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Communication dans un congrÃ"s

Fire in road tunnels and life safety: lessons to be learnt from minor accidents

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Abstract: In the aftermath of the accidental fire disasters in several road tunnels at the turn of the century, fire safety in road tunnels was largely addressed through analysis of information drawn from major accidents; i. e. those resulting in significant casualties. This paper demonstrates that minor fire accidents in road tunnels, that is those resulting in no casualties, are also able to provide substantial and useful information relating to fire safety in tunnels. Many of these, fairly frequent, minor incidents had the potential to become major incidents, but a mixture of luck and appropriate actions, taken both by tunnel users and professional rescuers, helped prevent tragedy. Generally, information on minor incidents is limited to short dispatches or small 'news' articles issued for the wider public. This often scarce and scattered material is also marked by a cultural imprint which reveals the courage and initiative of people involved in the incidents, but also blurs and sometimes hides some aspects of the incidents which, perhaps, should have been highlighted. Through an analysis of a few recent examples of minor accidents, from all over the world, this paper shows why such information, despite often being of limited quality, should be systematically collected, integrated into existing databases and processed in order to better understand these incidents and, ultimately, prevent minor tunnelfire incidents escalating into major disasters.

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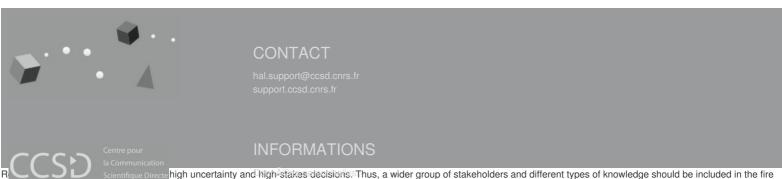
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