

ANATOMY OF A FATAL FIRE

“A fascinating and mind-blowing book. If you only read one book about the fire service, it must be this.”

—Raphael Verbinnen

Former warrant officer Aarschot Fire and Rescue Services

In the early hours of Sunday August 11, 2019, a fire broke out in an abandoned supermarket in the Coal Mine Lane in the city of Beringen, Belgium—a fire that destroyed several lives.

Twenty-four hours in the life of an officer of the fire service. I begin Saturday morning August 10, and I end the next day late in the morning. The tipping point is Sunday night 3:08 a.m. At exactly that moment, a fire that seemed under control unexpectedly turned into hell on earth. The impact of that fire cannot be underestimated. My life consists of two phases: one before and one after the fire. That fire changed my life, and I will have to (learn to) live with it. Stunned and completely confused, one question keeps running through my mind: How could this fire end so dramatically? Why did two firefighters lose their lives and a third suffer severe burn injuries? What have I done wrong?

To come to terms with my feeling of guilt, I began to read and write. In the months following the incident I devoured works of philosophers of science, historians, geneticists, molecular neurobiologists, behavioural biologists, and psychologists that deal with the various aspects of decision making under time pressure. One way or the other, I had to make sense of that tragic fire and uncover its anatomy.

A good understanding of how our predictive brain operates in normal circumstances and under difficult conditions is not only important for emergency services, but for everyone, as throughout everyday life your actions, thoughts, and feelings are more directed by the unconscious than you might think at first sight.

Marc Coenen, PhD, an Egyptologist by training, started his career in the fire service as a volunteer officer in the Aarschot Fire Service. Now he is a career officer of the Fire and Rescue Service of South-West Limburg, attached to the fire station of the city of Beringen, Belgium.

FIRE ENGINEERING
• BOOKS •



COENEN

ANATOMY OF A FATAL FIRE

FIRE ENGINEERING
• BOOKS •



ANATOMY OF A FATAL FIRE

WHAT HAVE I DONE WRONG?

MARC COENEN

FIRE ENGINEERING
• BOOKS •