

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: SPOONER, JULIAN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 7 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: J SPOONER

Date: 21/01/2018

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

I am making this statement about my involvement in the Grenfell Tower fire on the 14th June 2017. I have been spoken to on digital media by DC Lou JONES and DC Peta JAMES but I understand that this statement is a full version of what was said. During the interview I used my contemporaneous notes which I produce as exhibit reference JBS/1. I also used a map of Grenfell Tower and the surrounding streets to mark some points on and this I produce as exhibit reference JBS/2.

I have 26-27 years' service within London Fire Brigade. The make-up of this is I began as a Fire Fighter (FF) in 1991 at Chiswick Fire Station. I stayed there for four years before I moved to North Kensington Fire Station. I started taking promotion after this and became a Sub Fire Officer in 1999 at North Kensington. I left in 2001 moving to our Training Department in Southwark. I became a Station Manager at Battersea Fire Station; I continued through the promotion process and ranks before becoming a Borough Commander for Merton Borough in 2015, Camden Borough in 2016 finally being posted to Union Street where I am the Group Manager responsible for Incident Command Policy and Operational Assurance.

Through the years I have completed numerous training courses. Every year I part-take in high rise block fire exercises. Additionally, as part of the promotional exams I passed the Incident Command Exercise (ICE) section on high rise fires. The training also covers a host of other matters. The style varies between decision making table top environments and also the physical aspects. I have specialised in Urban Search and Rescue (USAR). This is an additional 8week course covering functioning in areas like 9/11. We have

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resources such as additional equipment — heavy lifting and cutting equipment, line access with steel cables, we work with the HART (LAS) team in hazardous areas, and I also deal with incidents on water. I get involved in the retrieval of trapped people and work in dangerous environments. I attended the floods on the Thames in 2014, I was first in attendance at the Paddington Train crash in 1999, and I attended the fire at Lakanal House and also the incident involving the missing school girl [REDACTED]

On the 14th June 2017 I was due to work an 8am-5pm shift. I got up at 5am and was on my way to work by 5.15-5.30am from [REDACTED]. The first I heard of the incident at Grenfell Tower was on a news bulletin on Radio 4 as I was driving in. This was at about 6am; the report said there were 40 fire engines there. I realised if this was true then firstly this was an unprecedented incident which should not happen in London but secondly this would have stripped cover for the rest of London completely. I called Control and spoke to an officer in the Brigade Coordination Centre (BCC) and advised them I was available to either attend or to provide cover for the rest of London when I got in. I left them my details and continued to Union Street.

On way down the M4 I could see the smoke cloud. At this stage I knew the building was burning considerably. I could see the outline of Grenfell Tower and the smoke cloud was travelling 4-5 miles into the air and going with the wind. Smoke was billowing out which means to me the building is burning under pressure and the combustion is quite high. It had been burning for quite a while due to the amount of smoke. I was 6 miles away and I could see it. The smoke was black but also light grey at times where it had dissipated a bit in atmosphere. As I arrived at about 7.30am I received a page to mobilise as a relief officer at Grenfell Tower.

I went to the incident. Upon my arrival I attended the Command Unit (CU) where the Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) calls were being dealt with. This was situated on Grenfell Road. They showed me where to go for the Incident Command CU in Bomore Road so I went there and I booked on. The Incident Commander (IC) at time was Assistant Commissioner (AC) Andy ROE. He was later relieved by AC Dominic ELLIS. AC ROE tasked me with taking over as Sector Safety Commander for incident. I believe he did this due to my additional USAR training. In his brief to me he said offensive fire-fighting would continue; he knew we were working outside some of our policies, however until crews had reached the top floors to confirm whether there was any saveable life left we would continue. Given the circumstances of the incident I fully agreed with and supported this decision.

The policies we had stepped outside of at this time were our high rise policy, this covers:

- How the BH is set up,

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- How many wears Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets have, especially Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA),
- Fire-fighting
- Where jets are directed i.e. they should be from the floor below the fire up to the fire floor.
- BA crews going up beyond the fire without water.

