

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: GALLAGHER, BEN

Age if under 18: S1389 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 27 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: BEN GALLAGHER

Date: 11/01/2018

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

My statement is in relation to my attendance of the fire at Grenfell Tower in the early hours of the morning on the 14th June 2017 at around 01:30hrs?

In my statement I will mention the following people who work for the London Fire Brigade (LFB). Guy TILITSON, was Crew manager on the evening of the 13th-14th June and rode on the back of Paddington pump ladder. TILITSON is now crew manager plus which means he is qualified to go out and be in charge of other stations, he will regularly ride in charge of this station and at the moment because our governor is detached to headquarters he is in charge of the watch. Fire fighter Harry BETTISON and fire fighter Jim WOLFENDEN who I will refer to as WOLFIE. Fire fighter from Hammersmith who I will refer to as fire fighter 1. Fire Fighter who was carrying out stair procedure I will refer to as fire fighter 2. Gareth Cook station manager, Mike DOWDEN watch Manager at North Kensington on the red watch who had control of the Bridge Head in the initial stages. Watch manager Brian O'Keefe and Pat GOULDBORNE, I believe was in charge of the Bridge Head once it had moved to the ground floor.

I am employed by the LFB which I joined a little over 11 years ago. I was stationed at Heston Fire Station initially and then transferred to Paddington fire station where I am working now. I worked for about ten years on blue watch of which four of those years I was acting up to the rank of Crew Manager. I was promoted to the rank of Crew Manager around 1½years ago and moved to red watch. I enjoy my job very much. I have a really good crew the reason why people are here at this station is because they are all hard

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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workers, they are ready to work no matter how big or small the job is.

The rank structure at the fire station is trainee fire fighter, fire fighter, crew manager, crew manager plus and watch manager and a station manager who oversees the watch. I report directly to the watch manager. My role as crew manager involves managing the day to day workings of everybody in my crew and to ride in charge of the machines. I view my role as one of the middle management on a watch.

At Paddington we have the following machines. A pump, pump ladder and turn table ladder. The pump is your standard fire engine which is assigned to every type of incident and every crew manager in the bridge can ride that. The turn table ladder (TL) has a big ladder on it which is used for rescue work or as a water tower. The Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) has more technical rescue equipment, which will go out to for example a person trapped under train, road traffic accidents and terrorist incidents it doesn't really have any firefighting capability on it except for a couple of fire extinguishers. We have constant rotation around the machines which give us a chance to ride all of them. All officers working at Paddington Station attend different courses to be able to ride all of the machines. I am qualified to ride in charge of all of the machines however I cannot ride in charge of the station at present as I am still on development as a Crew Manager.

Paddington fire station mainly covers central London area, the pump will tend to stay around neighbouring stations unless there is a big incident, however the TL and FRU they will go as far as needed around the brigade as there are not many of them. This area has quite a lot of major infrastructure. There are a lot of railway and underground stations, loads of offices, quite high density residential area and a lot of high rise buildings. I believe on our ground alone there is probably around 70 -100 high rise buildings. We tend to get called to a high rise building every day. The population is very mixed you have incredibly affluent wealthy people sitting next to incredibly the poorest in society. I wasn't aware of Grenfell prior to the evening of this incident, I think I had gone as part of an attendance with blue watch but I definitely hadn't been in the tower I wasn't familiar with it at all.

Grenfell appeared to be a massive tower block, it looked huge from the outside one that you thought may have a complicated layout inside, however it was tiny and I will always maintain that in terms of difficulty of layout it was incredibly simple. There was one stairwell which run up through the middle of

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

the tower. The floors were tiny with 5 or 6 flats on each floor, there were no long corridors. The thing that I remember is the block looked quite modern from the outside, when I entered the building I thought wow this is like an office it's actually quite nice. It had a lovely and new foyer however as soon as you went past the mezzanine level and through the door and entered the stairwell it looked like it hadn't been touched for a long time. It was not what I was expecting compared to the outside. It had definitely not been touched on the inside. There seem to be a mixture of doors, one of the doors we put in was a new door with dead locks on either side. The doors leading to the floors from the stairwell were wooden fire doors which worked pretty well. I think there was a little window in with frosted glass.

On the 13th June 2017 the night of Grenfell fire I was on my first night duty shift on red watch, which started at 20:00 hrs and finished at 09:30 hrs the following morning. I cannot remember anything of the evening prior to attending the fire at Grenfell. I had just gone to bed and at roughly 01:15 hrs we received a mobilisation over the call bells. I have absolutely no idea of timings of anything after this. I didn't check my watch until I got back to the station.

The driver went to the watch room and he came out with a slip which gave details of the job. I went straight down to the truck and looked at the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT). The MDT is a computer on the truck which provides the same information the driver had received from the printer in watch room. They do sometimes contain additional information about the attendance address. I conveyed what information I had to the rest of the crew. I think it said make pump 6, this mean there is a request for 6 engines to attend the incident. I knew the area we were going from the address although I didn't know the block. I knew there was the likelihood it would be a high rise especially as they requested an Arial Ladder. I didn't know it would be so many floors. I had no concerns at this time as 99 out of 100 times of being called to a 6 pump fire you know you will probably be doing something but usually after the first 4 engines you are usually carrying out the smaller jobs, assisting with hose and backing up the initial crew. But this incident wasn't like that.

We drove out of the station up the ramp, went around the roundabout and come down the other side. As we were coming down I saw two of the other engines call lights come on. This made me think this is definitely something because the other machines had been called out.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I drove to the incident via Westbourne Grove. As we drew nearer I could see the tower and what looked like a couple of flats alight. I remember saying oh we will definitely be doing something. I said to the guys on the truck it looks like the Shepherds Bush fire. The Shepherd Bush fire was around a year or so ago in another high rise, the fire had come out of the window and went into a couple of other flats. I often look a lot worse than it actually is. Usually the fire is contained in the flat and you can deal with it quite comfortably as long as you follow procedures and do what we are supposed to do and it gets dealt with.

Upon arrival it was a nightmare, a real rabbit warren, we couldn't get in initially and we had to go around the block. We were able to park up when we came around the 2nd time as there was a guy there directing us to where we should park the engine. We didn't have any trouble parking as there were only a few engines there when we arrived. We arrived at the same time as one of Hammersmith's pumps. We were parked around the corner away from the Tower.

There was a crew manager there who said "Get your sets everybody get your sets". I wouldn't normally wear a set, it's quite rare because I am in charge of the machine and need to maintain an element of command and control. Although I do all of the same training, I will only get involved with firefighting and rescue if the fire gets bigger and more resources are required. Fortunately that night we were riding well over the top meaning we had five or six people on the machine. I can't remember exactly but normally we a ride minimum of four because we don't have enough firefighters. Therefore we didn't have enough breathing apparatus sets and the driver didn't have a set. He ask me what I wanted him to do. I said just go and help them make sure they have secured water.

We walked down towards the building which was still pretty quiet at this time, there wasn't members of the public or fire fighters running around. We walked under what looked like a fly over and when we reached the other side I saw the fire coming out of the flats it looked like it had taken hold of the outside of the building. We walked around to the front of the building to see what was going on and to find out what they wanted us to do. I didn't see any members of the public coming out of the building, there were a couple of people running about outside but I wasn't paying too much attention to them.

I went in the front lobby of the building where a watch manager was positioned, I do not know his name. I asked him what he needed he said just hold fire for a minute. I asked him if the lifts had been secured,

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

he told me they hadn't so I said "No worries I will get that".

Normal procedure is for us to secure the fire lift so that we are the only people who can use them and gain control of the floors. This allows us control to either bring people down and out of the building or get equipment to where it needs to be quickly. There are two different method to controlling the lift using a drop key or a button. I'm pretty sure I used my drop key.

