

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MCKAY, ANDREW

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 4 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: ANDREW MCKAY

Date: 24/01/2018

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

This statement relates to the 14th June 2017 when I was on duty at Red Watch and attended the Grenfell Tower Fire in Kensington.

I am currently a serving Watch Manager based at Wimbledon (H34) on the red watch, I have been in the London Fire Brigade for 23 years. Throughout my career I have worked at Paddington and the West End for 13 years and then onto Incident Command Training and then a project at Union street before I was posted to Wimbledon as Watch Manager. As a Watch Manager I am responsible and manage a group of firefighters and oversee their welfare, discipline, training and management of the watch at Wimbledon. I regard myself as a competent firefighter.

At my base station H34 we have a Pump ladder appliance H341, a Fire & Rescue appliance H346 and an aerial ladder platform appliance (ALP) H345. Most of my watch are trained in the use of extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA) apart from one firefighter. I have been trained in high rise procedure and rescue. Training for Firefighters in relation breathing apparatus and firefighting procedures and drills is an on-going process throughout the career of a Firefighter.

On the 13th June 2017 I started my shift at 8pm starting at my base station at Wimbledon, I was riding the pump ladder appliance H341 along with driver FF EARL, FF STUART and FF ALLISTON.

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There was a large fire in Golders Green on the Sunday before Grenfell and I remember hearing over the radio Battersea being mobilised for this call and then we followed them a few hours later, this was relevant as the watch manager at Battersea was someone I knew from another watch, we had been to an alarm call at the Centre Court Shopping Centre, Wimbledon at about 1am, I could hear calls on the main scheme radio at this time where WM StuartBROWN from Battersea requesting further information / clarification of what he was attending, the MDT was not showing the full information and the information relayed was that there was a large number of FSG calls coming out to a complex incident, this was the first time I became aware of the incident at Grenfell Tower.

We got back to Wimbledon at about 1.30am, I looked on my phone to see if there was any news about this incident but nothing was reported as yet. Our Fire Rescue unit and ALP were then deployed around the same time I had returned, to a 40 pump fire which is quite unique. At about 4.30am we also mobilised to the same incident at Grenfell Tower, by now the fire was a major incident and on the news.

At about 4.30 am we were mobilised to Grenfell Tower, I was aware this incident was serious as the call was to a 40 pump fire, our ALP and Fire rescue unit were already out and had not returned so I knew it was a major incident.

Our route to this priority call using lights and sirens was from Wimbledon, up to Wimbledon Park Side, into Putney over Putney Bridge and onto Fulham Palace Road and into Hammersmith Broadway then towards Shepherds Bush Road and onto Holland Park roundabout and then up Holland Park Avenue and left into Ladbroke Grove. The first I saw of the fire was when we reached Holland Park roundabout but this was from a distance and I could see that the building was consumed by dirty brown smoke. It was becoming light as dawn was breaking by this time about 5am. Normally on the way to a call I would brief the team on the appliance and put plans and structures in place but as this incident was so large our objective was really to get to the incident and fit into the overall objective which was already commanded at the scene.

As we got into Ladbroke Grove I could not see the tower due to the surrounding buildings, the appliance was parked up on Ladbroke Grove and there were two command personnel in the street. Our instructions were to grab our SDBA sets and take as many BA cylinders we could carry and go up to the base of the tower.

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We made our way through a walkway and onto Bomore Road and towards the leisure centre and up to BA main control where we said that we had BA sets and cylinders, control were asking for EDBA and I said we were trained in extended BA which is what was needed.

We were then asked to set up and test EDBA sets. Once the EDBA sets were tested and ready we made our way to the next point which was on the west side of the building under the walk way near the play area. All of my crew were together at this point, I remember that Paddington's aerial platform was parked on the south east corner.

As we all got near to the building it was more chaotic, there was cladding and debris everywhere, I also saw a deceased gentleman under the walkway covered in plastic sheeting as we were making our way to the BA mustering point, and it was about 6.30am by this time. A ground monitor was set up in the play area, this is a fixed unmanned hose point. There were rumours of people jumping and bodies under debris and burning cladding coming down. I did not hear any specific screaming or shouting at this time as we walked up to the BA mustering point and it was particularly quiet and sterile and there was more firefighter chatter, however as we got to the mustering point it was more chaotic with people running around and Met Police riot squads waiting around. Exhibit AM/1 is a map of Grenfell Tower and the surrounding area which I now produce and shows the general logistics and muster points whilst I was at the scene and before I went into the tower, this is sealed with police exhibit label MPSZ13185008.

The instructions were that EDBA crews were needed and we were going to be escorted by the TSG into the base of the tower. FF EARL, FF JONES, FF STUART, FF PEACOCK and I went into the base of the tower. GM Pat GOLDBOURNE was in charge of BA marshalling and briefing crews, we waited in the lift area for about 30 mins, the lobby area was full of water and the brief which was given by GM GOLDBOURNE was to carry out search and rescue, on the 8th floor there may be hose and to make our up the floors and firefight.

