

Claimant:
Name of Witness : Natasha Elcock
Statement No : 1
Exhibits : NE1,NE2,NE3,NE4,NE5
Date : 15 May 2018

IN THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

PHASE 1 STATEMENT OF NATASHA ELCOCK

I, **Natasha Elcock** of Flat 82, Grenfell Tower, London, W11 1TG, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:-**

A. BACKGROUND

1. I make this statement to assist the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. This statement is intended to cover the issues identified in Phase 1 of the Inquiry. I reserve the right to provide a separate statement addressing the issues to be examined in Phase 2.
2. The statements I make are from my own knowledge or belief unless otherwise stated. If not from my own knowledge I will identify the source.
3. My name is Natasha Elcock. I was born on the [REDACTED] 1976. I presently live at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Before the fire I lived at Flat 82 on the eleventh floor of Grenfell Tower with my partner Anthony Smith (DOB: [REDACTED] 1985), my daughter Rikeyia ([REDACTED]), my son Richarn ([REDACTED]) and my daughter [REDACTED] 2010). I lived there for about 20 years.
4. About a week before the fire I was diagnosed with [REDACTED]. I also suffer from [REDACTED] and for that reason I would avoid the stairs. Apart from that I had no physical or mental health problems prior to the fire.

B. 14th JUNE 2017 AND THE HOURS LEADING UP TO THE FIRE

5. On the evening of 13 June 2017, I arrived home from work at about 20:00. I spent the evening watching TV with my partner. We were watching the film Trainspotting. At some point I fell asleep on the sofa with my partner. My daughter [REDACTED] was asleep in my bedroom when I arrived home. My bedroom is the room nearest the front door which can be seen in the attached exhibit NE1.

6. As far as I am aware there were no electrical problems in my flat that evening.

C. YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRE IN GRENFELL TOWER

7. On 14 June 2017 I was woken by the sound of sirens. I thought nothing of it as it is not uncommon to hear sirens where we live. I got up from the sofa got into bed with my daughter and fell back asleep. My partner remained on the sofa watching TV.
8. Sometime later I was woken again by the sound of voices on the landing outside my flat. It was unusual to hear voices outside the flat so late at night. I got out of bed and half-opened the front door and saw the father and daughter from Flat 86. They are from Afghanistan and don't speak very good English but I understood that they were saying that there was smoke in their flat. I could see a small amount of white smoke around the doorway of their flat. I have marked this on the second exhibit to this statement (NE2). The lights were still on in the landing. I couldn't see any smoke near my flat at this stage. I couldn't hear any fire alarms. I looked at the lifts and the left lift was out of service but the right lift was still working. I was confused and wasn't sure what was going on but I told my neighbours to leave and went back into my flat, shutting the door behind me.
9. I went into the front room where my partner was still watching TV and asked him what was going on outside, he got up and looked out of the window overlooking the sports centre and said there was a fire (as indicated in exhibit NE3). I went over to the window and saw the flames. My flat is on the east side of the Tower but I could tell that the flames were coming from the west side. I could see the fire brigade on the grass below and a fireman on a cherry picker outside my window. In the Tower, each floor has the same layout, with the flats directly above each other ending in the same number. He was spraying water downwards towards the column of flats ending in six. I saw him move to the side to avoid falling debris from the Tower. Shortly after water stopped coming out of his hose.
10. I got dressed and called the fire service at 01:28 to tell them that we were on the eleventh floor and I didn't know how to get out. I know it was this time because my solicitors were supplied with recordings of my calls to the emergency services and the corresponding time from the London Fire Brigade transcript. The call handler asked me if there was smoke in my flat, I told them that there wasn't but I had seen some on the landing. He told me to keep the door closed to prevent smoke from entering my flat. He said he would let the crews know where I was. At this stage I felt that the fire brigade were in control of the situation and that we would be okay. I had lived in the Tower for 20 years and I had never seen a fire in the Tower. I had heard of other recent fires in blocks nearby which had been put out within an hour so I had faith in the fire brigade.

