

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: WRIGHT, CARRIE

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 9 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: C WRIGHT


Date: 25/01/2018

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

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This statement refers to the day I attended the Fire Incident at Grenfell Tower. I have referred to my contemporaneous notes, which I've written at Paddington Station on WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017, to assist with my recall. I exhibit these notes as CAW/01.

I'm a Fire Fighter (FF) based on G23 Hillingdon on the red watch. I joined the brigade in December 2000, 17 years ago. I worked previously at Acton Fire Station. I'd moved from there when they lost a machine in 2005. I've been at HILLINGDON since then.



The people I will mention in this statement are Chris LANG — Fire Fighter (FF), Helen CHRISTMAS (Watch Manager), Sue PURSEY (FF), David BADILLO (FF I knew when I was in Acton), Mark ASTON-DONOVAN (Watch Manager) & Jason HUNTER Crew Manager (Entry Control Officer on the night) and Simon ELLIS (Watch Manager).

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I had no previous experience of Grenfell Tower before the day of the Fire incident and I don't know the layout of the area where the tower is.

On TUESDAY, 13<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017, I reported to duty at 20:00 hours then we had a roll call which details what each individual was doing. I was detailed to ride the back of the ladder with Chris LANG and I was at Heston that night. I did a two-month detachment there at that time and this was my first night shift on the run. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This was my first night back [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

There were twelve Fire people on the roll call, three of them are officers. There is an officer on each machine which has to have a minimum of four on each machine including an officer. The Watch Manager on my machine, which was Heston's pump ladder call sign G381, was Helen CHRISTMAS. The driver was Sue PURSEY. I was sitting behind Helen and the fourth person was Chirs LANG.

I was then detailed to what I'm doing, I put my fire gear on the truck. We do Breathing Apparatus (BA) tests we do inventories which is a check over the machines and make sure that we have everything and any standard tests that need to be done and any equipment that needs to be checked.

To check the equipment, the BA sets have to be tested before and then you put your name on the tally so they know you can use that set if you have a call out. We have to check that all working OK includes putting the face mask on and doing a breath down to make sure that everything is working correctly.

Everyone has a set to test when they come on duty. We have to make sure our fire gears are on the truck as well, so we are ready to go on call out. The fire gear is the PPE, helmet, jacket, leggings and boots.

When we come in we have to make sure that everything is there and ready to go at 20:00 hours in case we get a call out straight away. We also do inventory check to make sure that we have everything we are supposed to have. Every change in the watch, whether it's 09:30 hours or 20:00 hours, we have a list to go through and make sure that every locker has what it's supposed to have. If anything is missing we have to report it. Some stuff would prevent the machine from going on the run if it was missing from the machine, such as the Thermal Image Camera or the main ladder (the 135 Ladder) which is the big ladder. Once everything is done, we go back to the watch room and check if anything need to be done. Things like Smoke Alarms, Electronic Protection Device (EPD) which records contamination. Everyone has one of those as well but we have to check that they're all in the station and that's on the back of the machine too. This takes about 30-45 minutes.

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After that, we went upstairs in the mess area where we eat. The mess area is 3 floors up at HESTON. It's quite a big station, very different than Middlesex station which we have at Hillingdon. The guys were having a meal. I didn't eat because I ate before I came in. I was just sitting there chatting. That was probably a good hour. We then went through to the TV room which is next to it. We (G381) just sat there and we didn't get any call outs before the Grenfell call out. The down time is usually between midnight and 06:40 hours.

I went to bed around midnight. The guys share a dorm and I had a room to myself at that night. I think I might've just gone asleep before we got called and was woken up by the bells and the lights. It details which machines are going out. If it's not your machine, you stay in bed and go back to sleep.

Initial time of call was 00:55hrs. Our time of call must've been 01:50 hours or 01:55 hours.

