

Video Transcript: Mics & Sirens Season 2 – Episode 2

[Silvana Pulitano, Podcast Host] You're listening to Mics and Sirens, the official podcast of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in Western Australia. DFES acknowledges the traditional owners on the land on which this podcast is created, the Whadjuk people.

[Sirens sound while news footage of fires play]

[Mark Hardingham CBE, QFSM, former chair of the UK National Fire Chiefs Council] The building had behaved in a way that nobody expected. I mean, it went from the fourth floor to the top of the tower, in less than 30 minutes. And there's a wall of thick, black, acrid smoke in front of me. Do I take my family into that and try and escape? I mean, it's an unimaginable, horrific decision. It has to go beyond just telling the story. There has to be an appetite to change regulations.

[Silvana] In June 2017, fire tore through the Grenfell Tower in London. 72 lives were tragically lost, families shattered. A city and the world left asking how such a disaster could happen. For Mark Hardingham CBE, QFSM, former chair of the UK National Fire Chiefs Council, the Grenfell tragedy was a turning point, forcing urgent questions about building safety, community trust, and how fire services prepare for the unthinkable. In this episode, Mark takes us inside the lessons of Grenfell, and why they matter here and around the world.

[Di Darmody, Interviewer] Thanks so much for being here with us, Mark.

[Mark] You're welcome, Di.

[Di] One of the disasters you worked closely on, especially in the aftermath, was the Grenfell Tower fire. Could you take us back to the 14th of June 2017, and tell us about what happened in a 23-storey tower block in west London?

[Mark] Yeah, it's over eight years now, but it still feels like it was only yesterday in many respects, because tragically, 72 people lost their lives, and they lost their lives in completely harrowing circumstances. I mean, there must have been a time when, amongst those 72 people, mums, dads, husbands, and wives were grouped together, often with their children or grandparents in flats. And I'm sure for some time they knew what was gonna happen, and there was nothing they could do about it. So, I'm trying to think of almost a kind of worst set of circumstances to find yourselves in - just completely harrowing.

And it started like many other fires start. It started in a fridge freezer in flat 16 on floor four. The man who lived in the flat was a guy called Behailu Kebede. He was Ethiopian, he was an Uber driver, and he'd come home at 11:30 at night following his shift. Gone to bed and was woken up a short time later by the smoke alarm going off. And it was a fridge freezer, a Whirlpool fridge freezer in the corner of the kitchen, that had caught fire. And he did everything you would want someone to do in those circumstances. He had two lodgers in the flat with him and he woke them up, and he isolated the power to the flat. He dialled 999 straight away. And he knocked on the doors of all of the other flats on floor four, and then he left the building whilst he was on the 999 call to the London Fire Brigade. And of course, what happened is the London Fire Brigade turned out quite quickly, but terrible set of circumstances led to those 72 people losing their lives.

[Di] Who lived in Grenfell Tower?

[Mark] A lot of people lived in Grenfell Tower. A lot of people who lived there had lived there almost all their lives. But there were, well, at the time the fire happened, there were 293 people in the tower, and all bar 72 of those people made their way out, but there's a story in the 72 people who lost their lives. And I think that story is representative of everybody who lived in Grenfell Tower because the demographic of those people was disproportionate to the demographic of people in the UK.

The vast majority of those who died weren't born in the UK. They were born elsewhere around the world, and they'd come to the UK to live and to work. And they lived in the tower. From a disability perspective, 15 of the 72 people who died had a disability. And again, that's disproportionate to the UK population in terms of disability. And the 72 people ranged from the tragedy of a newborn stillborn young child who lost their life all the way through to an 84-year-old great-grandmother who died and who'd lived in the Grenfell Tower for more than 30 years.

So, there was a real broad spectrum of people who lived in the tower. And one of the things that it showed was that right across the UK, people who live in high-rise residential buildings are disproportionate to the rest of the UK population, who live in other, more sort of general housing.

[Di] An absolute human tragedy, wasn't it?

[Mark] It was a complete human tragedy. And there's sometimes a bit of a perception that they were all vulnerable people of a lower social demographic, but actually, there was a real mixture of people. There were some people from that sort of demographic, but equally, there were professional people who had fantastic jobs, and who just loved living in the tower. I mean, once you got up to the sort of upper floors of the tower, you just had amazing views across the whole of London, and people who lived in the tower, who survived, talked about the community of the tower and the fact that they just loved their life in the Grenfell Tower.