11. I then got dressed and woke up my daughter. I could see that some people were being evacuated and I didn't know what to do. I could see my neighbour Yousif from Flat 85 on the grass below. At 01:31 I called my sister who lives nearby with my mother and told her there was a fire in the Tower and that we were okay. I told her that I would bring my daughter to my mother's house as soon as we got out. I know that this was the time because I took a screenshot of my phone later.
12. At 01:33 I called the fire brigade again and asked them to send someone to rescue us. They said they would send someone to help me. They asked if there was smoke in my flat and I told them that there wasn't but I could see the fire getting worse outside. They told me I was well away from the fire and to shut all the windows and doors, which I had already done. We were all awake and in the front room by this point.
13. I started to receive phone calls from friends on the ground. At 01:40 I received a phone call from my friend Jimmy Corcoran who lived across the road from the Tower and I could sense the nervousness in his voice. I started to worry and said to Anthony that I thought we should go, he opened the front door, shut it quickly and said "*we can't*". He didn't say why at the time but he later told me that he saw a blue flame on the landing when he opened the door.
14. After Anthony said that, I went into the bathroom, plugged the bath and started running the taps. Anthony asked what I was doing and I said something along the lines of "*well the house is going to be fucked, a bit of water aint going to hurt.*" We then went back into the front room. There was a firefighter shooting water from a cherry picker at the side of our flat which overlooks the sports centre and firefighters stationed by the risers on Grenfell Walk shooting water at the side of our flat which overlook it. I have exhibited two diagrams to show where the water was coming from NE3 and NE4. The water was coming through the gaps in the walls. I could also hear firefighters knocking on doors on Grenfell Walk and evacuating residents.
15. At 01:43 I called the fire brigade again and told them that there was smoke coming into my house. The call handler told me to block up the bottom of the door which I had already done. I asked her to send someone to come and help us and she asked me what floor I was on, I told her and she said she would let the crews know. She suggested I opened some windows to let some fresh air in but I told her that it would let smoke in. She asked me if I could go outside and I told her that the stairs were full of smoke.
16. At 02:02 I called the fire service again and asked them how long it was going to be before someone came to get us. The call handler asked what flat and floor we were in and told me that they were passing messages to the crews on scene and they were going flat to flat and getting

people out. She asked me how many people were in the property and whether there was any smoke inside. I told her that the smoke alarm hadn't gone off yet but we'd opened the door earlier because we thought the fire brigade were outside and some smoke had gotten in. The handler told me to put towels down beneath the doors and keep the windows closed. She said that if the smoke does come in, stay calm and stay low and if the situation got worse to ring them back.

17. At 02:13 I called the fire service back again and this time I was put through to Glasgow because of delays in connecting to the London Fire Brigade. I asked them to assure me that someone was coming to get us. She told me that there was a stay put policy until we heard otherwise. She said she would pass on my details.

18. At 02:32 I called the fire service yet again and told them that I needed to know if someone was coming to get us out. She told me that there was a lot of fire engines on the scene and they were making their way through the building. She asked what the situation was in my flat, I told her that it was okay in my flat at that time but the fire seems to be spreading and I could see flames at the window. The call handler asked if I thought it was safer to stay or to try and leave. I told her that they needed to come and get us, I told them it wouldn't be safe to try and leave. She asked me if there was smoke coming into the flat, I told her there wasn't as we had all the windows shut and the gaps beneath the door blocked. She told me she would pass on my flat number to the crews. She said we needed to stay away from the windows and doors and if any smoke came in to move to a different room and block the windows and doors in there and to stay low. I asked Anthony if there were flames coming into the flat and he told me he thought that the fire had spread to the flat next door, which I told the call handler. Flames were starting to enter the kitchen through the window and Anthony was putting them out with water from the bath. He could tell that the fire had spread to Flat 81 which shares a wall with our kitchen as the wall was so hot. I could see the fire brigade outside the window and I was shouting for help.