The lifts were situated just inside the lobby in a separate room which appeared a bit strange to me. The lobby was a bit different to most high rise buildings, it looked more like an office lobby. I remember opening the door and everything was fine and it's just literally a separate room with two lifts.

The watch manager was standing in the doorway of the room behind me, I opened the lift and a great big plume of black smoke came straight into me. I remember saying to him well we won't be using that then and pushed the doors shut to stop smoke continuing to billow out. I thought about it afterwards it shouldn't be full of smoke at all, it supposed to be in a protected shaft that protects you that's why it's a fire fighter lift. The fire was on the other side of the building it shouldn't have even come out of that door and into the hallway to be able to get into that lift at this stage. It was horrendous, it was a big surprise to me, and I have never seen that happen before. The only time smoke would get into a lift is if you take the lift to a fire floor which is effected by smoke and open the doors on that level. The position of these lift corresponded to where they were on every single floor. I'm not sure if there were more lifts, I didn't look and I should have looked. I think there were two more lifts which started on the floor where the stairs to the stairwell started but I could be wrong they could have been service doors.

I hadn't met any of the other crews who arrived first on scene Kensington and North Kensington or Hammersmith so we went to try and find them. On the way a young guy a member of the public started shouting "There are people at the windows, there's people at the windows". I still didn't think at this stage it was a problem. I have attended fires previously where there have been lots of people at the windows of a high rise blocks where things had failed in the building. They weren't really in danger but from their perspective they thought they were. We follow our set procedure like fire survival guidance which I will expand on further in my statement and it is dealt with.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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So we went to the back of the building to take a look, it was really, really dark, I couldn't see very well. I could make out the layout of the cladding and the windows it quite difficult to tell what floor the people were on when looking from the outside. The reason for this is that it might look like it's the third floor but actually, this building its call the first because they had mezzanine levels. I think at this time I was with a fire fighter from my machine and a fire fighter from Hammersmith and we did what we are trained to do and shouted to them to stay where they were and asked what flat they were in. The fire fighter from Hammersmith was saying call 999 tell them and they will tell you what to do, we are coming. There were so many people shouting it was very confusing. There was no fire on this side of the building at this stage it was all quite surreal to see, it was really strange to see these people on that side and not the side where the fire was shouting for help.

Whilst there Guy TILITSON came round the corner and joined us and it was quite obvious that we needed to go to the front of the building. There was no one on the ground so we went straight up to the mezzanine level to find out where the officer in charge was. When we reached the bottom of the stairwell Brian O'KEETH and I think another fire fighter who name I can't remember was there. I am not very good with names because when you move watches it is literally like moving jobs you don't know anyone. Whilst Guy was speaking to O'KEETH two firefighters from another station had started to make their way up without taking their tallies out of their sets. Guy quickly ran past to grab their tallies and placed them in the BA Board. Guy came back to O'KEITH and told him there were people hanging out the back windows and that we need to go to them. O'KEITH said "Ok you two go". Guy is very good, he is a top leader he said no we are not going as a two, we are going all five as that's what it warranted. O'KEITH said ok I'm making a decision you are going as a five "That was the words he used" I thought that decision had already been made by Guy. Our procedure are we always stay together and you never split unless for example you enter at the same time as a team of five, which allows you to split up to complete tasks, for instance as a team of three and a two but never alone. I am so glad every single time I went in we were in big teams because it allowed us to complete tasks.

The one thing that struck me when I first went in was there didn't seem to be any water and normally we wouldn't commit to a fire unless we have water because we have got no way of protecting ourselves or just dealing with anything we see, we were literally going in very blind. We took with us some breaking in gear the items we had grabbed off of our truck and were committed. As we went up I do remember

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

seeing one length of hose going up on the stairwell I don't know what floor that was on, I believe it was there the first time I went in but I can't say 100% because I went in a number of times.

Guy, myself and two other fire fighter from Paddington Fire station, Harry BETTISON and Jim WOLFENDEN, and firefighter 1 went up. We didn't see another sole no fire fighters or members of the public. We reached I believe it was the 6th which was a just above the floors that were affected by the initial fire. We banged on some doors, got some people out and brought them down. After we had completed this a couple of times, Guy told me to continue taking people down and that he and BETTISON were going to check the above floors. I remember coming down and the smoke level in the stairwell further down was quite thick, although it wasn't affect by fire at all. I don't think it was barley effect by fire the whole of the incident amazingly. Other crews who had been committed were now coming down the stairwell. There was nice green hand rail made it quite easy to lead people down. I was at the back whilst WOLFIE and firefighter 1 was leading the person down. Everyone was really good from a fire fighters point of view, we were continually checking on each other to make sure we were alright which was quite impressive actually. On one occasion I looked back and could make out through the smoke the feet of the crew behind us and thought that's cool they are bringing someone else down. As I went round the next set of stairs I looked back but I couldn't see the other fire fighters anymore. I said to WOLFIE just keep taking them down and I will just make sure that they are alright there was nothing wrong with the stairs so I was thinking may they had dropped something. I nipped back up and I could see fire fighter 2 carrying out stair procedure. All I could see him was the outline of a diamond sticker which had been on his helmet from when he was a recruit. The rest of the helmet was stained though fire and smoke. We were on the 6th or 7th floor and he had a casualty. I grabbed him and I said "you have got a casualty, they have got no air, just walk down the stairs they are concrete stairs they are totally safe just get them down stairs as quickly as possible" He said yep. So I left him and went to catch up with the rest of my team to make sure they were alright. I looked behind again me thinking they should literally be behind me but they were not. So I went back and saw fire fighter 2 doing stair procedure again I grabbed him and said stop fucking about they will die on the stairs if you don't get them down, just grab the bright green hand rail and lead yourself down, which he did. I will explain fully further in my statement what stair procedure is.

It was literally a case of us bringing the people down, and handing them off and going back again. I didn't

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

know what the response was to the incident, we were very aware there were lots of people and very aware that the rest of the crews were still in the building. We were not going to leave them so we just handed people over turned round and went back up. The smoke was getting thicker down the bottom now it was light grey smoke it was strange that there was smoke in the stairwell and it was coming up.

When we reached I think the ninth we found Guy and Harry, it was clear in the stairwell. To be honest I didn't know which floor we were on it was so confusing there be no number. Guy and someone else said we were on the ninth, he had probably obtained that information from a resident whose flat he was in. I went into the flat to check Guy and Harry were ok closing the door behind me whilst I spoke to them. They told me they had a young lady and her daughter which they needed to get down. I didn't know at the time that her daughter was only 5 or 6. By this time I am thinking the firefighters would have the fire under control that we would bring them out and it wouldn't be long before they could go back up. I then remembered opening the door and telling the others that something had gone wrong there is smoke coming up the stairwell. This was strange as it shouldn't be happening in a protected stairwell.

I went with another fire fighter who I can't remember to find out where the dry riser was because 99 out 100 time they are in they are on every single floor and we had a look in the hall way which was pitch black just from the darkness not through smoke. We found it in a back corner and I immediately knew this would be a problem because every door on the floor we have plugged the hoses into will be open. I popped my head outside the door to the stairwell and the whole hall way was just black with smoke, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. I knew we were not going to be able to bring these people down through the smoke as we were nine floors up.

Guy made the immediate call which was brilliant he just said to Harry and Wolfie stay with them in the room we are going to get two sets. I knew the flat next door was alight because I could see the glow. Their flat wasn't damaged but you could see the smoke through the window I thought it was probably being driven around the corner by wind. Having not been out of the building I didn't know what was happening but knew something had gone wrong maybe it's still just burning. So Guy said go rush downstairs and get two more sets and we will put them in sets. The reason we had to get two more set is because we don't have any equipment to bring them through the smoke. There are smoke hoods in existence but we don't have them in the LFB and I will explain more about them later in my statement. I

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

hadn't seen the girl at this time so I didn't know how big she was. Guy just said its two set required for a girl and her mum so I didn't question it. I don't ever question Guy I trust his judgement. So Guy, myself and fire fighter 1 run straight down the stairs.

