

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: NELSON, ANTHONY

Age if under 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: ANTHONY NELSON

Date: 10/11/2017

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

This statement concerns my attendance as a fire fighter at the Grenfell Tower fire on 14th June 2017.

On Thursday 2nd November 2017 between 1049 and 1222 hours, I was interviewed by DC Judith KAYE and DC Tony BEACH as a significant witness in relation to the fire at the GRENFELL TOWER on 14th June 2017. This interview took place at West Hampstead Fire Station, 327b West End Lane, London, NW6 1RS. Also present was Greg EDWARDS from the Fire Brigade's Union at my request. The interview was audio recorded and this full statement has been produced from the recording. I have been allowed to review my statement and make any necessary changes before signing it.

I am a Fire Fighter employed by London Fire Brigade. I am currently based at West Hampstead Fire Station at the above address. I have been a Fire Fighter for only seven (7) months at present following a 'career change' from being a Solicitor. I had only been a Firefighter for approximately three (3) months when called to attend the Grenfell Tower Fire which I have been asked to provide information about today. I completed my training in March 2017. During training we learnt a unit on high rise buildings, basically you form a bridge head two floors below the fire floor, from here you base your fire fighting operations where you would go under air and check in and out. We trained to gain experience in a building over a number of floors, it was over 3 or 4 floors up and down stair cases. From March onwards I am under development as a fire fighter which will last approximately 18 months. Until I am fully qualified I have yellow and black diamonds on the sides of my helmet.

In this statement I will mention my Supervisor Greg YEOMAN who was the Crew Manager. Will also mention Fire Fighter Brian FLANNAGAN who was driving and Fire Fighter Luke COOK.

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On Tuesday 13th June 2017 at 2000hrs I started my nightshift at West Hampstead Fire Station. During this shift I would estimate at approximately 0100hrs on Wednesday 14th June 2017 we were called to mobilise for a Fire. At this time we went to the 'Watch Room' as normal and I started to hear information about the fire we were going to attend. The information being received about the fire was reporting it to be a 'twenty (20) pump' incident by this I mean the amount of Fire Fighters and appliances that were being called to it but it rapidly became a forty (40) pump incident and I knew (even in my limited experience) this was to be a very serious fire.

We are a two (2) Fire Appliance station, one (1) of our units was already out, I cannot recall where at this time but know they attended Grenfell Tower after us. I left the station on a Fire Appliance call sign A411 in company with my supervisor Greg YEOMAN, Brian FLANNAGAN and COOK, on route to the fire which I now know to be Grenfell Tower. I cannot remember hearing a lot over the radio on our route to the fire. I did not know the location as it was not on 'our ground' but we were using our MDT which directed us. I cannot recall the journey time but from my contemporaneous notes see that it was from the direction of KILBURN and I remember as we approached the area surrounding Grenfell Tower the streets became busier and on arrival there was lots of other Fire Engines and Police. We were looking around and saying things like 'where is it?' We then turned a corner and saw what I now know to be Grenfell Tower and said, 'oh there it is!' My first thoughts were 'oh F..!' The building looked like something out of a movie. It was like nothing I or even much more experienced Firefighters said they had ever seen before.

We left our vehicle off to one side of the Tower, I do not know the name of the road. We parked the Fire Appliance and then walked towards the main entrance of the Tower. From what I saw fire was issuing from one side of the building from [from] bottom to top. There were people and emergency vehicles everywhere the area was very busy. We attended Command Unit 8 and someone probably Greg YEOMAN spoke to the Supervisor present. I cannot say who this was. I put on breathing apparatus and collected some hoses or equipment. I approached Grenfell Tower from the 'main entrance' I was with my supervisor Greg YEOMAN and FF FLANAGAN and COOK

On entering the building we followed other Firefighters queuing and waiting to be assigned. We were detailed to floor nine (9) flat sixty five (65). We activated our breathing apparatus and gave our key tally to the entry control officer. This logs your air supply time electronically and can therefore raise the alarm for help if your air runs out whilst conducting firefighting. The procedure was being supervised by a male and female Firefighter. I did not know either of them. As we progressed up the single staircase I was

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surprised to realise we did not have access to a Fire Lift. This is a lift that can be accessed and controlled by Firefighters during incidents and assists with the heavy equipment and casualties. I did not see any lift for our use during my time at Grenfell Tower. I am unsure of the reason for this.