I met with the current Sector Safety Commander, Group Manager (GM) David O'NEILL and he walked me round the Incident Ground (IG). He confirmed which sectors were in place, the Sector and Safety Officers and their briefs. What struck me at the time was the level of detail and awareness those Safety Officers were giving to their roles. They were very specific about who was allowed in, who was allowed out and constantly watching for debris falling from the building. They were watching the spread of the fire, whether anybody could be seen at the windows and also watching for any signs of the building collapsing. They were also watching for people coming out of the building at the entry and exit points on the South and West sides. Each Sector has a Safety Officer who is responsible for putting these safety measures in place. Additionally, in place outside were the riot police who were using their shields above their heads to escort fire-fighters in and out of the Tower. This worked really well but I still had concerns. There were spotters watching for falling debris and giving the order when it was clear for people to enter or exit. This was crucial. The Officers were being really clear about where people could go and when to stop to get the timings right. This was being conducted on both the South and West sides where the entry points were located. I was very comfortable with these safety arrangements in place.

At the time, the fires had been knocked back from the 4th floor to the 9th with the 9th floor up to the top being 100% alight. It was burning ferociously inside the building so the Safety Officers were being incredibly professionally. These Sectors were set up around all sides of the outside of the building. The Safety Officers would have to be a minimum rank of Crew Manager (CM) and then have a Senior Safety Officer; in this case this was now myself.

I entered the Tower on the ground floor and made contact with the Bridge Head (BH) Sector Fire Commander. I told him I had taken over as Safety Sector. The Fire Sector inside the Tower is normally the floor above and the floor below the actual fire. There should then be a Search Sector above the Fire Sector, the rest is termed as a Lobby Sector. The difficulty with organising the Sectors inside was that it was unusual to have a building fire where everything from 4th floor upwards was alight. The question was - where does the fire sector stop and search sector start? This has to remain flexible to fit each incident. The BH was set up on the 4th floor. In this case, everything above that was deemed both the Fire Sector

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and the Search Sector. On the ground floor was a BA holding area for crews. This is somewhere where the crews can rest comfortably, get water and recover / prepare to be committed into the Tower.

The BH is set up two floors below the seat of the fire. This is a place where we commit BA crews from; it is a staging post, a physical place where the Lobby Sector meets the Fire and Search Sectors. The BH also has the Entry Control (EC) set up. This is a point where BA crews go through before entering the Fire Sector, they have to be under air (have their BA sets on) when they pass this point. FF's are not able to reserve air by walking up the stairs until they deem it necessary to put their BA sets on. FF's health and safety is paramount and thus they have to start in safe air at the BH. Also on the BH are the emergency crews, resuscitation team and if needed the London Ambulance Service. The BH is a safe place to bring people to in clean fresh air. The problems we had that day were the distances the FF's had to travel to get to fire-fight or rescues. Even if we had the equipment it was hugely physically demanding on the FF's. There was a lift but the Fire lift was not working. The electrics were out and thus the lifts were out as well.

At the BH a Safety Officer had been put in place I believe by GM Andy CANE in his role as the Operational Review Team officer (ORT). It was their job to concentrate on the physical welfare of the FF'ing crews before they were committed. The entire FF's wanted to put their BA sets on and be recommitted but we needed to ensure they were physically able to do that. SM Jason FRISBY was allocated this task. I reconfirmed with SM FRISBY that not only was he to ensure FF's being committed were able to be committed but also that he was happy and capable to say no if he felt they didn't look physically well enough to go back in. GM John GRAHAM was in charge of the running of the BH. He had taken over from GM Richard WELSH or GM Pat GOULBOURNE.

What I realised was that the safety outside the building was tight. What needed concentration were the difficulties inside the Tower. There were significant issues with the BA crews getting hoses up to the floors. They were managing to take equipment to the floors but then running out of air and having to come back down again. They were therefore not able to get any fire-fighting done on the middle to upper floors.