When we got to the Bridge Head which was on the top mezzanine floor, it annoyed me that the board was still here in the tiniest little area where they were committing people. It could have been out there in the completely fresh air in the light in the foyer or you could go the other side which was out of the stairwell and on the foyer landing where there was good light and space.

I went past the board, through the door into the foyer to the person in charge of the bridge head who I think it was Mike Dowden at that time. Normally our procedure is that if we find someone and haven't got the capability to dealing with it you pass that information off and a decision will be made how it is dealt with. However we went down to where there was load of fire fighters waiting in a line to be committed. I burst through the door and said "I need two set now just give me two sets now". Obviously the first two fire fighters who were next in line to go in wanted information as to where they were needed. They were quite reluctant to give up their sets. I totally understood that because they wanted to get involved.

I think it was Mike who said "You are fucked, let us know where they are" and told us that we were to go out. We knew that with no numbers on the stairwell they were never going to be able to find them in time. We were also totally aware that we have just left two of ours up there sitting in a room waiting for us and they are relying on us to come back. Guy was behind us it was such a small area down at the bottom of those stairs it was just a ridiculous lay out. I think Guy and myself at the same time was saying it would take longer for us to explain where they are just give us the fucking sets, and they handed over their sets. I carried one and the firefighter 1 carried the other. As we were going back up Firefighter1 said he had no air left, nothing he was so low. We made the decision for him to go back downstairs on his own nothing was going to happen to him on those concrete stairs there was no fire, just smoke. Guy took the set and we continued up to the ninth floor, the flat was still ok it hadn't been compromised by smoke. I just remember these flames going past the windows. Harry and Wolfie had taken their masks off to conserve their air which we are not supposed to do but that is the 100% right decision in this incident.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

This was the first time I had seen the two resident of the flat, when I looked at them I thought I would never be able to get the set on the girl she was so small. By this time everyone low pressure whistles were going off, however I was still aware we still have a margin before it runs out. Guy told everyone to take their masks off to conserve their air whilst we worked out what we were going to do. Guy had nothing left literally it had hit zero because everything was moving so quickly we didn't do one gage check as we are supposed to do regularly. As the radio communications were so bad control would never have got hold of us to inform us. Even if they had of been able to contact us we would probably not have heard them. I was low on air around 23 bar which is not very good. Just to get down 12 flights of stairs took me from 23 bar to 11 bar which was half of what I had left. Harry and Jim had the most air. Guy plugged into one of the spare sets. I said to Harry you've got the most air you are going to have to carry the girl and we plugged the mask from the set that Guy initially had into Harry's set and put it onto the girl. The mask didn't fit because her head was too small, we got it on as best as we could. Although we are not trained for an incident on this scale, all the training we do, when we sometimes think why we are doing this again did come into its own. We usually train rescues with each other not with a casualty. They were both the coolest people, we said we are going to put this on you and we are going to go straight out no stopping, just keep going ok and they said alright it was quite bizarre.

By this time the flames were coming into the flat through the windows and it was obvious we needed to go. Guy led because he had to carry the other set and he didn't have anybody with him. Harry then went next carrying the little girl and I was behind her, the lady behind me and Wolfie following up at the back. As we were making our way down the mask started moving so I had to lean over Harry to hold the mask over the little girl's face. He started shouting at her open your eyes, open your eyes. He was shouting at me "Ben she is not opening her eyes" I remember saying it is because I told her to shut her eyes all the way down. We came through the door at the bottom and passed them straight off.

As we came through the doors everyone stopped, there was a bit of a look from everybody out there I remember them checking our gages and Guy had nothing in his, I had 11 bar now and the others had barely anything. I thought fucking hell we were quite lucky really, that could have gone a little bit worse than that. I remember hearing they have made it 20 or something like that, which meant 20 pumps so they had made up the response quite quickly.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I still hadn't seen the outside of the building so wasn't really aware of what was going on outside. We had taken our air off but kept our sets on and were trying to catch our breath and, chatting amongst ourselves, making sure we were all alright when I think the FRU — Fire rescue unit crew came down with a girl who was completely out of it. I don't know if she had burns but she was black so had defiantly taken on a lot of smoke. They put her down on the top mezzanine level and started to try and revive her and were shouting get the paramedics get the paramedics. Someone ran out and came back saying there not coming, there not coming in. I went out to where the Hazard area response team (HART) were standing.

HART are a department in the LAS a bit like our FRU in terms of incidents they will go to. We are supposed to work together but it doesn't always feel like that. 99 times out of 100 everyone will assist because it is a pretty much safe environment and this was a big thing which highlighted to me that they act like they are going to come and save the day, they come and they give this real we amazing we can do all this stuff and the one thing they were called to come and do they didn't.

I said you need to come in now just to the Mezzanine level. A male who I believe must have been their manager or supervisor said we are not allowed to come into a smoke filled environment. I said look in there not one person is wearing breathing apparatus, there is no smoke in there. From where they were standing which was underneath the flyover they could see straight in the buildings mezzanine level and the fire officers working on the girl. They would not have to go through fire, the fire was not round that side of the building. I said to them you've got all this kit you are supposed to work in Hazardous areas are you going to come and help them? Two other HART people grabbed their stuff and were about to follow me in when this male refused to commit to the mezzanine level he said we will not be coming in there it is an environment we are not allowed to work in.

We didn't want to be in the building we were all doing jobs we weren't supposed to be doing. I know other people were shouting at the same time as I was talking directly to him. I remember telling him he was a fucking prick; I think he probably took a bit of abuse from a lot of other people around. I went back into the building to tell the fire officers they needed to get her out to them. They picked her up and carried her down as we didn't have any stretchers, although they probably wouldn't have been able to use them as the stairwell even on the mezzanine levels were so tight and small. The people who were carrying her were in sets some of them EDBA set so they are double the size. They carried her down two flights of stairs out to where the HART team were standing and put her on a bed. they didn't even take the bed

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

nearer to the door. I have heard the girl is ok so it did work out alright.

We are still under the flyover and hadn't really seen taken much notice of what was going on around us. We have seen a lot of debris coming down the front of the building but not really clocked it in terms of what it really was because we had been so busy. As a group we wanted to go back in and help normally you wouldn't be going back into a building if you have made a rescue. We walked under the flyover to a ramp and up the grass verge to where there were a load of people standing back and looking. I didn't look around until I reached the top of the bank. I turned around and thought O my God the whole building was alight. My feeling was one of amazement. I hadn't seen anything like that and when I spoke to people who had been listening to radio traffic, I realised it really was going wrong.

At the top of the bank I passed the Turn table ladder (TL) crew Manager Dan Harriman and Chris Reynolds had pretty shocked looks on their face. They said they tried but couldn't get the ladder up any further due debris falling from the building so had to bring the ladder back down. I was only when I saw the footage afterward the incident that I realised what they had, had to deal with outside. In that area I heard senior officer taking about whether they should get more water on the TL. I heard lots of senior officer talking I didn't really hear any plans, they were making lots of suggestions about what would help.

We needed to rest so sat down for a while. It went round the whole fire ground we are missing a fire fighter I'm not sure if they declared a fire fighter emergency, it might be it didn't get to that stage because they found him. No one seemed really that surprised that a fire fighter was missing to me it seemed inevitable, I was thinking just one. Due to the scale of the fire we are lucky there was no loss of a fire fighters' life.

I was thinking it's not getting any better so along with a few others went to change our cylinders on our sets. I was totally thinking there was so many fire fighters there we would probably not be going back unless they really needed us to and thought there would just be small jobs but jobs that needed to be done for instance moving hoses or equipment.

I was with Guy, Harry and a couple of others from one of Paddington pump ladder crew. We saw a Chinese male appear at his window half way up the block (I think he was the last guy to be brought out).

