

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: BROWN, DANIEL

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 15 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: D.BROWN

Date: 07/02/2018

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

This statement is about the night I attended a fire at Grenfell Tower in Kensington and Chelsea. I am a serving Fire Fighter with London Fire Brigade (LFB) and have been serving in this position for over twenty seven (27) years. My training level is competent. I am assigned to North Kensington fire station and the code for this station is G27. I have been at North Kensington fire station since July 1991 and was posted there after I completed my training at Southwark in the training school. I am currently assigned to Red Watch and on the night of the fire I was posted to appliance G271.

In this statement I will mention my colleagues on G271 who are Crew Manager (CM) Charlie BATTERBEE, Watch Manager(WM) Michael DOWDEN, Fire Fighter (FF) Dave BADILLO and Fire Fighter (FF) Bills who I will refer to as Billsy. We all usually work together on Red Watch. Where people sit within the engine determines their roles on initial arrival to any incident. The driver is designated the pump operator. The two outside riders in the back will be the BA wearers and if there are enough fire fighters available, the person in the middle carries out other roles such as BA entry control and hydrant location. This is determined at the start of the shift during a role call so everyone knows what they are doing. I was sitting on the rear driver side and knew if an incident happened I would be wearing BA equipment.

I will also mention Crew Manager Chris SECRETT, Fire Fighter De St AUBIN who were riding appliance G272 Pump and also retired Fire Fighter Michael FREDERICKS who was not on duty that evening.

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I will mention Grenfell Tower which is located in North Kensington. I have exhibited two drawings of Grenfell Tower. The first is a map of the local area with the Tower in the middle which I have exhibited as DRB/2. The second is a generic floor plan of Grenfell Tower. I have exhibited this as DRB/3. During this statement I will refer to these drawings.

My memory of the events that I will describe is good, however after completing the initial attack of the fire in Flat 16 the exact chronological sequence of events during the rest of that night has blurred a little so some things I mention may have occurred in a different order to the way I have described them.

On Wednesday 14th June 2017 I was at work in the TV room, alone in North Kensington fire station watching TV. At approximately 01.00 hours we received a call so the alarm sounded, the lights turned on and we made our way to the appliance room. It is up to the Duty person (whoever is designated in charge of the watch room) to acknowledge calls that the station receive and get a route card ready if required. The drivers will also enter the watch room and pick-up the TIP sheet whilst the rest of us will get on to the appliance (the fire engine). The TIP out sheet provides the details of any call that we have been ordered to attend i.e. the incident number, the date, the address, details of the incident, who else is attending etc. both our appliances G271 and G272 were ordered to attend.

Once everyone was on the appliance, I was told that we were going to a kitchen fire in flat sixteen (16) which was on the fourth (4th) floor of Grenfell Tower. From memory it was made clear that there was no-one reported to be in the flat which means there should be no-one left in the flat, but until we actually speak to the occupier, we always assume there may be someone inside. Even if we are told by the occupier upon arrival that no one is inside we still carry out a methodical search of the property.

The tower is a location that I have attended many times before for many different incidents. This ranges from unusual calls such as pigeons trapped in netting to where residents had been locked out, floodings, fire alarms and people stuck in lifts. I have fought fires in the Tower before but I can't remember the details of when. I am based at the fire station closet to the Tower and at any time it takes only a few minutes to get to it.

It took us about three (3) to four (4) minutes to get to the Tower that night as there wasn't any traffic due to the time. Whilst on route to the incident, CM BATTERBEA and I were putting on our breathing apparatus (BA) sets on. This is something that we are not supposed to do on route but from experience,

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we know that seconds matter. We were going to a fire in a tower block in the early hours of the morning were there are lots of people and we wanted to get the fire out as quickly as we could.

We approached the call from Grenfell Road and were the first appliance to arrive. The appliance parked outside the front of the tower, close to the South East corner. I have marked the position of our engine on DRB/2 as a rectangle with the letter A in it. This area is covered by a walkway. The road had numerous parked cars and motor bikes along it so access was restricted which stopped us getting that extra ten (10) feet forward. However we were close enough as the hydrant was to the left of where we parked so where we stopped was fine. I have marked the letter H on DRB/2 to denote where the hydrant was found. As we arrived outside the tower, I saw the fire for the first time. My door was on the side of the tower. I first saw the fire as we pulled up and I got out of the cab. I was at the South East corner and at an acute angle but could see an orange glow coming from the East side of the tower towards the corner furthest away to me, around the North East corner. I could also see a very light haze of smoke around the street light outside too. The fire looked contained around the window area and it didn't look like it had broken out at this stage. I didn't count up to where I could see the fire as we already knew that the fire had been reported on the fourth (4th) floor from the TIP sheet. I remember shouting "we've got a job". Everyone swung in to their roles and to the job at hand. We are all experienced enough and know what our roles are. There was no specific briefing or instructions that I can remember but we are all competent and experienced enough to know where to go, what equipment to collect and so made our way up to the fire. Through continuous training and real incident experiences our roles are drummed in to us.

We already had our sets on and we were ready to go. We grabbed some lengths of hose, a branch (the nozzle used to jet the water from the hose), a BA board and a thermal imaging camera (TIC), enforcer and an IEC Pack. This is a lot of equipment but everyone grabbed this from the two appliances and we all ran inside. I had grabbed two lengths of forty five millimetre (45mm) hose.

We ran in to the tower through the main entrance on the South of the tower and I think the door to the communal areas was already open. It may have been a member of the public or a firefighter who opened it. I can't remember the exact route but I remember getting to the lifts. When entering a high rise where there are lifts, we operate the fire lift function. This is a very simple process where we use a key to flick a switch and immediately take control which automatically sends the lift to the ground floor. It is like a master control key. It disables all the call points across all the floors and the only way to control the lift is within the car itself. This is extremely useful because we can get fire fighters and equipment to the correct

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floors very quickly and effectively, also, if required, it is easier to rescue people. For example if we need to rescue someone from the eighteenth (18th) floor, we can send a crew up there quickly without stopping on various levels wasting valuable time or putting fire crews at risk of it stopping on a floor deemed on fire, plus an additional benefit is that it conserves our air and energy. We can then get targeted people out from information received via our control which we call FSG's (Fire Survival Guidance) and back to an area of safety below the fire. With the fire lift out of action, we would not be able to target specific floors and flats for fire fighting rescues anywhere near as quickly and effectively. There are 24 floors in this tower; each floor level consists of two (2) staircases so from ground to the top floor it is forty eight (48) flights of stairs to climb. When the fire lift doesn't work it is a huge problem when going to a tower block fire.

Chris operated the fire lift but nothing happened, we waited about thirty (30) seconds but it didn't come, I think the lift stopped off at another floor before descending which meant that the fire lift function wasn't working. CM SECRETT stated it wasn't working. Ultimately we were calling the lift in the same way as any other person would call it. I'm not sure exactly how long it took for the lift to come but it felt like a lifetime as we just wanted to get in that lift and get up to the fire. We almost decided to use the staircase, to the second floor, it would have been four (4) flights of stairs to climb with all our equipment to the second floor. This meant the process took longer than if the fire lift had been working. The fire lift in a tower block should always work in an emergency but it did not work on that night. I believe the reason the fire lift failed that night was due to poor maintenance. When the lift eventually arrived there was a member of the public in it. I think it was a male though I don't remember enough to describe him. He looked a bit surprised to see all of us standing there but he didn't say anything and just got out and left.

