



# Harrow Court: 5

**Inquest into  
Harrow Court  
- Findings**

**Rule 43  
Harrow Court letter**





**CORONER'S OFFICE  
DISTRICT OF HERTFORDSHIRE**

The Old Courthouse, St Albans Road East, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 0ES

DX: 100702 Hatfield

Tel: 01707 897411 Fax: 01707 897398

MR EDWARD G. THOMAS Coroner MR DAVID PIDGEON Deputy Coroner  
MR GRAHAM DANBURY Assistant Deputy Coroner Dr FRANCES CRANFIELD Assistant Deputy Coroner

08 March 2007

Fire Resilience Directorate  
Department For Communities And Local Government  
Allington Towers, Floor 5 C  
Allington Street  
London  
SW1E 5WY

Our Ref: 00342-2005

Dear Sirs,

**Re: HARROW COURT FIRE**

I am writing to you concerning the inquest into the tragic deaths of:

Michael Liam Brady-Miller, firefighter,  
Jeffrey Richard Tristan Wornham, firefighter,  
Natalie Elizabeth Close, occupant.

All three died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005, Michael and Jeffrey attempting to rescue Natalie from Flat 85 on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of Harrow Court, Stevenage. The jury brought in Narrative Verdicts in respect of the firefighters and Accidental Death in respect of Natalie Close.

I am writing to you under the provisions of Rule 43 of the Coroners Rules which reads "a Coroner who believes that action should be taken to prevent the recurrence of fatalities similar to that in respect of which the inquest is being held, may announce at the inquest that he is reporting the matter in writing to the person or authority who may have power to take such action and he may report the matter accordingly".

During the course of the inquiry I received helpful reports from:

The Fire Brigades Union  
The Hertfordshire Fire & rescue Service  
Mr Scott, Building Fire Expert commissioned by Stevenage Borough Council  
Mr Paul Grimwood, a fire expert instructed by the Fire Brigades Union.

The cause of the fire was, in the judgment of the jury, the placing of tea lights on a television set. I have written to the British Standards Institute expressing our concern relating to tea lights and the dissemination of information to the general public on the dangers of tea lights in such circumstances.

I announced at the conclusion of the inquest that I would be writing to you with the various recommendations that had been made, it being clear on all the evidence that the appropriate forum to consider the efficacy of all these well thought out recommendations was through discussions and action produced by your department.

I therefore enclose:

The 94 recommendations made by Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

The 73 recommendations made by the Fire Brigades Union

The report of Mr Scott that helpfully outlined the building implications in respect of recommendation.

The recommendations of Mr Grimwood concerning procedures and equipment.

You will see that those recommendations fall into a number of categories:

**(a) Procedures for tackling high rise fires.**

The need for familiarization, information and adequate training for those firefighters called to fight high rise fires. I was given, and am aware of, two circulars that had been produced recently in respect of advice on fighting fires in high rise buildings (Circular 32/2006 and Circular 71/2006).

**(b) Safety features in respect of high rise buildings.**

The recommendations report encapsulates certain thoughts in respect of this, particularly the provision of adequate securing of cabling. The cabling of the fire alarm had become insecure as a result of it only being secured by plastic and not metal clips and this meant that Jeff was found, in the words of one witness "*entangled in cabling near the entrance to the flat*".

**(c) Training in general**

There were a number of recommendations concerning future guidance in respect of general training.

**(d) Protective personal equipment**

There were concerns, particularly relating to ADSU Units that the batteries recommended by manufacturers could not be relied upon at temperatures above 55°

**(e) Water Supplies and Equipment**

Evidence was also heard concerning the efficacy of the equipment used and the water pressures available at a fire fighting branch in such circumstances. Attention was given to Port 4/205 used by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in December 2004.

I am sure that due consideration will be given to all these recommendations and policies formulated to ensure the safety of firefighters and the minimalisation of risks to householders.

Many thanks for your anticipated attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully

Edward G Thomas  
H M Coroner