

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: MAY, PETER

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 5 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: P.MAY

Date: 27/10/2017

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

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This statement is made in reference to the Grenfell Tower fire on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June and Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

Following the course of the shift I made a written record of the actions that I undertook during the course of my shift. I exhibit these notes as PM/1 'Notes made after incident of Grenfell Tower'. During the course of this statement I may refer to these notes.

I am employed by London Fire Brigade and started in February 1978. I have over 39 years of experience and working in control rooms at Stratford, Wembley and Croydon. I have been in my current role as an Assistant Operations Manager (AOM) since 2009. I enjoy my job. No duty is the same. It is a very diverse role as I can either be in charge of the control room, supervising staff as an AOM, answering emergency calls, or operating the radio. I have been on duty for a number of large scale incidents including civil disturbances, a high rise fire in Leytonstone, and a 40 pump fire in Dagenham. I was the officer in charge of Control for these incidents.

Control Room staff work a six day shift pattern. Day 1 is referred to as 'day watch' and is from 0800 – 2000 hours. Day 2 is a 'short watch' split to either 0800 – 1600 or 1400 – 2200 hours. Day 3 is the 'night watch' and is from 2000 – 0800 hours. Days 4, 5 and 6 are rest days.

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Our main Control Room is based in Merton, South West London. Due to maintenance working being carried out at Merton, on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 we were based at our fall back control room in Stratford, East London. Personally I like the control room at Stratford. With it being a smaller control room, I find it easier to communicate with staff and I have a better oversight as to what is occurring. At the control room in Merton we have two televisions on the back wall, one of which normally shows the 24 hour news. The other is a PowerPoint presentation indicating the day and Watch shift. At Stratford we only have access to a small TV. This was not switched on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) is a procedure which arises when a caller says they are unable to escape a building due to fire or smoke. Advice given to a caller may vary depending on the type of premises involved. In the case of a high rise building, we would normally advise a caller to stay in a flat as these types of flats are made to prevent fire coming through. If a caller starts to become affected by smoke or fire, the operator will give Fire survival guidance to the caller. This could include advice to block doors with wet towels, open windows for fresh air, or move to an unaffected room. My ultimate aim is to protect that caller from being affected by fire or smoke. During my service I have taken two Fire Survival Guidance calls that have resulted in rescues.

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I reported for duty at 2000 hours. We had eleven staff on duty for the shift. In charge of the control room was our Operations Manager Alexandra NORMAN. Both I and Debbie REAL were the Assistant Operations Managers for the shift. The remaining staff were the Control Room Officers who answer emergency calls, monitor the radio channels and page senior officers.

The mobilising system we currently use in the control room is called 'Vision'. Since Vision was introduced we have encountered a number of issues and difficulties. These issues have continued to date. On the system we have a Gazetteer (address search facility). I feel that one of the major issues is the address selection. The Borough based, so each Borough inputs their own addresses which we then use to mobilise our appliances. However each Borough may input an address differently and may not return correct results with the slightest spelling difference.

During my shift I was aware of a problem with the Stars system. Stars is our Staff Attendance Recording System. As a result of the problem it was not communicating correctly with Vision mobilising system.

The first call came to the Control Room at 0055 hours and was taken by Control Officer Pam JONES. It was to the fire in a flat of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Grenfell Tower. I saw the call on our incident list on the screen

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in front of me and only three appliances were sent. I had instinct that this building was a high rise, which should attract an attendance of four pumping appliances. The name Grenfell Tower made me think it was a high rise building and thought to myself why only three appliances were sent. On thinking this, I googled Grenfell Tower and saw that it was a high rise building with at least twenty floors.

With this information I then changed the Incident Type Code on our system to 'A1HR' (fire in a high rise building). This changes the attendance to four pumping appliances. I mobilised the additional appliance making it up to four. Another action created from the A1HR code was page to nearest on duty Station Manager to inform them of the high rise fire. This is for their information, but they have the option to attend the incident. I then ensured that the lead appliance was made aware of the additional appliance despatched in order to complete the high rise attendance. I verbally told the radio operator control officer Sharon DARBY who relayed the message.

