

Le Constellation Bar Fire Summary & Timeline

Crans-Montana, Valais, Switzerland

January 1, 2026

Incident Date:	January 1, 2026, 01:30 CET [1]
Location:	Le Constellation Bar, Rue Centrale 35, 3963 Crans-Montana
Casualties:	40 fatalities, 119 injured (many critically) [1]
Likely Cause:	Sparklers on champagne bottles ignited acoustic foam ceiling [2]
Fire Behavior:	Rapid fire development (~30 seconds to full room involvement)

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 1, 2026, at approximately 01:30 CET, a catastrophic fire broke out at Le Constellation bar in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, during New Year's Eve celebrations. The fire resulted in 40 fatalities and 119 injuries, making it one of the deadliest fire incidents in modern Swiss history. [1]

According to Valais Attorney General Beatrice Pilloud: "Everything leads us to believe that the fire was started from sparkling candles or sparklers that were put on bottles of champagne that were moved too close to the ceiling." [2] The fire exhibited characteristics consistent with an *embrasement généralisé* (rapid fire development), with witnesses reporting the entire nightclub was engulfed within approximately 20 seconds of ignition. [3]

NOTE: The municipality of Crans-Montana had banned fireworks and sparklers on December 30, 2025 due to an "extremely high" fire risk from a lack of rainfall for more than a month. The ban applied to Crans-Montana, Lens, and Icogne, with only cantonal police-authorized fireworks exempt. [4]

2. PRE-FIRE VENUE DESCRIPTION

2.1 General Information

Le Constellation was a bar, nightclub, and café located at Rue Centrale 35 in the center of the Crans-Montana ski resort. According to BBC News, the bar was "a real institution" that had existed for at least 40 years. [5] The venue was acquired and remodeled in 2015 by Jacques and Jessica Moretti, a married French couple from Corsica who own several establishments in the region, including Le Vieux Chalet in Lens and Le Senso in Crans-Montana. [6]

Pre-Fire Venue Specifications

Attribute	Details
Address	Rue Centrale 35, 3963 Crans-Montana, Switzerland [7]
Operating Hours	9:00 AM – 2:00 AM, 365 days/year [8]
Capacity	300 persons indoors + 40 on terrace [7]
Ownership	Jacques (49) and Jessica (40) Moretti (acquired 2015) [6]

2.2 Building Layout

The venue occupied two levels within a building in the center of Crans-Montana: [5]

- **Ground Floor (Street Level):** Main entrance, café/reception area, central bar, terrace access with electric heating for après-ski [10]
- **Basement (Lower Level -1):** Primary nightclub/event space where fire originated; connected to ground floor by a single staircase; described as "very cosy with a DJ playing good music" [11]
- **Emergency Exit:** Secondary exit present in basement, but jammed during incident [12]

2.3 Interior Features (Pre-Fire)

Based on promotional materials, TripAdvisor photos, social media posts, and the Crans-Montana tourism website, the interior featured: [7][10][11]

- Wood and stone accents throughout, described as "strongly characterized by wooden elements" [9]

- Central bar with spacious red leather couches
- Small stage for live music performances
- 14 television screens for sports event broadcasts
- Shisha/smoking area with sofas
- Speakeasy-style section "where water flows naturally over the rock"
- Sushi bar
- Billiard table and games area in basement
- Resident DJ every evening during peak season

2.4 Ceiling Finish

The basement ceiling was covered with black, pyramid-patterned acoustic foam panels. Survivor Lucas Rebot (24), who had visited the bar days before the fire, specifically noted the ceiling was covered in foam insulation "like a music studio." [13] Photographic evidence from both pre-fire promotional materials and the night of the incident shows consistent black foam paneling. [3]



[IMAGE: Pre-fire photograph showing foam-clad ceiling from TripAdvisor (August 2016) promotional photos – Source: TripAdvisor [11]]

2.5 2015 Renovations

When the Morettis acquired the venue in 2015, they undertook significant renovations. According to Blick and Blue News, photographs from the operator's Facebook page document the following work: [14]

- **Staircase modifications:** Photos suggest the staircase connecting the basement to the ground floor may have been narrowed during the 2015 renovation. [14]
- **Foam ceiling installation:** Photos show foam acoustic panels being installed on the ceiling. A circulating social media image purportedly shows large foam panels being mounted. [14]

- **Timeline confirmation:** TripAdvisor photos from August 2016 show the bar with the foam ceiling structure already in place, confirming the ceiling treatment was installed during or shortly after the 2015 renovations and had been in use for approximately 10 years. [11][14]



