

Fire authority criticised after worker deaths

A fire authority failed to introduce necessary safety procedures and training, a union investigation after the death of firefighters Mike Miller, 26, and Jeff Wornham, 28, has found. Matt Wrack, general secretary of firefighters' union FBU, commenting after an inquest into the deaths in a high rise fire in February 2005, said: "Everyone at this incident did the very best they possibly could with the resources, training and equipment available to them. But initially there were not enough firefighters to tackle this fire safely and none of them had specific and practical training in fighting fires in high rise blocks." He added: "The FBU investigation concluded that Hertfordshire fire authority failed to put in place proper procedures, did not have adequate training and did not send enough firefighters in the initial response to tackle this fire safely. But this tragic loss of life could have happened in any number of fire authorities across the UK, it was only by misfortune that it happened in Stevenage." The union leader concluded: "The entire fire service and government need to learn the lessons of what happened in Stevenage. There must be an end to the constant pressure to cut frontline fire crews and cut corners with training and other safety critical activities." The firefighters died as they battled unsuccessfully to save Natalie Close, 32, who was trapped in a 14th storey flat. They were attempting to tackle the blaze without water because the dry riser had been padlocked shut against vandals. Smoke alarms were not working.

- [FBU news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Comet](#).