

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: SECRET, CHRISTOPHER

Age if under 18: OVER 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: C SECRET

Date: 22/11/2018

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

I am making this statement further to the statement that I provided to police on 6th February 2018. I have been requested by officers from Operation Northleigh to provide additional detail around my attempt to use the lift at Grenfell Tower in June 2017.

A firefighter lift has a control box which is normally at the main entrance to the building on the ground floor or in the basement but in a lobby area. To activate it there is a control box normally at head height activated by using an express lift key which is carried on fire brigade appliances. Firefighters put the key in the hole and normally turn it clockwise, once that engages what should happen is that the lift display will read something like 'lift out of order' or 'under fire control' or something like that. The lift should stop and then run to ground level and the doors will then open and we are under complete control of that lift. It will only go to where we press the buttons to take it to and we then once the doors open, they will stay open until a firefighter moves the lift car by selecting a different floor or the fire lift is disengaged at the fire lift control box when it returns to operating as a normal lift. It won't go anywhere if someone calls it and it will not operate. It stops functioning as a normal lift and comes under our control.

The express key is normally turned clockwise — a lot of these mechanisms have been in buildings for years and have different manufacturers and there is not just one standard so it can differ. The standard key however is the express key, I have seen two other keys in my time but it is rare to have a different type of key.

The key can be taken out but it is normally left in the control box whilst the lift is in operation— there is no reason to take it out. The brigade supply them but I normally keep one in my tunic because of my role

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— I am often first in the buildings and would need a key to hand so I keep it in my tunic. The keys are always going missing and are used a lot so they are a regular order for our purchasing system. Purchase order management system (POMS) is how we order express keys through the LFB

To deactivate the lift out of fire mode the key turns in the opposite direction, if I turn it clockwise to activate it, I would then turn it to neutral and then turn it the other direction, anticlockwise and it will deactivate it.

The key that I had at Grenfell tower I know I had had for a while and I had used it a number of times in different locations with no problems.

The keys are metal they are not painted so it is a raw material silver in colour. Sometimes keys are marked up with callsigns but generally they are kept in a pouch or in a firefighters pocket, there was no tag or marking on the key that I used. It has a hinged key section at the end of it which hangs down and there are bars about half way along which stop you from pushing the key in too far.

On the wall next to the lift there is a box with 'firefighter lift' on it, there is a tiny hole in the middle of it and usually an arrow with the direction that the key has to be turned. I hold the key level so that the drop down section on the end is level with the rest of the key and also level with the hole. I place the key into the hole slowly and then continue to push the whole key forward into the hole. As you start to turn the key you will feel the drop down bit at the end of the key drop down and you feel that it is in the chamber where it should be.

Once you put the key in and it drops down you are ready to operate it. The key has to be turned in the direction of the arrow, it will normally turn about a quarter of a turn, you feel a bit of resistance and push it a bit further and you will feel a notch or a click and that is when you know that it has activated.

Sometimes on some boxes this does not work and you have to whack it round a few times until it engages, the issue is watching for how the lift reacts to the turning so that you know it has worked.

I would say a good 50% of calls we go to we have to use one, they are not just on lifts, they are also on access panels for doors, or gates on car parks or into residential developments, basically anywhere where access is required so that firefighters can override it.

If I have even been shown how to use the express key then I cannot recall ever having that training and I believe it is the same for the use of a fire lift.

I have drawn on an A4 piece of paper a diagram to the best of my ability of what an express key looks like and also next to it the fire control box. I now exhibit this diagram as CMS/4, this has been allocated exhibit serial number MPSZ13329793.

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On Wednesday 14th June 2017 I arrived in the lift lobby of Grenfell Tower with colleagues firefighter David BADILLO, Crew Manager Charlie BATTERBEE, Firefighter Daniel BROWN, firefighter Chris DORGU and FF Alex DE ST-AUBIN.

I have been shown a photograph of firefighters in the lift area of Grenfell Tower and have marked on this the names of LFB personnel that I can remember and recognise onto the photo. I now exhibit this photograph as CMS/5 and it has been allocated exhibit serial number MPSZ13329794.

We entered the ground floor and gained access to the lift lobby area by electronic fob, we went straight over to the lifts. There was one maybe two lifts which are for the residents, they become fire lifts once activated by the fire key.

I took the key from my tunic and straightening it placed it into the hole and tried turning it in both directions because it did not work first time. I felt the end drop down and it engaged, I turned it again in a clockwise direction but the lift wasn't reacting to me operating the switch. I realised it wasn't working so I turned it the other way again and must have by this point tried turning it about 3 or 4 times. It is a simple design and usually they work. Maybe on occasion it has to be done a couple of times but most of the time it works first time. I can remember after I realised it was not working I tried to do it harder and with a bit more force because it was not working. First time it can be done delicately as it works. If it is not working then you increase the pressure to try to get it to operate.

They are designed to be idiot proof, you shouldn't have to wiggle it or turn it a number of times, if it doesn't happen first or second time then you generally know that it is broken. Sometimes when they are broken the key will just turn round and round in the box but this one was not doing that.

I wanted to ensure it was not me causing it to not work but that it was the key or box causing the problem. There is only so much strength you can use on the key and box as it is a one handed operation.

I don't remember whether there was a cross bar on the key I was using, sometimes they do have the cross bar sometimes they don't have them.

There was still no change to the lifts and they did not react. I cannot remember what floor it was sitting at but I was not able to control it. The lift did not move.

I vaguely remember that I was struggling to get the key out and I was pulling it a few times and realised that it was stuck in the box. I left the key in the box. I have then just called the lift as normal and used the lift as normal to get to the floor that we were going to.

I was not aware of any defect with the key and had used it successfully before on a number of occasions.

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Form MG11(T)

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I do not remember going back to collect the key from the lift box so it may have been left there but I cannot be sure.

I do not know the exact location of the key that I used on that day, I have probably had three or four different keys since that day.

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