The first four or five floors after the bridgehead were a waterfall. The Portable Pump we were using to boost water pressure had burst. FF's were coming up the stairs through water and were soaking wet. They then hit the hot humid floors where there is then the potential to bake in their uniform / protective equipment. There was also an Electrical Substation in the basement but I could find no physical way to get down to it so I made the decision and told the IC that if the water was going to trip it out then there

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was nothing we could do. I decided I needed to get as much hose and branches up to the middle floors as I could to allow BA crews to go up to the floors and concentrate on tackling the fire. I decided that was clearly pushing the boundaries of our policies and safety because we would be doing this task without BA sets on; so I asked for volunteers to get the hose and branches. 6 FF's volunteered so we went upstairs where I informed the BH Officers we were going up past the BA section to put the equipment out up to the 13th floor.

The staircase had vented and we were able to walk up to the internal floors without there being too much smoke. These were the conditions up to the 15th and 16th floors. Whilst we could work in the internal staircase, the floors themselves were raging with all the flats 100% a light. We could feel the radiated heat coming off the floors. It was not safe to go any higher than we had, and I made it particularly clear that we were not to enter any of the landing areas. By making the decision to place the equipment out on the floors, this meant that the BA crews could go straight to their floors, lay the hoses out and get to work extinguishing fires and work their way up the building to establish whether there was any saveable life. Once the equipment had been left in situ we immediately left the stairwell and returned to the BH. I informed the BH where the equipment had been laid out.

At 10am I went outside the building where I received a brief from AC Dominic ELLIS. He re-confirmed my role as Safety Sector Commander and we had a discussion about the stability of the building, bearing in mind it had now been subjected to eight hours of burning. There were no real experts who could say what the building would do this was down to our professional judgement and constant monitoring. Kent's USAR had offered us the use of their drone, which we accepted and that was on route. We wanted to look at the cracks on the upper floors which had been reported by FF's. These were reported to be on the ceilings, columns and externally around the windows so it was crucial we had a good look at that.

AC ELLIS was also keen to get the gas company to the incident in order to isolate the supply. There were a lot of gas fires burning in the Tower. Gas fires by their nature can be relatively safe as long as they are burning and do not ignite anything else. If a gas fuelled fire is extinguished this does not stop the flow of gas, so the gas then gets released into the atmosphere and creates a potentially explosive situation. The gas board arrived and I spoke to them. Initially they informed me they could isolate the gas quite quickly but this unfortunately changed. They said the only way they could isolate the gas supply was to dig up the ground in three places around the tower which would take 4-5 hours to do. I briefed them on safety because if they were working within the inner cordons of the sectors then they had to go to the Sector Commanders to receive full briefing on their safety. Panels were falling down from building. I am not

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sure which Gas board it was but the supply was not isolated until midnight. By the second day we were still fire-fighting at 3-4pm even with gas capped. There had been a strong smell of gas at times in the buildings. It is possible for things to reignite even when they have been extinguished and I suspect this happened a few times.

At about 11-1130am I continued in my role, checking with the other Safety Officers, checking safety on BH or I would be on the IC CU. I was at CU when we received information not entirely sure with who, most likely the IC, Dom ELLIS at the time regarding the bariatric casualty on 9th floor. I was aware of this casualty because I had walked over her a couple of times when taking the equipment up to the middle to upper floors. What we didn't know was that this was causing the BA crews some distress. She had been on the stairs for a number of hours now and the crews were struggling to actually walk over her. I offered to go and clear the casualty. Due to the fact she was deceased I took Alistair HUTCHINS from the DVI Police Team with me and a crew from Croydon Fire Station to assist me with the move. When we got to the Tower we were told she had already been moved by an earlier crew. I went with Alistair HUTCHINS to the 9th floor so he could do a quick DVI process. I think she was the first casualty on stairs on the way up. Alistair HUTCHINS took some initial photographs, completed a DVI form and left a slip with the body. She had been moved to the hallway of the 9th floor over to the left on the landing. The fires were pretty much out by this point on the 9th floor. We then came out of the tower.