[IMAGE: 2015 renovation photograph showing narrowing of stairs from basement to ground level – Source: Facebook via Blick/Blue News [14] and finished stairwell [2]]



[IMAGE: closeup photograph showing foam installation – Source: Facebook via Blick/Blue News [14]]

2.6 Promotional Video Evidence

A promotional video posted on YouTube in May 2024 by the account @ConstellationCransMontana is captioned: "Le Constellation Crans-Montana welcomes you every day from 9am to 2am, 365 days per year, without interruption." The video shows: [8]

- Waitresses wearing motorcycle/futuristic helmets walking through the dark, crowded club
- Champagne bottles (including Dom Pérignon) topped with lit sparklers being carried through the venue
- Bottles held high, "at times nearly touching the ceiling" [15]

2.7 Fire Inspection History

Mayor Nicolas Féraud stated the bar had undergone annual or bi-annual fire inspections by the town authorities, but declined to answer questions about the details of those inspections. Swiss fire safety regulations require venues with capacity exceeding 200 people to have several open exits, smoke ventilation systems, non-flammable furnishings, and strict pyrotechnic permissions. [5] Investigation into whether the ceiling foam complied with regulations is ongoing. [2]

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3. DETAILED EVENT TIMELINE

The following timeline has been reconstructed from official police statements, witness accounts, and photographic/video evidence verified by major news organizations.

TIME (CET)	EVENT	SOURCE / HRR ESTIMATE
~01:00:00	Lucas Rebot and girlfriend denied entry; bar staff indicated venue was full	[13]
01:25-01:29:00	Approximately 200 people inside venue (eyewitness estimates); champagne bottle service with sparklers in progress	[3]; Baseline
~01:30:00 (T=0)	IGNITION: Waitress (wearing crash helmet) on barman's shoulders (wearing Guy Fawkes mask) holds champagne bottles with lit sparklers; sparks contact foam ceiling centimeters away. Photograph shows flames already visible on ceiling while sparklers still burning. Initial attempts to extinguish fail.	[5][3][16]; Est. HRR: 50-100 kW
~01:30:03-05 (T+3-5s)	Foam ignites and fire spreads laterally across ceiling; video shows young man attempting to beat flames with white cloth; some patrons continue dancing, unaware of severity	[3]; NIST PU foam data [17]; Est. HRR: 200-500 kW
~01:30:05-10 (T+5-10s)	Smoke begins billowing from exits observed from outside; witnesses in queue see smoke emerging. "An immense fire blast" occurs 10 seconds after initial smoke.	[5]; Est. HRR: 500-1000 kW
~01:30:10 (T+10s)	FULL ROOM INVOLVEMENT: "Once the ceiling was on fire, within about 10 seconds the entire nightclub was on fire." Ceiling collapse begins. Entire basement fully involved.	[3]; AG Pilloud [2]; Est. HRR: 3-8 MW
~01:30:10-30 (T+10-30s)	"In a few dozen seconds, the whole ceiling was on fire. Everything was made of wood." Dense black smoke fills space. Axel Clavier (16): "A huge cloud of black smoke, we couldn't breathe anymore."	[16][18]; Est. HRR: 5-10 MW
~01:30:30-60 (T+30-60s)	EVACUATION CRISIS: Crowd surge toward narrow staircase. Laetitia Place (17): "The first stairs are pretty easy to get through since they're wide... But after that, there's the small door where everyone was pushing, and so we all fell, we were piled on top of each other, some people were burning, and some were dead next to us."	[19]; Est. HRR: 8-15 MW (peak)
01:30	EMERGENCY ALERT: Police alerted due to smoke emerging from bar. Red alert triggered mobilizing fire department.	[1]
01:32	FIRST RESPONDERS: Police arrive on scene (2-minute response time). Firefighters arrive immediately thereafter.	[1]

TIME (CET)	EVENT	SOURCE / HRR ESTIMATE
01:32-02:00	Bystanders and survivors assist evacuation. Axel Clavier breaks window with table to escape. Paolo Campolo discovers jammed emergency exit door: "We didn't wait. With someone who happened to be passing by, we broke the door open and got the people out."	[12][18]
01:35-02:30	Full mass casualty response deployed: 150 personnel, 10 helicopters, 40 ambulances. Triage centers established in neighboring bars and UBS bank branch. No-fly zone imposed over Crans-Montana.	[1]