CM SECRETT, CM BATTERBEE, FF BADILLO, FF De St'AUBIN, myself and possibly FF Operator O'BEIRNE all got into the lift. I think between us we had four (4) lengths of hose, a branch, a Thermal image Camera, breaking-in gear (which was an enforcer), IEC Pack and a BA board. An IEC Pack is a green bag that contains vital equipment such as oxygen, basic first aid and equipment and a defibrillator. This weighs about ten to fifteen kilograms (10-15KG). This was not including all of the kit that we were wearing. I remember thinking that the lift could be overloaded with so many of us in it and with so much equipment.

We then made our way to the second (2nd) floor where we all exited the lift to set-up a bridge head. This an area that is set-up two (2) floors below the seat of the fire and considered a safe zone, a BA entry

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control point is set-up. Hose management for fighting the fire will start one floor above the bridge head.

A BA entry point is where BA wearers turn on their sets so that clean air from your tank can be used. You will hand your BA tally to the person with the BA board and this will allow them to monitor the BA wearers air consumption, location, given tasks, who and how long BA wearers have left inside wearing the equipment. It is also a point where radio communications are maintained with the BA wearers. FF De St'AUBIN set up the BA control point and was in control of this.

CM SECRETT and FF BADILLO started hose management which is where they bowl out lengths of hose and plug it into the dry riser outlet one floor below the fire floor connecting the branch ready for the BA crew to take to the fire floor. CM SECRETT and FF BADILO were running the lengths of 45mm hose and decided to connect to the fourth (the fire floor), they are both highly experienced firefighters and I believe they could see the staircase leading up to the fourth (4th) floor and that the fourth floor lobby itself was completely clear and safe. I believe this because we discussed their role after the incident.

They set everything up including breaking in gear which was waiting for us outside Flat 16 ready for us to go in with the BA sets. This again saved time making the process quicker and also prevented additional usage of air for both Charlie and myself. BA wearers are not allowed to start up and commit anywhere else other than the BA entry point.

We waited a moment to let crews deal with their tasks. It takes a short while to bowl out lengths of hose in a narrow area such as a staircase and 'snake them' to prevent them becoming a tangled mess. As an experienced appliance driver I am also aware it would take a moment for the driver to set into the hydrant securing a water supply to the appliance and then set the appliance into the dry riser at the base of the tower to charge the rise with water. On a more extreme scenario, a few months earlier we attended a fire on the twenty seventh (27th) floor of Trellick Tower and the BA crews were waiting for about twenty-seven (27) minutes for water to work and almost ended up in a situation of not having enough air to enter the flat and fight the fire. Due to the height of Trellick Tower it has a wet riser, so all we should have had to do was plug into an outlet, open the valve and receive water immediately, however the pump within the building failed. This meant that crews had nearly run out of air by the time we got the pump running and water became available. Firefighters cannot enter a flat on fire without water. This fire remained contained within the flat as it was designed to do as we would expect it to.

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Everything was ready in a very quick time as we heard a shout down the stairs saying it was set up so we started our sets up and gave our tallies to FF De St'AUBIN who by this time had set up the entry control point. Charlie and I then made our way up the four (4) flights of stairs to the fourth (4th) floor.

The stairs were completely clear and you wouldn't have thought that there was a fire in the building. I do not remember seeing any numbers on the stairs to indicate which floor we were on.

As we arrived on the fourth (4th) floor lobby area there was no smoke or any sign of a fire. Flat 16 was located across the landing in the corner. I can remember it had a red door with the number sixteen (16) on it. There was no sign of fire, heat or smoke coming from the door. I think that the door was a normal modern front door but I can't remember a lot more of how it was made other than the fact that it was red.

Close to the door, the uncharged branch together with the enforcer had been left on the floor ready for us to use. I had a look through the letterbox of the flat and I could see smoke in the hallway and could just make out a room at the end of the hallway so visibility appeared pretty good. I confirmed with Charlie that I could see smoke. I am not sure if Charlie looked through the letterbox himself. At this point the branch still wasn't charged so we waited until it was. This means that the water hadn't made its way to the branch from the hydrant to the appliance and then pumped under pressure (10 bar) into the dry riser outlet for it to be ready to use. This is not unusual given my earlier explanation of the process.

We waited about thirty (30) to forty-five (45) seconds which felt like a lifetime and it was then charged. I had the TIC and Charlie had the branch. Charlie pulsed the front door with the branch. Pulsing is where you spray water on to an area to cool it down. Charlie pulsed the front door to see how hot it was, there was no sign of any heat or blistering from the door.

At this point we knew we were at the right flat because of the number 16 on the door and the smoke I had seen through the letterbox so I used the enforcer to gain entry. It took two (2) hits for the door to open but as soon as it did, black smoke billowed out and I thought "Ok.. We've got something now getting hold here."

We headed down the hallway following the left hand wall heading towards the room ahead. I did not experience any increase in temperature and the recording on the TIC will show this. I had the TIC which you use by pointing it and viewing the screen – it will give you a visual image of the room by reading heat. This enables you to see various levels of heat in areas where your eyes can't so this is useful when

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you are in smoke filled rooms. We came to the first room which was what I believed to be the living room. The door to this room was already open. We entered this room and with the aid of the TIC I checked around. I could see that there was no fire within that room and we also establish that there was no one within the room so we left it and returned to the corridor/hallway. I believe that the windows in the room were closed. The TIC will show this process.

We made our way back and continued along the hallway keeping to the left hand wall. This meant that we were maintaining our sense of direction and we were also methodically searching the property.

We came to a closed door. I was not sure whether this was a small room or a cupboard on our left, But Charlie identified it as a cupboard. We continued to search along the left hand wall. The thickness of the smoke had begun to change quite rapidly. Conditions were certainly deteriorating from what I witnessed looking through the letterbox and even from leaving the living room only moments ago. I knew the fire was really starting to take hold somewhere. What began confusing me was that despite the rapid increase and thickness of the smoke, there was absolutely no increase in temperature which you would usually find for that level of smoke.

To keep our sense of direction and continue in a methodical way to try and find the fire as we still did not have any firm indication where it was, we kept to the left. We reached the end of the hallway which was only a further couple of metres and saw two (2) closed doors. One (1) was on the left and one (1) was on the right and they were opposite each other. At this point it started warming up a bit. I would describe this as the same feeling you get when you go on holiday to a hot country and get off the plane for the first time. That was the temperature difference between the ends of the corridor. It still did not seem hot enough for the amount of smoke that was now filling the hallway though. In my experience, I can usually tell where a fire is because of the heat coming from the room that is on fire and it is possible to experience a significant increase in temperature in that direction but I was not getting that here, and this is what I was finding confusing. The information recorded on the TIC will show this.

The last room on the left was a bathroom which we checked and this was also clear, no fire or any casualties within it. This left us with opposite door which was at the end of the corridor on the right opposite the bathroom door.

Visibility had now gone down to absolute zero in the hallway. I could no longer read the screen on the TIC as the smoke was so thick and black. Conditions were without doubt deteriorating yet there was still

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no real increase in temperature. I then swapped with Charlie and took hold of the branch and he now had the TIC. The reason we swapped equipment is because the corridor was narrow. I was already behind Charlie and closer to the other door opposite meaning I was in a better position to get it. For us to swap position would have been difficult and we may have got tangled up so it made sense to simply swap roles.