I got up, went down and got on the back of the truck. To that point, I didn't know what we are going to. It's the driver's job to go in and to make sure they check the map. The person in the Watch room, which was Alan HUDSON that night, has to go to the printer to find out what we are going to and make sure the driver knows where they are going. My job was to get on the back of the truck and when Sue got on she said "it's a 40 pump fire."

I've seen the tick sheet which says "Make pumps 40" which I've never seen in my whole career. Hence, I've known straight away that this is a Major incident for so many fire engines to be going and they are listed which ones had previously had gone into it so you know who's in attendance.

Previous to that, the pump had gone out to standby at CHISWICK. But we met them up at Grenfell and they said "As soon as we got to CHISWICK we got ordered onto it as well" which was also to make pumps 40 so at the same time as we did from HESTON and the Fire Rescue Unit. All three units from Heston were there.

Because the incident wasn't on Heston's ground, Sue had to work out where she's going. We have an MDT on the truck which maps our way. We headed down the M4 and the A4 then through Hammersmith. We arrived at about 02:30 hours.

We didn't see Grenfell Tower until we pulled up as we didn't come on the A40. When we did pull up, Chris LANG was kind of shocked and said "Oh my God" while he was looking out his side of the window. I went over to his side and that was the first time I've seen the tower.

I think from where the fire had started we were looking at the side, pretty much every flat was alight. Pretty horrific to see and I've never seen any incident like that. Straight away I thought "Gosh. Are there people in the building? Is it a refurb that is empty and something's happened?"

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We parked up at WALMER ROAD. It was really awkward, we couldn't drive any further and couldn't get to where we were supposed to be meeting. There was so many fire engines. I didn't pay too much attention because I didn't know the roads or the area. We were been sent onto an area I've never been to. The four of us got out of the appliance, went around together and took our Breathing apparatus (BA) sets with us. We walked around to the Leisure Centre. The tower was on our right when we walked up. There was few people around there. I couldn't see their injuries but you could tell some of these people had come from the building. They were crying. They were being taken off to an area. Then we didn't see many after that.

As I was walking towards the tower I could see it was well alight. It was right up to the top floor. You could see that there was fire in every flat window at that point. It'd gone up on the outside. You could see each flat, at that point, was quite bad. I could see one side of the tower. It was not the whole building, from the point where the fire was to the floors up, maybe 5 or 6 floors up and then it was alight all the way up to the top. I've never seen anything like that before. There was a lot of smoke going up from that. We put our sets down in front of the leisure center by the entrance. There was no smoke in the area where we were sitting at the leisure center. There was fire fighters there. Helen said "I'll go and find out what we need to do." She went off and the three of us stayed. She would find out who she had to report to, Incident Commander (IC), or whoever was in charge of that sector. I think at that point we've broken down into sectors.

At that point, I think someone's said they need more BA cylinders. The Operation Support Unit (OSU), which I think came from EALING was on a road out. I can't remember what road. The OSU carries a lot of extra equipment for Major incidents. I and Sue said "We will go and do that." We negotiated our way back around, pass the Leisure Centre. We passed an area they set up for casualties that have been taken from the building. It was around the corner from the front entrance. There were a few bodies there already so we knew this is quite major. I could see some bodies covered up, I can't remember how many. They were deceased. There was a few and they were covered up. We could see on the side what machines we were going to. We went to the big van machine that says 'OSU' on the side. We got a big wheelie container that has, may be, 12 standard duration cylinders inside. Between us we wheeled it back to where we were set up.

Because Heston is a fire rescue station all the personnel there are trained to wear Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA). I haven't done any of these courses so I wasn't trained. At this point, they realised that they needed people who were EDBA trained because they knew they can get them through

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into the building and their sets would last longer. Sue and Chris were called for the EDBA but because I'm not trained I obviously couldn't go and do that. I think they had a load of EDBA sets there in an area because they wouldn't have them on our machines it was just the standard durations sets.

Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) would last about 35 minutes of air, we all trained for that. You always have to be aware how far you are going into a job so you have time to get out. Your whistle would start to go. You have to be back to the Entry Control Point before that whistle goes off. That's our safety margin.

