



PLOT wants maximum safety for firefighter, police and paramedic training

The province of Limburg training facility (PLOT) for firefighters, police and paramedics, which is located in Genk, conducts up to 20,000 lessons and drills each year. To help protect instructors and trainees as much as possible against specific hazards, such as exposure to high concentrations of toxic substances, PLOT trusts and depends on Mensura's expertise.



"Our external prevention advisor is a key driver in our journey towards safety excellence. He monitors everything from a to z and offers pragmatic advice that can be immediately applied."

Jacky Vastmans, Director of PLOT

Challenges

- > guarantee the safety of instructors and trainees during training;
- > limit the exposure of instructors and trainees to health hazards.

Solutions

- > establish a solid safety policy under the guidance of the multidisciplinary safety steering group;
- > invest in new firefighter uniforms, advanced CO2 cleaning technologies and a sauna;
- > optimise the safety of training sites (e.g. the simulator installation, the shooting range).

Benefits

- > improved safety behaviour among instructors and staff;
- > less incidents and more consistent reporting of safety focus areas and near-misses;
- > reduced exposure to toxic substances thanks to properly cleaned firefighter uniforms and the use of a sauna.



Jacky Vastmans, Director of PLOT

PLOT runs its safety training courses with the help from 50 permanent employees and over 400 instructors from the firefighting, law enforcement and paramedic fields. To ensure their maximum safety and health and that of the trainees, the organisation trusts and depends on Mensura's expertise.

"Mensura offers advice, counselling and a broad range of expertise to our internal department for prevention and protection", says PLOT Director Jacky Vastmans. "As we frequently deal with major health and safety risks in our field of work, such as exposure to toxic substances and hazardous fire drills, we pay a great deal of attention to risk prevention."

Safety stays on the agenda

To streamline communications between all three of PLOT's training departments – for firefighting, law enforcement and paramedic services – Mensura established a multidisciplinary safety steering group. The steering group addresses topics such as health and safety hazards, incidents and near-misses, new prevention measures and upcoming projects.

"The group includes members from the internal department for prevention and protection, the fire department, the federal police, ambulance personnel, and coordinators from various educational facilities", says Johan Theunissen, occupational safety and health expert at Mensura. "All these people are there to help improve the safety policy of the organisation based on their own expertise."

Innovative protection against toxic hazards

During fires and fire drills, firefighters are often exposed to high concentrations of hazardous substances that can remain on clothing and potentially enter the bloodstream via the skin. "That is why we focus heavily on the quality and maintenance of firefighter uniforms", Johan Theunissen explains. "We are also looking into CO2 cleaning, a new technology for cleaning heavily soiled clothing and equipment."

"As a future-minded training institute, we want to protect our instructors and trainees using the best methods available", Jacky Vastmans continues. "We recently installed a sauna room at our facility where firefighters can sweat out dangerous toxins, and where instructors can teach about fire physics. This is the only service of its kind in Belgium."

New high-tech simulator installation

To help trainee firefighters learn how to put out hazardous fires, PLOT uses an advanced simulator installation. The practice site provides a controlled setting and incorporates large metal objects for the realistic simulation of various fire scenarios. Johan Theunissen: "In view of creating a safer training environment, we recently upgraded the practice site. The new installation is also more environmentally friendly: it is now 80% propane-based, resulting in reduced emissions."

Access to a broad range of expertise

The law enforcement and paramedic training departments at PLOT also receive the support they need from Mensura. "Mensura helped us provide maximum safety at our shooting range", Jacky Vastmans continues. "They also assisted us with the construction of an extremely secure headquarter facility and the development of a clear plan of action to counter terror threats. Mensura also helps with environmental matters, such as wastewater removal from the firefighting training facility and flue gas measurements."

Pragmatic support, noticeable improvement in safety results

By ramping up their safety efforts, PLOT's safety results have noticeably improved. Safety reports are completed as required, and instructors are pleased and know that their voice will be heard. "Less incidents have occurred overall", Jacky Vastmans explains. "This is the result of the change in mentality and behaviour among our staff. They are becoming more and more aware of the importance of safety. The efforts put in by our internal department for prevention and protection and the expert, pragmatic support from Mensura are yielding results."

What we can do for you

Take advantage of Mensura's broad range of expertise. Find out what we can do for your organisation by visiting www.mensura.be. Questions? Contact us on +32 2 549 71 00.