

**Witness Statement: Gary Robert Ager**

**No of statement: 1**

**Exhibits: 1-5**

**Date of statement: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

## **GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY**

### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF GARY ROBERT AGER**

I, Gary Robert Ager, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement in connection with a fire that broke out at the Grenfell Tower located at the Lancaster West Estate in North Kensington, London W11.
2. The Independent inquiry, commissioned to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire at Grenfell Tower, has made a request for a statement to answer specific questions which have been raised in relation to the lift works, undertaken by my employer and my involvement in the same.

#### **Background**

##### *Employment History/ Qualifications*

3. I left school when I was 16 and entered into an apprenticeship with BP Oil Kent Refinery Ltd. That apprenticeship focussed on pipe fitting. That lasted a period of 4 years until 1982 and I was able to secure various pipe fitting certificates together with a certificate in fabrication and welding.

4. The refinery closed down and I moved employment to Faincroft Ltd, who were tasked to decommission the refinery where I had previously worked. That employment lasted until 1987. During this job I undertook a number of different tasks and gained overall site experience.
5. On 26th February 1987 I joined Apex Lift & Escalator Engineers Ltd.

*Employment at Apex Lift & Escalator Engineers Ltd "Apex"*

6. I have been working for Apex for some 32 years.
7. I started my employment as a lift engineer's mate. In that role I was assisting the engineer in all aspects of lift installation. After an initial period of 6 months I followed an internal structured training programme, which enabled me to work towards becoming a qualified lift engineer.
8. This training consisted of J5 (lift recognition) and J26 (installation) modules. This was the lift certification in existence at that time. This was all site based training and was supported by records made in personal log books.
9. After a period of two years I successfully completed the training and qualified as a lift engineer. I then continued to install lifts with Apex and after some 5 years I was promoted to the post of Senior Engineer. Thereafter I became a Technician and in or around 1999 I was moved into the role of Site Supervisor.
10. Currently I hold the post of Construction Project Manager within Apex Lifts. I have been in this role since 2005.
11. During my time with Apex I have undertaken a series of internal and external training, as mentioned above. I attach copies of my training certificates marked Exhibit "(GRA/I: )". This training has allowed me to secure the following qualifications:-
  - Engineering Industry Training Board J26 – Lift Erection 6<sup>th</sup> February 1990
  - Engineering Industry Training Board J5 – Lift Practice 12<sup>th</sup> April 1990;

12. I continue to receive refresher training for both safety and lift developments. As part of my employment with Apex I also attend lift forums to ensure that I am aware of any changes to lift regulations and or standards.

13. I am aware of the fact that Apex undertook two projects at the Grenfell Tower. The first related to the lift modernisation of existing lifts. This took place a while ago and I have since been told that it was in 2004- 2007. At that time my role at Apex was as a site supervisor.

**APX00008762/3**  
APX00000702 0000

15. The second project that Apex undertook was to install four new lift entrances in 2015. At that time, I held the position of Project Manager.

16. I was not involved in the initial instruction of Apex or pricing for this specific job. My involvement began once Apex had been asked to attend a Subcontractor pre start interview prior to the project being awarded. I attach a copy of the Subcontractor pre start interview marked Exhibit “(GRA/2: URN APX00000012)”. I then attended pre start meetings, on site with Rydon’s and GHP (“Gerald Honey Partnership”). GHP were the lift consultants engaged by Rydon’s. These were the only parties that I can recall that I had the main contact with, during the project.

17. As an overview of the job, I would advise that the following steps were undertaken:-

- I attended a pre start sub-contractor interview meeting at site. This meeting enabled Apex to understand the nature of the project and to undertake an initial view of the site;
- Thereafter I attended further pre start meetings. The purpose of the same was for me to be orientated and inducted on site; meet the builders and agree the programme of works;
- I was only provided with a very limited specification for the works which is attached marked Exhibit “(GRA/3: URN APX00001092)”. The requirements were identified as :-

*To carry out the supply and installation of 4no lift entrances  
To carry out pre-condition survey to 2 no lifts  
For engineer in attendance whilst builders work is being carried out*

