



# SFPE

Engineering Solutions Symposium

Fire Protection of Cultural and Heritage Sites

November 12-13, 2026

Venice, Italy

**Venue: Hilton Molino Stucky Venice - Giudecca 810, Venice 30133, Italy**

## DAY 1 – Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>

8:00 – 9:30	<p><b>Pre-Symposium Programming</b> <b>NFPA Standards and Cultural and Heritage Properties</b> Sheila Coppinger, <i>Immediate Past Chair, NFPA Technical Committee on Cultural Resources</i> Gregory Harrington, <i>NFPA, Staff Liaison, NFPA Technical Committee on Cultural Resources and Correlating Committee on Safety to Life</i> Mark Hopkins, <i>Summit Fire Consulting, Chair, NFPA Technical Committee on Cultural Resources</i></p>
9:30 - 10:30	<b>Registration and Exhibits</b>
10:30 – 10:45	<p><b>Opening Session</b> <b>Welcome and Introductions</b>, Chris Jelenewicz, PE, FSFPE, <i>SFPE CEO</i></p>
10:45 – 11:00	<p><b>Welcome to Venice - Unique Challenges of Protecting Historic Sites</b>, The Venice Fire Department</p>
11:00 – 11:45	<p><b>Keynote</b> Jose L. Torero, PhD, CEng, FSFPE, <i>University College London</i></p>
11:45 – 13:00	Lunch
<b>Historic Buildings Regulatory Oversight</b>	
13:00 – 13:30	<p><b>Fire Safety Engineering in the Renovation of the Royal Swedish Opera House</b> Johan Hanberger, <i>National Property Board of Sweden</i></p> <p><i>The renovation of the Royal Swedish Opera House in Stockholm presents complex fire safety challenges driven by its heritage status, intricate structure, and large-scale modernization. With construction starting in late 2026, the project combines preservation with extensive upgrades to building systems and functionality.</i></p>

	<i>This presentation outlines fire safety strategies before and during construction, as well as for the completed building. It highlights key challenges and critical design decisions, with a particular focus on balancing the need to protect cultural heritage values against the need to achieve an adequate level of fire safety in a phased renovation of a historic landmark.</i>
13:30 – 14:00	Topic: Italian Perspective Piergiacomo Cancelliere, PhD, <i>Ministero dell'Interno Corpo Nazionale dei Vigili del Fuoco</i>
14:00 – 14:30	Topic: Global Perspective Chris Marrion, PE, FSFPE, MScFPE, <i>Marrion Fire &amp; Risk Consulting</i>
14:30 – 15:00	<b>Evaluating Historic Buildings Using SFPE Existing Building Guide</b> Nick Ozog, PE, <i>Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee Break/Exhibit Hall
15:30 – 16:00	<b>Speaker Q&amp;A Panel</b>
<b>Cultural Heritage Sites</b>	
16:00 – 16:30	Topic: Architect's Perspective Caterina Frisone, PhD, <i>Università Iuav di Venezia</i>
16:30 – 17:00	Topic: The Notre Dame Rebuild Benjamin Truchot, <i>INERIS</i>
17:00 – 17:30	Topic: Fire Service Perspective Jakob Vedsted Andersen, <i>Greater Copenhagen Fire and Rescue Service</i>
17:30 – 18:00	<b>The Copenhagen Stock Exchange – Renovation and Rebuilding of a Cultural Heritage Building</b> Morten Moelgaard Schmidt, <i>Jensen Hughes</i>
18:00 – 19:00	<b>Networking Reception</b> (All invited)

## DAY 2 – Friday, November 13th

9:00 – 10:00	<b>Registration and Exhibits</b>
<b>Fire Protection Engineering Solutions</b>	
10:00 – 10:30	Topic: Exploring Suppression System Solutions William Koffel, PE, FSFPE, <i>Koffel Associates &amp; Luciano Nigro, Jensen Hughes</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Topic: Exploring Smoke Control, Fire Alarm, and Detection System Solutions Wojciech Węgrzyński, PhD, <i>Instytut Techniki Budowlanej (ITB)</i>