The incident rapidly got upgraded from a six pump fire to forty pump fire within a 50 minute time scale. Both myself and Assistant Operations Manager Debbie REAL were involved in dealing with mobilising these additional resources and officers. In addition, I was organising fire cover for the rest of the brigade and numerous additional resources/equipment including Extended Duration breathing Apparatus (EDBA).

During this period I also communicated with Assistant Commissioner Andy ROE providing him with the latest information we had from the incident. This included size of the incident, and to my best knowledge the current significant officers attending the incident. I then showed him 'Status 2' (preceding to the incident). Referencing to my notes (exhibit PM/1), I ended my conversation with Andy ROE at 0141 hours. The conversation only lasted a couple of minutes.

Additionally during this period I became aware of an increase in 999 calls, and fire survival guidance procedure being passed. At 0136 hours, myself and Debbie REAL upgraded the incident type code to FSG (Fire Survival Guidance in progress). I became aware that fire survival guidance information received from the callers was initially being passed via radio operator Sharon DARBY to the Incident Command Pump at the scene. This information included numbers of persons, floors and flat numbers. I later became aware that this information was being recorded on paper by the call takers, and was being passed to the Incident Command Pump via Station Manager Jason OLIFF. Jason was passing on this information by mobile telephone and was also recorded on whiteboard in the control room.

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I also had contact with other senior officers. This included our duty Senior Operations Manager Joanne SMITH who was en-route to the control room. On Joanne's arrival, she was later joined by Senior Operations Manager Adam CRINION and Principal Operations Manager Scott HAYWARD. Additionally, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Adrian FENTON, Station Manager Jason OLIFF and others came into the control room to provide support to the control. I am unable to recall exact timings of arrivals.

I am unsure of timing, I overheard a conversation between Alexandra NORMAN and Joanne that they were going to make a decision to change the fire survival guidance from 'stay put', and advise the callers to 'get out'. The conversation was very much in the background as I was concentrating and focused on mobilising resources.

Over the next couple of hours I spent a long time organising and arranging various equipment and resources required at the scene. This included a request for all available Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) kits to be mobilised to the scene. To achieve this I liaised on a number of occasions with the duty RPELO officer Geoff AVIS. Geoff was the on call officer who deals with breathing apparatus. We had a number of telephone conversation ensuring this was carried out. I was passing on RVP locations, and he was telling me where the EDBA was coming from. Geoff did the organising, and I was telling him where I wanted them. I also mobilised the four Fire Rescue Units available in the brigade, and all OSU's to the scene. At 0413 hours (referring to my notes), Geoff informed me that 78 EDBA cylinders and 48 sets were in attendance at the incident, but not necessarily at the preferred RVP. This was passed to the Command Unit.

At 0437 hours, a request was received for petrol at the scene, which is normally transported by an OSU. Six OSU's were already in attendance at the incident, and that time were unable to exit the area to go and collect fuel. Therefore I had to try other options to obtain the fuel, which included contacting police, Babcocks and the Brigade Distribution Unit to see if they could assist. As I was doing this, and OSU did manage to get out of the scene and collected the petrol. I rang one of the OSU and by chance, H33A told me that he exited the scene and already had petrol on board. This was at 0522 hours.

At approximately 0530 hours, things had calmed down in the control room. We were no longer receiving emergency calls from the incident. This enabled me to speak to my colleagues, checking on their welfare. I then managed to have a break from the control room for ten minutes.

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At approximately 0630 hours, I was involved in communicating with the police helicopter via radio, regarding the possible sightings of people in the building, and what they could see. There was also advice given on the firefighting operations including changing the angle of attack with hoses to avoid the casualty being affected by smoke. This information was being passed back to the Command Units by others, I don't know who exactly.

I remember very little of the handover. I cannot remember my involvement in the handover, but I was happy that Alexandra NORMAN and Debbie REAL provided the handover to the day watch Operations Manager Sam COAKER.

Towards the end of the watch we had the opportunity to speak to a counsellor before we went off duty. I spoke to the counsellor who offered advice.

The first couple of weeks were tough but I felt very proud of everyone and the amount of professionalism that there was throughout the shift. In the following weeks were visited by numerous people offering support.

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