- To be clear, the four new lift entrances were being inserted into floors where the lifts has not previously stopped.
- An order would have been raised for the GAL equipment for the entrance steel work, doors and architraves and the controller modifications and then the new car operating panels (“COP”) and associated buttons and indicator software. A copy of the purchase order that I raised for the lift entrances dated 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015 is attached marked Exhibit “(GRA/4: URN APX00008695)”;
- The actual job was carried out by an engineer and mate from a subcontractor company, RH Lifts under my supervision. Throughout the job, my manager

was Gary Poynter. I kept Gary apprised of the works on a weekly basis. I cannot recall now whether he attended site;

- The lifts were isolated by Apex and the subcontractor. This allowed Rydons to carry out their work to cut out the entrances;
- Once done we installed the new entrances and added new push buttons and indicators on the new floors. To my recollection the work was undertaken without issue. Rydon's back filled the architraves;
- As two new entrances were added, we needed to install new software to the controller and indicators. In addition, we needed to add two new buttons to the internal lift car operating panel control equipment and lift positional equipment in the lift shaft;
- Software modifications were provided by Thames Valley Controls ("TVC"). I cannot now recall whether we undertook the software modifications or if that was done by TVC;
- Once all the works were finished, they were tested by Apex to ensure that the lifts were running as they should; were stopping at the new floors and all the indicators and push buttons were functioning correctly. I cannot recall who undertook that test.
- There was no work undertaken by Apex, as far as I can recall that related to the firemen's switch. The work that we were tasked to complete had nothing to do with the switch.
- We were not engaged, as far as I can recall, to carry out any Defects Liability Period ("DLP") checks;
- GHP requested certification for the 4 new entrances and the relevant sections were used from BS5655 Part 10 test sheet which were pages 5 & 9, blank copies of which are attached, by way of example, marked Exhibit "(GRA/5: )". These were filled out & countersigned by the tester. The documentation was handed to GHP during a meeting onsite.

18. That completed my involvement in the project.

19. The inquiry have asked a number of questions which I will now address below:-

**Question 1:** Please describe your role within Apex, how long you have been in this post, any previous relevant roles within the lifts industry and your qualifications, training, experience in respect of lifts.

**Answer:** Please see paragraphs 3-12 above.

*Project 1 (Lift Modernisation 2004-2007)*

**Question 2:** What, if any, involvement did you have in the lift modernisation project at Grenfell Tower (including any subsequent servicing) in or about 2004-2007.

**Answer:** As stated above at paragraph, I was not involved in the modernisation project at Grenfell and cannot address the question that has been asked.

**Question 3:** What, if any, involvement did you have in Project 2 i.e. the lift modernisation works at Grenfell Tower in 2015 (including any post-works defect liability period)?

**Answer:** Please see paragraphs 15-18 above

**Question 4:** How did Apex come to be engaged as the lift specialist contractor in relation to Project 2 at the Grenfell Tower (with reference to any tendering process undertaken);

**Answer:** Please see paragraph 16 above. I was not involved in the initial discussions or tendering for the work on this project for Apex. That aspect was dealt with by the Apex sales team. As set out at paragraph 15, I can advise that I attended the Subcontractor review meeting and following that meeting, Rydon's formally engaged Apex on this project.

**Question 5:** Identify the party/parties with whom Apex entered into relationships in order to carry out its role, describing the purpose of those relationships. Please also set out which organisations and individuals Apex staff (including you, if applicable) regularly had contact with respect to Project 2.

**Answer:** Please see paragraphs 16 and 17 above. My recollection is as follows:-

- Rydon (builders) were our client, all works were arranged and agreed through Rydon's with pre-start meetings and regular onsite meetings throughout the programme until its conclusion. From the Sub contractor interview meeting notes, it is clear I met with Adam Marriot, Jason North and Simon O'Connor from Rydon's.
- GHP (Lift consultants) were involved for their lift expertise and GHP Mike Sapsford (lift consultant) would periodically attend site to sign off works carried out. They were also involved with all meetings and any decisions made.
- RH as stated above were the lift installation engineers engaged by Apex to deliver the actual works on site.
- A purchase order for the lift door equipment was raised with International Lift Equipment Ltd.

