



Executive Complaints Unit

[REDACTED]
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AB/1700249

13 October 2017

Dear [REDACTED]

The World Tonight, Radio 4, 27 June 2017

I'm writing to let you know the outcome of your complaint about this edition of **The World Tonight**. I'm sorry this has taken rather longer than we initially led you to expect.

Your complaint was that an interview with a resident of Shepherd's Court, a London tower block where there had been a serious fire in August 2016, gave a misleading impression as to the vulnerability of that building to fire. She was introduced thus:

Elizabeth, another resident, is still deeply concerned about fire safety at Shepherds Court.

She then stated that the building had no fire doors, no sprinklers and no fire extinguishers. Each of these claims was repeated by the reporter. Although fire safety measures in that building were not the direct focus of the report it seems to me that, given the context was a fire in this particular block of flats, it was important to avoid giving a misleading impression of them. I agree with you that, in fact, a misleading impression was created.

Buildings of that age frequently do not have sprinklers. Some may have been retrofitted with sprinklers but as the relevant official guidance¹ in these matters makes clear there is certainly no requirement that sprinklers should be fitted:

While smoke alarms can easily be retrofitted, other fire safety technology cannot always readily be applied to existing buildings. It is unlikely that retrofitting sprinklers or water mist systems would be reasonably practicable for existing blocks...

Similarly, there is no requirement that fire extinguishers should be provided and, as the guidance makes clear, this is not a straightforward issue:

The provision of fire extinguishers and other forms of fire-fighting equipment in common parts for use by residents is problematic. It is not expected that residents should need to

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/fire-safety-purpose-built-04b.pdf>

tackle a fire in their flats to make their escape. Indeed, to obtain a fire extinguisher located in the common parts for this purpose would involve the person leaving their flat in the first place.

In both those instances, incomplete information contributed to an impression being created that the building was exposed to unnecessary fire risks. The third claim, there were no fire doors, was simply mistaken. The fact is that in such buildings the front door to each flat is actually a fire door, as are doors giving onto stairwells.

For these reasons, I'm upholding your complaint. I hope you'll accept my apologies, on behalf of the BBC, for the breach of standards which occurred. A summary of our finding will be published on the BBC Complaints website, along with a summary of any action taken as a result.

Meanwhile, there being no provision for further appeal within the BBC, this will be our final response unless we modify it in the light of any comments you might wish to make. If you do wish to make comments I'll be happy to consider them provided you let me have them by 27 October. Otherwise, it's open to you to approach Ofcom if you believe your complaint has identified a breach of the Ofcom Code (which can be seen at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code>), though of course it would be for Ofcom itself to decide whether to consider your complaint. Information about lodging a complaint with Ofcom can be found at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint>. Ofcom acknowledges all complaints received, but will not normally write back to individual complainants with the outcome of its considerations.

Yours sincerely



Fraser Steel

Head of Executive Complaints