BAFSA Conference 2026

19th November 2026
Arden Suite, Forest of Arden Hotel, Birmingham

British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association
bafsa

12:00–1:00pm **Buffet lunch and exhibition in the Warwick Suite**

1:15–1:30pm **Welcome and presentation of Student of the Year Awards 2026**
Russell Dixon, Chairman of BAFSA

1:30–1:50pm **National Suppression Centre of Excellence: A New Era for Fire Protection Competence**
Dale Kinnersley, Principal Consultant Fire Protection Association

BAFSA, the Fire Protection Association (FPA) and RISCAuthority are collaborating to create the National Suppression Centre of Excellence, a landmark facility designed to enhance understanding, competence, and confidence in fire suppression systems across the construction and built environment sectors.

In this session, Dale Kinnersley will provide an update on the project, showcase the proposed facility and explain how it will support practical familiarisation, demonstration, training, and future competence development. Featuring live sprinkler and suppression systems, pumps, tanks, valves, installation areas and dedicated learning spaces, the Centre aims to become a nationally recognised hub for education, innovation, and industry engagement.

Dale will also outline the development programme and explain how this significant joint investment will help drive higher standards, improve fire safety knowledge, and support the wider adoption of proven fire protection solutions throughout the built environment.

1:50–2:20pm **KEYNOTE | Building Safety: Lessons from Grenfell and the Challenges Ahead**
Peter Apps, Author and Journalist

Pete Apps will discuss the root causes of the Grenfell Tower and talk about the changes since the fire, how far we have gone and what we still need to do. He will give his thoughts on sprinkler protection, the reluctance to retrofit sprinklers and what the industry needs to do to influence change.

2:20–2:50pm **PFAS Regulation and Firefighting Foams: UK, EU and Global Developments**
Robert Thilthorpe, Technical Manager FIA

Robert Thilthorpe will provide an update on the rapidly evolving regulatory landscape surrounding PFAS and firefighting foams. The presentation will examine current and emerging UK and EU regulations, key phase-out timelines, and the potential implications of wider PFAS restrictions for the fire protection industry. It will also explore the transition from fluorinated firefighting foams to fluorine-free alternatives, highlighting the challenges for manufacturers, users and fire safety professionals. Drawing on developments from across the globe, Robert will provide an overview of emerging regulatory trends and practical considerations to help the industry prepare for the changing landscape.

2:50–3:15pm **Coffee break in Warwick Suite**

continued overleaf

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3:15–3:45pm **Evolving Sprinkler Protection for Modern Storage and Emerging Fire Risks**
Stuart Lloyd, Global, Practice Leader – Fire Protection, Zurich Insurance

Stuart Lloyd will examine significant recent developments in fire protection research and standards relating to storage occupancies and emerging fire hazards. Particular focus will be given to the industry's move away from foam-enhanced protection concepts for plastic rack storage, reflecting a growing reliance on proven water-based sprinkler systems and updated protection philosophies.

The presentation will review findings from recent large-scale fire tests involving vehicle fires in car parks, highlighting how the results are influencing the understanding of fire growth, fire spread, and sprinkler system performance in modern parking structures. The implications for future guidance and design approaches will be discussed.

3:45–4:10pm **Counterfeit Fire Sprinklers: A Hidden Threat to Life Safety**
Mark Fessenden, Managing Director, IFSA

Fire sprinkler reliability is a life safety imperative, yet counterfeit and non-certified sprinklers are increasingly entering the global supply chain. In this presentation, Mark Fessenden, Managing Director of the International Fire Suppression Alliance (IFSA), will examine the risks posed by counterfeit sprinklers, drawing on real-world investigations in China and Brazil where non-certified devices were found to have serious deficiencies in materials, activation, water distribution, corrosion resistance and fire performance. The presentation will explore how counterfeit products enter the supply chain, how to identify them, and what manufacturers, contractors, building owners and fire safety professionals can do to prevent them being installed. Attendees will leave with practical guidance on sourcing, inspection, verification and reporting to help protect the integrity and life-saving reliability of fire sprinkler systems.

4:15–5:00pm **Panel Discussion: Building a Resilient Fire Suppression Sector**
Ruth Oliver, Head of Training and Skills and Development, BAFSA
Alan Brinson, Executive Director, European Fire Sprinkler Network
Dr Dale Kinnersley, Principal Consultant, The Fire Protection Association
Stuart Lloyd, Global Practice Leader, Zurich Insurance
Mark Fessenden, Managing Director, IFSA

A resilient fire suppression sector is one that can anticipate, adapt to, respond to and recover from changing risks while continuing to protect lives, property, and critical infrastructure. How does the panel think we as an industry can achieve this?

Possible themes for discussion:
- Demonstrating competence and professionalism
- Transparent certification and accreditation
- Evidence that systems perform when they're needed.
- Delivering life safety, not just regulatory compliance.
- Designing for changing fire risks due to drive to more sustainability and climate change

5:00–5:30pm **BAFSA AGM**
BAFSA Members only