At 1pm I took the Building Structural Engineer (BSE) from Kensington and Chelsea Council (John I think) into the Tower because we were getting more and more concerned about the stability of it. We were at the point of still fighting considerable fires but we were getting hold of the lower floors. The fire had been going for 12-13 hours and as Sector Commander Safety the likelihood that there would be a full or partial collapse was increasing. We looked at the damage on 5/6th floors. The BSE was not happy about being in the building so he came out. In the time we had been in there we had seen considerable damage to the floors and columns. I talked to AC ELLIS but it felt like we were almost at the stage of pulling crews out due to the potential for collapse. This considerably outweighed any chance of finding any more saveable life.

It was about this time I got a message from AC ELLIS that a Dr Barbara LANE (from Artrops) who was a building specialist had been in contact with the fire ground. She said she was very concerned that fire had started a chain reaction which could not be stopped and building would collapse. I talked to AC ELLIS about this and arranged to get a car to pick her up and bring her to incident ground. It was an hour and a half before she arrived.

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Whilst waiting for Dr. LANE, DAC Rick OGDEN, GM John SIMPSON and I went back to the BH and had meeting with GM Neil CHISHOLM and GM SIMPSON. We discussed the viability of continuing to commit crews, information we received was that breathing apparatus crews had now reached the top floors. The fire had been going for 15 hours and likelihood of finding anyone on the upper floors now was near enough zero. Three or four of us walked up the Tower as high as we could. I believe we got to about the 19-20th floors. We could hear bangs coming from building. I believe the bangs turned out to be the reinforced bars snapping on the floors that had been exposed to fire for the longest although we did not know this at the time. We had no idea how thick the floors were, there was no lighting, the stairwell was tight, there was smoke everywhere, fires on all the floors, we had reports back from crews that they had reached the top floors and there was no saveable life and crews were stepping over numerous bodies of all age groups. We assessed the situation and at 3pm decided we could do no more. The stability was really quite concerning and it did not justify the risk to FF's being further committed. We agreed to move to the next phase. The gas needed isolating and the structure of building needed assessing. If the Tower had not collapsed in the next 24 hours, then we would probably go back and commence body recovery working with the DVI team. I think it was about this time I checked the lifts for any residents in there but they were empty.

The drone from Kent arrived. The initial footage taken from around the building was showing damage. Dr. LANE arrived. I was due to go onto the CU and have a Tactical Command Meeting and Dr. LANE was on the CU. As I was walking on AC ELLIS asked if I was comfortable with the cordons if the building collapsed. This was a defining moment for me so I said I would go back and have a look to reassess them. As a result of this I missed the meeting. When I got back to the CU Dr. Barbara LANE was coming off and burst into tears. She said she could not be there anymore as she feared the Tower would collapse. She left the scene and got a taxi home. The building itself was definitely not burning as intensely as it had been at 7am. All the floors were no longer 100% alight above the 9th floor, but were still burning. The only real way out to extinguish the rest of fires was to get the gas supply off. My advice was that we did not commit anyone overnight. We would isolate the gas and let the Tower cool down. That is how I left it when I was relieved about 7pm and handed over.

When I returned the next day I was there to assist the DVI Police team with forensic body recovery, USAR and the structural integrity of the building to ensure everyone is safe to enter and complete their tasks. We still had a couple of tactical withdrawals due to the stability of the building I was there, Thursday, Friday, the following Monday and Tuesday. These were five days of difficult work. The

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structure of building was a concern and sending crews into the building when it may collapse was hard. No expert will tell you for definite if the Tower would collapse; no one wants to put themselves in that position. The columns inside the Tower had fractured and these had to be shored from the 13th floor West corner to transfer the load to the 11th floor. There was substantial damage to the columns and the ceilings had bowed. It was all physically draining and boiling hot. We assisted in the removal of the bodies in stairway first and then moved out to the floors. We had to see how far we could get up each day. It was very hot and gruelling work. The Health and Safety of the other agencies was our responsibilities. Prior to the USAR and DVI process in the subsequent days I did not want to concentrate on the casualties I saw in the stairwell. I tried not to disturb any of them. There were multiple adults, children, and a baby and mother on 21/22nd floor. I had to concentrate on the safety of the FF crews.