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

We were frustrated because we wanted to help him, but had been told we couldn't use the TL. The TL wasn't fully under cover and everything was falling down on it anyway so we decided to see if we could drive it forward through the debris and put it up. I think there was four of us, 3 of us were TL operators myself, Guy and Wolfie. A senior officer tried to stop us, Guy spoke to him, told him what we planned and he was fine with us to try it. We planned to move the TL forward as it was half under the fly over and wouldn't be able to elevate it without it hitting the flyover however the debris in front of it was about 2 meters high blocking our path. We were disappointed we were unable to move it.

We changed our BA sets and put them back on. At this time probably the scariest thing for me was the debris constantly falling from the building and hitting me wherever I went outside. I didn't want to look up because I was thinking the next one is going to hit me and that's it. They hadn't opened up all the garages at this time and police weren't there yet with their shields so we had to sneak around the corner of the building and it was literally like running the gauntlet. There was a fire fighter I think from Hammersmith with a hose branch who was looking up and trying to put the fires out of the pieces as they were falling down. When it was clear he would say go and we would run to a holding area where all the BA crews had been directed to go.

We were all ready to go back in but were told they were only new wearers which were fire fighter who hadn't been committed before. A number of us didn't agree with the decision. I felt that if someone is fit and ready to go and they have already been in they would be far more useful as we knew the environment, we knew the floor layout they would have no idea where they were going. Even though we were black all over from the smoke we kept saying we had not been in and they eventually let us up to the next station which is just before you had to run the gauntlet to go in the back door. Because it was obvious we had been in already we were told to take off our sets and were tasked with bringing casualties out of the building once they had been brought down to ground level. It was very much a conveyor belt system, Guy and I had a large short lady who we brought out with the assistance of a police officer who used his heavy shield to cover us and protect us from the falling debris. We stood by the door and everyone said ready, ready, go. Guy and I took the lady one under each arm and was semi carrying her as she seemed to be struggling a lot. There was so much debris outside and so much water we had to wade through. The lady fell and Guy and I half fell over, the police officer continued marching not realising we had fallen. The building started coming down on top of us it was going down the back of our necks and

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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burning. We picked her up to haul her out and the police officer came back with the shield to help. When the lady was safe I turned around and went back in again. Later when more police officers arrived we had two police officers for every fire fighter or casualty they were amazing.

I don't know where Guy went he might have been given another job. There were so many fire fighters there by now we weren't in our own teams we were all working collectively. I saw station manager there Gareth Cook with a set on which is really rare to see anybody above a crew manager with a set on. Gareth is a doer he had volunteered to go up to carry out a situation report which to us having been up was nonsense the situation was every single floor was alight. But obviously for those senior officers at the bridge head which I think it was at Group Manager Level in fairness to them they needed a bit more information than we were providing them.

Gareth was in his SDBA standard duration set, there was no one else in there in SDBA s just some EDBA people. We do not mix EDBA and an SDBA. You might send two SDBA's and two EDBA's together then you could split and work in groups but you would never send one and one. He needed a partner and was looking around for someone my set was just outside so I asked him if he wanted me to go with him. I don't know why no one stopped me when I went to get my set I just seemed to go through. A watch manager tried on my way back in, I said I've got to go up with the station manager so he let me through. That's not the way it normally is, no one questioning them free-lancing but it just seemed that on this job it was the right decision every single time. If it sounded good what you were doing you were able to get on with it.

I remember saying to Gareth its hot it's really smoky and there are people everywhere just so you are aware. He is an ex-military guy I don't think any of that would phase him at all. I think the group manager in charge at this time was Pat Goldborne. We were both give a brief which was something like Just let me know what you have got up there tell me what's going on. Because by this time there was no communication anywhere, nothing and the airwave was flooded due to the number of fire fighter. There was one channel really for BA users.

It was hotter this time I'm guessing because all flats had started to catch alight. It wasn't just the outside of the building anymore. It was defiantly hotter in the stairwell but it was ok there was 100% a length of hose down there now I don't know where it was going I can't tell you but there was a length of hose on

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

the stair well. I annoying because it was in the way and would cause you to trip especially members of the public. We made it to I think the 12th floor and there was no one else on that floor. In the lobby it was warm, there was a smoke layer which was a little bit low and pitch black. There was clearly no fire in the hallway. We banged on all the doors but there was no answer, nothing. We stepped back out to the stairwell and I said the situation is we just need to clear every floor and the only way we can really do that is to put the doors in and make sure there is no one there. We had to check especially at that time of night, it was the middle of the night people may still be asleep and not even have woken. People do place ear phones in and could be enjoying their sleep unaware of what was going on around them.

There was some breaking in gear laying on the floor, I went to one of the doors and opened up a letterbox and it looked pretty clear, no smoke, it was still pitch black it was 100% black. I felt around and because I had been on the other floors I knew the layout of where the doors were and I thought let's start on this one, which was to the left as you came from the stairwell, because its nearest to the fire in the terms of that side and to be honest it's the nearest to the way out if something went wrong we could nip straight out. The only piece of breaking in equipment we had was the enforcer, we smashed the door as hard as we could and it wouldn't go in, we continued hitting it and the door handle went through. That's when it got really hot and the smoke just went flew past us making it obvious the fire was behind that door.

Gareth had to take a breather we went out onto the stair well he assured me he was ok but just needed to get his breath back. Another crew appeared I don't know where they came from, I went back onto the floor with them and went round the other flats. It became so hot quickly and I know hot because I was in a flash over once and I know when temperature rises that quickly its bad news. Whilst doing this a lone fire fighter appeared out of nowhere and I remember grabbing him and saying who are you with and he said I don't know. I said "Who did you come up with?" He said "I don't know I don't know where I am". I told him to stay with this crew now and whatever they do go with them.

I was low on air, so came out and said to Gareth lets go mate we have done all that we can do so let's go. Gareth reported there is pretty much fire on every floor, we haven't got water up there properly, we just need to keep searching to see how many people we can get out and we couldn't get past the 12th at this stage.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

When we exit the Bridge Head and went up to the front lobby exhaustion hit me big time, due to the heat so sat down. I didn't see North Kensington crew for 99% of that entire job and some of them for 100% of it. There was one person who was there doing everything that was Mike Dowden. He was genuinely worried and concerned about everybody and wanted things to go right. We must have been there 2 -3 hours by now. Mike was on the first truck or defiantly in the fire 3 truck and he was still down there in the foyer.

Gareth and I sat in the back room for probably a good half hour - 45 min until we recovered before going back outside. There seemed to be a lot of debris now and there were a lot of police officers there and it was one for one with the police officers. Police were lined up with their shields staring up and I remember saying to one of them you weren't expecting to be doing this tonight were you. This is not what you are paid, they are not trained for this, they didn't back off which was good.

I didn't really see that many residents coming out now. Even when we were outside waiting around after the initial stages I didn't see that many people they weren't streaming out. They were streaming out for 20 minutes which is probably realistic.

When I left the building I came around the corner and saw that a lot more services and triage staff had set up. I remember looking at it and I thought it was quite weird because they had all this tarpauling out and there was not one person in there which was really strange. I thought we have either got everyone out or we have just not got anybody out or only a few people who I had seen probably around 20. I stood with Gareth for about 10 minutes taking on water when someone was brought our near us who was clearly dead, they put them down and all that medical stuff sort of kicked in. HEMS were there.

This bothered me because apart from the male who jumped, this was the worst person I had seen affected by the fire. Gareth left and I was a bit on my own and there was a couple of people that I knew and I said hello and I just remember thinking if they are going to start bringing bodies out I don't particularly want to be here. There is no reason for me to be standing here seeing this. I didn't know where any of my crews were and I thought it was time to go and find them. They were ferrying people in and out at this stage, I think someone else had gone and worn a set again. I really didn't want to go back through the way I had come, I knew the area so I walked round the block. I just walked round and remember suddenly

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

hitting cordons of people and I was expecting to get hit with a barrage of questions and there wasn't any.