Once in our positions Charlie then cracked the door open and as I poked my head inside I could see a forceful curtain of flame on my left from about 2-3ft above the floor along with thick black smoke engulfing the room (I describe it as a curtain of flames as that is what the fire looked like; a curtain). As I opened the door I remember hearing a gushing sound, like a gas burner. The curtain of flame was orange in colour, not blue which I would expect with gas but the flames seemed like it was under force. What surprised me was there was still a lack of heat and I thought it was weird. There was not the level of heat I would expect to find in a room that was on fire. Usually when you crack a door slightly the heat you experience increases a lot but this didn't happen. I shouted to Charlie stating we've found it. I firstly pulsed the ceiling with the branch to reduce/cool down the gases in the room, you have a lot of un-burnt gases escaping out of the room so by pulsing them, it cools them and also protects our escape route. The forceful curtain of flame on my left began from about two (2) or three (3) feet above the floor and was strangely just disappearing into the ceiling. This is certainly not normal for a fire in a room. In my experience when you have a fire in a room, the flames usually rise and lick across the ceiling, you can feel immense heat. It wasn't doing that, it was going up under force and then neatly disappearing. Following pulsing the ceiling, I then hit the flames with the branch but nothing happened. There was no steam and it had no effect on the fire. I thought that this was really weird and told Charlie to close the door. Usually there is additional heat when you start hitting the fire with water as the effects will fill the room with steam, again increasing the temperature further but this wasn't happening.

I said "Charlie, let's do this again" and he cracked the door open again. I narrowed the cone on my branch slightly and directly hit the fire area moving left and right with the water for about three (3) or four (4) seconds but nothing was happening. By narrowing the cone on the branch it gave a slightly narrower spray of water. There was still no steam reaction, or any effect on the fire and I didn't know what was happening. I have never experienced anything like this before. Usually you put water on a fire and even if it doesn't go out, you at least have an effect on it and also the conditions within the room change. I was having no effect on the fire or disturbing the conditions within the room from the water application at all.

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I told Charlie to shut the door again. I explained what was happening. I knew that I was breathing heavily which means you can use up your air quicker. I said "gauge check" which means you check how much air you have used and how long you have left before you have to return to the bridge head. We hadn't dealt with the fire yet so I thought it would be a good idea to swap and help conserve my air and we could carry on attempting to fight the fire. This would also better enable me and watch more closely to what was happening in this room. We were unable to read our gauges due to the thick black smoke causing zero visibility however Charlie agreed and we swapped, with Charlie taking the branch. It is quite usual to rotate within your pair, especially if one is using their air faster than another. It means you both use your air evenly and can stay fighting a fire for longer. As we always enter fires in pairs, you leave in pairs, even if you have a lot more air left than your partner. Swapping prolonged the amount of time we had left in the flat.

I said something along the line of "Let's just get in there and try and put this fucker out." To Charlie. I now cracked the door open and Charlie pulsed the ceiling. I remember thinking that it can't be gas as the flame, although forceful, was orange in colour and gas tends to burn with a blue flame. We then entered the room and Charlie opened the branch and said "it's out". I must admit I was rather surprised. After a few moments I could now see the screen on the TIC again so I started looking around using the TIC to check the fire was indeed out and also looking for any hot spots that could reignite that would need cooling down. As I looked around I realised that we were in the kitchen as I could see the worktops and kettle on the side. The TIC will show this. There was still a lack of heat and I thought that this was really weird when comparing this to the level of smoke generated. I remember thinking how nothing had pyrolysed which made sense in that it confirmed to me that the room temperature was not hot. I primarily checked around the room, the footage on the TIC will show this. Charlie was also checking the general area of the fire.

There was no further damage to the rest of the room as I looked around.

The room began to clear really quickly of smoke. Charlie had moved over towards what I now know was a window and had pointed the branch out of the window. He had sprayed a wide cone of water outside. This essentially draws anything behind the branch out of the window and will assist in drawing smoke out of the room quickly using the Venturi principle and it was working very well.

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Charlie said "it was the fridge and I've put it out". I then looked at the fridge and remember seeing that the top twenty five (25) to thirty (30) percent was blackened. I thought that there had been a lot of smoke for just the top part of the fridge. It was at this point I saw the window opening and what Charlie was doing to draw out the smoke in the room.

I think it had taken about 30 seconds to a minute from when we first opened the kitchen door to the time the kitchen fire was extinguished. It is really hard to tell how long it took as my adrenaline was pumping and I was concentrating on what was in front of me. The exact time will be recorded on the TIC. In total it took perhaps about five (5) to six (6) minute from receiving the initial call to dealing with that kitchen but impossible to gauge correctly.

The room continued to clear really fast. As I was looking around and visibility increased I became confused as the location of the fridge was not where I saw the forceful curtain flame. It was more to the right. I noticed a single candle like flame just flickering and dancing in the corner of the room, at the top of the wall by the ceiling above the window opening. The flame was orange in colour. I thought that is really weird so I pulsed it with the branch and put it out. I then looked more closely at where this flame had been and could see no sign of charring, blistering and bubbling, the paintwork was not blackened in the area above the window. It was completely clean. There was no sign of any holes, spread of fire travel which made no sense to me.

I realised that where I had seen the curtain of flame was in fact where the window had been. The window and frame were no longer there and it had completely dropped out, leaving a hole in the wall. I carried on following the line on the ceiling to above the fridge and then noticed in the corner of my eye an orange ember fall outside the window area so I looked out of the window to investigate what this was. Below where the window should have been was a ledge, bench, table or box. It wasn't hot or damaged and it could take my weight. This suggest to me that it had not been compromised by any fire so I knelt on this and leant out of the hole to look at the outside of the building. I could see that the two pointed sections on the outside of the building (I have drawn an arrow on them on DRB/3) were on fire. I immediately shouted "Charlie tell them that it's going outside".

I continued to lean out of the window, I asked Charlie for the branch, I then narrowed the cone to more of a jet to aid projection and started hitting the area on fire with a forty five millimetre (45mm) jet which is quite a sizeable piece of hose. I was probably four (4) to five (5) feet away from both of these vertical

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sections that ran from the ground floor to the top floor yet the water was having no effect even though I was putting a lot of water on them both. I could see the fire was creeping up these vertical sections but I could not get water underneath the panels covering the outside of the building. I could not knock these panels off or clearly see underneath them all. I didn't know at the time that these panels are referred to as cladding.

I could see that the fire was slowly creeping up these two pointed vertical sections of the building but I could not see exactly how far up it had travelled as I still had my BA set on so my view up was restricted and I was leaning out of a fourth (4th) floor window with the branch.

I'm not sure how long I had been hitting the panels with water but I think it was for some time when I noticed that there was debris on the ground below the tower and some of the items were alight. I then remember looking to the right vertical column from where I was leaning and noticed about eight (8) to nine (9) feet off the floor that I was stood on and around three (3) feet in height above me on the outside from where I was leaning a piece of the vertical section on the protruding point was split open, twisted and warped. I'm not sure what had caused this but it appeared as if something had exploded or popped causing the panel to push outwards causing a hole. Unfortunately I couldn't lean out any further than I was to examine it closer, it was too far away and four (4) floors up in the air. I wanted to get some water into this area but I couldn't do this either due to the angle I was at. I remember Charlie grabbing hold of my BA set belt as I was leaning so far out and I guess he was worried I might fall out the window.

I know that Charlie and I had swapped over at points but I can't remember the exact sequence. I do know that the whistle on my BA was now sounding which meant that my air levels were low and we should have already returned to the BA entry point located at the bridgehead and close down. We had already stayed longer than we should have done but I did not want to leave this position as it was not a long and complicated route back to the entry control point, the flat was quite clear of smoke now and also I didn't feel we had made any difference to the fire yet and I was determined to keep trying.