[Di] Was where you lived on the tower - in the tower - did that have an impact on whether you made it out or not?

[Mark] It did, as I said, the fire started on the fourth floor, but nobody below the 10th floor was amongst the 72 people who lost their lives. And the vast majority of people who lost their lives were on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th floors. And actually, the tragedy in there is some of those people who lost their lives on those uppermost floors, had gone up, so had come out of their flats, got into the stairwell, were so overcome by the heat and the smoke in the stairwell and the fear of the fire that was below them, that they went up the stairwell and not down the stairwell, because they considered that to be a safer place to be until firefighters came to rescue them. And some of them had a misplaced view that perhaps there might be some sort of escape from the roof of the tower via helicopter or something like that. So, there were a number of flats on those upper floors where not just the people who lived in those flats were there, but other people they'd taken in were in those flats with them as well.

[Di] Just hearing you describe what happened, I really can feel as though we're almost there, and can just imagine what that experience was like for those people in that tower.

[Mark] Absolutely. I mean, I think it's unimaginable, really. And just the sense of fear and the sense of helplessness, really, and the sense of just having a terrible choice to make. Do I stay in the flat? And a number of people were being advised to stay in their flats because firefighters were gonna come and rescue them. Or do I, when I've opened the front door of my flat and there's a wall of thick, black, acrid smoke in front of me, do I take my family into that and try and escape? I mean, it's an unimaginable, horrific decision. And some people made the decision to leave and were successful. Others made the decision to leave and were unsuccessful, and some stayed in their flats and were either rescued by the firefighters or actually perished in their flats.

[Di] Mark, can you tell us about what firefighters faced that evening at Grenfell Tower?

[Mark] Yeah, I think, when the call first came in, what they thought they were gonna face was a typical fire in a high-rise residential building. I mean, there are thousands of these buildings right across London, and the London Fire Brigade are dealing with them day in and day out. But and when they first turned up, that's what they encountered. And the first firefighters were in the, well - the first firefighters arrived within five minutes of the 999 call, and the first firefighters were in the flat within about eight or nine minutes after arriving, to deal with the fire and they extinguished the fire largely in the flat. But unbeknown to them, it had escaped out of the window, and into the external cladding system and was spreading around the rest of the building.

And I think what happened was it turned out that firefighters were woefully unprepared to deal with that sort of fire. They simply hadn't received the training on how to deal with that sort of fire. They were largely unaware of external wall systems and the risks associated with external wall systems. And there was a faith that the building was built in accordance with building regulations, so would behave in a way they expected it to behave. And when the fire didn't behave how they expected it to behave, and spread so incredibly rapidly, I mean, it went from the fourth floor to the top of the tower in less than 30 minutes. When it started to do that, I think they simply were stunned, and didn't know what to do to manage the situation that was unfolding in front of them. And of course, it's also 1:00, 2:00 in the morning. It's pitch black. It's a chaotic scene. There's police, fire, and ambulance there. There are members of the public screaming. I mean, it's just a completely chaotic scene.

[Di] We'll get to what led to the fire, only taking 30 minutes to take hold, and what - the tragedy that unfolded, but what do you remember most vividly about that day, Mark?

[Mark] Yeah, you know, I think my first memory is I woke up that morning like everybody else. I woke up at 5:36 in the morning. It was a normal day at work. I was a Chief Fire Officer in Suffolk at the time, and I turned on the television like everybody else did. And it was just the shock and horror of what I could see in front of me. And by this time, the building had been burning for five hours. So the whole of the building was alight. And I just couldn't believe this was happening in the centre of London on a warm, sunny day.

I remember thinking that firefighters will inevitably, and it turned out to be the case, be carrying out some acts of unbelievable bravery to try and deal with that incident. I remember the news reports talking about a small number of deaths, but a significant number of people trapped inside the building. And I remember talking to my family at the time, saying the death toll is gonna be very high on this incident, I suspect. And I also remember, this is going to be

the sort of fire services, what I call a Hillsborough moment. So, the Hillsborough football disaster, where 90-odd football fans were killed in 1989, dominated policing in the UK for 30 years. And at the time, I started to quickly think that's what the Grenfell Tower is gonna be for the fire and rescue service for decades to come. What I didn't appreciate at the time was it wouldn't just be the fire and rescue service; it would be the whole building safety and construction industry as well.

[Di] And what was it as you were watching it unfold on the television and speaking to your family that made you so sure that was going to be the case?