People just parted and we walked through. I remember walking past Harry BETTINSON who was talking to the press or members of the public. I asked him if he was alright, I said I was going to the truck and asked if he could cut away and get someone else to do it. I said would go and find the rest of the crew. I was still thinking we must be getting a hold of this now or defiantly would within the next hour. I found some of my crew and some of the FRU crew and by this time they had brought in hundreds of Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus sets (EDBA). They were calling for EDBA wearers and bearing in mind EDBA are a lot heavier than the SDBA I was wearing the crew had already been into the Tower they were all all willing to go in again. They were already wearing their EDBA sets. Because I am trained to wear EDBA I said I would go with them. I quickly put on the EDBA Serviced it and completed the checks. There wasn't any cylinder covers on the sets. The covers are a small piece of kit which are orange. It has an anti-tangle section on stop cables becoming caught in the cylinders. As crews were coming out we were having to take their covers.

There were 5 or 6 of us we walked down a path, under the under pass and were able to go around the back by the garages by now. There were hundreds of firefighters waiting there to be call forward to the next stage, it was a really good set up. They would call out what they needed for example 4 EDA to come forward for a police escort to another holding pen. Because there were so many fire fighters they were asking for new wearers only. But every time they said new wearers all of my crew would get up and go yep and they would go forward until eventually they said just go. We went in forward in two lots of three and sat waiting in the room where the lifts were, which could fit around 8 of us in.

We seemed to be waiting for ages, I was completely drenched we all were. When I was busy I didn't really think about how wet I was but when I was sitting there, that was all I could think about it was so uncomfortable. There were was a crew from Battersea that hadn't been in and they were asking for advice, we said main thing was to stick together and take whatever gear you have which meant hose, branches and breaking in gear.

When it was our turn to go up there was four of us. Pat Goldbourne gave me the brief and I think it was probably the most useless but the most honest correct brief I have ever had. He said I don't know what the

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

fuck is going on, I need you to go up there and tell me what is going on and he said we have fire survival calls coming from the 14th floor and above we haven't heard from them for ages and no one can get past the 12th. He said quite simply, I need you to go up there and see if you can push higher. It was totally 100% the correct briefing. I remember saying look what we will go to the 12th if we can go any higher we will go higher systematically too to the 13th then the 14th It was irrelevant telling him that because we didn't get past the 12th floor.

It was a bit of a trudge as the EDBA sets are really heavy, we had already been in, we were soaking wet which weighed us down even more and it was hot in there. It was third time of going in. I don't know how far up we were when a lot of water started pouring down the stairs. That does sometimes happen from the water that has been used for firefighting so I didn't pay too much attention to as it wasn't getting higher due to it flowing down the stairs. The further we got up it felt like it was raining it was literally like being in a waterfall. The higher we climb the louder the noise of the water became, I couldn't hear the person next to me talking, it is a struggle in the mask anyway, but I couldn't hear anything it was so loud. There were two or three or maybe more hoses going up and one of them had burst. I was difficult as we had to take big old steps to get over these hoses. The burst hose was firing water onto the wall which was about ½ meter away, it had a good water pressure presumable 10 bar at that is what a dry riser should be charge too. It was hitting the wall and going everywhere like a waterfall you couldn't see anything for water, not even your hands in front of your face. Because hoses were going across stairwells around waist height we were hitting them and bumping into each other.

We took a breather and my initial plan was find where the hose had burst and see if we could trace it back and to either put an axe through it or cut it off at the bottom. We had to find the right hose so as not to turn one off to someone who really needs it. However, we couldn't find where it had burst so continue up. It was so powerful that as you went past you had to turn to go up the stairwell and through the jet. I only took a second to get past but every single one of us groaned as it just hit us in the stomach and smashed us into the wall.

As we continued we came across two other fire fighters who were wrestling with something on the staircase, it was so dark I couldn't see what. I asked them what they were doing. They said trying to get this casualty down I lent right in with a torch and could just make that it was someone's skin completely

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

wrapped up amongst the hoses so much so that it was really difficult to move. It was a very large female who was totalling blocking our route so we needed to clear the route by trying to get them onto a floor out of the stairwell. We had to give up because she was, very heavy wrapped up and completely tangled in the hoses. I couldn't even see her head, someone did see her braids. As she was blocking our path there was no way to get past her other than to stand on her. Even though I knew it was a person I couldn't see her face I couldn't see anything so I tried not to think about it and thought of the bigger picture that I needed to accept that I had to stand on her to get past. I do remember thinking I hope my foot doesn't go through her.

I think we reached the 12th floor. It wasn't too bad condition wise, there, it was a bit smoky and funnily enough going higher into the fire felt better then standing around where that water fall was even thought water wasn't going to hurt us. A crew come down literally just above the 12th if that's where we were and said it is too hot we can't do it. We stayed on the 12th where there were two hoses. We went from flat to flat trying to put the fires out. I think there might have been a 70 mm hose there is a lot of water going though that and some of the fires were just not going out. The flats were at various stages of damage. In one flat there was nothing wrong with it at all and that was bizarre. As we went round it was weird, there were four or five flats on that floor in some you could make out where the kitchen was, in others there were no interior walls which although they are probably stud walls and not structural wall they were all gone and you just had the frame work it showed how ferociously it must have burnt in some of those flats. We did not go into the flats, although the floor was concrete there was no need to go in as you could see it from the outside they were open shells so you could fight the fire from the door. However hard we tried, the fires they thought they had put out would just flare up again. Whilst working we heard loud booming noises, some big booms everyone looked at each other continued working. I thought at the time it will be alright. I wasn't until we discussed afterward the event we thought it was going to pancake down like 9/11 just boom, boom, boom.

Thinking about it now we should have at least started making our way out. I don't know why, I just didn't think properly at the time. I spoke to Pat Goldberg and explained there was fires in 90% of the flats on the 12th floor and that we cannot advance higher at the moment. I remember saying what you need is floor crews sending one to the 13th one to the 14th each one each with a water hose and plug it in on that level. I believe it could have been done. We were then escorted back out and we went back through the garages

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

this time, we were told all the reliefs were there and that we could go. It was a relief and felt good to see all the crew there. We had a cup of tea and I think everyone was done we couldn't do any more. We arrived back at the station and around 10.30 hrs -11.00 hrs.

It was only when we got back to the station I realised the gravity of the situation. It was a massive relief when everyone met up and I could see my crew. Really we should have been really sad but everyone was just relieved that we were all ok. It had been such a long night I don't think I had any energy left to get emotional.

The whole station was kitted out we went into room and did tentative notes but to be honest they were awful because I was sitting there trying to write the notes when all I wanted to do was go home. I had been there pretty much from the beginning so put pen to paper and wrote what I could remember and left. As I walked out I started to remember other things so the next day I actually sent another set of notes detailing information about bodies. I exhibit these notes as BG/1 and BG/2

I mentioned earlier in my statement about Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) I would like to explain fully my understanding of FSG. A FSG call is when someone makes a 999 saying we are in our flat, we don't know whether it is safe to come outside or they may say we are trapped in our flat. The guidance that the person is given is pretty limited. From my understanding they will ask questions like. What are the conditions? Can you get out of the flat? Can you see the smoke? Is there smoke coming through the door? I am under the impression if the smoke is not affecting them they are told to stay put. If the resident should answer for example yes, I can see smoke I don't feel safe to come out of my flat this would be a trigger point. It would trigger fire survival guidance.