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4. FIRE DYNAMICS ANALYSIS

4.1 Ignition Source

According to Valais Attorney General Beatrice Pilloud: "Everything leads us to believe that the fire was started from sparkling candles or sparklers that were put on bottles of champagne that were moved too close to the ceiling." [2] Photographic evidence shows a female staff member (wearing a crash helmet) on the shoulders of a male staff member (wearing a Guy Fawkes mask), holding champagne bottles with lit sparklers. The sparks were "centimetres from the wooden ceiling." [5]



[IMAGE: photographs showing ignition of foam installation and initial flame spread – Source: Yahoo News [15]]

Two women (Emma and Albane) told French broadcaster BFMTV: "We were inside when we saw a male bartender lifting a female bartender on his shoulders as she held a lit candle in a bottle. The flames spread, collapsing the wooden ceiling." One estimated "about 200 people trying to get out within 30 seconds through some very narrow steps." [16]

4.2 Fire Growth and Rapid Fire Development

Multiple witnesses reported the fire engulfed the entire basement within approximately 10 seconds. [3] Swiss authorities described the event as an "*embrasement généralisé*" which Swiss authorities termed a flashover (*embrasement généralisé*). [2] NIST research from the Station Nightclub fire reconstruction indicates that untreated polyurethane foam typically ignites in 3-14 seconds and reaches peak heat release in less than 45 seconds, with peak heat release rates between 400-1,400 kW/m² in cone calorimeter testing. [17]

4.3 Heat Release Rate Estimates

Based on available evidence and NIST research data on polyurethane foam combustion [17], the following HRR progression is estimated:

Phase	Time from Ignition	Est. HRR	Basis
Ignition	T = 0	50-100 kW	Sparkler + initial foam ignition
Growth	T = 3-20 s	500-1,000 kW	NIST PU foam data [17]
Full Room Involvement	T = ~20 s	3-8 MW	Witness account [3]; full room involvement threshold ~1 MW
Peak Burning	T = 20-60 s	8-15 MW	Full fuel contribution; comparable incident data [17]

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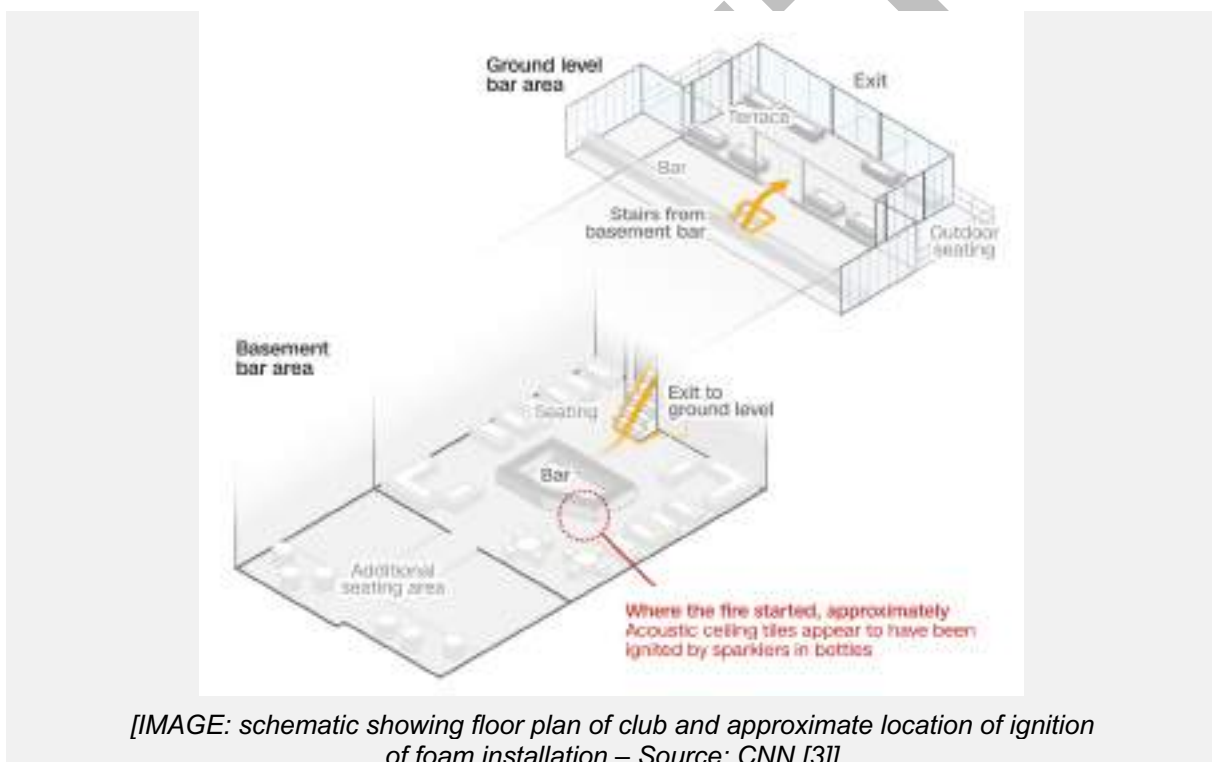
5. EGRESS ANALYSIS