19. At 02:37 I called the fire service again and told them that the fire was on our landing. I told them what floor I was on and that the flames were above my flat and that they were spraying water against the wall of our flat and the water was coming through. I told them that I hadn't been outside but Anthony had. The call handler said that if I didn't have fire in my flat I needed to stay in there. She told me that that she would let the crews know where I was and that they were making their way up now.

20. At 02:44 I called the fire service back again and told them that the front door kept popping and that it was hot. The call handler told me that to stay away from the door as there was probably flames on the other side. I told her I was in the hallway because the firefighters were spraying

the side of the building and water was coming into the flat. I told her that there was smoke coming in and they needed to get me out. I begged them to hurry. She told me to go into the room with least smoke and close the door. I told them I was going into the bedroom closest to the front door. I told them the flames were coming in through the kitchen window. I told her we had shut the door and were trying to block the gaps to stop smoke coming through but we couldn't keep it all out. She told me that if there was smoke coming into the room, the best place to be was on the ground, she said we should get down on the floor and cover our mouths and noses with material. She told me I need to stay calm and I told them I was trying my hardest to stay calm but I was extremely distressed. She told me to call back if things got worse or if the fire entered the room. After this call, we went into my bedroom, which was the bedroom closest to the door, and I put down duvets and told [REDACTED] to lie on it.

21. By this point there was smoke in my bedroom but it was not so thick that I couldn't see. There was a gap between the wall and the window sill which I had complained about after the refurbishment as there was a draught and smoke was coming in through the gap.
22. At 03:00 I called the fire service again and told them that the fire was outside of my front door and there was smoke in the flat. I could hear the door popping and it was really hot. She asked if I could get out because they were advising everyone to leave their flats. She told me to cover ourselves with wet sheets and clothes, open the door slowly and try and get to the staircase and run down. Anthony opened the door and said we couldn't get out but I told him that the call handler had told me we had to try. I told [REDACTED] to put something over her head and approached the door. The call handler wished me good luck.
23. At around this time one of the smoke alarms in my flat went off. There was one in the kitchen and one in the hallway. I am not sure which one went off. I think it went off when we opened the door to the hallway and smoke came in.
24. At 03:03 I called the fire service and told them it wasn't possible to leave my flat because it was too hot on the landing. The call handler told me that the advice at the moment was to put wet towels over my head and run for it.
25. I called back again at 03:04 and told them it wasn't possible to leave because of the heat coming from the landing. I asked them to send the cherry picker which they were using to shoot water at the side of the building. They told me they were doing everything they can and to block up the gaps to stop the smoke coming in. Whilst I was on the phone Anthony opened the window, the call handler heard and asked whether we could open a window so I told Anthony to leave it open despite the fact there was some smoke coming in. The handler asked if the smoke was coming up from underneath and I told her I thought it was and she asked if it

was in all the rooms. She also told me that there was more aerial ladders arriving whilst we were on the phone. She told me to try to keep calm, concentrate on stopping the smoke entering and stay together.

