

SP15 MANAGEMENT OF SAFETY IN ROAD TUNNELS

Many of the issues discussed during this session complemented and developed the discussion which took place during the C3.3 session.

There has been a positive trend to improved tunnel safety over recent years. Whilst new standards and directives have been published, the exact nature of their implementation has still to be resolved. Many of the issues raised do not have definitive answers and will rely upon dialogue and agreement between the various stakeholders for their resolution.

The use of risk assessment and of methods to determine the relative value of alternative solutions, have been accepted in principal, but the exact methodology has still to be agreed. Those methodologies which are accepted will have to be understood and accepted by all of the stakeholders. To this end, they will have to be based upon reliable data and accessible to all.

Motorists are a key factor in tunnel safety. It was recognised that whilst activities which raise customer awareness to safety issues, such as EuroTAP, helped gain support / pressure for improvement, it was ultimately the responsibility of road tunnel safety experts to resolve which changes were of actual benefit. To this end, care must be taken in ensuring that motorists do not receive misleading information. All stakeholders should target educating motorists to behave correctly in tunnels in all circumstances. In this regard there was still the problem of how we translate our improving knowledge of human behaviour into sensible system changes and solid advice to tunnel users. Similarly, there was still concern as to how operators actually behave under pressure and how this might be assessed.

The Fire Services have a wealth of experience which needs to be harnessed throughout the whole life of a tunnel, from design, through commissioning to day to day operation. Closer co-operation is required to ensure better understanding and a more co-ordinated interface. Those Fire Services with limited knowledge of road tunnels need to be educated regarding their specific problems. It was recognised that there was a need for clarity on who should be involved in incident management development.

New facilities are already gaining the benefit of the increased awareness of the problems related to safety. Whilst the new European regulations are driving current thinking on many issues, it is recognised that the conclusions being drawn are applicable to tunnels the world over. PIARC possibly occupies a unique position from which it can help encourage dialogue, for instance through international forums, to promote a common understanding and co-ordinated response to road tunnel safety issues.