5.1 Primary Egress Route

The primary evacuation route from the basement was a single staircase connecting to the ground floor. Local student Thomas Dias stated that escape would have been a "nightmare" if hundreds had to funnel up the narrow staircase from the basement to the ground floor. [3]

Witness Laetitia Place (17) described the evacuation: "The first stairs are pretty easy to get through since they're wide and all that. But after that, there's the small door where everyone was pushing, and so we all fell, we were piled on top of each other, some people were burning, and some were dead next to us." [19]

One of the BFMTV witnesses estimated "about 200 people trying to get out within 30 seconds through some very narrow steps." [16]



5.2 Secondary Exit / Emergency Egress

Officials confirmed the presence of a secondary emergency exit. Valais security director Stéphane Ganzer stated: "When there is an instance of flashover where you have so much smoke that it's impossible to see to move, the majority of people, one would imagine, failed to find the fire exit." [20]

Bystander Paolo Campolo discovered the emergency exit door was jammed with people trapped behind it. He stated: "While searching for an emergency exit behind the bar, [I] found a jammed door with people trying to get out... We didn't wait. With someone who happened to be passing by, we broke the door open and got the people out." [12]

5.3 Window Egress

Survivor Axel Clavier (16) stated he escaped by using a table to smash a plexiglass window after initially hiding behind a table and struggling to breathe. [18] Video verified by CNN shows people pulling themselves out of windows as flames and smoke engulfed the building. [3]

6. COMPARABLE INCIDENTS

The following table compares Le Constellation to prior nightclub/bar fires involving polyurethane foam ignition by pyrotechnics:

Incident	Date	Deaths	Time to Full Involvement	Key Factors
The Station (Rhode Island, USA)	Feb 2003	100	~90 seconds [17]	PU foam; pyrotechnics; single exit bottleneck
Kiss (Santa Maria, Brazil)	Jan 2013	242	Rapid	Stage sparklers; foam ceiling; HCN toxicity
Colectiv (Bucharest, Romania)	Oct 2015	64	~2 minutes	PU foam; pyrotechnics; no sprinklers
Le Constellation	Jan 2026	40	~10 seconds [3]	Acoustic foam; bottle sparklers; narrow stairway

7. SUMMARY OF FORENSIC FINDINGS

1. **Ignition Source:** Sparklers attached to champagne bottles, held centimeters from ceiling by staff member elevated on another person's shoulders. Practice was routine and featured in promotional materials. [2][5][8]
2. **First Fuel Ignited:** Acoustic foam panels covering basement ceiling, installed during 2015 renovations. [13][14]
3. **Fire Growth Rate:** Ultra-fast, with full room involvement occurring within approximately 20 seconds of ignition based on witness accounts. [3]
4. **Peak Heat Release Rate (Estimated):** 8-15 MW during full room involvement, based on NIST polyurethane foam combustion data. [17]
5. **Fire Behavior:** Rapid fire development confirmed by Swiss authorities. [2]
6. **Contributing Factors:** Flammable ceiling finish, high occupancy (~200), single primary egress route with narrow staircase (potentially narrowed during 2015 renovations [14]), obstructed secondary exit, low ceiling height in basement, promotional culture of pyrotechnic bottle service. [5][6][12][14][19]
7. **Emergency Response:** Police arrived in 2 minutes (01:32); firefighters immediately thereafter. Fire dynamics (20-60 second fire development) meant most casualties occurred before emergency response was possible. [1]
8. **Regulatory Context:** Municipality banned outdoor fireworks on December 30, 2025 due to dry conditions; indoor sparkler use apparently not prohibited. [4]
9. **Investigation Status:** Criminal investigation opened against bar managers (as of January 3, 2026). Investigation into ceiling material compliance ongoing. [21]

