

# TRAINING WITH A ROAR

Martin Joosen, Managing Director EMEA, Lion sheds light on the company's roots, and the latest trends in fire training

**L**ion EMEA was a Dutch company formed 30 years ago, we were founded by firefighter for firefighters. The mission was to offer better products and training scenarios. The desire was born out of the fact that the founder was not happy with the quality of the smoke generators that were being used, which were like the ones used in theatres / night clubs. He created his own products, small generators to begin with.

We then progressed, sold our products to other fire brigades in the Netherlands, followed by Belgium, France, UK, Germany. Eventually, we got into the Middle East and into the USA. In 2012, we were bought by the Lion Group, which gave them the opportunity to broaden their portfolio beyond PPE. The benefits of the takeover were mutual, giving us the opportunity to expand as well. Lion also bought one of our competitors in America, that continues to provide training products in the USA.

## How did the takeover benefit Lion's operations?

The takeover allowed us to grow our footprint, we were able to attract larger projects. Along with our purpose-built firehouses and containers, we were able to build complete fire training skyscrapers in Shanghai and Melbourne. These are fully functional buildings, residential / office blocks whose sole purpose is to be set on fire.

The facility in Melbourne includes scenarios that replicate everything that can catch fire such as a boat, car, helicopter, building, and a house. We are the biggest company in the market in our sector. We offer everything from the smallest training products, such as smoke generators and fire trainers, to delivering training centres.

Since our centres involve burning gas, wood, and other components it requires the highest standard of maintenance.

Ultimately, the training we impart is lifesaving in critical situations, which is paramount to firefighters and the industry. Well imparted training makes all the difference in critical situations where lives and property are at risk.

## The EMEA is a massive region, what are a few complexities of the different regions?

Absolutely, the Europe Middle East and Africa is a broad region. The European market is different from the Middle East or Asia for that matter. Meanwhile the African market is still developing, and we are not there yet in terms of competition. We have an appetite to increase our market share in all these regions, but it needs to be done strategically, without loss of quality or standards.

When we talk about our competition in the market, there aren't too many companies that offer what we do. Some of our peers, for instance, cater to a specific market segment.

Ultimately, in the fire training business it all comes down to the expertise of a company. The trainers you employ, methods and techniques they use, and standards we follow. For example, our competitors might focus on smoke generators in sewage extraction or night clubs, which is their remit. On the other hand, we are one of the only companies that's looking at it from a firefighter's point of view, and not from a product perspective.

## To what extent are Lion's training regiments customisable?

We always start with a blank canvas and paint the picture with our

clients. We have more than 30 years expertise in the field, we are able to offer insight at different points throughout the journey. We want to be in a position, where we handover the keys to a client and they can get started straight away.

## Tell us about your other training facilities?

Fire departments have a different thinking process across different regions. Each country tends to have its own set of training requirements. We don't have many projects (in Europe) the size of our China or Australia facilities. We have several smaller purpose-built training facilities based on container

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systems, or a firehouse, kitted out to the requirements of the client. The most recent one was a facility we set up in Cardiff, Wales. A firehouse can be purpose built to any fire technology required by the client, wood, or gas fires, and so forth.