As I said earlier, I have never seen an incident where the Safety Officers were so serious in preventing a number of accidents with falling debris in and out of building. They ensured crews were fit for purpose and everyone was looking after each other. I thought the whole incident was really professionally run. The early crews had a difficult time of it. Although we stepped outside of our normal policies, none of these decisions were made without careful consideration. The IC listened to what all of his Safety Officers were saying and this allowed him to make that informed decision. We were always looking to see when we could pull things back in line with policy and when the situation allowed this is what we did. I have previous knowledge of Grenfell Tower and that whole estate. When I worked in North Kensington Fire Station in the late 1990's it was regular business for us. These would have been incidents such as automatic fire alarms, rubbish alight or flat fires. Back then the LFB had something similar to the familiarisation visit which I would have completed, but I do not recall if I carried one out on Grenfell Tower. Currently if buildings reach a certain score then they are listed on the LFB database as an operational risk. I am not sure whether Grenfell Tower is on that database or not.

The Tower only has one stairwell to enter and exit from. The smoke level at some point during the incident would have come right down the stairwell because the walls were black. You could hear the roar of fire each of the floors. The space within the staircase was tight and there was no room to pass the bariatric lady. There were no windows in the stairwell. The floors numbers were sometimes guess work because although some were present on the walls, some numbers were missing. It was quite frustrating at times working out what floor you were on. Someone at some point had used a chinagraph and written numbers on there. The doors to the landings were fire doors. There were no sprinklers and no alarms sounding. The only fire safety measures I was aware of in Grenfell Tower were individual smoke alarms,

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but they are not linked. There was a venting system there but I do not know if we ever used it or whether it worked. There is a smoke extraction system which I had asked if it was working but got the answer back that it wasn't. That would have been on each of the floors near the stairs in the lobby. It's a yellow box you are supposed to push.

The flats were pretty much burnt out. All the doors to the flats had gone. All the windows had gone. The rubbish shoots however, were untouched interestingly. These were tucked in and round to the right, these were completely untouched. There were some bin bags in there and these had not even melted. It was extraordinary. The inside of the room was not even smoke stained. If you had gone into the bin room you might of survived - but you would not do it as it was not an obvious point of refuge.

The Dry Riser Main (DRM) is an internal pipe which runs from the base to top of the building. There is a vent at the top and a release value at the bottom. For us to utilise this we must put 2 lines of hose into the DRM and charge it with water. This then acts as a hose basically and FF's can set into it on their floors. This is their water source to fight the fire. Water should go right to the top of the DRM so FF's can go to any floor and get same water supply as on first floor. It is set it at a certain bar pressure but you cannot take a working jet on all the floors because this would cause a pressure loss. That's when we use the Lightweight portable pump (LPP) to boost water supplies. I believe this was mid-way on the 5-6th floor. The DRM was supplying the water and then the LPP supplies water from a separate hydrant to increase the number of jets we could use. That must have taken 2 hours to put together.

There is also a Wet Riser Main (WRM) but this was not at Grenfell Tower. FF's still have to plug into it but has its own pumps and is fully charged with water already. I am not sure how many jets it can run at once. FF's are going to struggle to extinguish a fire like Grenfell. The internal firefighting measures are designed to tackle a fire on one or two floors, at most, any further jets would lead to a lack of pressure on the system. The cladding forced the fire spread without a doubt. I have seen video footage and the fire shot up the cladding. We had no chance, even with jets or even a turntable ladder. The cladding itself, acts like roof tiles and is designed to repel water, so any water we were getting on it was not effective. The fire went behind the cladding and then shot up the building, clearing the 7/8th floor in 10 minutes. The fire generates heat and jumps up and jumps up and burns each window and sets that floor alight. The jet is only going to reach a certain height; this has to be set at the right place, right height and at the right time. Even if this had happened the water still needs to get in-between the cladding and the building to be effective. The Turntable Ladder takes 10 minutes to set up, get water into it and then be ready for use. The fire had spread hugely by this point. We could not get the Turntable Ladder close to the Tower either

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due to the steep grassy bank; there was no access at the rear of the building; no access by play area. We also have to consider where we park these appliances. You cannot put the appliance on grass because the jacks will go straight through it.