I did not have comms attached to my breathing apparatus set to communicate what we had been fighting on the radio but Charlie had been doing this. I assume he had been trying to call FF De St'AUBIN who was managing the radio channel for the BA crew at the entry control point on the second floor. As I didn't have comms I couldn't hear any response as it was coming through Charlie's earpiece. At any incident you will usually have two radio channels in use. Channel six (6) is for the BA crews whilst channel one

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(1) is for the incident commander and all other traffic. The BA crews then communicate with the BA controller who should be stood with another fire fighter that is on channel one (1). This means that any vital communication can be passed between all parties. I do not know at what point Charlie was successful in passing the information on to the communication officer as I was attempting to fight the fire on the outside.

I don't remember exactly what was said by Charlie whilst he was on the radio or who he spoke with as my focus was on the fire outside and aiming the branch at the fire. However, I remember him trying to explain to someone that the fire had gone outside and how it was spreading. The radio communication was poor within the building and it was a struggle for people to hear you. This isn't a problem just relating to this incident, our radios are old and are often poor as is the out-dated and unreliable system attached to our breathing apparatus whilst we are trying to complete our job. Usually high-rise towers seem to have problems but I'm not exactly sure why. Possibly the signal is blocked by the thickness of the concrete but I don't know.

Other than FF Bills who was pump operator and FF De St AUBIN operating BA Entry Control I do not know what other fire fighters were doing elsewhere as I had been concentrating on the task in front of us. However speaking with FF Operator O'BEIRNE a number of days later he mentioned at the same point in time as he heard us breaking into flat 16 he was located one floor above, the fifth (5th) floor, the residents directly above Flat 16 were saying their kitchen was on fire. This suggests in the early development stages of the fire it was able to jump floors rapidly and extremely easily on a concrete tower originally designed with containment in mind. After some time of whilst sounding, another crew of two (2) came in wearing BA. I think the crew were from Hammersmith but I can't be certain. We gave them a short brief and told them that it was alight outside and what we have done. We could no longer attempt to fight the fire as our air was running low. We then left the flat to return to the bridgehead, leaving our hose with the additional crew of two (2) in BA now in the kitchen. At the time Charlie and I left the flat there was no fire within it and the room was more or less clear of smoke.

We did not search the rest of the flat as our air was low and we had already gone past our turn-around time and needed to return to the BA entry control point. I do not know if the crew that replaced us searched the flat again.

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I think that the TIC records and I believe the footage has been downloaded and looked at. I was not involved in downloading it and I have not seen the footage. I do not know where the footage is stored.

As we left the flat I noticed that the landing to the flat had become smoky although nothing unusual considering the front door to the flat has been open and smoke would escape into this area. It was still clear enough to be able to see clearly and nothing like how the smoke in the flat had been.

The stairwell was still completely clear of smoke between the fourth (4th) and the second (2nd) floor. Once on the second (2nd) floor we reported to the BA control, which was FF De St AUBIN. We closed our sets down and he returned out tallies to us. We then made our way back to the ground floor to get out of the building.

As we were going down the stairs to leave the building there were other crews in BA waiting to go up. I did not speak with anyone to check if they were aware the building was alight outside. But by the way everyone was reacting it seemed obvious that they were aware of this fact. I saw WM O'KEEFE from G33 Kensington fire station, I think between the second (2nd) floor and first (1st) floor. There was a definite and without doubt raised level of tension. WM O'KEEFE told Charlie and I to do a fire grade A test. This means we needed to strip out BA equipment down, change our cylinders and get them ready to enter the building again. He was with other BA crews and was starting to commit them and get them ready to do tasks inside the tower. This suggested to me that they knew the building was alight elsewhere and Charlie had got his message across. There was a heightened anxiety amongst everyone there.

As we went down the stairs, they remained clear and free from smoke right down to the ground floor. As we went outside, Charlie was immediately pulled away by somebody else to help them to complete a task, or a number of tasks. He didn't even have time to drop his set. This left me on my own so I went to see the pump operator Billsy to check he was ok and to see if he needed a hand getting anything else set-up. He told me that everything was set up and that the job had been made to a twenty (20) pumps. I said "Really?" and went to have a look at the tower to the East Side to get a better look at what was going on where I had been working and why the amount of extra appliances had been requested.

I looked at the tower on the East side, close to where the appliance was parked. As I looked at the tower my jaw dropped. The fire had gone from what was reported as a kitchen fire, to being breached externally and it had now spread right up to the top involving twenty (20) floors. I think that I was looking at either the second or the third vertical column on the tower. At this stage the fire had not spread horizontally but

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it certainly had travelled vertically, all the way up to the top. Because of the make pumps twenty (20) request, I knew that there were loads of resources on the way to help but at that very moment we were well short of personnel.

Billsy then shouted that there was a branch on the floor but no-one available to use it. I still had my BA set on but ran over and grabbed the branch and begun a covering jet on the East side of the tower, on the area to the left of the fire, standing more towards the South corner. This process is where you put water in to an area to try and prevent the fire spreading. I was not trying to put the fire out as this could be very dangerous for crews within the building. I used the jet and aimed left, right up and down onto the flats across many floors next to the section as high as it could go which I thought was about seven (7) floors up. The water pressure was fantastic and I remained very close to the tower to ensure the height I could reach was the maximum.

I have since seen a video online that shows a jet of water hitting the tower. I believe this jet to be coming from my branch and hose. This appears to be hitting floors higher than I initially thought. I have forwarded the video to DC ROUSE via secure email.

After some time of doing this I remember seeing the fire starting to spread horizontally and down at the top of the tower. It was rapid.

I did not have a view of the exit at this point so I am not sure if people were being evacuated. I remember seeing a ridiculous number of people, silhouettes at the windows at various points in time across various floors. At the early stages people weren't shouting for help but looking out of their windows to see what was going on and perhaps asking why there was a fire fighter spraying water on the outside of their building. Whilst I understood that there were a lot of flats that may have been filling up with smoke, I had not realised the rapid fire spread was actually catching other flats alight and had no reason to think this was more than an external fire at this stage although I was aware following my own experience that each flat on each floor from the fourth (4th) to the twenty fourth (24th) may well be filling up with thick black choking smoke. Spraying the water at this height seemed to work so I kept doing this.

I think that even as you look at the East side of the tower now, following the fire, around the eighth (8th) and ninth (9th) floor to the left side, you can see where I was spraying this covering jet the external area appears to remain unaffected by fire. I hope that in some way I at least helped prevent the fire from spreading around this part of the tower, by keeping the surrounding area cool, it somehow stopped the fire

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spreading across from the vertical section and unnaturally down which the fire was happily doing rapidly from the top floor. It isn't natural for fire to spread rapidly down; it likes to travel/draw up. The external area must have been so flammable that it could rapidly travel in any direction it chose.

The biggest problem I had was the falling debris, often items that were still alight, were now starting to fall from the tower. Initially this started with small, light pieces of debris that was floating down every ten (10) seconds or so. At first I was able to move out of the way easily of this material by moving left and right. The problem was that the amount and size of debris increased. For me to have maximum trajectory it was necessary to remain very close to the tower.