EDBA, which I'm not trained in, is a double set on the back. They have longer they will be able to go further into a job. There are fourteen stations in London that would have a Fire Rescue Unit and most of the personnel on that station would be EDBA trained.

If you are not EDBA trained you can still ride on the pump ladder. There are three Fire Engines at Heston, the pump and the pump Ladder which is exactly the same as we have at HILLINGDON and then they have a Fire Rescue Unit which has to be crewed with EDBA trained personnel on that night. The rest of the crews can be just normal FF's but all of them had the qualification for Fire Rescue Unit. Because they were all EDBA trained, which they needed on that night, they were all called to do that specific job. I was the only one that wasn't trained. I was still in that area outside the leisure center, just waiting.

While I was outside the leisure center, I spoke to David BADILLO who was one of the crews that had initially been in. He was one of the initial crews who was there for the flat fire. I had a little chat with him. He said to me "It was all out in the flat." He was explaining that the crews inside didn't realise that it'd gone up outside of the building. We had a chat about how it was quite horrific. There were quite a few FF's outside the leisure center but I didn't know many of them because mostly from central London probably.

I'm not sure how long Helen's gone for but when she came back, she said to me "Well, let's get our sets on and I'll go in with you" because I literally have nobody I could go with because they are all taken for the Extended Duration.

We were taken around the side with a group of other FF's. They said "Wait here until we take you through. There was a lot of waiting around so it's hard to work time scales. Together we were taken under the police riot shields, which was held by a police officer. That's when I realised that there were a lot of debris falling from the building and a lot of water. I had a bit of glass in my face mask when I got into the building which was all wet. I'm not supposed to put it on when it's wet so I remember standing there using my sleeve of my fire gear to try and dry it. We had the shield over us but it wasn't always

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protecting us. I think it was the cladding that was on the side of the building because you can see bits falling down. Some were alight.

We went in, under a tunnel where there was a bit of protection then we went in a lobby area where there were glass windows and doors. There was a stairwell next to us which they were using. I'm not sure if we went through the front entrance of the tower. There was a glass shield and then you had to go through another door to get to the stairwell area but you could see it from where we were. There was a lot of stuff on the ground that we were trying to negotiate over when we were going in.

We were very long time waiting to be detailed of what to do. I reckon probably between a good hour and hour and half before we got our sets on and went in did anything. That waiting around was quiet difficult, thinking the building is going to come down. There was a lot of people there.

When we were standing waiting for that really long time in the lobby area there was problems when it started up to fill with smoke. I don't remember where the smoke was coming from. We had a FF trying to break the windows to get some air in. Then there was a big loud banging because they were trying to smash that but it was unbreakable glass. Then they used some of the Positive Pressure (PP) fans to try and clear the smoke. But I remember at one point it was getting quite bad, we were using our smoke hoods to cover our faces because we were breathing in a lot of smoke at that point. Visibility was OK, you could still see but it was getting a bit worse because of the smoke and was obviously causing people's eyes to sting so we were trying to keep our head down. Eventually they got it cleared and it got a bit better but just we were so long in that area.

I was talking to some guy I knew from Ealing. There was three of them with us that we were going to go as a crew together. The officer in charge was Mark ASTON-DONOVAN. Two of his FF's were together and they said we are going to make you a Team of five.

There was FF's in sets as they were being used and then coming out. They couldn't just send everyone together, too many. As people came back out we were moving along the list.

I've seen a leg. Someone said that someone had jumped from the building. It was a bit weird, there was a lot of stuff coming down at that point. You don't want to just go and pick a leg up. You don't feel it's your job to do that. It was just weird being there for so long, looking at it.

There was a senior manager, whose name I don't know but he was at least a Station Manager, who had spoken to everyone and said "Look, we know this's a major incident. We know we're asking you to risk a lot, but as long as we know there're savable lives we're going to send people in to try and save them."