[Mark] Well, for a start I thought the building might collapse. I mean, you start to think about the Twin Towers, because when you saw the pictures of that building burning, I mean, it was a concrete building, and the whole of the building above the fourth floor was on fire. And I started to think this might collapse. And also, the building had behaved in a way that nobody expected. And we'll probably come on to that a little bit more later.

And also quite quickly, there were issues starting to emerge about the stay put advice that had been given to residents who were told to stay in your flat. The fire service are gonna come and rescue you, which turned out not to be the case. And I knew that was gonna be exposed, quite rightly, and questions asked about the fire service.

[Di] Well, do you wanna talk about that now, the stay put advice? Can you explain what happened?

[Mark] Yeah, so I think in Australia you call it protect in place, and we call it stay put in the UK. So, this is a sort of building safety policy that the fire service applies, where the building should be built in such a way that each individual flat is a completely separate fire compartment from the next flat. So, when a fire starts, it will be contained within that flat. So, the principle being if you're in that flat, you leave. If you're in one of the neighbouring flats and you started to get impacted by heat or smoke, then you might leave as well. But actually, everybody else in the building is entirely safe because you've got 30 or 60 minutes fire resistance that contains that fire, which is plenty of time for the fire service to turn up.

And that's the policy that had been applied for many years in fire services right across the UK. Not entirely, but almost always successfully. And that was the policy that was applied on the night. The building itself, the Grenfell Tower, had no fire alarm. So, there was no means to turn on the fire alarm, to then alert everybody in the building they needed to evacuate. The building didn't have a fire alarm like that, so people stayed put in the building. And of course, they started to, in significant numbers, dial 999 to say "my flat starting to fill up with smoke." And the 999 control staff, for about just under two hours, continued to tell people "to stay put. We've passed on your details to those on the incident, and they'll be sending firefighters in to come and rescue you."

And the reality was the way that information was being communicated to, from the fire control staff through to those on the incident ground, was heavily criticised by the public inquiry. And firefighters were simply unable to get to many of the flats to rescue some of those 72 people. So, it became a significant point of evidence in the public inquiry, and a lot has changed since then to improve the way that stay put is applied. But the principle of stay put still exists in the UK.

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[Di] The public inquiry: how quickly did that come about, and what was the feeling, I guess, within the firefighting service, but within the general public too, about the Grenfell Tower fire and what needed to be done, post it?

[Mark] Yeah, so the sort of political context at the time is probably quite important with this as well, because there had just been a general election in England and Theresa May had won the election, but it had been literally within a week before the Grenfell Tower fire started. And she'd appointed a new fire minister, an MP called Nick Hurd. And he was appointed fire minister on the Tuesday before the fire started in the early hours of Wednesday morning. So, politically, it was quite a dynamic time in England, certainly. And within about a week, when the death toll was coming up to sort of 72, the Prime Minister immediately announced that there would be a public inquiry to understand how these 72 people had died and why the building reacted in the way it did. And she appointed Sir Martin Moore-Bick, a retired. High Court judge, to chair that public inquiry, and it became the largest ever public inquiry in the UK. It started not long after the fire in 2017, and it didn't publish its final report until September last year. So, sort of seven years on from the Grenfell Tower fire.

[Di] Following that inquiry a number of changes were made to building safety. And given what you've told us, it's clear that needed to happen. Can you briefly tell us about what the main ones were?

[Mark] Yeah, I can so if you think of the Grenfell Tower, it was a building that had no sprinkler system, and it was a building that had a single narrow staircase across 24 floors. So, the legislation has been changed. So, every high-rise residential buildings over 11 metres now requires a sprinkler system. But of course, that only applies to new buildings. That's not retrospectively applied to the thousands that there are across the UK. Every new building from 2026 that is over 18 metres will require two staircases. And so again, that's quite a significant change.

What also became clear was the number of other high-rise residential buildings across the UK that had either the same ACM cladding on the outside, or similar flammable cladding that didn't comply with building regulations. So, governments set up a significant system with billions of pounds of funding attached to it, to enable that cladding to be removed from the sides of those buildings to make those buildings safe, because residents of those other buildings found themselves having spent 400,000 or 500,000 pounds, sometimes on a two bedroom apartment in a high rise residential building, where the value of that just disappeared overnight because it had unsafe cladding on the outside of the building. And nobody's gonna buy that sort of flat. Nobody's going to get a mortgage on it. So, that system was in place, albeit even eight years on, there are still thousands of buildings with unsafe cladding on the outside of them.