11:00 – 11:30	<p><b>Modelling Egress Given The Constraints of Heritage Sites</b> Steve Gwynne, PhD, <i>University of Greenwich</i></p>
11:30 – 12:00	<p><b>Engineered Retrofitting of Heritage Building with PBD solutions</b> Eric Tonicello, <i>ISI - Ingénierie et sécurité incendie</i></p> <p><i>When listed and historic buildings need to be renovated or converted, fire safety often presents challenges for consultants. How can we balance safety, heritage preservation, and cost-effectiveness? We will present several examples where performance-based design has provided our clients with cost-effective, safe, and practical solutions.</i></p>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	<p><b>Most at Risk: Fire Protection During Construction Activities</b> Deborah Freeland, FSFPE, CPCU, ARM, FIAE, <i>Arthur J. Gallagher &amp; Company</i></p> <p><i>Buildings are often at their greatest risk of fire during construction, renovation, or restoration—and for cultural heritage sites, the consequences can be catastrophic and irreversible. This presentation explores why these activities introduce elevated fire risk, particularly in historic structures where unique materials, concealed spaces, and preservation constraints complicate protection strategies. Common ignition sources are examined alongside contributing factors such as impaired or decommissioned fire protection systems, reduced compartmentation, blocked or limited access for firefighting, and changes in occupancy or fuel load. The presentation also highlights less visible risks, including inadequate policies and supervision, language or cultural barriers among multinational project teams, and gaps in coordination between stakeholders responsible for protection and preservation. Drawing on international project experience, this presentation will discuss how these conditions can combine to produce rapid fire growth and significant loss, and will outline practical, risk-based approaches to managing fire exposure during construction. Emphasis will be placed on adapting protection strategies to heritage sites, where maintaining historic integrity must be balanced with safeguarding irreplaceable structures and collections.</i></p>
14:00 – 14:30	<p><b>Sacred Cultural Heritage at Risk: Balancing Preservation and Fire Safety in Historic Places of Worship</b> Grunde Jomaas, PhD, <i>Fire &amp; Risk Alliance</i></p> <p><i>Every year, fires destroy places of worship that survived centuries of war, neglect, and decay. We call each one a tragedy. We treat each one as a surprise. And then we do very little differently. This presentation asks why — and finds the answer not in the buildings themselves, but in the systems meant to protect them.</i></p>

	<p><i>Sacred buildings have burned since the earliest human civilisations. From ancient temples razed by conquering armies to medieval churches consumed by candle and lightning, to mosques and synagogues targeted by hate-motivated arson in the twenty-first century — the threat spans every religion, every continent, and every era. What has changed is not the fire. It is the motivation behind it, and the sophistication of society failing to prevent it.</i></p> <p><i>The core problem today is a paradox hiding in plain sight: the more officially protected a historic sacred building is, the harder it becomes to protect it from fire. Heritage listing and fire codes pull in opposite directions, and in most countries, nobody has seriously tried to reconcile them.</i></p> <p><i>Drawing on cases from Notre-Dame to Norwegian stave churches, the presentation traces a pattern that has held across centuries: we understand the risk, we have the tools, and we still lose the buildings. Not because the engineering fails — but because the institutions do. The real story is one of regulatory gaps, funding failures, and two professions — fire safety and heritage conservation — that rarely sit in the same room.</i></p> <p><i>The good news is that a handful of countries have begun to solve it. Their approach is straightforward enough to replicate anywhere.</i></p>
14:30 – 15:00	<p>Topic: Case Study &amp; Tour Introduction Renata Codello, <i>Fondazione Giorgio Cini</i></p>
15:00 – 15:05	<p><b>Closing Session</b> Chris Jelenewicz, PE, FSFPE, <i>SFPE CEO</i></p>

15:30 – 19:30	<p><b>ADD ON: <u>Technical Tour – Fondazione CINI – Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore</u></b></p> <p>Participants will enjoy a private visit to the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, located on the serene Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, directly across the water from Piazza San Marco.</p> <p>The tour offers a rare opportunity to explore the historic monastery complex, meticulously restored after centuries of transformations, and to access the Manica Lunga, Fondazione’s iconic library. Originally a 16th-century Benedictine dormitory, the Manica Lunga has been converted into a striking contemporary research library, known for its dramatic linear design, vaulted ceilings, and elegant interplay of light and space. It is considered one of the most architecturally significant library restorations in Italy.</p> <p>This tour is organized by SFPE Italy and will provide technical guide to understand some of the technical aspects of the recent renovation. This tour has a limited capacity, so register early to secure your space.</p>
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## Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup>

9:00 – 14:00

ADD ON: Tour – Palazzo Ducale

Planned tour of Palazzo DUCALE in San Marco Place. Details and fees will be finalized soon! All registrants will be provided an opportunity to add this tour to their itinerary first.

*Last Updated: June 11, 2026.*

Topics and times are subject to change.

## Thank you to the Event Sponsors

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