

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: PEARCY, ANDREW

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 5 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: A PEARCY

Date: 20/12/2017

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

This statement relates to Grenfell Tower fire on the night and early hours of the 13th-14th June 2017.

I currently work for the London Fire Brigade and have a total of 24 years of service, the majority of my service has been with the London Fire Brigade but I have also worked at East Sussex Fire Service. I am currently attached to Soho red watch (call sign A24) where I am a Crew Manager, I was in a temporary role of Crew Manager (CM) since 2011 but was made substantive CM in 2016.

As a Crew Manager I am in charge of a fire appliance with four crew members. On a normal shift a role call of all personnel on duty would be carried out at the start of the shift, along with equipment and breathing apparatus checks.

At Soho red watch we have three fire appliances (vehicles) call sign A241 and A242 along with an Aerial Appliance which is normally A243 Turntable Ladder but on the night of Grenfell we had a spare appliance which was an aerial ladder platform (ALP) call sign A245. A241 is Soho's pump ladder which has a 13.5 metre ladder and carries slightly different equipment to A242 which is Soho's pump, A242 has a smaller ladder and again carries slightly different equipment.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017 I came on duty as normal at 8.00pm at Soho for a night shift. We carried out role call and ridership's (allocation of vehicles and personnel) were then allocated, I was allocated in charge of A242 along with FF Teresa ORCHARD as my driver and FF Ritchie MITCHELL and FF Terry ROOTS as my other crew members. All my crew were allocated BA (breathing apparatus) and carried out an A test of this equipment and deemed in working order.

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The crew then did their normal firefighter inventory and check of the equipment which entails testing the appliances and equipment to see if it is all in working order this take around an hours and all appeared correct. As an officer I carried my normal administration duties whilst the crew carried out their inventory.

Watch Manager BEALE was allocated in charge of appliance A241 and the ALP A245 was also ready to be deployed.

I remember on the this night we were very busy as is with Soho due to its central London location, we had already been to around six to eight call already from the start of the shift up to around midnight. One of the calls was to a one under (person fallen on the tracks or trapped under a train) at Tottenham Court Road tube station, this took an a hour at this call around 10.30pm, we had also been to a number of fire alarm calls up until about 1am on the 14th June 2017 and also had dinner between this time so we were quite busy from the outset, no BA equipment was used during the previous calls we had been to.

As we had already returned to Soho at around 1am I was thinking of going into a rest period which as a CM we are able to do between midnight and 6.20am, at about 1.30am I was in the locker room at Soho when I heard the call over the tannoy for both appliances A241 and A242 to attend a “make pumps 20” call at Grenfell Tower, the ALP A245 had already been gone to another call in Kensington before 1am. I would normally listen out for my appliance if a call came out and would not normally check the call details for another crews truck but as both truck were being called I then went and checked the details of the call, unfortunately the MDT in our truck was not working at that time which caused a bit of confusion, it had been working previously on the other calls we had been on but it seemed at this time it was not working, the drivers of both trucks had gone to the watch room and got the printed incident calls and they said that both trucks were being order to this make pumps 20 call, so I agreed with my watch manager, WM BEALE to go and double check the details of the call and then check with control immediately on the priority line as there were problems with the MDTs not working. I went to the watch room and got a copy of the printed call which the drivers would have got already had, I then called control immediately who confirmed they required both trucks A241 and A242 to both attend the “ make pumps 20” call to Grenfell Tower. The drivers knew where they were going, they would have looked on the map and knew where Grenfell Tower or Grenfell road was.

Once this was confirmed we started to make our way, I immediately heard on the main scheme radio channel control talking to other pumps and saying they were taking a number of FSG (fire survival guidance) calls where people were trapped and not able to leave the building, I had never heard that many

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before, and I knew the makes pumps 20 call was a serious incident and as I had got a copy of the printed call sheet I knew we were going to a serious incident at a high rise so I started to prepare my team as I knew many people could be trapped.

We turned left onto Shaftsbury Avenue, and through Piccadilly Circus Hyde Park Corner and into Park Lane, then into Cumberland Gate and Bayswater Road and onto Notting Hill Gate and Holland Park Avenue. We then made our way down Ladbroke Grove, Cornwall Crescent, Clarendon Road, Doleford Street, Walmer Road, Bomor Road and into Grenfell Road, the journey only took us approximately 10 minutes along with fire appliance and crew A241 with WM BEALE as officer in charge. Our official arrival time was 1.47am.

Prior to this night I had never been to Grenfell Tower nor had I ever carried out any fire safety in relation to this building, this was the first time I had attended. High rise firefighting is an ongoing continued development training, the last realistic high rise training I received was a two day refresher at Park Royal in January 2017.

During my journey toward the tower from a distance probably about less than a mile away I could see the fire from that distance and realised what we were going to which was a serious incident. On Grenfell Road as we arrived we could not get both our trucks A241 and A242 any further towards the tower due to the volume of trucks and personnel, so we all left the trucks in situ and all dismounted. I could see that the North/East side of the tower, sector 3 and 4 corner was burning ground to top, I got into my CM role and spoke to my crew told them to get BA equipment on, grab hose and to stick together, I told my driver FF ORCHARD to book us in TOA manually due to the MDT issue, our official arrival time was 1.47am.