And then the other change that came in was government established a new regulator. So, if you are now the owner or you are going to construct a high-rise residential building over 18 metres, it now goes through a completely different and new regulatory process for you to get permission to start that work. And that's comprised of the Health and Safety Executive, fire and rescue services, and local authority building control.

[Di] Operational changes were also recommended. How are fires in buildings like Grenfell Tower put out after what was learnt from this disaster?

[Mark] Yeah, there's been a lot of change. And I think if I was to pick out a few of the most significant ones, I think one of the things that happened at Grenfell is the firefighters - when they turned up at the incident commanders, when they turned up for a significant period of time, got slightly tunnel vision probably, in trying to extinguish and deal with the fire. And didn't consider the evacuation of residents to the extent that they do now.

So, when firefighters turn up to this sort of building now, regardless of whether it's burning, to the extent that Grenfell was, one of the first things they're thinking is about potentially evacuating the building. Do I need to make a very early decision to abandon, stay put, and to evacuate this building and prioritise that over the firefighting operations? So, that's the sort of significant mindset change that there's been a change in kind of the way that the policies are written to enable that to be built into sort of training and development as well.

The second thing is that there is much greater knowledge amongst firefighters about the built environment, about external wall systems, and other aspects of the built environment. But having said that, the built environment is such a fluid, innovative, and varied place. It's almost impossible for firefighters to keep up with that sort of level of innovation, but their awareness of it is greater than it had been in the past.

We touched on the sort of change to stay-put guidance. So, fire control staff are now much better trained in terms of how to deal with stay-put guidance, how to administer that change from stay put to an evacuation of the building, and how to communicate that across the incident ground. And there are a couple of sort of tactical things where every fire engine in the UK now carries smoke hoods. So, these are just hoods that you can put over the heads of residents in buildings to enable them to evacuate down the staircase that may be full of smoke, in a way that's much safer than them simply coming down, either breathing in smoke or fire fighters, giving them their breathing apparatus mask to breathe fresh air as they bring them down. But also every building over 18 metres in the UK, of which there are about 14,000, now has a premises information box outside that building, which contains information about the fire safety arrangements in that building that firefighters can access whenever they need it.

[Di] Another recommendation was the establishment of a College of Fire and Rescue. What has happened in the last seven years to progress that?

[Mark] If I'm honest, Di not a great deal, really. I mean, the College of Fire first came out as a proposal from government before it became a recommendation in the Grenfell inquiry about four or five years ago. And then the inquiry recommended it as well, albeit with a sort of slightly different aspect associated to it. The reason not a lot's happened with it at the moment is partly because I think government wanted to wait to see what the Grenfell inquiry recommended, and the recommendation only came out in September last year. But also, it's

going to need money if it's gonna be established properly, to achieve everything it possibly can, and it's going to need tens of millions of pounds a year to establish it and enable all the fire services in the UK to use it. So, I think to an extent it's gonna be about watch this space. Having said that, some of the things that the College of Fire will be proposed to do are currently done by the National Fire Chiefs Council. So, it'll be about where does the ownership of that work sit in the future? If and when a College of Fire is established.

[Di] There is an influential group of bereaved survivors and relatives from Grenfell who want justice for the 72 people who lost their lives. What do you think will happen next to try and bring them that justice?

[Mark] Yeah, you're absolutely right, that group, my reading of that group is they now know what caused the fire. They know what happened on the night of the fire. It is about justice for those 72 people who lost their lives. Who's gonna be held accountable for what happened? So, the Metropolitan Police commissioned a criminal investigation as soon as the fire happened - the largest or one of the largest investigations has ever been carried out by the Metropolitan Police. Only recently, they published an update on it and talked about the 180 police officers and staff who are still working on the investigation, some seven or eight years after the fire started. So, where they are now with that investigation is that they are, they're examining the final report from the public inquiry, and that's gonna take a while because that's 2,000 pages over five volumes. So, I think that'll take us to probably the end of this year, early part of next year. And at the moment, the Metropolitan Police have identified in sort of legal terms, that there are 19 organisations and 58 people I think the number is who are identified as suspects in the criminal investigation. The Metropolitan Police will come to their conclusions. They'll then pass the file over to the Crown Prosecution Service, who will decide who is then taken forward to court, and charged with various offences. And ultimately, I think the bereaved survivors and relatives quite understandably want to see somebody or more than one person held accountable for the 72 people, and I think probably potentially go to prison.