I am not sure how long I had been to the left of the east side using the branch but it was for quite some time. Eventually I remember the fire had spread across and down many more floors on the right of the North east corner of the tower. I decided to drag a hose to the corner of the North east side to see the extent and attempt to prevent further fire spread as I believe I had achieved to the south east side. It was tricky due to the debris that had fallen onto it and also a 70mm charged branch is heavy to manoeuvre.

I am not sure whether anyone else had been observing the sides of the tower to see how the fire was moving and spreading. I had been working the east side on my own.

Some of the upper floors were now glowing orange indicating that the fire had taken hold inside the flats. It was notable that many residents were now screaming for help. The problem was that on the right of the east side there were a number of trees. This meant it was more dangerous for me to be as close to the tower because I couldn't see what was coming down from above. I had to move slightly further back but this meant that I could not spray the water as high as I would have liked and also you cannot put the water through the trees as this would be dangerous; you don't know if it's getting through and having a desired affect or what you're hitting with the water for example; firefighting/rescue crews inside or if the flat was on fire your pushing the fire further into the building. Firefighting in its long history remains the same to this day, the way to fight fire is from the inside pushing it out, not pushing it in deeper.

As I finally looked at the North side it was well alight, spreading quickly and again I found myself quite shocked. I remember passing this information on using my hand held radio a couple of times but I don't remember getting a response. There was a phenomenal amount of debris on the ground and a lot of it was alight. Towards the East corner there was a small building or unit that was attached to the tower. This had flames that were about ten (10) feet in height on the roof of the building. I remember thinking "Oh my

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God” and realising how many people were living inside and the amount of firefighters in there and though there is a real danger of the ground floor catching alight here. The last thing we needed was the ground floor to be on fire so I put the branch on to this area and extinguished the flames on this small structure and the surrounding area. I was helped with this by Charlie. I’m not sure where he had been or at what point he arrived back with me, but he helped me in moving the hoses around so that we could extinguish the flames on the flat roof of this structure and the area around.

It was around this time that I realised it was too unsafe to stay where we were. The jet was making no difference to the higher areas of the tower that were well alight. We moved back to a relatively safe position and dropped my BA set, we put them on the ground near to a fence to allow us to move around a lot easier. My gloves were soaking wet so I had to take them off to do this. As I took my gloves off, the inner part of them came out which meant I couldn’t get my hands back inside either of them and I couldn’t wear them for the rest of the night. I left these with my BA set as they were now useless. Unfortunately we don’t carry spare gloves and I knew this would stop me completing a fire ground A test on my BA set and going back in to the building. It also meant that my hands were vulnerable to injury from falling debris. At least twice a small burning piece of debris hit my hands which hurt. I didn’t think that this was bad enough to record it in the medical book though. I retreated back to the East side. I think that Charlie helped me drag the hose back as well. Charlie left me again after this but I am not sure where he went or what tasks he was involved in. I remained very close to the tower to maintain maximum trajectory.

Around the time I returned to the East side of the tower, A213, a turntable ladder from Paddington fire station had arrived and was already set up and working in this area. A turntable ladder can work to a height of about one hundred (100) feet. I don’t know what height they were working at when I saw them but it was definitely higher than I could reach with my jet. I decided to set-up with my branch again just below them and continue to protect the flats to the lower floors of the left hand East side.

I have marked a rectangle on DRB/2 with A21 inside it. The ladder was parked close to the rear of my appliance, towards the South East corner of the tower.

I am not sure how long they had been there but eventually the TL crew from A21 Paddington had to withdraw due to the amount of burning debris falling on to them. They brought the cage of the ladder back in. I retreated under the housed cage, although exposed, it still provided a safer place for me to work

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with the branch and reduce the chance of debris hitting me yet still remain quite close for maximum trajectory.

I think I was probably doing this for about an hour but I can't be certain of time and how long things took on that night. I remember a fire fighter from Chelsea saying "What the fuck are you doing there? Move back!" and I responded and moved back, however I knew that as long as what I was doing was working and I was preventing the lower flats from catching alight as the fire travelled down I would stay there, putting water onto them, so I crept forward again.

The water pressure remained really good. I was working from approximately two (2) lengths of hose that were still connected to G271. I was surprised that the hose had kept its integrity as it had a lot of hot and sharp debris that had fallen resting on it. It is not unusual for a hose to burst with a lot of hot sharp material falling on it. Eventually it just got too dangerous for me to stay. There was now a lot of debris falling around and even onto the cage of A213 that I was using for protection so I decided to withdraw back to FF Bills at the pump which was still under the walkway so provided me with greater protection from the falling debris. Here I learnt from Billsy that this was now a 40 pump fire. Whilst I had been in the area to the East side of the tower I had seen numerous heads appearing at windows in the early stages but I have no idea which flats they were in or enough to describe the people. At one stage I saw an adult male appear at the window and he had all of the lights on in his flat. He was staring out and then walked away from the window and disappeared. I can remember hearing people shouting and screaming constantly for help from in the tower but I don't know where the shouts came from.

Once I was back at the pump I picked up the hose reel that was attached to it. This is a black 19mm hose and the reel is about eighteen (18) metres in length. These are usually used to put out small fires and they operate on a high pressure. I used this to try and protect the A213 turntable ladder and G271 Pump Ladder. I was also concerned about the parked cars and motor bikes close to it because if these were to catch fire we would have another problem as they could compromise our pump which was supplying water to the entire building. I then used the hose to put water on these and the surrounding area to prevent any fire spread. After about half an hour of doing this the hose reels failed. I don't know why, they just stopped working. I have only encountered this a couple of times before during a daily or weekly check of the appliance, both times this has been caused by an air lock but I've never encountered this once a pump has been in operation for some hours so I don't know what the problem was. Fortunately this did not

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affect the low pressure part of the pump which continued to supply water to the tower. I did not wind the hose back in to the reel, I left it where it was.

I can't be certain of when this happened but I witnessed the glass to the entrance to the tower lobby area being smashed deliberately by fire fighters using a sledge hammer. This was likely done to remove any smoke building up in the area and also to make access easier. It looked like it was hard work for them to do this because it was thick glass.

One (1) of the lengths of hose that was being used to supply the tower's dry riser inlet did have a leak caused by fallen debris and was spewing water. The lengths of hose were entwined and covered in debris and after investigating it, it would have been too dangerous to attempt to remove the debris, we didn't have any protection from falling debris to assist in locating which length of hose it was, then to go onto untangle it, go through a process of shutting down 50% of the water being supplied to the dry riser and the crews inside the tower to replace it. The water supply to the tower did not seem to be compromised, there were no reports back to FF Bills that water was failing in the dry riser so the decision was made by FF Bills and myself to leave it in place at that time.

Whilst I was in this area I remember seeing people coming from the direction of the tower, but I can't be certain of what location they were coming from or what they looked like. A crew of firefighters had brought out an unconscious male. Also around this time a crew carried a male and placed him under the walkway on the nearside of the appliance G271. I was also aware that this person had jumped from the tower. Firefighters had moved his body and notably one of his legs was missing. It was mentioned that he brushed a firefighters Breathing Apparatus set he/she was wearing upon landing narrowly missing them full on. He was already deemed deceased prior to being moved and he was covered over with a salvage sheet shortly after. I know he was a clothed male but I do not remember enough to describe him.

As the hose reels had failed I ventured up the stairs to the top of the walkway to see if I could assist any other crews there. There were lots of member of the public on the stairs and on the walkway just hanging around and sometimes getting in the way. There were also lots of police officers as well. I could also see that lots of debris was falling in this area too.