We've been told that there were people on Fire Survival calls at that point, which means there're people

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in those flats still on the phone to our control saying "I'm trapped in my flat". I would say that Senior Officer's rank is at least a Station Manager.

They were using EDBA crews who were obviously getting priority on the stairwell because they were able to go further up than we actually went.

Because we've waited so long, I did see few casualties coming down through the stairwell. There was a lady with a child. I don't remember their description. After that, there was one guy came down and had a pair of swimming goggles on to protect his eyes. It looked a bit funny when I saw him but I thought that it's genius because there was so much smoke. He might've been Chinese in his 60's and wearing dark clothes. He was been escorted down the stairs. He was walking and there was a crew with him. I think that's all I saw come down.

We've moved through to the base of the stairs before we went up, that's where we hand our tallies. I did know the Entry Control Officer who is Jason HUNTER, he's at Northolt, but he was at WEMBLEY that night. That was another face I knew there. Especially in something that major, you kind of look out for people that you know, we said hello but he was really busy with the board.

The Entry Control Officer is where you have to hand over your BA Tallies so they can keep track of who's gone in and who's in the job. When we come out we get our tally back, so it's basically just to keep us safe.

When we test our sets we have to put in how much air is in it. That will give us a reading on the electronic part of the set. You have to have a minimum of two hundred and seventy bar when you test your set. You have to have a minimum of 240 bar to go into a job. One thing we have to do is to check when we start off that we have enough air to go into the job and also confirm it with the Entry Control Officer. I would say my name when handing off my tally and number of bars. They'd repeat that back to me then they put it into the Entry Control board so they can keep track of who's in there. It also connects electronically to our sets so they can see, if we are in the job, how much air we're using and how much we've left.

We had a brief that we were going to start firefighting. The brief was we will start finding the lowest floor that on fire and work our way up because at that point they didn't think that there was anyone that was still to be rescued if they weren't on our previous when we knew there were fire survival calls that was going on.

The first floor we came to that was alight which I put in my notes it was the 5<sup>th</sup> but it was either 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> and I think it was flat 31 that we were at. The crew we were with had been there already and directed us to the right floor as they were ahead of us with the hose. The hose was already up the stairs but they had

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to take hold of it before they went in. When we went up, the stairs were very busy with the crews coming down and up.

The door to the communal area to the flats was already open because they had already gone through. The door to the flat I attended was also open. I think someone's been there previously. We were just making sure that it was all out before we progress on to more flats.

Some of us would be firefighting and helping out with the hose to make sure they have enough to get where they need to go then we swapped around. The three FF's who were with us went first with the firefighting. Helen and I were at the door. There wasn't really a lot to do because they had enough hose up. We were waiting until we swapped around when they tired then we took over the firefighting. Helen went into the flat ahead of me with the hose first then we swapped around. The water pressure on the hose was fine for the job we were doing.

The flat was very smoky and hot so I couldn't really see a lot. I could tell that the whole place was destroyed by fire at this point. It was pretty bad. All the windows were out. The sun was coming up, we thought there was fire in the corner and we were aiming for that and then realised that we were not putting anything out and that was the sun coming up. We didn't move around a lot in the flat. We just had the hose and we were checking for the hot spots with the thermal image camera and making sure the fire was out.

I think I'd been in the flat for about 10 minutes. The other group of three were running out of air, they came and said "We have to go". I and Helen checked our gages and we knew we had enough air to stay for another 10 — 15 minutes at least. You don't really want to come out if you know you have enough to do the job, that's why we asked "Could we stay?" But Mark said "No, we are a crew of 5. We need to come out together."

We came down at the bottom of the stairs we closed our sets and made sure it got zero pressure before we got our tallies back. I don't know if we passed any casualties coming back down. You couldn't really see. There was movement on the stairs so we stayed on the right hand side to make sure that people can get down. I think they were just the crews. It was pretty smoky on the stairwell, I couldn't see a lot. It wasn't clear. You couldn't make out what was around. I could see the person in front of me because I knew I was behind someone.