[Di] What do you think are the most important lessons learnt from Grenfell?

[Mark] So, I think there's I think there's a raft of lessons that come out from the recommendations, and sort of an operational level. Some of the stuff we've talked about already about building safety, change operational changes, stay put, things like that. But actually, I think if you sort of step back from the recommendations themselves a little bit, and look more broadly at some of the sort of big strategic lessons for me, there are four.

And the first one is about organisational culture. So, the whole of the building safety system - from architects to constructions to subcontractors, to fire testing systems to government, to the fire and rescue services, and our role in it as well - I think there are real challenges that came out about the culture within those organisations, and particularly on the construction side, the balance between profit and fire safety, and regulation versus deregulation. So, I think organisational culture is one.

I think the second is about the complexity of the system. I mean, this is a standard refurbishment that's happening up and down the country day in and day out, and the number of moving parts, the number of contractors, subcontractors, and other organisations. You're into the sort of 20 to 30, and when you get that sort of complex system, you get gaps

between those organisations. And the gaps is where the responsibility and the accountability is ended up and where 72 people lost their lives.

And then I would say, that the last one I would pick up would be about personal and organisational learning. Because we talked about at the start, when we were describing what firefighters turned up to, and it was sort of felt like an unforeseeable event. But actually, as the inquiry's looked back and as the system has looked back, it was entirely foreseeable that you had your own fire here in Melbourne - the Lacrosse building - back in 2014. There are at least 60 fires in the external wall systems of high-rise residential buildings all over the world that happened before Grenfell.

The London Fire Brigade dealt with a high-rise fire in 2009 that killed six people and injured 20 others, when there were issues with the construction of the building, and there were issues with stay put. Both of those foretold what happened at Grenfell. So, I think the absence of personal and organisational learning, not just in the fire service, but right across the whole of the system from government down, was one of the significant causes about the fire when all of the information was there, if people had gone looking, and I think if the system had been a bit more curious.

[Di] There have been other fires around the world since 2017, particular in Valencia and Doha last year, and in China and Milan in 2021. What do you see as the similarities with those, with what happened at Grenfell, and how do we ensure - it's a tragedy, and hearing about it is absolutely heartbreaking, but how do we make sure that we learn from Grenfell and prevent other high-rise fires like it in the future?

[Mark] Yeah, and I think we absolutely have to do that. That has to be the legacy of 72 people who lost their lives. And if I pick out just a couple of those fires you talked about. So, the Valencia fire in particular had some real parallels with what happened at Grenfell. The cladding on the outside of the building in Valencia was exactly the same ACM cladding that was on the Grenfell Tower fire. There were issues with the stay-put advice that was being given by the fire service to some of the residents who were trapped inside the building. People died at that fire. The fire spread rapidly throughout the building and not only spread across the cladding, but in the same way that happened at Grenfell, spread back into the building, into the individual flats. And also, it was a wind-driven fire, which accelerated that fire spread around the building as well.

And then the other one I would pick out would be the Milan fire. And we had colleagues from the UK and London Fire Brigade in particular, who went out to Milan to kind of learn from what went well out there, because that was a building that was completely lost. But no one died in that building. Everybody was safely evacuated out. And that was back to that point about when firefighters arrive at that incident, that decision-making process about, are you gonna tackle the fire or are you gonna evacuate the people out of the building? And they took the decision to evacuate the people out of the building, and everybody was out of the building safely. Slightly easier in Milan because it happened during the day, whereas Grenfell was at night, but the principle was an important principle.

And coming on to your point about how do we learn? I think we have to learn in a range of different ways. We learn through podcasts like this. But equally, it has to go beyond just telling the story. There has to be an appetite to change regulations. There has to be an

appetite to change the way that we deal with fires. So, this is a great way to do it. What I would say is that there isn't currently an international system that sort of facilitates this learning. It requires individual people or individual services or parts of the construction industry to share some of this information, and I think that's how we prevent it happening in the future.

[Di] In this series, Mics and Sirens, we speak to fire and emergency services experts from all around the world, and they all bring their vast depth of knowledge and a wide range of experiences, but all of our guests, like you, Mark, are connected by a personal drive to improve how we respond to and manage emergencies. So, I wonder if we could please delve into some of your personal experience and ask, firstly, what inspired you to work in emergency services originally?