If appliances are already in attendance the incident command pump will be radioed through to say we have received FSG. Someone will write down all the information on a pad on front of the machine with information of what flat, where they are, the conditions. They will have to repeat it back to the control officer and they will write down all the information and they will have to repeat it back to the control officer. The information is printed out in triplicate or 4 time. One copy will be forwarded to the Officer in charge, and they will devise a plan to deal with that. The officer in charge to make the decision to declare it is a person reported fire and not down to control. Once it is designated a person reported fire

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

they will receive a fire investigation and an ambulance response. What will also happen is that an additional appliance will be immobilised which I believe is Station manager command unit another fire engine. They are solely to manager that unit for running paper work or just recording things. They are not there to take on the role of rescuing someone. Hopefully they will have enough people to deploy for instance two people to a flat. Depending on where the flat is it doesn't necessarily have to be with BA they could just go in. It could just be someone who has panicked because they have seen a bit of smoke, it could be nothing. Or it could be the flat directly above or directly next to the fire and then we will commit with BA to go.

Most of the time this is where FSG stops, and you have to make your own decision as to what do. The choices are you leave them tell them don't worry about it you are fine we will keep coming and checking on you. You stay with them until it is safe to leave them or safe to bring them down or you bring them out of the building that's your call. Wherever we have to use fire survival guidance 9 times out of 10 we are told to go and rescue them. That would be fine I we had the ability to bring them out. It's just my opinion but I know it is echoed elsewhere by a lot of people that our fire fighter survival guidance is not fit for purpose because we don't have that ability to react.

We have a lovely discussion with a person and they tell us where they are and we go up to them and then we have just come up in breathing apparatus and we have no way of getting them down if something goes wrong. You are on your own to make a decision. what do you do bring them down in a load of smoke and they die or do you risk staying with them and you are putting yourself at risk there's no guidance. I think it is actually I think it's one of the worst policies we've got everything up to that stage is fantastic but we don't have the facility to do anything once when something goes wrong.

It is easy for someone standing in breathing apparatus to say don't worry you will be fine stay there. If someone is a bit strong willed they will say yeah it's easy for you to say that. we have had a few around here not a lot of the time but you do bring them through smoke whether it will be light smoke or heavier smoke or just a little bout of heavy smoke, you don't have any facility to look after that casualty while we are doing it. There is equipment out there, there are smoke hoods.

The governor and Guy carried out a whole presentation about how it worked, how much it would cost to

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

implement, who the manufacturers were and put it up for consideration. From what I understand they were told we don't have a budget for it. It's not necessary and we wouldn't be getting them. They are small enough to sit in your pack, they are a bit like a carrier bags. You put them over the casualties' head and zip tie up. Casualties can then be brought through the smoke. This incident happened two months after the presentation. I know it would have helped if we had carried them. I know the French fire department carry them. we had an incident not far from here where people were trapped behind bars with smoke coming and we had nothing to put on them.

I feel you could very much solve some of these problems by carrying 10 breathing apparatus masks in your truck which can be plugged into a BA set. You don't even need the cylinders and the sets and that way you could take them up to where they are needed. I know this was an extreme circumstance that you had to go to 12 floors however they are still required going one floor up as we know coming through one floor of smoke can damage someone especially a child or a young person forever.

I would also like to clarify my understanding around stay put policy. The understanding is that they stay put and we come to get them. That does make sense to me because one of the things on high rise jobs is your space. The space that you have to work is incredible limited and one of things that massively hinder you is loads of people. You want specific people doing specific task and the last thing you want is 50 people running down the stairs when you are trying to bowl out hose 45 of them could have stayed where they were or all of them could have stayed where they are. To me it makes sense I don't actually have problem with the stay put policy. It is literally stay put and we will come and get you that's it.

I think the problem is you don't have back up to the stay put policy. For instance, In Dubai where they have a stay put policy but if someone make the decision everyone should evacuate they press a button and an alarm goes off of a claxon or someone saying evacuate the building goes across. The more I think about it I think it is quite incredible that we don't have that. we have it in offices in London running horizontal they have a system with the ability to say evacuate, or they have an evacuation policy. we may have that on modern block but we don't have it in vertical residential social housing buildings.

I don't know when the stay put policy changed during the Grenfell. As far as I was aware the first time I went in there was no instruction to evacuate everybody. I think It was when we were outside the Second

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

time and someone said just everyone get out, I don't know who said it initially I just heard it around the fire ground. I didn't hear it officially but it was quite obvious to be honest. Anyone going in that building was not going to say you stay put it wasn't happening. Everybody was going in there and bringing people out. There was no one saying by the way everyone you come across tell them to fully evacuate, there had got to be something wrong with you if you are not telling people that anyway. I was definitely aware after I had come out after the first time. The second time I went in no one needed to tell me to get residents out. They were coming out the first time. We weren't going on any door saying stay where you are. The only time we continue along with that guidance was when we Were outside and we hadn't the conditions inside, also the fire was still on the other face and the fire hadn't come round the corner it was still on the other face that we continued along with that guidance we are supposed to tell them when we do visits.

It was such a fluid thing you would just assess it as you go along and as soon as we started seeing people we took them out. It takes more effort to get someone back in to stay in their flat then to get them out. It became very apparent when there was smoke in the stair well anybody you saw any doors you knocked it was just get them out.

I have mentioned SDBA, EDBA, Tally board and will explain in more detail about this equipment now.

Everybody is trained to use STBA. If you work on FRU and EDBA support pumps you would be EDBA. The FRU (fire rescue unit) carries them, but the pump would have them delivered there in the way they were at Grenfell by an OSU (Operation Support Unit). There are a few people in the Brigade that are not FRU trained but they are EDBA trained they are the CBRN because of the nature of their work it takes so long they have to have the extended duration. For an average STBA set you would roughly get around 20 minutes breathing time out of the cylinder whilst working. Everyone is different and breaths differently. Two people could go in the same work with the same amount of air to start with and one person would come out with a completely different amount of air in their tank. The harder you work the more air you will use the quicker your set will run out. Factors that would also affect it would be heat, work, stress, communication and carrying people or objects. Anything you are doing above and beyond sitting there it will change even walking and definitely walking upstairs. Even just concentrating you tend to breathe a lot harder. This can all increase consumption. One of the biggest is fitness so if you are not a fit person it won't be lasting anywhere near someone who is fit.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

The difference between the STBA and EDBA is that the EDBA has another cylinder you can get more than double wear out of it if you wanted to. It is also very heavy you need to be fit to wear them. We wear an STBA on 90% of our jobs. We don't do a lot of training wearing EDBA therefore we are not as used to wearing it. The fire service would like extended duration for everybody but why put yourself under that strain it is ridiculous, we still have the capability of wearing it. You can get more than double out of it if you really want to but not if you are working really hard and fitness is a big factor.

If you are wearing EDBA you are going to have to wear it for longer than 15 minutes you are going to be wearing that for a long time and you are going to be doing a lot of work. Because it doesn't get used that often firefighters are willing to complete the course. They have no idea what you could be letting themselves in for. There should be a standard of fitness they have to meet. You can't joint the marines or the paras unless you meet a standard. In the same respect the brigade doesn't care as long as they have filled the space on their course even if it with 12 people who could do with going to the gym. There is a lack of appreciation by the people who make these decisions who haven't done it.

Training

To be able to work on the FRU would complete EDBA training and that would be 2 or 3 days it is just like any other BA training you do but just with a bigger set.

We used to do a yearly wear for EDBA which isn't difficult where you wear the set for an hour and then they just stopped one day we don't do that anymore. So if you want to be trained wearing EDBA you have to try arrange that yourself.