As we had attended with A242 and WM BEALE we started the booking in procedure and got manual nominal role boards with all crew listed and went to find Command Unit, this was located near the leisure centre. Normally the Command Unit would allocate jobs to crews but due to the serious nature of the incident and scale it was very busy, slightly chaotic and no jobs were allocated and we could not ascertain who was in command at that time, so we handed the manual role boards to command and made our way to the tower to see how we could assist, I was aware later that senior management were at the incident including the commissioner who spoke to crews.

It took about 60 second from our appliances to the tower, I was aware of the tower spit into sectors, sector 1 was south located near the front entrance/lobby area, then sector 2 was west, sector 3 was north and sector 4 was east, exhibit AP/1 is a map I drew of the tower and the sectors, sealed with police exhibit label MPSZ10779780. My watch manager WM BEALE quickly became incident commander for sector 4

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and safety officer. I walked with WM BEALE to sector 1 near the entrance, on the east side I saw Paddington's turntable ladder (A213) which was the first Aerial truck on scene parked on the corner of sector 1 and 4 fully extended to about the 9th floor committed and struggling to firefight due to the amount of debris and broken glass falling onto their cage, also depending on the water pressure they could have reach to about the 15th floor with a Firefighting Jet.

We got to the staging area at sector 1 under the canopy at the front entrance to the building I could see a number of BA wearing firefighter crews approximately 40 queuing to get into the building, another watch manager WM Stuart BROWN from H27 Battersea told me to get as many second set bags, these bags contain spare kit and additional breathing apparatus equipment if crews are going to carry out rescues. I located a few bags from a Paddington and Battersea Fire Rescue units and took them to WM BROWN which were then passed up the line so they could be taken to the bridgehead.

I was still outside which looked like a war zone, I could see the reaction of the firefighter queuing up waiting to go up to the bridgehead which was fear and into the unknown, I had never seen anything like this before. I had shut this out of my mind but recently I remembered and it must have been the adrenaline at the time but as I was stood outside at sector 1 I could hear the noises of screaming and shouting and breaking glass along with falling debris, I'm not sure where the screaming was coming from but I could hear it and it sounded horrific, I could hear on the handheld radio Paddington's watch manager WM COLLINS saying to CM HARRYMAN that they need to get to possibly floor 15 as people were trapped there and CM HARRYMAN replying that he could not reach that floor on his aerial ladder A213 as it could not reach that far, I heard later that people were making makeshift ropes trying to get out of the window, I had been at the incident for about 15 minutes at this point.

WM BEALE had already gone over to the grass area near sector 4 to assist Soho's aerial ladder appliance A245, which is where I then headed towards next after locating some second set bags, as I got to sector 4 I got more visibility and saw the speed of the fire, I could now see that several people at the windows shinning lights or their mobile phone light and waving. As I went over to the grass area where WM BEALE was I saw Soho's aerial platform A245 in sector 4, FF FROST and FF KING started setting up the platform so I went over to assist them. They were trying to establish an area to base the ALP on but there were not many options, normally the ALP would not be secured on grass but after a short discussion it was agreed that the ground was hard and dry due to the summer it was decided to release the jack and set up the platform quickly. There are four jacking points where wooden plates are put on the floor and the jacks are then used to lift the platform up and support the vehicle so the ladder can be extended safely.

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There was no other place to set up in the other sectors and Paddington's ALP A213 was the only appliance in a place where it was in a position to do any aggressive firefighting.

A bank of trees were covering the eye line up to floor three across sector 4, a pumping appliance was then needed but not available as there were problems getting a trucks close to the area, normally each aerial platform has a dedicated pumping appliance, so WM BEALE told another firefighter and I to go and find another truck.

I walked east towards Lancaster Road in search of a suitable pumping appliance and then round back towards Bomore Road and Grenfell Road but could not locate a suitable appliance, as I was walking back towards sector 4 a female member of the public came up to me, she stated that her sister was trapped on the 15th floor, she was very upset, I told her as per the current protocol for her sister to stay put and also said for her stay in contact with her and for her sister to locate another phone and call 999 to say she was trapped, I can't describe this woman unfortunately. I then heard WM BEALE over the radio say that another crew manager had located a pumping appliance, fortunately this was A241 which was a new Mercedes vehicle, and this appliance would have had water on board but would have run out quickly due to the scale of the fire so a separate water supply was needed.

A separate water supply from a hydrant was located near to sector 4 and connected to a 70mm hose via the pumping appliance, however it seemed the water pressure was too low, we needed 2-2500 litres per minute of pressure but was only actually getting about 380 litres per minute, this meant the hydrant was not providing enough water so we asked command if the pressure could be increased. The next obstacle was that the ALP was in tortoise mode which meant the platform and ladder was moving very slowly, normally you can override this from the controls which FF KING tried to do but was unsuccessful, I then tried to fix the problem but could not get the platform out of tortoise mode either.