8. REFERENCES

- [1] Valais Cantonal Police Press Conference, January 1, 2026 (Commander Frédéric Gisler). [NBC News Report](#)
- [2] Attorney General Beatrice Pilloud, Press Conference, January 2, 2026. [PBS NewsHour](#)
- [3] CNN, "Champagne sparklers and a fast-spreading inferno," January 2, 2026. [CNN Report](#)
- [4] CNN Live Updates, Fireworks ban information, January 1, 2026. [CNN Live](#)
- [5] Wikipedia, "2026 Crans-Montana bar fire." [Wikipedia Article](#)
- [6] Blue News, "Owner also injured: Now there are new details about the fire bar." [Blue News](#)
- [7] Crans-Montana Tourism Website, Le Constellation venue listing. [Crans-Montana Tourism](#)
- [8] Le Constellation Promotional Video, YouTube (@ConstellationCransMontana), May 2024. [Daily Beast Report](#)
- [9] Blue News, "Le Constellation: an overview of the nightclub." [Blue News](#)
- [10] Le Constellation Reviews, Wheree.com (venue description). [Wheree.com](#)
- [11] TripAdvisor, Le Constellation Reviews and Photos (includes August 2016 photos). [TripAdvisor](#)
- [12] 20 Minutes (France), Paolo Campolo interview, January 1-2, 2026. Via CNN.
- [13] CBS News, Lucas Rebot interview, January 2, 2026. [CBS News](#)
- [14] Blue News/Blick, "New conversion photos of the fire bar are now coming into focus," January 3, 2026. [Blue News](#)
- [15] Yahoo News/The Telegraph, "Pictured: Moment sparklers turned celebrations into horror." [Yahoo News](#)
- [16] BFMTV (France), Witness accounts (Emma and Albane), January 1, 2026
- [17] NIST, "Reconstructing the Station Nightclub Fire," Interflam 2007 (Bryner, Madrzykowski, Grosshandler)
- [18] Associated Press, Axel Clavier (16, Paris) interview, January 1, 2026. [NPR](#)
- [19] Reuters, Laetitia Place (17, Lausanne) interview, January 2, 2026
- [20] Valais Security Director Stéphane Ganzer, Press Conference, January 2, 2026. Via CNN.
- [21] CNN, "Swiss Police Open Criminal Probe," January 3, 2026. [CNN](#)

9. KEY PHOTOGRAPHIC/VIDEO EVIDENCE

The following list of images and video have been verified by news organizations and are available from the sources indicated:

9.1 Pre-Fire Venue Images

- **Promotional Video (May 2024):** YouTube video showing sparkler-topped bottle service with staff in helmets. Source: @ConstellationCransMontana YouTube channel [8]
- **TripAdvisor Interior Photos (2016):** Photos showing basement interior with foam ceiling and staircase configuration. Source: TripAdvisor [11]
- **2015 Renovation Photos:** Facebook photos showing foam installation and staircase work. Source: Operator's Facebook page via Blick/Blue News [14]

9.2 Incident Images

- **Ignition Moment Photo:** Photograph showing waitress on barman's shoulders with sparkler-topped bottles, flames visible on foam ceiling. Source: BFMTV/French media, geolocated by NBC News [3]
- **Fire Spread Photo:** Photograph showing at least six lit sparklers with fire breaking out on ceiling. Source: Social media, verified by CNN [3]
- **Interior Fire Video:** Video showing patron attempting to extinguish flames while others continue dancing. Source: Social media, verified by CNN/NBC News [3]
- **Evacuation Video:** Video showing crowds rushing up staircase toward exit. Source: Social media, verified by CNN [3]
- **Exterior/Window Escape Video:** Video showing people escaping through windows. Source: Social media, verified by CNN [3]

9.3 Post-Incident Images

- **Police Aftermath Video:** Screenshot from Valais Canton Police video showing fire aftermath. Source: Valais Canton Police via Reuters/PBS [1]
- **Sealed Venue Photo:** Photograph of sealed-off Le Constellation bar, January 2, 2026. Source: Antonio Calanni/AP via NBC News
- **Memorial Photos:** Photographs of mourners and floral tributes outside venue. Source: Stephanie Lecocq/Reuters

— END OF REPORT —

Report compiled: January 3, 2026 | Version 1.4
Investigation ongoing. Findings subject to revision as additional evidence becomes available.