Rescue unit training used to involve three drills. These were the sort of drills that would break every single rule and every person came out saying that is the best drills we have ever done. You were coming out with no air all when people questioned it the answer was the reason is because you are the last resort you are the people who are there to rescue fire fighters so you are the last resort if you can't go in and get them no one is coming to get them, which made you understand why we just did that. Now we can't possibly teach that training, from a health and safety point of view. Fire fighters quite resented it and didn't believe you were EDBA trained if you hadn't done this.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I remember doing one when I was on the blue watch. I remember organising one and it massively highlighted other people fitness. Because people came out after it was training where you were doing it with dummies and they brought one dummy out after 10 minutes and I was facilitating it and there was the officer in charge and I said. Ok they are going back in there are 20 people down there that they need to bring out the have been in there 10 minutes. They are wearing a massive set which supposed to last those ages and the officer in charge had to say to me he cannot go back in because he's not fit enough.

We carry EDBA on the fire engines at our station and they get mobilised when there is a request for an 8 pump fire. Let's use Grenfell for example EDBA was needed straight away. Not on an 8 pump fire not when, someone has gone make pumps 4 make pumps 6 make pumps 8 we have it so let's use it and everybody is willing to do it.

I am very passionate about it and think the FRU should go to all high rise jobs. They should go as FSG because the reality is that once we put on our BA set our policy is we do not take that BA set off until we have reported by to central control. So if I take my BA set off on a job I am going against policy. Our set don't last that long and if it uses a bit of air to get to the casualty or you haven't been able to go for 5 minutes that 5 minutes of your air gone already and then you get to these people and even if you were to think it's safe but I don't want to leave them they are not in a state to be left you can't sit in that room and take your set off by the book. You know you shouldn't have done it but occasionally you have to take it off, for you that would be the right option or you would run out of air and other fire fighter would have to be committed.

We have 12 FRU in London and we don't get those incidents all the time now it's a lot rarer and calls are filtered a lot more so let's use them. Let's use them for us as well we are supposed to have emergency crews when we commit BA once we have sufficient service we are supposed to put an emergency crew in place, why are we using the people with same amount of air as the people we have just sent in there. Why don't we use people with more air so if they actually have to get them of something they can do it? Its nonsense to send them on an 8 pump fire, and not send them on a four pump fire. Because everything on that truck that you will need you will need straight away or not at all. So we have option now and we have a terrible habit of we don't want to send fire engines to things.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I will describe how the Tally system works and how it monitors the oxygen levels in the STBA and EDBA sets.

The tally is a portable electronic board with a Perspex screen and slots in the left hand side. It is used as a way of recording who has been committed and monitors their oxygen supply. The tallies are yellow pieces of plastic about 10cm by 2cm and are attached to your BA sets, your name and rank is written on the tally and time of entry.

It is the Entry Control Officer Job to monitor the board and the firefighters. Sometimes you can lose signal with the board and control will react by radioing you. It is difficult because the communication radios are incredibly unreliable and do not work properly. More than one board can be used. I think at one stage they had four boards being used.

Prior to entering you take the tally from your set, give it to the entry control officer who will write down the time you have entered and place it in the board. The tally will now be in touch with your BA set and will be constantly updating. The board will display how much air you have in your tank. The time until your low warning! low pressure whistles goes off, your projected time that you should be coming out. They are brilliant so you could get away with not doing any manual checks because the board calculates all that. It is still good practice to carry out gage checks yourself in case they are not working correctly.

When you first enter a building the gage may register you have 20 minutes of air time, should you start working hard it would come down drastically and it might only say I have 10 minutes left and once again if I stopped my consumption rate would go down so that time would then go up. When you have 10 minutes' time left a whistles will sound as a warning. When the second warning sounds then you should be leaving the building. We should also carry out manual checks in case the electronic system fails.

Entry control has two stages. For stage one the minimum rank of a fire fighter can control the board. Stage 2 is if you have used EDBA which was relevant with Grenfell. Stage 2 can be declared if you think it is needed or if you use more than one board. This is a higher level of control of that board.

A Fire fighter can still write on that board but you have to have a minimum of a crew manager running

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

Signature witnessed by:

that board so it is just a high level of command and control on that and if you use more than one board.

The entry control board is monitored on the Bridge Head, you should not be committed above that point unless you are wearing BA. All your equipment is taken to the bridgehead which is where you would start your set.

I mentioned the bridge head in my statement and will expand on that. The bridge head is like a forward control point you would set one up when attending a high rise building. Your officer in charge would stay downstairs whether it be outside or inside in the lobby. The bridge head will be set up two floors below the fire for safety reasons. Fire tends to travel upwards so if you go above the fire you may get compromised and may not be able to get down so it's a safety factor. I think there is operational impact, it works in some places but is not always practical in others. The hose will come out of the outlet on the next floor above the bridgehead lead up the stairs and on to the fire floor.

On the night of Grenfell fire the bridgehead actually got moved down. When I was first arrived I was committed from the bottom of the stairwell for my first wear and the second from the ground floor. By the third wear the Bridge Head had been moved to the bottom mezzanine level and stayed there for the length of time I was there 9 or 10 hours. From what I heard I think it did go higher but I didn't see that. The situation of the bridgehead was not an issue it could have been in a better place to start with but once it was moved down to the bottom floor I don't think you could have moved it higher for quite a long time. Mike DOWDEN Watch Manager had control of the bridge head in the initial stages. Watch manager Brian O'Keefe was on the working on the bridge head. Pat GOULDBORNE - I believe was in charge of the Bridge Head no one actually said this person is it charged but he appeared to be, he was definitely the one giving the briefs. There were quite a few senior officers down there.

Grenfell Tower had dry risers. A dry riser is like a massive drain a pipe running up the inside or outside of the building. Water is fed to the dry risers from the outside using the hydrants. We plug the hydrants into the pump on the fire engine, then run a hose to the bottom of the building where there's two inlets. Inside the building on every floor, or every two or three floors whatever the place is designated acceptable they will have what is called an outlet. The outlet is just a tap where we can plug our hose into to. So if we wanted water on the 10th floor we would plug our hoses on the 9th floor water would come through the bottom of the dry riser, water is pushed up the pipe to deal with the fire on that floor. Many

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2018

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dry risers are in protected stairwells where you can run hoses up without there being a risk to yourself. So hopefully you are opening minimal doors and not going onto the floor to set them up.

In Grenfell even though I said it wasn't a complicated layout, in the pitch black we still had to look on the floors to find the outlet. It seemed a funny place to be right next to someone's door at the other side of the building from stairwell. Which meant by working to policy and running a hose up one from the floor below, keeping the door open on that floor, running the hose up the stairs onto the fire floor which meant keeping that door open also. So if that fire was then to breach that room! flat on the fire floor and come out into the hall that smoke would travel through down the hall and out that door and back up the stairwell and now you have compromised your stairwell. Which someone might say happened in Grenfell there seem to be a bit of smoke on the stairwell.

Which is why a number of us put forward the idea that if safe to do so you should be going off the fire floor. Then you are not compromising your stairwell at all. There is no reason why you can't run a backup jet from the floor below. The whole idea is you contain that fire to that flat and you definitely contain that fire to that floor but by opening doors you are letting all that smoke and everything and as we see with this and with most fire most people die not from burns they dies from the smoke.

We have refresher training, like anything there could be more, but there is a budget and they can only do so much. Training isn't too bad it has been taken over by a private company who tell us we need to do it this way and this is the way to do it. However, it struck home with me for example the fire Officer I mentioned coming down the stairs carrying out stair procedure that they also need to advise during training that if we cannot do it that way then to use common sense. We need to be aware of this and think don't just it because I was taught to do it that way in training because none of us were taught how to deal with what happened on the 14th June in training. I don't know how you teach that to be honest I think is just experience. I think there should defiantly be more of an element of looking after people that have come out of training. We shouldn't just be putting them on stations where they need people. As you may have two or three recruits on one watch and non on another, there should be more of an effort to possible ask if people would mind changing their watch.