[Mark] Yeah, a great question. So, I left school at 16 and went to work in a bank, in the middle of London. So, and I had a fear of heights and a fear of confined spaces. So, the fire service really wasn't a career for me. But after a couple of years, evidently banking wasn't a career for me either, because I was bored to tears, and I remember looking around, seeing 40-year-old colleagues in the bank who, frankly, were miserable. And I remember at 19 thinking; *I don't want to get like that*. And I wanted to do something that was more practical. I wanted to do something that was more team-based, and I wanted to do something that got me outdoors a bit more. And I saw that the fire service were recruiting. So, I decided to put my fear of heights and my fear of confined spaces to one side, and I applied to join. And from the day I put the application in and started on that recruitment process, it's been an absolutely fantastic career, and I've never regretted it at all.

And also, there is a bit about - when I worked in the bank, I wasn't clear what my purpose was. I wasn't clear in my role in the bank, what I was actually doing, other than shuffling a bit of paper from A to B onto someone else. So, I sort of wanted the purpose of public service as well. And that sort of lived strong with me for the 35 years I've been doing it.

[Di] I love that a fear of banking ranks higher than a fear of heights and confined spaces. Mark, is there an incident that stands out for you in your mind even today that you could tell us about?

[Mark] There is, and I'm not gonna pick a big incident, actually. I'm gonna pick the first road traffic collision I ever went to. So, I'd only been 19, fresh out of training school. And it was early hours of the morning. And a digger had gone into the back of a van, and careered across the road, went over the central reservation, and hit a car coming the other way and killed the driver instantly of the car.

And I just remember coming away from that, with a really overwhelming feeling of just how fragile your life is. And thinking about the driver of that vehicle, probably saw it coming a couple of seconds before it happened. And I've never forgotten it since then, so that kind of sense that, in just a moment, your life can change completely. And I sort of vividly remember that instant. I mean, there's hundreds of others I've been to, and I've got some very funny stories from incidents, and I've got some tragic stories from incidents. But when you ask me that question, that's the first one that pops into my head, really. And that was 35 years ago, and it's still a very strong memory.

[Di] Is there a technological development that you think will have a great impact on the future of firefighting and emergency services?

[Mark] So, I'm gonna say - I think about this from sort of two perspectives, really. One from a what's happening in society that the fire service is gonna have to respond to. So, I'll pick AI and automation, because who knows where we're going with AI, but my sense is that industry is gonna become far more automated, whether that is robotics or the consequence of AI and things like that. But things will still go wrong, and the fire service will then have to respond, potentially to a large industrial unit that has almost no one there. And the building is entirely automated.

Well, that's completely different to how firefighters historically have been trained to deal with fires in buildings. So, I think the fire service is gonna have to change the way it deals with those fires as a consequence of that.

And the second thing I would say, which is more about the sort of tools that the fire service has available to it, and I know you've done a podcast previously with a colleague talking about drones. And I just think the capability of drones both now, but also in three, five, ten years' time, I think is gonna present a real opportunity for the fire service, both in terms of firefighter safety and well-being and kind of where you now don't have to commit firefighters into dangerous environments, but also to improve public safety, and to improve the capability of the fire and rescue service. I mean, it's probably not a great comparison, but when I read the news about the war in Ukraine, and at the moment with Russia and it's become a drone war. I mean, that's how different the world has become in a short space of time around drones. And why shouldn't we see a positive aspect of that in the fire and rescue service as well in the future?

[Di] Well, thank you so much for joining us today on Mics and Sirens, Mark Hardingham. It's been an absolute pleasure to chat to you.

[Mark] And you too, Di thanks very much.

[Male Narrator] Are you looking for fast, accurate, and official information that helps you to make informed decisions to stay safe during an emergency? The Department of Fire and Emergency Services Emergency WA app lets you set up watch zones for places important to you. So, if an emergency happens in your watch zone, you'll receive alerts and warnings. The best part? It's sent direct to your mobile device. Download DFES' Emergency WA app from the App Store or Google Play today.

[Silvana] That was Mark Hardingham reflecting on the Grenfell Tower tragedy and its global impact. You've been listening to Mics and Sirens, the official podcast of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in Western Australia. If you enjoy this episode, please follow, rate and share the podcast so more people can hear these important stories. Coming up, Mami Mizutori, former head of the UN office for Disaster Risk Reduction, on how prevention must become a priority.