FF EARL was then crewed with another team so I was in a team of four now with FF JONES, FF PEACOCK, and FF STUART. We were then finally committed around 7.30am, we all went up the stair case to the fourth floor, there were other crews not wearing BA doing hose management, the staircase was not smoky during walk up to the fourth floor. There was no bridgehead by this time, BA entry control was on the ground floor entrance on the west side.

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We got to the fourth floor, through a door into a lift area, this is when conditions were worse, the walls were black, and it was hot and smoky. We made our way up the stairwell to the 8th floor, on the way there were several crews ahead and it was getting quite crowded on the stairwell. During the climb up we had to rest a few times due to the heat and amount of equipment we were carrying and I remember resting my arm on the wall and it seem really hot. We carried on up to the 10th floor where we came across a casualty on the stairwell, the casualty was a black female, large build, barefoot she was deceased. There were hoses everywhere and it was very wet, and visibility was extremely poor. I decided to send FF PEACOCK back down to inform entry control not to send further crews as the stairwell was getting really clogged up. I sent him back as we couldn't get through to entry control via radio.

As we got to the 11th floor the door to the lobby/lift are was closed, FF STUART had recovered a hose and branch, and we carried out door procedure on the door to the 11th floor lobby area in order to ascertain the direction of any fire in the lobby area, I was holding the door and FF STUART was in charge of the branch, once it was clear to move forward, myself FF STUART, FF JONES and FF PEACOCK moved around the lobby area towards the left hand wall, we stayed together as visibility was poor. The first flat we came to, I can't remember the number to the flats we went to, FF STUART put a jet of water into the first flat door which hit the door and completely disintegrated, this flat was completely burnt out so we moved onto the next flat. The next flat was more intact, we got through the front door, visibility was much better in this flat and you could see through the windows, no one was found in this flat, I could see that towels had been put on floor near to doors in order to stop smoke getting in by residents. As this flat was clear we all moved onto the next flat, FF STUART and FF PEACOCK were in first, it was very hot in the flat and there were two small fires burning in the hallway, FF PEACOCK came back out the flat and said it was very hot, FF STUART then took over the branch and myself and FF STUART went back in the flat. FF STUART was struggling to get the jet around to smaller fires in the hallway.

One of the bedroom doors was closed, there was a kitchen are further down the hall, then the door to the bedroom opened and an elderly oriental male around 60-70 years old appeared, we told the male to get back in to the flat as the hallway was on fire, I said to FF STUART if he was going to grab the male, FF STUART said he was going to continue with the jet and keep firefighting in the hallway and said for me to grab hold of the elderly male. I then helped the man out of the bedroom and hallway and into the lobby area.

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I said to FF STAURT and FF PEACOCK to stay and continue carrying out search and rescue while I and FF JONES would take the male down to ground control. Myself and FF JONES then made our way down the stairwell, however I decided that as the casualty was walking it would be better if I go back and check on FF PEACOCK and FF STUART to assist them, FF JONES then took the casualty and I went back up to assist FF STUART and PEACOCK.

I got back up to the 11th floor again and located FF STAURT and FF PEACOCK, FF STUART by this time seemed very fatigued so I took over the jet from him and continued with them to carry out search and rescue on the floor. As I went round to the opposite flats they were all badly burnt and I was struggling to get the hose around in order to operate the jet. By this time, we decided to go back down as FF STAURT was very fatigued, I went behind FF JONES and the casualty, I made sure FF STUART was ok and we all then went back down towards the base of the tower with the casualty. The stairwell was full of hoses and we passed the deceased female on the 10th floor as we made our way down, by this time water was cascading down the walls and we were all soaked.

There were no other crews as we made our way down, it took about 10 minutes when we first saw other crews which was about the 4th floor at which point they took the casualty from us, we all then made our way down to entry control. It was about 9am when we were escorted from the west entry point by the police with their riot shields. Exhibit AM/2 is a floor plan of the 11th floor which I now produce and where it shows how we located the casualty we rescued and the flats we went to before going back down to the 4th floor, this sealed with police exhibit label MPSZ13185006.

We all went back to BA main control, the team were all exhausted, FF STUART was particularly fatigued, I felt really dehydrated and went to locate refreshments for everyone. We spent about an hour resting and rehydrating and then served our sets again ready to go back in. after our rest period we all were ready to go back in, again we went back towards the west entry point towards entry control. I spoke to SM LOFT and said we were ready to go back in, by this time day crews were turning up and were lining up to go in, I informed entry control that if they were going to send us back in then to send us in first as we had been at the scene for some time and if we were not needed as there were enough day crew to then release us.

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As other crews arrived we were then not required to go back into the tower so we went to the leisure centre to standby until we were deployed or needed again. We got some further refreshments and waited in the Leisure centre, FF EARL then returned and located us and my crew were all back together.

Finally, we were released by GM Jamie JENKINS located our SDBA sets and made our way to where our appliance was parked passing members of the public on the way who thanked us. We were then tasked to go back to Paddington for de-brief and where there was also counselling services available. I then got back to my base station at Wimbledon at about 4.45pm.

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