26. I called again at 03:13 and told them that I knew I had rung a lot but would they please send someone to come and get us. I told them I couldn't leave because there was fire outside the front door. The call handler asked if I had received the advice about covering ourselves with wet towels. I was extremely scared and told them that Anthony had tried to leave but it wasn't possible. I begged them to send someone to get us. She asked who was in the flat with me. I asked again for them to send a cherry picker to get us. I told them the floor and flat number. I told them I could see the crews on the ground but they weren't able to put it out, she said they were doing everything they could and she said she would get word to the crews on the ground. She asked where we were and I told her we were in the bedroom and she asked if we could open a window for fresh air, I told her the fire was outside the window, she told me that they knew there were people trapped in the building and that they were trying to put it out. I told her the fire had come into our flat, she told me that we were going to have to try and leave.
27. At 03:33 I called the fire service to tell them that the fire was in my flat. They asked me how many of us were in the flat and what flat we were in. I told her that the fire was in the front room and the bedroom. She told me I had to try and get out and I told her I couldn't because I didn't know if the stairs were safe and whether the fire had spread there. She told me to wrap towels around myself and make a run for it. I asked if it was safe on the stairs but she didn't answer. I told them I couldn't do it. I told them my child is six. I told them I was in the room furthest from the front door. I told her I had left the bath running. I told her that we had to keep the windows closed because the fire was outside the windows. She told me we needed to get on the floor. She told us that the best advice was that we needed to go for it. I begged her to tell them to send up the cherry picker and asked why they had waited this long to come and get us. She told me that the fire had spread quickly and they had someone on the phone to the crews telling them. I asked if they had it under control now, she told me they were getting under control. I felt that they were trying to placate me by telling me they were getting it under control. She said that if I thought I could stay in my flat until they come and get me, I should but if it gets so bad then we needed to run for it. I begged her to tell them to do everything they could. She told me I needed to stay calm for my daughter.
28. I was also speaking to friends and family on the ground at this time who were passing the phone to police officers who told me that people had to leave the Tower themselves because no one was going to get them. I felt that until a fireman told me that they were not coming to get

me, I was staying in my flat. I wanted to know whether the fire had spread to the stairwell and whether it was safe to use.

29. Throughout this time my partner was checking that fire had not spread into the flat and putting it out with water from the bath when it did. At around 04:15 he told us to move into my daughter's bedroom as there was no smoke in there. By the time we left my bedroom there was a lot of grey smoke in there but I could still see quite clearly. It was causing us to cough but not to choke. There is no handle on the inside of the door to the other bedroom and when we shut it we realised we were stuck inside. We found some scissors in the room and managed to use them to open the door. We were in the middle bedroom for a few minutes.
30. We then went back into the front room and at 04:27 I spoke to my sister Denise Daly who was on the ground outside the Tower. I spoke to her again at 04:37 by which time she was stood with the fire crews and she told me that they were on their way up to get us. Denise was directing the firemen and at first they went to the wrong floor. We were preparing to leave and Anthony was by the door shouting "*hello, hello*". Denise could hear Anthony over the radio and told me that they were outside our flat. Anthony was holding [REDACTED] and he approached the door covered with wet towels. When we left the front room there was quite a lot of grey smoke – I just had it painted bright white so the smoke stood out. I am not sure if the lights had been on originally and had turned off at some point during the night/morning. I remember picking up bracelets which were next to the TV and the TV suddenly turning off.
31. Anthony opened the front door and the landing was filled with thick black smoke and I couldn't see anything. The smoke caused us all to cough and the smell was unlike anything I was familiar with. The fireman shouted "*can you see the torch, walk towards the torch*". I followed Anthony and he followed the firefighters through the door to the stairwell. As we went down the stairs we tripped on a body of a woman, she was lying on her back with her feet lower than her head. I recognised her as one of our neighbours. One of the firefighters took [REDACTED] from Anthony and another steadied me and we continued down the stairs.
32. It was pitch black until we reached the seventh or sixth floor where the lights were on and there was a lot less smoke. There were hoses on the floor and I think I saw a firewoman, I think she was stood at the door to the flat where the fire started.
33. We got down to the ground floor and were led through the meeting room and out of the Tower at 04:47 (NE5). I know this was the time because I have been shown a CCTV image of me leaving the Tower by the police and the time is handwritten underneath it. I saw rows of firefighters preparing to go back into the building. We were escorted by the firemen under police riot shields protecting us from falling debris through the playground up to The Station

pub. We were in the pub for about thirty minutes and we were then led into an ambulance and taken to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

SIGNED .....

MS NATASHA ELCOCK

DATED 15/5/18.....