Nothing about this fire behaved as it should or how we have been trained to deal with them. I believe the fire started in the kitchen, the room of origin. At most the fire could have spread to that flat but the walls and the fire door should have given 90 minutes of fire protection. If the fire had gone out through the windows or outlets, it should have gone out onto a concrete facia and that should have been fine. But this fire got into the cladding and spread across the whole building. FF's are trained for aggressive compartment firefighting. Compartmentation is not expected to fail the way this did. All of the windows had disappeared and all the internal walls had disappeared across multiple floors

In line with high rise fires our advice to residents is usually to stay put. When I got to the incident I think AC Andy ROE said everyone was coming out. I had no specific briefings around this. Our policy is - if a fire is in a high rise or house stay put if possible within the confines of the room or flat. The caller's location is passed to crews to attempt a rescue as opposed to residents coming out. Control will stay on line until the line goes dead or they have to take another call but ideally keep the line remains open. Our Stay Put policy is normally for incidents involving 2/3/4 FSG calls at once, not for 160. It was very difficult for everyone. The fire behaviour meant we couldn't deal with the incident under conventional policies. There was no free-lancing. The Leadership Team needed to ensure progress was made. If we had stayed within Policy, we wouldn't have saved half the people we did.

Fortunately, the floors at Grenfell Tower are about 2 foot thick, although we did not know that at the time. If they had been thinner the outcome regarding collapse might have been different. We did not know whether the Tower would pancake (floors falling on top of floors) or suffer a partial collapse or a full collapse. If it was a full collapse would it fall sideways? It was with this in mind that I moved the cordons. The distance is the buildings height and a half. Initially the cordons were around the perimeter of building, covering the grassy area and play area. As the day wore on and we did the evacuation, we pulled right back. The new cordons were moved to Silchester Road, the walkway beside Kensington Leisure Centre and Bomore Road, Grenfell Road and beside Station Walk/Hurstway Walk where the ramp is. These cordons were moved at about 4pm. Everyone inside this area was evacuated.

In an ideal world drenchers were what were needed. These are set on the outside of the building to drench behind any cladding. Sprinklers might have made a slight difference but I can't really say. It was the

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outside that needed slowing down, behind the cladding. Sprinklers on outside of building and set every 4-5 floors could have helped extinguish this fire.

Additionally, we could have something like Escape Smoke hoods which crews can take up to the people they are rescuing. This would enable people to come out in smoky environments and get out of the building. FF's found people on the upper floors earlier on in the incident but those people never came out. The problem is getting people out. The stairwell would have been in thick black smoke at some point. FF's can't give people their BA kits and the residents wouldn't have survived in the stairwell in those conditions. FF's would have told people they were coming back for them but then known the conditions in the stairwell. Even FF's were coming out and being sick or fainting. Some FF's did give their masks over to people but they suffered by doing so.

Some people made it out, some didn't. You could see the result of the smoke on some of the bodies as they were covered in soot. They wouldn't have lasted 30 seconds in those conditions. Policy could be more of guidance and have the flexibility for incidents like Grenfell Tower. LFB needs more input into building design. The current rules are that there should be 25% accessible for fire appliances; this is not the case at Grenfell Tower. We would welcome more input on the fire measures. Buildings are designed with 1-2 compartments on fire not the whole building.

At no stage did I suffer any injuries nor have I sought any medical attention. In relation to witnessing any near misses I saw the cladding come down close to personnel but the Safety Officers stopped them.

I left at the incident at 7pm and went to my brother's house in Fulham (stayed at Fulham Fire Station the following night). I knew I would be back in the morning for USAR at 8am. I believe I wrote my notes 6 weeks after the incident.

How the London Fire Brigade did not to lose anyone that day is a miracle. I was petrified at one point about the collapse when we were hearing the bangs. You really start to question why you are in there as by that time there was no saveable life.

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