The staircase was busy with other Firefighters as we progressed to floor nine (9). I recall it being hot but believe this was more due to my kit than the heat of the building, however it was smoky and the visibility was poor especially between floors four (4) and seven (7). I cannot recall hearing alarms just lots of shouting going on around me. I do not remember if there were hoses on the stairs but remember people being helped or carried by Firefighters. I was holding onto the stair rail as I progressed up the stairs. The smoke was covering the floor signs and the lighting was poor. I recall having to waft smoke away to discover what floor we had reached. There was no illuminated numbers on the walls. I did not recall seeing any 'Fire Exit' signs on the stairways.

On arrival at Floor nine (9) there was a door on the right to get access onto the floor then I put out the hose and someone attached it to a wet or dry rise I am unsure which as I did not see it. I was with my supervisor Greg YEOMAN and two (2) other Firefighters from Soho, I did not know their names and had not met them before.

At this time I saw other Firefighters coming out of Flat 65 with two (2) residents. Initially I thought it was two (2) children but on reflection I believe it was a young mother and her son. A Firefighter may have been carrying the child but I cannot be sure. I cannot really describe them except to say they were both white and the female may have been about twenty (20) years old. I want to say they were wearing pyjamas but I am not sure if this is just what I expected them to be wearing. It all happened so fast and the lighting and visibility was very poor. I believe the young boy may have been using an oxygen mask but I cannot be entirely sure.

On floor nine (9) I believe there to be three (3) or four (4) flats in total. Following the residents leaving via the stairwell we then began knocking on other doors. I saw smoke coming from the door of Flat sixty six (66). The door was then forced by colleagues and I had the 'branch' meaning the leading person with the hose, so led the way into the flat with the hose which had been attached by another colleague. The hose was approximately twenty five (25) meters long and I did not notice any difficulty in water pressure. I progressed into the flat but it was already significantly consumed by fire. I let out safety shots of water in order to attempt to cool the air down around us to try and enable us to proceed. This was not making very much difference. The fire was too intense. I had my crew manager behind me and the other two (2) Soho Firefighters. We only progressed a very short way into the flat approximately six (6) feet in. We

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then attempted to turn right and enter a room but were unable to make much progress, the whole room was pretty much alight. My crew manager and I then attempted to use the thermal imaging camera. This records the differences in temperature within a room. It can also show heat/fire between walls and could identify and direct you to a victim within a room if the smoke was too intense to see them. This could not identify anything as the fire was obviously too hot. I am unsure if it recorded anything and did not take control of the unit following leaving Grenfell. I know there must be a policy for seizing any footage but I am unsure who was in control of this on the day. Each appliance has a thermal imaging camera, I am uncertain if the unit I used was the one allocated to our appliance.

The fire was beginning to 'lick' over our heads a little which is something that you really don't want to happen so we decided to move back out of the flat. The Soho colleagues attempted to lead with the hose also but it was concluded we were not making any progress so closed the flat door and retreated. Our air supply was running low at this point we decided to go back downstairs and out of Grenfell Tower. There again were lots of people on the stairs, casualties and firefighters. I saw my two crew mates, Brian FLANNAGAN and Luke COOKE, they had been assisting on other floors. My supervisor Greg YEOMAN was assisting other Firefighters coming down the stairs with casualties. I am unable to describe any parties or name any Fire fighters. After checking in with entry control Greg YEOMAN and I progressed to the entrance and went to put on another 'cylinder' of air. We class this as our 'wear is over' meaning our session with that cylinder. The cylinders I believe at this point were just a cache of containers somewhere outside as I did not have to go back to the Command Unit. I also had some water. Following this we went to a side entrance of Grenfell Tower and not the main entrance we had initially entered. We were waiting with other Firefighters in a holding area trying to get re-entry into building. During this time Firefighters were coming downstairs, some with casualties. I cannot really recall any details but know some looked very poorly. I could not say who was dead or alive but I was just glad to see we were still rescuing people. We were waiting around for quite a while for another 'wear'. I cannot give any time scales as I was not wearing a watch and was not aware of the time around me. After some time we were told to go outside as we were not going to get a second 'wear' or entry to the building for Firefighting. I believe this was because there were so many additional Firefighters who had now arrived who had not previously entered the building. On receipt of this information we then removed our air cylinders.