Once at the top of the stairs I met with A21's Watch manager though I cannot remember his name. A21 is the call sign for Paddington Fire Stn. He explained that he wanted to get a jet working on the walkway level, hitting the south side of the building. In order to do that, he wanted me to get the ground monitor.

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A ground monitor is like a branch but you have two (2) hose lines connecting in to it. It also has a tripod so that you can position the monitor on the ground and direct the jets where you need them and the monitor can then be left and you don't have to sit there holding it. It is good for dangerous places as someone doesn't have to constantly monitor it.

A21 Governor pointed out where a ground monitor could be found which was close to where I had been working to the east side of the tower in front of A213 TL under the debris so I went to get this with FF Bills assisting in keeping an eye out for me and returned to the upper level with it and handed it over. A couple of other fire fighters then fed hose down from the ground monitor. I took the end of this and handed it to FF Bills for him to plug this into the pump and I explained it was for the ground monitor. I cannot clearly remember but I think Billsy removed the branch I used for the covering Jet on the east side of the tower and then used that outlet on the pump to supply the monitor.

After the ground monitor was plugged in, I took a very wide berth to collect my BA set from the fence area at the north east corner of the tower and bring it back to the engine. Once I had collected it, I left it on the near side of the appliance. I remember thinking that I didn't want it just lying around as there was a cylinder attached to it.

I can't be certain but I think it was around this point that I felt exhausted and needed a breather. I remember walking away from the East side of the tower towards a grassy area. This is the grassy area that is close to the leisure centre. As I was stood on the green, a Manager from the Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) approached me. By coincidence, he was hoping to speak with the first fire fighters that had entered the tower. I remember saying that despite all of the fire fighters present he had found me. I gave him details of what I had seen when I had been in the flat. Because I had spoken with FIU I then learned the salvation army canteen van hadn't set up yet so I didn't have the break that I was hoping to have. I do not remember the name or rank of the person from the FIU.

I headed back towards Billsy and around this time I remember seeing a number of riot police with shields running up which shocked me at first and I thought that some members of the public must be kicking off, which shocked me. I then realised they had not arrived to deal with trouble but had come to deliver the shields for us to use for protection by placing them above our heads to protect fire crews and any members of the public from falling debris as they moved around outside of the tower in the open. I

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thought instantly that I wanted to help with this so made my way over to the area. As I was doing this, I met FF BADILLO who was also making his way over to help.

There were a number of riot shields on the floor so I picked one up. FF BADILLO also picked one up. A crew manager told us that another exit had been opened up on the West side of the tower, close to the South corner. I am not sure if they were fire exits. I think this was now the only way in and out of the tower as the main entrance was now too dangerous to use. The one (1) set of stairs within the tower was still in use but I had no idea to what level.

I was then asked to take fresh fire crews in breathing apparatus from the cover of the walkway or the crews lined up waiting along a wall to the west side to the tower into the tower and then remove used BA crews exiting the tower back to a safe area. I would do this by holding the shield above my head and also over the head of one other fire fighter. There were two Watch managers strategically positioned and permanently watching the tower and falling debris, we would wait until we got the go command before making our runs. On one occasion FF BADILLO and I had to help a family out from the base of the tower who had been rescued from the above floors and ran them to the safety zone located on the west side of the tower. I am not sure what time of day this was but it was daylight. There was an adult male, and adult female and a child. The child was about three (3) years old. I just remember saying to the little girl "you'll be alright, you're home and dry now, safe" as we were carrying out the run to a safe zone. The girl was clearly in shock and terrified. That was the only interaction I had with any of the victims that night.

In total I think both FF BADILLO and I did about thirty (30) runs but can't be sure of the exact number. The runs were between walkways, to the tower exit and back. We were protecting crews coming out, crews going in and I remember running another branch in to the tower at one point. I was also tasked with taking messages between two (2) different Watch Managers one positioned in the basement the other outside. I do not know the names of the Watch Managers or which station they were from. These were all verbal messages and I was tasked with these because the radios were not working and some communication was not taking place between crews inside and outside of the tower. I can't remember most of the messages but they were similar to "water on command" or "can you run another jet to...". This did slow down the whole process but the information needed to be passed along somehow. With improved radio communications, firefighters could have concentrated on the task at hand and reduced the risk of danger to themselves whilst running messages between officers.

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Completing the runs was very scary. There were sharp edges everywhere, trip hazards galore, things constantly falling from above both around and on to us clattering the shields held above our heads, it was just a really very dangerous place to be but the adrenaline must have kicked in. it had to be done. At the base of the tower there were many firefighters located and waiting to be committed. In my twenty seven (27) year career I have never seen fear in the faces of firefighters as I saw that night. At some point, I jarred my back whilst running back and forth with the riot shield. This was due to continuously running with the shield held above my head. I did not get any medical treatment for this there was no time and continued working.

Many fire fighters began to get anxious that the building might come down. The main reason I thought this was that the building had been burning like a train for five (5) or six (6) hours and the integrity of it may have been compromised. We were down to two (2) side doorways located on the west side/south corner areas as the main entrance located to the front (south side) had been compromised and deemed unsafe for some time. As FF BADILLO and I waited in the ground floor area to complete another run we witnessed one of those doorways becoming blocked by very large pieces of debris fallen from above. it was blocked up and about shoulder height. The debris, some hot, sharp, and even on fire, was surrounding the tower and was on average at least three (3) feet deep. We were down to one way in and out. This basement area of the tower was becoming a little smoky. I did not have any other indication that the building was unsafe other than the falling debris, on the odd occasion I did look up from outside I was still too close to be able to see the structures integrity. It was just a concern I had that it may be unstable. There were two Watch Managers watching the tower from the South West and West side and there were more than likely other watching the tower. I had 100% faith in my colleagues to be watching the integrity of the building from a better vantage point than any of us had.

Around this time I was now feeling really exhausted. A Salvation Army van had turned up and was giving drinks and food out to fire fighters. I had a break and then went back to doing the runs with the riot shields again. I remember that whilst I was having a cup of tea I was stood under the walkway and firefighters had jerry cans with fuel for our appliance. The pump had been on all night supplying water to the tower which meant it was low on fuel and it needed filling up again.

At some point, other than it being daylight I can't remember when, WM DOWDEN and four (4) or five (5) others disconnected the damaged hose that had been compromised and was feeding the dry riser and

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replaced this with a new length of hose. Again both FF BADILLO and myself used the riot shields to assist with some form of protection for them whilst carrying this out.

There were numerous ambulances from the London Ambulance Service (LAS) on scene but I didn't have any dealings with them directly. I don't remember them arriving and it suddenly seemed that there were loads of them there. Without me noticing it seemed that the whole world had turned up to help.

Around half past eight to nine o'clock in the morning (08.30 hours to 09.00 hours) some said "all those from North Kensington are being pulled off" and we were being relieved. We all met up with each other and following instructions from Commissioner Dany COTTON we returned to our fire station to write some initial notes about the incident.

The notes I prepared I have handed to DC ROUSE and I exhibit these as DRB/1.

Whilst I had been in the tower, the only members of public that I saw were the adult male in the lift when I first arrived on scene and the family I escorted out. I think there had been ten (10) to fifteen (15) people on the south side main entrance of the tower just hanging around when we got there but I can't be sure on numbers or what they were doing as we had a job to get on with. I don't think that they were watching the fire and they were just dotted around outside, not congregating anywhere in particular.