WM BEALE and I became worried about other crews around the tower due to the falling debris, so we decided to set up ground monitors which are unmanned hoses to assist with the firefighting on sectors 3 and 4. Sector 3 was particularly dangerous as there was lots of falling debris coming down, I could see a raised block of flats at sector 3 about a 100 metres and it looked like you could not get an appliance there but I did see a group of firefighters on a raised walkway near to the raised block of flats trying to assist but there was still a lot of debris falling down toward them, there was also a concern that the building was going to collapse as the fire was no in full flow from about the 5th floor to the top at the corner of sector 3 and 4 which is the northeast end of the tower. It seemed the fire went up and diagonal in a ferocious manner, it felt like we were not getting anywhere. I did then see a man come to the window no further

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description on the 9th floor at sector 3 (east) the light was on, he opened his window, looked out and then closed it again. I could see that the fire was coming from above and across towards his flat, I told WM BEALE we needed to do something and also informed a senior officer of the situation.

As I had taken over and was in charge of operating the aerial platform A245 and due to the issues we were having trying to get the ladder platform to work properly and a suitable water supply onto the tower I decided to tie a high pressure hose reel from A241 pump ladder to the cage on the ALP and at least get some water onto the fire around the flat on the 9th floor where the man was seen at the window, this took about 5 minutes. After a period of time I decided to alter the angle of the lashed off hose reel so in order to get more projection and higher we tied a sealing hook which is a long pole for taking sealing down to the cage on the ALP at an angle and then retied the hose reel branch to the ceiling hook. This was really successful and gave us a much higher projection. This seemed to work and we were able to distribute water around the flats near to where the man looked out of the window. I later learnt from FF Richie VANSTONE CBRN at Lambeth that man I saw at the window on the 9th floor had been rescued, as his flat was intact but his immediate neighbours was completely burnt out.

At this point we had been at the incident for some hours as the natural light was changing a going towards dawn. Throughout the night calls over the main radio channel were heard for fresh SDBA wearers to come forward, CM FROST then took over from me in charge of the aerial ladder A245 so that FF KING and I could grab our BA sets and then find the staging area. FF KING and I walked towards sector 1 where there was a staging post on a grassed area where several firefighters were resting or waiting to go back into the tower, we ignored this area and went to another staging post in sector 2 at the north west corner of the building. FF KING and I waited near a high wall whilst police TSG officers helped crews get into the building. From the high wall at sector 2 FF KING and I managed to make our way into a second staging area at the bottom of a set of steps, as we went in it was chaos with water and hoses. We then made our way to the bridgehead, it took about an hour to get from the outside staging area to the bridgehead, once at the bridgehead on the 5th floor FF KING and I waited to be deployed along with FF REYNOLDS, CM HARRYMAN, and two other firefighters from Brixton.

We were told by bridgehead command SM KAZMANLI to change comms channels to channel 3 due to communication issues. FF KING and I were then told to commit and the brief was to systematically search and extinguish fire from floors 6 to 11, FF KING and I were to start at the 6th floor and the other crew from Paddington were to go the 11th floor and meet in the middle. FF KING and I walked up the stair well with BA on, I passed other crews on their way down, it was still smoky but still clear enough to see, I

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could see lots of hoses and water on the stairwell and the stair well seemed very narrow with no lighting. We got to the 6th floor and picked up a hose however there was no branch and an enforcer, the next step was to locate the dry riser inlet which we did and plugged in the hose and started to systematically search each flat on the 6th floor. Some of the flats on the 6th floor were alight and other just had smoke damage but we did not locate any casualties or residents, normal policy would be to advise residents to stay put and wait to be rescued or evacuate and this is basic advice given during FSG calls. We put out any fire we located and went up to the next floor and carried out the same process. As we went up to the 8th to 9th floor I saw deceased cat and dog and then I also saw a deceased black woman on the stairwell wrapped around the hoses, she was quite overweight and facing down with her feet facing up, we left her in situ and carried on the next floors. Floors 8 and 9 seemed to have much more fire damage, the lower floors seemed less. As we got to the 10th floor FF KINGS automatic distress signal unit went off indicating he was in distress, this normally sends a signal to command as well, I checked with FF KING and he said he was OK. Our time was running out on our BA so we went back down to the entry point at the bridgehead and closed our BA sets and de-briefed. The radio channels had communication issues all night and channel 3 also did not work properly, it worked on the bridgehead but not when we went up to the other floors. We de-brief the bridgehead and confirmed floors 6- 9 were clear apart from the female on the stairwell which the bridgehead were aware of. FF KING and I then made our way out of the building and back towards sector 3 where the Soho aerial platform was, I could see that the whole of the Soho crew were present so we swapped roles with Surrey's aerial platform and left the scene at 11.30am. We all went back to Paddington Fire station where we de-briefed and had refreshment and wrote our notes, counselling was also organised. I got back to our base at Soho at 4pm. The following are items related to my interview which I now exhibit as:

A sketch plan of Grenfell Tower, exhibit AP/1, sealed with police evidence label MPSZ107797870

Original further notes of the Grenfell Tower incident, exhibit AP/2, sealed with police evidence label MPSZ10779783.

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