For the rest of my time at Grenfell Tower I spent my time doing things to help outside of the Tower. I recall someone (I cannot say who) but believe he was a Senior Officer told me to smash the windows in

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the foyer as it was becoming increasingly smoky. I used a crowbar to do this. There was lots of Firefighters in this location awaiting entry in the building. It was for ventilation purposes for them. It was a large foyer window. I could not really describe the window and I did not note anything relevant about it except it was toughened glass. I did not look at any other windows in detail within the building.

I also began assisting Firefighters enter and leave the building by using a 'riot shield' to prevent them being hit with falling debris. I carried on with this for several journeys to and from the building.

Sometime later Police Officers also assisted in this. Material coming down was cladding and pieces of the building. As the fire progressed there was more and more water around with pot holes being filled etc.

This was another hazard and you had to continually watch your footing. It became worse and worse like a battlefield. You had to constantly watch where you were going. Luckily I did not hurt myself that night and at no time did I have to give first aid to anyone else around me. I cannot put a time scale on how long I continued with this but I know I hardly sat down all the time I was at Grenfell Tower. Being new I just wanted to help as much as I could. There was lots of other Firefighters helping some of my own watch as mentioned. There was also two (2) senior Firefighters monitoring our trips in and out of the building with shields and instructing when to go and stop. This was to assist avoiding any large debris etc. I cannot name these officers, although I recognised one of them from before, not sure where.

There were lots of people around and when I went to the other side of the building and to the back I realised the fire was spreading full 360 degrees around the building. This was when I realised how bad this fire was spreading. I didn't really appreciate this fact before when I was inside. It was definitely the general consensus of the Firefighters around me that 'something is not right' the way the fire was spreading so fast. I noted the fire was going diagonally at one point across the top part of the building and burning quicker than the lower half. I can't recall seeing people in the flats but can remember seeing the lights from possibly mobile telephones or torches. I could hear people shouting all around me from I believe inside and outside of Grenfell Tower. This went on all the time I was around Grenfell Tower. I cannot recall anything being said just general shouting.

I cannot be specific on the time I left Grenfell Tower but I recall going back to our appliance at seven (7) to eight (8) am as it was light and people had started contacting me asking 'if I was ok?' and 'Was I at the fire?' From Grenfell Tower we travelled in our Fire Appliance to Paddington Fire Station where [where] we completed some notes on our actions at Grenfell Tower. I handed them to the senior officer there and a copy of these notes was emailed to me a few days later. I exhibit a copy of these as AN/2 document seal

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MPSZI3134618. I cannot be specific but believe I was at Paddington around 1000-1100hrs on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

Following this I travelled with my crew back to West Hampstead Fire Station before going off duty and returning home. My previous experience at the time of Grenfell Tower was only one (1) previous house fire. This was a small house fire contained in one room. My other 'call outs' I believe were just rubbish bin fires. During the time I was present at Grenfell Tower at no time was I wearing 'body camera'. I did not attend any other floors than Floor Nine (9). I have since been informed that the fire originated in Flat 16 on the fourth (4) floor. I can confirm at no time did I attend this floor or enter this flat.

My experience at Grenfell Tower leads me to believe I 'got off lightly'. By this I mean that I did not play a huge role and did not have some of the distress that other Firefighters would have had. I did see one (1) dead person. I cannot give any details regarding this except to say I saw a tag saying 'dead' on the body and the person had an emergency worker attending them. I have noted this location on my sketch AN/1. I did not interact with any residents or members of the public outside. I am aware of the 'stay put' policy used by Firefighters but I did not have to issue this advice at Grenfell Tower. My interpretation of the 'stay put' policy which has been around for many years is the safe advice to use at a fire when a room/dwelling should be compartmentalised away from the fire. As stated earlier I did not see any fire safety information with Grenfell Tower or hear any fire alarms where I was I unsure if any doors had the fire safety closing mechanism or arms except the doors to the staircase.

I am very proud to say I played a small part in the rescue at Grenfell Tower. I know a lot of colleagues had jobs much more difficult than me. I don't feel I have been overly affected by Grenfell Tower but do recall I slept badly for a few days after and it took a while to adjust my routine from the long hours and adrenalin generated that night.

A rough sketch I made during my interview has been given to DC KAYE, I exhibit this as AN/1 document seal MPSZI3134621.

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