**Question 6:** Provide an outline of what Apex was required to do in relation to Project 2 and how these requirements were set out. Please further confirm:

- a. As part of Project 2, was Apex required to ensure the lifts' compliance with the standards for a 'firefighting lift' within lifts guidance?
- b. If not, did Apex consider that industry standards and/or the lifts guidance required the lifts in Grenfell Tower to meet the 'firefighting lift' standard?
- c. To the extent of your knowledge, did organisations and individuals involved with the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower appreciate that the lifts did not meet the definition for a 'firefighting lift'?
- d. If Apex considered that a firefighting lift was not provided for in the specifications but was required (having regard to the nature of the building and lifts guidance), what if any steps did Apex take to highlight this to other organisations?

**Answer 6:** Please see paragraphs 15-17 above.

**Answer 6a:** I produce this statement to address the information and knowledge which I hold in relation to my involvement in the works carried out at Grenfell Tower. I am not able to respond to questions on behalf of Apex and this is a question that ought more properly to be directed to them.

**Answer 6b:** I produce this statement to address the information and knowledge which I hold in relation to my involvement in the works carried out at Grenfell Tower. I am not able to respond to questions on behalf of Apex and this is a question that ought more properly to be directed to them.

**Answer 6c:** I am unable to comment on the state of knowledge of others. I can however advise that from my experience it was clear to me, from a visual observation of the lift, that the lift was not a firefighting lift. By way of explanation, as far as I can recall, there was no intercom, or emergency trap door in the car roof, which would have been in place if the lift was a firefighting lift.

**Answer 6d:** I produce this statement to address the information and knowledge which I hold in relation to my involvement in the works carried out at Grenfell Tower. I am not able to respond to questions on behalf of Apex and this is a question that ought more properly to be directed to them.

**Question 7:** What, if any, changes were made as part of Project 2 to the Fireman's Control subsystem (including switches) in place after Project 1's completion? Please set out the location of any switches and whether/how they were connected to the lifts

**Answer:** None, please see paragraph 15-17 above which identifies the work that was carried out.

**Question 8:** Did Apex test the Fireman's Control switch(es) to confirm they were fully operable on conclusion of Project 2 works? If so, what was the result and how was this recorded (please exhibit any relevant certificates)?

**Answer:** No. The work that was undertaken did not impact on the fireman's switch.

**Question 9 :** What is Apex's expectation for sufficient maintenance/testing of a Fireman's Control Switch following the completion of Apex's Project 2 work (e.g. by an incumbent maintenance provider)? In particular, should any maintenance/testing involve the insertion of a drop key, activation of the Switch and observing the effect on the lifts, rather than just a visual inspection of the Switch? Please exhibit/reference the O&M Manual if appropriate.



**Answer:** I produce this statement to address the information and knowledge which I hold in relation to my involvement in the works carried out at Grenfell Tower. I am not able to respond to questions on behalf of Apex and this is a question that ought more properly to be directed to them.

*Projects 1 and 2*

**Question 10:** What, if any, measures were put in place by Apex to prevent:

- a. The lift car, the lift well and the lift motor room filling up with smoke in the event of a fire;
- b. Providing a supply of clean air in a standard pressurisation system within the lift shafts, to prevent smoke ingress

**Answer:** I can only provide answers in relation to Project 2 and in relation to my own involvement in the works for the reasons stated above.

- a. No steps were undertaken given the very limited work that was to be carried out.
- b. No steps were undertaken given the very limited work that was to be carried out.

**Question 11:** Did you have concerns, at any point in time, about whether the Grenfell Tower lifts were compliant with industry standards, lifts guidance or otherwise fully operable (including in respect of the Fireman's Control subsystem)? If so, how and to whom were these concerns expressed? What, if any, remedial action was taken (insofar as this is within your knowledge)?

**Answer:** The lifts that were in place at Grenfell Tower pre fire, are the same specification as other lifts that I have worked on in other high rise buildings of the same age across the UK.

## Statement of Truth

I believe that the contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Robert Ager', written over a horizontal line.

Dated

30<sup>th</sup> October 2019