At about 05:00 hours, we went back out of the building the same way under the riot shield which was carried by a police officer. The wet debris were still falling. A lot of water was coming down. I don't remember the size of the debris, I wasn't really thinking about it. It was very hot when we came out. My

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T-shirt and everything was soaking wet underneath. I remember then getting very cold coming out, because I've been so hot in there. I was shivering, even though it was quite a warm day. We took off our gear and dropped our sets down outside the leisure center where we were all waiting around to be detailed what to do and just had a cool down period, taking on water. We dropped our sets and stripped down because our gear was soaking wet. I remember taking off my tunic and spreading it out to try to dry it a little bit because it was completely drenched.

I think after a little period of a break, Helen had gone off back to where she was previously, with more Senior Managers, to help out. I was on my own, sitting in the grass area in front of the leisure center, recovering. The tower was still in my vision. At this point, the smoke had changed from when we first turned up. You could tell there's a lot of firefighting going on inside. There was a lot of white smoke because there was water being put on to whatever was on fire but it was coming out the whole top of the building. It wasn't as bad as when we first turned up but there were still a lot of flats alight.

I'd had a couple of messages on my phone from my family who had seen on the TV the job was going on and was concerned. I was in the leisure center [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] At this point my battery was about to die in my phone. Then I was back outside and there was not a lot for me to do. There was no point going back in because I was on my own; I didn't have a partner as such.

It was a while before the crews have turned up from FELTHAM who I know. The officer in charge was Simon ELLIS who was looking for someone to move some fire engines around for the base pump which was supplying the water to the area of which was fighting the fire on the outside. They basically wanted to swap that base pump around. His crew that he turned up with were all in BA and they wanted to go in. I said to him "I'm happy to move the fire engine or whatever you need done." He said "OK."

We walked from there. We walked around the streets; some of them were cordoned off because you could see where all the press were. Everyone was watching what was going on. You could see there were television crews. We were going from fire engine to another. Most of them were locked up so we couldn't get access to them, until we found one that was open and we were able to take it so we moved it. We brought it back down to where the base pump was needed. But they ended up not using it. So there was a change, I don't know why. Then I was back outside the leisure center. The EDBA crews were still all gone they were being used. I think they were used a couple of times.

I think they said "We are going to get you down to the leisure centre hall and we will give you a debrief and have a chat and find out how we are going to get your crews away to go back to station. Before you

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go back we need to make sure that you've done your statements. We're sending everyone to PADDINGTON."

At that point, we've been there for quite a long time. I'm not sure what time it was, maybe 10:00 hours or 11:00 hours. I think Helen was with me at the time. I think the EDBA crews were still being used. They were waiting to go back in again. But because there were so many crews, I don't think they ended up using Chris and Sue a second time. We obviously couldn't leave and go back to station until we had our full crew. There was a lot of waiting around for myself and Helen. We were in that leisure center and people were just chilling out there because basically we'd finished what we were doing and waiting for our relief crew. We were briefed that we had to go back to Paddington Station to do our statements and that they'd have counselling and wellbeing there as well, that we could chat to if we needed to. I think when everyone was finished they were being directed to that hall.

It was a little while before the EDBA crews were finished. Once we were all together, we went back up to find our sets, got our gear together and then we walked back to the fire engine, put our sets back on there. Chris and Sue hadn't worn the SDBA Sets they'd brought with them. Their SDBA sets were still in that area they left them, outside the leisure center.

When we got back to the fire engine, there were a lot of members of public out, passing out food and drink for the crews who've been working hard. They were praising us for what we did saying "Well done." There were lot of people trying to help even with bringing clothes. I didn't speak to any member of public during the incident. We left the ground around midday. We drove to Paddington Station. It was bad traffic; it took a while to go back to Paddington.

When we got to Paddington, we didn't even drive into the yard. All the fire engines were lined up on the road before you go in. When we got in there, there were loads and loads of people. They had a tennis table with people kneeling around waiting to write their statements. There were people sitting on the ground in the appliances' bay. They had an area for food and drink if needed.