Looking back with hindsight, I believe that the fire quickly began to spread outside, most likely as soon as the fridge exploded (as reported by the resident of flat 16) and even though I initially thought it was contain from my glance at the window when getting off the appliance, I believe it is highly likely the external insulation/cladding was alight before we arrived. With the amount of smoke that was present, particularly as conditions deteriorated, it would be reasonable to expect that it should be accompanied with a lot of heat together with a fair amount of both direct and radiated heat damage within the kitchen if it was a simple contained internal fire that grew and ultimately broke out of the room.

Visibility in the hallway went down to zero. As Charlie and I got to the end of the corridor, I should have felt what I describe as a heat tingle on your skin towards the direction of the fire giving a clue as to which door the fire is behind but I didn't have it. I couldn't see anything showing on the TIC to suggest the fire was behind that door.

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I think that when I first looked into the kitchen area of flat sixteen (16) and saw the curtain of flame, it was outside of what I now know was the window. I put water on the flames but in reality I was hitting the glass of the window whilst the actual fire was located on the opposite side of the glass, externally. This could explain why I had no reaction upon water application including a steam reaction.

This would also explain why the curtain of flames under some force that I saw were not curling and licking across and around the ceiling; because they were external. This would also so on to help explain why I experienced no real heat. Ultimately the heat was not transferring into the flat yet somehow the thick black smoke was quickly and easily entering and filling the flat from the outside.

I believe I must have knocked the window out on my second attack and this changed the dynamics of the fire. Possibly some of the debris fallen to the ground outside not only included the window frame but also the insulation and the cladding that was alight directly below the window that was creating what I describe as a curtain of flame. When the window fell out it may have taken a piece of cladding and insulation that was alight with it causing this fire curtain to suddenly disappear. There wasn't any smoke rising from where I was working the jet as I attempted to extinguish the external pointed vertical sections that would indicate to me some form of combustion directly below the window.

I have never seen a window and its frame fall out in this way before. The hole for the window frame was about four (4) feet long and three feet (3) tall. The bottom of the frame would have been roughly around waist height. From what I remember, the hole looked like it was ready to have a new window put in. Further evidence that the fire was external was the fact there was no damage to the paint on the wall either above or below the window are that I noticed although I did mainly concentrate on the area above where the window frame would have sat. It is perfectly reasonable to at least expect some form of damage to the internal part of the decoration on the wall above the fire, but here was absolutely none, the plaster and paintwork remained untouched.

Below the window was a box or unit and it was still safe enough to take my weight and allow me to lean out to put water on the external fire. It wasn't warm, or weakened in any way from radiated heat as you would expect being directly below a fire so again another indication that the fire was external.

I have never seen a window drop out with such ease like this particularly with the only fire damage located in the room being the top 25-30% of the fridge which positioned just right of the window. I will now mention retired FF Michael FREDERICKS who was not at this incident. The following week after

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the fire, Fire fighter FREDERICKS visited the tower with a senior officer to look around at the magnitude of what happened that night. I asked him if he gets the chance to look at flat 16, ask where the fridge was located within the kitchen and then identify if there was a vent. FF FREDERICKS confirmed to me that there was indeed a vent above where the fridge was located.

I believe the candle-like flame I witnessed was caused by the flammable gas that was contained within the fridge. When the fridge exploded as the owner stated, I think the gas and flame travelled into the vent/extractor located above the fridge catching the external insulation covered by cladding alight.

I have noted a plan of the flat of DRB/3. I cannot be certain where flat sixteen (16) was in relation to the stairs and lifts so I have drawn this as best as I can remember. On DRB/3 L denotes what I believe to be the Living Room. B the bathroom, ? the cupboard and K for kitchen. I have drawn a rectangle with F inside it which is where the fridge was located.

Whilst I was in the building I did not hear a fire alarm which is incredibly unusual for a tower block fire. Grenfell Tower used to have a fully integrated fire alarm system. I think that there were break glass fire alarms on every floor in the lobby areas. I do not remember seeing these on the night. Before the tower was renovated it used to have a concierge service desk on the ground floor. It had fire alarm system that linked up to every floor though I can't remember if it linked each flat or just the lobby areas. When I had attended fire alarm calls there previously, the concierge would be able to tell us which floor or area the alert was on.

The modernisation of the building removed the concierge from the tower and as far as I am aware there is no longer an integrated fire alarm system. This meant that fire fighters had limited information upon arrival and had no information about any fires within the building or information on residents with disability or mobility issues.

I do not remember hearing a smoke alarm whilst I was in flat sixteen (16), or the fourth (4th) floor lobby area, the staircases or the ground floor entrance lobby.

There were no sprinklers in the tower but looking back at the ferocity, rapid spread and the thick black smoke I do not think that they would have made a huge difference for residents either. The fire appeared to rapidly spread with such ferocity on the outside of the building and not in a location where sprinklers would be located. For example I don't believe a sprinkler would have acted in flat 16 as there was very

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little to no heat yet the flat became inhabitable due to the thick black smoke. I imagine this repeated itself across many other flats, lobbies and the only staircase. Lots of thick black non survivable smoke and no fire. A sprinkler head most likely would not have actuated. Whilst sprinklers would be a nice thing to have, in my opinion it would be far better to focus on keeping the containment rules in place and not allowing highly flammable material to be externally wrapped around a Hi-Rise buildings, or any buildings come to that.

Whilst I was in the tower I did not experience any issue with water pressure. The dry riser was effective and the water arrived fast.

Once the fire developed and took real hold it was spreading both internally within the flats and externally. In roughly twenty (20) minutes we had a fire that had spread across twenty (20) floors. So many flats alight or filling up with toxic smoke across so many floors. In order for us to have fought the fire effectively we needed to rip off the cladding and fight the fire underneath. However, it would have been the equivalent to chasing a chicken round a farm. The fire was too rapid. As an example, if you set-up a small fire on the back seat of a car and then shut all of the doors and windows and then attempt to extinguish the fire, you can't open the doors or break a window to get to it. The only way is to break into the car to put it out or you are just simply washing the car. That was the situation we faced.

I have never fought a fire where cladding has been involved before. I may have been to buildings where there is cladding but I have not been involved in an incident where the fire has spread outside and in to the cladding. Prior to attending this incident I have not heard of any other building fires where cladding has been an issue. The only fire I have been to in a tower block where the stairwells have not been compromised with smoke is Trellick Tower. This is because the stairwell in Trellick Tower is not part of the main building. Every other tower block fire I have been to, the stairwell becomes compromised. Often the cause of the stairwells being compromised is that fire fighters need to run hoses up the stairs which means some of the doors are left open to accommodate the hoses going through them. When full of water these hose are quite thick. Because the hose s leave the door open, smoke will usually escape up the stairs above the fire floor and there is no way around this. This was the case on the fourth (4th) floor that night as hoses had been run to the lobby area. I am not sure whether other doors were open that I passed through to get to the fourth (4th) floor. These hoses also create a hazard on the stairs for anyone using them.

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I do not have any knowledge of the air/smoke removal vent system in place in Grenfell Tower but I did learn that a vent system was in operation but completely unable to cope with what was required of it. It was so overwhelmed.

All equipment on the engine is checked at least twice a day whilst all personal equipment is checked at the start of each shift. This means ensuring that the vehicle is functioning, including the parts on it like the hose reel and pump. you always check that your BA set is working as well.

On the night of the fire most of my equipment worked well. We were unable to read the TIC at a crucial time. It may be that it wasn't working but I can't say for certain as the smoke was so thick that I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. The high pressure hose on the pump also failed after a while. The worst pieces of equipment on the night were the radios. If the radios had worked we would have all been able to communicate between managers and crews much easier, we would have been able to work more efficiently and effectively and would not have needed to communicate by running messages.

