. Further concerns were those of demand for the work, the wear and tear on the original document, and the need to assess internal organization for handling the digitization project.

The goals of the digitization project were to provide access to the work via library catalogs and nationally and internationally, to provide materials for use in schools, to identify "authors" (each image has its own record and each has its own text), to facilitate reproduction, to develop routines for circulation, to limit wear and tear on the original documents, and to allow people to experience the document as completely as possible. The primary steps involved in the project were conservation, cataloging, image capture, inventory, providing for access to the digital files over time, web site development, launch and evaluation. The professionals involved in the project were conservators, photographers, librarians, book historians, web master, web and database technicians, systems librarians, programmers, and a project administrator.

Over the course of three years, these professionals spent 1400 hours on the digitization project. Cataloging was the most time consuming, with 31% of the time spent on that, followed by web development (26%), image capture (21%), inventory (12%), conservation (7%), and evaluation (3%). The resulting digital work can be accessed through the "Digitised Collections" link on the National Library home page (www.kb.se) and a number of other ways. Records can be navigated by either searching the work or "turning pages," and the viewers can zoom in on the images to an astonishing resolution.

The lessons learned through this project include the realization that digitization should be viewed as its own project, not something within the organization, and that it requires expertise in a variety of areas to achieve a useful end result. It requires long term planning and the use of a high standard of care in implementing the work.

InFIRE Round Table Business Meeting Chair – Susan Walker

Reports from Committee Members

Treasurer – The current balance in the treasury is \$5811.89.

Membership – Requests will be sent to members to check and confirm their library profiles.

Accessions List – Chris Dahms could not attend the meeting; no report at this time.

Brochure – The brochure will be updated in the near future. As always, it will be available through the inFIRE website as a pdf file.

Listserve – No changes.

Location for Next Meeting – Currently we are considering Vancouver, British Columbia and New York City as potential locations for next year's meeting. Members who would like to consider hosting the meeting are encouraged to contact the chair or a committee member.

PayPal – Member usage of PayPal to pay conference registration fees is increasing; we will continue to maintain the account.

Emeritus Status – We are conferring emeritus member status on Nina McPherson. The board will develop a policy for conferring Emeritus Status on members in the future.

New Members – All members are encouraged to suggest membership to those libraries that they believe would benefit from membership in inFIRE and would provide additional resources and input into the organization.

New Business – INERIS Proposal. Members are interested in the possibility of working together to develop consolidated databases of fire and explosion accidents, but are still unclear on the mechanics of the proposal (i.e., what would be required of members, who would compile information and perform data entry, who would review entries for consistency) and if it would provide benefits relatively equally throughout the organization. More information and discussion is needed.

Karlstad Fire Brigade Patrick, Fire Protection Engineer

The Karlstadsregionen Fire and Rescue Service is a consolidation of the fire and rescue services of five municipalities created in 2000. All the emergency services in Karlstad are located at the command center, which is one of fifteen. There are 9 firefighters on duty in Karlstad at all times, one of whom is the Battalion Chief; the other stations have paid on-call firefighters who must be able to get to the station, change into gear and depart for incidents within five minutes of receiving a call.

In 2005, there were 1432 alarms in the region, with 835 of those in Karlstad. The Fire Protection Engineer in the region makes decisions as to how to most effectively distribute the resources of the Rescue Service and serves as deputy fire chief. Of the alarms in the region:

- 142 were fires in buildings
- 188 were fires not in buildings
- 201 were traffic accidents
- 385 were fire alarms (no fire)
- 31 were chemical hazards
- 10 were drowning alarms
- 225 were emergency medical response
- 250 were other types of calls.

In the area of fire prevention, the region has four fire protection engineers and one fire inspector. Building owners are responsible for fire prevention; the owners must provide appropriate systems and maintain them. The fire department inspects those systems. The planning process for new buildings includes a check of the general plan for land use and a check of the detailed plan for specific zoning rules in an area. The Rescue Services check issues of building access, water access and special risk issues that might include transportation and local conditions. The building codes consist of both prescriptive design with detailed rules (e.g., specific interior finish materials in assembly halls) and analytic design with performance based requirements where systems are designed by private sector fire protection engineers and verified by Swedish Rescue Services fire protection engineers.

Conference attendees were then permitted to watch a very exciting training exercise at the fire brigade, shown some of the various equipment at the brigade and then visited the Swedish Rescue Services Agency for a brief tour of the library of our hosts.

After returning to the hotel, the day concluded with the conference dinner, held at Restaurant Munken.