We had to wait around for a long time before we got to do our statement. On a board, they had written the incident number and what they wanted on the top of our statements. We had to wait a while before we even got a space at the tennis table to write the statements. When we did that, we were taken upstairs where they had offices where they had the counselling and wellbeing. We went in as a team because by this stage it was late. I think they wanted to do it individually but Helen said "Look, we are going together because we need to get back. It's been a long day." So we went in together and had a chat. Since then I was offered and had taken counselling. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] It was a lot to deal with over a few months.

We got back on the fire engine. I reckon it took us a couple of hours to go back to Heston. They closed the A40. It was really bad traffic getting back to ISLEWORTH, HESTON. By the time we got there it was after 18:00 hours. We were due to be back on at 20:00 hours.

When we went back to HESTON we literally just had time to change all our fire gear, have a bite to eat, have a shower and get all our kit ready to go back on the run. We were ready at 20:00 hours to start our next shift. We didn't end up going out at all that night. It was a quiet night. The TV was on. People were watching about the Grenfell. There were a lot of the guys at Heston on the media, they were in a holding area for the EDBA.

Some of our equipment was left at the scene, I can't remember what it was. I was on the pump, G382, the second night but the ladder went back to pick up some equipment and then came back from Grenfell again. I didn't return to Grenfell after that first night.

I didn't receive any injuries during the incident but I think while I was in the building I had kind of a panic attack where I started to get a really bad chest pain and was struggling with my breathing. That was during the waiting around bit in the lobby area, but I knew there were enough paramedics outside and I put it down till when I get out. I was thinking a lot about the building might come down and what I was going to do if I try to get out. [REDACTED]

Once I got out I was fine. Once I was detailed what to do, I wasn't even thinking but the time I was waiting around period was really difficult. I said it to Helen afterwards, but because I was OK nothing was ever done. I dealt with myself. I think I'd had a pain in my arm, I didn't know if it was my heart, but I think it was basically a panic attack. I was just thinking of the 9/11 and have my picture in the paper with the rest. It's such a major incident and the few days afterwards it was on my mind a lot but I think I try to bury it away.

I'm not sure how often we do high-rise training but we do have a few high-rises in our area so we do different kinds of high-rise training. If we are doing a BA drill, they could say "This is a high rise. We're on the second floor" and we do a drill around that. If we are doing a lecture, we'd talk about what equipment we need on that floor and what we have to bring. We talk about if the fire's on a certain floor; you have to be two floors below to setup the entry control. You don't ever setup on the floor where the fire is. All of that training is just as and when it comes up, we need to tick a box to say we've done that training. We had a new governor at HILLINGDON on the Red Watch back in January and we did cover high-rise with him because I remember doing this with him sometime between January and March.

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We have lectures every tour, our tour is four days. We do practical training on our day shifts. Sometimes we do the lectures on our night shifts or sometimes we do them on the days depending on how our diary is, or how many call outs we get.

In the evening time, 20:00 hours, we start duty. By 21:00 hours we could do a lecture on high-rise that would take an hour. We cover lots of different things whichever is due on our training record. Our training packages generates on our system. The training is constant.

As a FF, turning up to something like Grenfell Tower fire incident is probably something I'll never see again and never thought I would see in my whole career. I think everyone that was there worked really hard. I think we did everything we possibly could. I know there are a lot of people struggling with the difficulty that we didn't get everyone out and we didn't save everybody. To me, I think we did all what we could.

We've seen in the media about the cladding and a refurbishment was done. I've heard that the windows were moved as part of the refurb. You'd think that each of those units should be self-contained, that if we turn up to a fire in a high-rise we think we'd just go to one flat. We deal with it and advise to stay in your flat because it compromises the Fire Fighters of getting in. Even though people were told to stay in their flats, I think at the time we were doing the right thing. It's very difficult to say what should've happened but no one knew that the building was structured the way it was and that it would go up the way it did. There're a lot of people who probably regret about what's happened.

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