Although we did not have the tallest ladder which based in Surrey immediately available for us to use within London, maybe if we had a similar ladder to Surrey and could have been controlled by remote control, perhaps it may have helped, but I can't be sure.

Post incident, I now know that the crews outside of flat sixteen (16) knew that the fire had spread outside. That is why the covering jet had been set-up that I eventually used on the lower floors.

I do not believe that the hot weather had any impact on the fire that night. I do not think that the wind had any effect on it either.

Since the fire, one of the things that I believe could have helped would have been smoke hoods. This is a small piece of equipment that can be placed over someone's head and it will give them about fifteen (15) minutes protection in a smoky atmosphere. The recipient requires no training to wear this safely. I have completed a staff suggestion request asking if the Brigade could look in to this kit as it is possible more lives may have been saved in Grenfell and certainly more lives will be saved in the future. They would be useful in any environment and not just tower blocks. If we had these hoods, people would be able to see, hear and most importantly breathe therefore they would have a far more realistic chance of making it down twenty (20) to forty (40) flights of heavily smoke logged stairs as was the only option for them at Grenfell to get to a safe area.

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Since the night of the fire I have received a lot of support from the LFB, FBU (fire brigade union) and colleagues. I have received offers for counselling although I have decided not to take these up. Management have been supportive and I have received support from retired colleagues and friends and family. The night after the fire my watch was given the night off and this is described as an “excused absence”.

I have previously been on a section 7(2)D visit to Grenfell Tower. We usually do one (1) every couple of weeks to a building in our area. I think that we were due to do a visit to Grenfell but this was cancelled due to the refurbishment works. I have completed many visits to the tower over the years before the refurbishments. I have never been a member of a fire safety department. The 7(2)D visit forms part of the Fire Fighting Plan. This meant that when we went to the tower I was aware of where the nearest hydrant would be because this is in a strange location and may not be obvious. The hydrant is situated within a wall and above the ground. I also knew where the dry riser would be and how to access it.

I knew that access along Grenfell Road would be limited for our appliances and it always has been. Prior to the academy being built opposite the tower there used to be a large car park there. Access was still an issue even before the school was built and we have never been able to get a fire engine parked right outside the front of the building but didn't need to because we plug in to the dry riser and you have water on twenty four (24) floors. I have previously received training was last year at Hammersmith. This is called Back to Basics training. I went through setting up bridgeheads and similar things.

Usually after every incident we attend, we de-brief which will involve us all discussing what we did, what went well and whether there is anything that we could have done better. This also adds to our training as we learn from each incident.

We receive “real fire” training every year. We do a one (1) day course followed by a two (2) day course. We do not have “real fire” high rise training. I think that we need to have an exercise where we can see how a fire in a high rise would affect casualties, especially when the single escape route has been compromised by heavy smoke logging. I am not sure that this is possible but it would help us understand fires like this a lot more and create an alternative plan of attack. Our previous training has always worked. We rely on the building's design to do its job and compartmentalise the fire. We do not have training on what the process should be if compartmentalisation fails. I am not aware of any time that compartmentalisation has failed in a tower block fire though I knew of occasions it has failed in houses

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that have been converted in to flats but not in a tower block. When we initially attended the incident, except for flat sixteen (16), I was not aware of any fire fighters being assigned to go to any other flats. At this point the assumption was that the fire has been contained according to how the building was designed.

The incident should have been what we call a code one (1) fire where we turn up, put the fridge fire out and it's done. Everyone would stay in their flats. There would be a funny smell for a couple of days but it should have been put out quickly and easily.

If we go to a fire particularly in a kitchen we would ideally like to isolate the electricity and gas supply. However this is not always possible and you may require an expert to come in and assist you. If we can see an isolator then we will shut it off but that is not always possible. This varies from job to job. We will not usually turn up to a fire and immediately turn off the gas unless it was directly involved.

In order to completely shut off the gas supply to a tower like Grenfell we would need a company like the Gas Board to assist. During the night of the fire I do remember seeing some blue flames within the tower which indicated gas was burning within. This was strange as we had been told the gas was already turned off. The blue flames I noticed were occurring several hours into the night in various parts of the building. But I do not believe that the gas in the building contributed to the way the fire spread.

At the start, the Incident Commander was located at the front of the building. They moved during the night but I am not sure where they moved to or when they moved. The incident commander will change depending on the severity of the incident. When we first attended the incident commander was Watch Manager Michael DOWDEN but once the call was upgraded to make pumps twenty (20), this would have changed and been handed over to someone more senior. I don't know who took over from WM DOWDEN.

The Command Unit is a unit that can be mobilised and taken to a major incident. It is a point where they command appliances and resources from. They will request any additional resources that they need and they can advise and tell crews what they would like them to deal with. The incident commander would usually have close links with the unit. I don't think they would necessarily stay in it though. I think that there were four (4) command units at Grenfell but I do not know where they were. I have never heard of or seen as many as four (4) command units at an incident before.

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Until this fire I have always thought that the stay put policy was fantastic and I think it has always worked. It is safer for the residents who are in and around the fire to remain inside because smoke and heat escapes which will compromise their exit routes. It is better to stay put because you have a fire door as your front door along with additional protection with the internal door in your flat. I think an internal door will give about thirty (30) minutes protection from fire. You should have a really long time to be safe before we even need to come and get you.

This is a standard policy that the fire brigade use and is the general advice from the control, the people who are on the phone, giving advice. It is not advice I would normally give as I am on the ground fighting the fire though I have an assumption that people are being given the advice to stay put. I did not give any stay put advice that night as it is not my role.

I do not know who made any decision around the stay put policy in Grenfell Tower either before the night of the fire or on the night of the fire.

The fire brigade used to be a lot more involved in enforcing the fire regulations to buildings. We would complete an inspection to check things such as the correct fire doors were in place, testing self closing fire doors, fire alarms, extinguishers, fire lifts, emergency lighting and numerous other things. This role was taken away from the fire brigade around twenty (20) years ago. I remember one fire fighter saying that eventually this change would lead to massive fires with a lot of people dying. Looking back, this is the result and he was right.

In all of my experience as a fire fighter, I found this fire unique, no matter how much water was applied you could not extinguish the fire from the very early stages. The speed it spread in all directions is unlike anything that I have seen before.

Access to the site has always been an issue, even before the school was built but it is even more difficult since. Whilst it did not add time getting the initial crews and a water supply into the property, oncoming crews and vital equipment would have been delayed as not only are they travelling from a greater distance from all over London but they also they would have had to park further and further away. But if it hadn't been for the refurbishment/cladding then the fire would have been contained and less equipment and crews would have been needed anyway.

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The memories of the Grenfell fire I will never forget are seeing the amount of people standing at windows and the screams from trapped desperate residents and feeling powerless to help them. I knew to expect casualties even though Brigade members were going way beyond limits in one way or another and breaking so many fundamental safety rules in their attempt to rescue people but little thought for their own safety.

I have no doubt that prior to the renovation this block was solid and I think that the fire would have been contained. Even with one staircase, the original design of the building would have meant that the fire would have been contained in the flat meaning the stay put policy would have been sound and we would have been able to attend, put the fire out and go home. The changes made to the building where it has been wrapped in highly flammable cladding meant that the fire could not be contained, it spread rapidly and caused an inferno.

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