Stair procedures are what we are supposed to do in smoky conditions but once again that is just common sense it wasn't necessary in this building. You go on your stomach and you sweep with your feet and

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2018

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stamp every single step to make sure it is not going to give way, that wasn't going to happen we were on a reinforced concrete stairway. We also had people who weren't in breathing apparatus and we can't be doing that because it's too long and they would have just died on the stair well or taken so much smoke they probably would have been quite bad.

Training for firefighting in a high rise block is compartment firefighting which we have had quite recently. We carry out yearly training which involves keeping the fire contained to that flat/compartment. It is not carried out in a high rise situation. If the fire breaches that flat and comes out into the hallway or anywhere else on that floor it is still a compartment as that floor will be a sealed compartment.

Policies were broken on the day yes I suppose we didn't high rise procedure properly. Unless we are entering the building for FSG we should never commit to a fire floor or above without water. On the night of Grenfell, we were going 10 floors above the fire and I actually didn't have any water on the floors we went too until the third time we went in. So that's how long it took because the initial panic was so much about the people, everything went out of the window then and rightly so. If we had spent time trying to get all the equipment in, then we probably wouldn't have got as many people out as we did because the fire spread so quickly. The life risk to the resident outweighed the procedures.

We have policies for everything we have policies for walking upstairs. It's rigid. We also have policy to say we can break policy with operational discretion. We had training for breaking the rule policy. Every single person said that is never getting used because now we will still get in trouble for whatever we do. Operational discretion is when you go outside of policy and to do that you have to send a message to say I am going out of policy. When the reasons you have to go out of policy is because you need to do something right now and don't have the luxury of time to send a message. Messages should be transmitted over the radio so it is logged. You can send it after when you have time to but you need to get that message across otherwise you are not covered.

We carried out the training and I haven't heard anything about it since nothing. I know you have to have policy but it is the understanding of the people who monitor it and access whether you have done it properly. So on paper they is policy to break the rules but there is the lack of the understanding that to break these rules you don't have any hour to write down what I am doing and discuss it, you do it and

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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that's the way it is. For me to write about it afterwards or to say just so you know that in a radio message we are going of policy why you are making that point when we have done it and finished the job.

My thoughts and feelings inside the tower block changed during the time I was there. Initially for me when I first turned up there is the pressure to get information so that I am going to the right place. I don't like taking lifts, if the fire is high up we can't walk. So I have this in the back of mind because you are in a box that is going to open somewhere that you don't know. So I always have in the back of my mind please don't be the floor that is alight. I have to take a step back and just let's be cools just get information its nothing it's just a fire.

Usually most high rises fire they don't commit that many people to fight the fire, the first crew will deal with it and the second crew might help them out, the 3rd or 4th crew is there to damp down little hot spots. I was thinking when we were going in it would probably be to carry out FSG so I was pretty calm for some reason even when the smoke came out of the lift. After that I just went on auto pilot. I didn't have time to think about anything, I was just doing it, everything seemed a bit surreal. Because we hadn't see the outside of the building it felt safer inside then it did outside. Then when I looked at it from the outside I thought we are definitely losing fire fighters here there are no two ways about it. When you are inside the stairwell there was no fire that breached the stairwell it was fine.

There were problems within the building we were set up to fail with what happened on the outside of the building.

One of the biggest things was that there were no floor number anywhere, you had no idea what floor you were on. I could sort of make out where someone I think had tried to draw the floor numbers in the dirt on a wall previously. I would recon at least up to the 12th each floor was probably searched about 50 times and I think that's one of the biggest failings for me personally, that little simple thing of having floor marks. There no numbers or anything on the stair way or the floors signifying details of that floor. Which meant at no point could anyone say yeah floor 7 clear, floor 8's is clear, so we were going to search where someone else had done. I would be honest in saying that every time I came down and reached the bottom and I say to myself 'oh cool I'm at the bottom" I had no idea it was round the corner I just kept going until I hit the bottom of the stairs

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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Flat doors were different some were wooden some were plastic multi lock doors. The only way to gain entry to the multi lock doors was to destroy the door. We are taught if we breach into somewhere and there is smoke or fire that is getting worse and you are unable to deal with it you coome out and shut the door. However, the doors that had been destroyed couldn't be sealed so whatever was on the inside was coming out.

If we had smoke hoods I think we would have saved a lot more people. It would have definitely made it easier for the two we saved. We could have walked in there and said yeah there is smoke out there put this on and go. We could have gone back up and got more people. There would have been no running 12 storeys down to get heavy 2 sets, lug them up thinking god I hope this works. But we spent the time of a five-man crew doing carrying out 20- 25 minutes' amount of work. We would have struggle if there had been anyone else in that flat because we didn't have the sets. I don't know maybe it took 70 or 80 people to die for this to happen. I know it is now in the pipe line. I resent it massively. It's alright that we have ergonomically designed chairs and that someone is working on a project to make the colour of the fire engines a different colour red because they don't reflect the sun. But we don't have any equipment to bring casualties down through smoke.

On the 14th June I didn't have one person I reported directly to. The first time I just went up the 2nd and 3rd I received a brief both times from the officer in charge of the bridge head and when I came down reported back to them. After I went outside I could have sat back ion the fire engine with cup of tea but I didn't I found out what needed to be done and just got on with the job helping transport people out of the building

I don't think anyone went above and beyond their duty, this is what we are paid to do. A number of fire fighters like to tell lots of their stories and I just sit there and listen. I don't get angry, I just laugh to myself and think they have no idea. What if we were to have left Wolfie and Harry in the room, who knows what would have happened? At the time we told them to sit and wait in the room, that it would be find whilst we run down to get the sets. It was only afterward when I went outside, I thought s... did we leave them in that room. Harry is brand new and for some who hadn't long come from training school it was a big old jump he was superb. I remember both Harry and Wolfie saying after the whole thing, we were wondering if you were coming back. So they were obviously in the room thinking what are we

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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going to do? Their only options would have been leave the occupants or risk bringing them down through the smoke which would have been a tough one for them. I am glad they trusted us.

Not even the senior officers down the bottom covering the bridge head went above and beyond. It was the safest area, there was nothing falling on top of them there. It angers me when I hear fire fighters saying there was no order. They had order, a set way of everything happening, it was decent, it was good it was simple they knew what they were doing but they didn't go above and beyond.

I heard crews constantly being told they could get away but no going. An AC spoke to us after the event saying he remember telling someone who had seen someone fall from the building to go and get a cup of tea and then 20 minutes later seeing he back in the queue ready to go up.

There were situations where I think people were put into positions which turned bad and I thought you lot were lucky. For instance, the FRU crew were sent to the roof with line gear right at the early stages and fortunately they found someone and made the decision to bring that person. I think if they had tried to get up to that roof they wouldn't be here now that's a definite. But they were told to go up to the roof and put in some line gear and I would have done exactly the same and everybody here would have. You just do what you are asked, I think anyone from any other station would have done exactly the same. Everyone worked to 100% but on reflection I feel we were just doing our job.

There is support from officers on a different watch, they are good. The intention of the counsellor's support is good however it isn't consistent. If a counsellor says I will phone you tomorrow and they don't phone, then that is not brilliant and that's what happened to me. I did attend a group session with 3 of us, which I didn't find very helpful. Others said I'm not sure we did enough and I am massively of the thought there is nothing else we could have done. We were losing that as soon as we turned up and there was nothing anybody could do. I bite my tongue because I would like to have said shut up but I know that is the way they deal with it.

After my session the counsellor was looking at the clock. When completing her paperwork, she asked which box she thought she should tick to request further contact tomorrow or in week or I not bother. I said I will contact you in 3 months she said we don't have that box so I said forget it. I think I am fine

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2018

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Statement of: GALLAGHER, BEN

Form MG11(T)

Page 33 of 33

now, I do put it in a box. I try not to think about it. I'm very matter of fact about it. It's been ok but I haven't had any contact since. If we want support it's there apparently, so they can only do so much.

Signature: Ben GALLAGHER
2018

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