

# THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

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## CADENT GAS LIMITED OPENING STATEMENT FOR PHASE 1

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1. Cadent is a gas transporter and used to be known as National Grid Gas Distribution Limited. It transports gas on behalf of gas suppliers across the gas distribution networks it operates, being East of England, North London, North West and West Midlands. The suppliers own the gas; Cadent owns and operates the pipes and associated equipment within its networks, which are used to transport the gas to customers' properties. Cadent is responsible for the gas pipes up to and including the valve prior to the customers' meters, but not the meter or the pipe after it. Cadent operates the North London gas network in which Grenfell Tower is located and was operating that network on 14 June 2017.
2. Cadent was first contacted by the London Fire Brigade ("the LFB") in connection with the Grenfell Tower fire shortly after 03:20 on 14 June 2017. One of Cadent's "First Call Operatives" (who are the frontline responders and attend all gas emergencies), Jason Knightley, arrived quickly on site at 03:48.<sup>1</sup> By this stage, the fire was a "forty pump fire", meaning that the LFB had requested that forty fire engines be deployed to the incident. Further Cadent personnel were called to the scene and at its peak there were thirty Cadent personnel working in the vicinity of Grenfell Tower, comprising first call operatives, members of the Cadent Emergency Response and Repair Teams and drivers operating the equipment and machinery. Further Cadent staff and managers were closely involved, monitoring events and liaising with engineers on the ground from Cadent's Operational Centre in Hinckley and from Cadent's depots in Fulham and Slough.
3. The LFB had primacy and co-ordinated the emergency response to the incident. They were the "Category 1 Responder" under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Cadent attended the fire as a "Category 2 Responder" whose role is to work closely with the

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<sup>1</sup> Information in this Opening is taken from Timeline [CAD00000002], the witness statement of Jason Allday disclosed to the Inquiry [MET00012710], and the witness statements of other Cadent engineers not yet published by the Inquiry (Jason Knightley, Dave Edwards, James Harrison and Neale Milam)

Category 1 Responders. Cadent, as a Category 2 Responder, was not a party to the LFB command meetings, but took direction from the LFB. Cadent's duty was to cooperate and share information.

4. After his arrival at the incident, Jason Knightley attended the LFB command unit and was told that Cadent should "stand by". At approximately 05:35, Cadent Emergency Network Engineer Dave Edwards again approached the LFB command unit and asked whether there was anything the LFB needed from Cadent. He was similarly told to "stand by" and await LFB instruction. At around 07:45, Jason Allday, a further network engineer, again presented at the command unit and asked whether LFB wanted Cadent to disconnect the gas supply. At this stage, LFB confirmed that they did.<sup>2</sup>
5. Cadent engineers had anticipated this instruction and had been formulating a plan to turn off the gas supply at Grenfell Tower, which took into account the very difficult circumstances on the ground. The aim was to isolate the gas quickly and safely.
6. The only feasible way of disconnecting the gas was to excavate the mains feeding gas into Grenfell Tower and to stop the flow by cutting the mains as no other valves were accessible due to the intensity of the fire and falling debris. This operation of excavating the mains is a complex and invasive process but attending engineers had previously worked in the area and had a good level of understanding of how the local gas network operated. Three isolation points were identified (on Grenfell Road, Testerton Walk and Station Walk), all three of which would have to be isolated if the flow of gas to the Tower was to be stopped.
7. By around 11:30 the three excavation sites had all been identified and agreed with the LFB and Cadent had been given the go ahead by the LFB to start moving machines and equipment to the sites. It was difficult to deploy teams and equipment to the excavation sites because the area was understandably congested with emergency vehicles, some of which had to be navigated around or moved. This took time. Cadent engineers worked in challenging conditions in order to isolate the mains. In some cases, digging had to be by hand, because machinery had not reached the relevant site. Engineers worked in

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<sup>2</sup> See also AC Andy Roe Record of Actions [MET00005405\_0012]

considerable heat and encountered distressing scenes as they worked. The teams were by necessity operating close to the building in dangerous locations. On two occasions during the afternoon they had to evacuate their sites because of fears that the Tower might collapse. They returned to work having agreed a safe system of work with LFB and with LFB spotters surveilling the building for any further structural movement as the work continued.

8. During the course of the excavations, LFB asked Jason Allday whether he would be prepared to enter the basement of Grenfell Tower with firefighters to attempt to disconnect the supply of gas by turning off the basement valves on the risers (the vertical pipes taking gas up the building). He agreed to do so. The police shielded them from the falling debris with riot shields as they entered at around 15:50. Jason Allday could see that the valves on the risers in the basement were not accessible without the assistance of further Cadent engineers and ladders. The basement was flooded up to the knees and the electricity was still on. LFB officers then received a radio message to evacuate the building because of concern that it would collapse and they all withdrew.
9. The Cadent teams were able to start work on the Grenfell Road and Testerton Walk sites at approximately 14:30 and succeeded in isolating those mains at around 20:00. They were able to start work more quickly at the Station Walk site, at approximately 13:30, but encountered additional difficulties there. The Station Walk team was unable to get a good trace on the main. The utilities services network there was congested, making it harder to locate the main. In addition, a low-rise wall and a walkway on a ramp made the excavation work difficult. The Cadent team was able to achieve a temporary isolation at around 23:30. At this time the gas supply to Grenfell Tower was completely disconnected.