

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: HALL, CHRISTIAN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 7 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 HALL

Date: 30/01/2018

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

This statement refers to my attendance as a firefighter to the Grenfell Tower fire on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017 as part of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) response to this incident.

After leaving Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 I completed some notes in relation to this incident. These notes were made contemporaneously on 14 June 2017, which I now exhibit as CMH/1. I have not referred to any of our LFB logs or records in preparing this statement, therefore I am unable to give accurate times to the matters I refer.

The people I will refer to by name in my statement are LFB personnel. These include: Watch Manager Dave CARROLL who was riding Command Unit 4 with me that night; Watch Manager Mark KENTFIELD who was on Command Unit 8 that night; Watch Manager Gary JOHNSTON and Watch Manager Dean DILLARD.

I am a Watch Manager on Command Unit 4 based out of Lewisham Fire Station. I have been in the Fire Service 15 and a half years. I joined in June 2002. I have been a Watch Manager since I got promoted in April 2015.

The Command Unit is a mobile office. The role is for us to support an Incident Commander no matter the size of the incident. There are 8 Command Units in London. These are all mainly staffed by Watch Managers or Crew managers that are acting up. I don't have any line manager responsibilities I just work with one other Watch Manager. So there is 2 of us that ride the Command Unit and we go out to any big fires. 4 engines and above, anything with lots of phone calls, chemical incidents, mass floodings, anything like that we go on and we provide a mobile officer where all of our senior officers come on board. It is all

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command and control and our role is to support them in their command of the incident. So we are a support function for senior officers running an incident. We are there to help them run the incident. So we look to prompt them on things they may not have thought about. We are there to construct and send messages. Make sure when it comes to the National Incident Command Frame work that the structure of any incident is correct.

We ride with either 2 or 3 people. Usually it is only 2. One of us will be the team leader, one of us will be the radio operator. The radio operator will always convey radio messages to and from control and they will also deal with any communication from the fire ground. Any updates from certain sectors will be relayed to us and then we will passed that onto the Incident Commander. The team leader's job is to liaise specifically with the Incident Commander however on a job as big as Grenfell that doesn't happen because we will have a sector commander command support. Which is minimum of Station Manager and they then liaise with the incident commander and we do everything through them. It is all about spans of control.

The nearest command unit to the incident will be mobilised. If it is 4 pumps then you will get 1 command unit, 6 pumps and above you will get 2. As the jobs escalate you will get more and more command units. We work to assist a National Incident Command Frame and we've got lots of tabards, plans, a computer, we've got a link to the police helicopter all sorts of things so that we can provide a great big support and somewhere for the officer in charge to come on board. It is nice and quiet, away from the incident itself and they can think about what they want to do. We can have meetings on board and lots of different things.

As we are the Command Unit and we are a specialist role our training differs somewhat. We are not as hands on anymore. I don't wear breathing apparatus, I am not trained in 1st aid to the level that people on a fire engine would be. So we don't do that sort of training. Our training will be more focused on command and control and how larger incidents are actually managed. We go out to different stations and we talk to the Watches and we do what is known as tactical decision making exercises and we will help fire fighters, crew managers and lower ranks that want to go for promotion or other Watch Managers and we will try and help them visualise how to run an incident at a low level, maybe a house fire or something like that and strategically plot. It is making sure there is the right command structure from the ground upwards. If we can get it right initially then it should flow quite well. We have had training in sandwich panels which are used on commercial premises. With sandwich panels we are very clear with the risks of fire spreading and it being very hard to detect.

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The 13th of June 2017 was the 1st of our 2 night shifts. That night I was working with Watch Manager Dave CARROLL. At around 1 0'clock (0100 hrs) in the morning, I was asleep and the pager message went off. In the command unit upstairs we don't have lights and bells. The pager message read that we had been mobilized to a 40 pump fire, I couldn't believe, I had never heard or anything so big so it was a bit of a shock. I saw Dave as he came out of his room we were both like "wow a 40 pump fire." We got the call slip and it was a case of finding out where we were going and trying to gather some information on route.

On the radio we heard a lot of fire survival guidance calls and so we knew we were going to a serious incident. Other than that there wasn't that much information available. And because the radio was so busy it is not as if we could have got in touch with anyone. It was just a bit of a shock. We thought could it be a plane into a building? Could it be a terrorist attack? We were speculating on route and trying to get ourselves up there as quick as possible. Dave was driving and I had the map trying to direct us there. I know the area of Grenfell Tower a little bit as I am doing The Knowledge of London. I had never been to Grenfell Tower for work purposes.

Our route meant that we headed towards Chelsea Bridge. We went past the Oval, turned left on Battersea Park Road, towards Chelsea Bridge. We crossed there we went up to Sloane Street, Sloane Square and then along Kensington High Street, up to Holland Road and Holland Park Roundabout, Holland Park Avenue, left onto Royal Crescent, up St Ann's Villas, St Ann's Road. I think our rendezvous point was Bramley Road. There was road works on Bramley Road so we started taking some back roads and then we got into traffic. We couldn't get further so we did a right on Stoneleigh Place and then did a left onto Sidar Road. There were just fire engines backed up, there was no forward movement. So we just got as close as we could and parked up on Sirdar road very close to both the police station and school. Sidar Road was about 250 meters away from the tower. I think it took us about 20 minutes to get there.

We got our kit bags out I think we also grabbed some paper and some SER coats. SER coats are coats that people wear so that they are easily identifiable on the fire ground. They are all different colours.

Everyone's role is clearly identifiable on their SER coats. That is one of the main roles for us as a command unit that we are putting in a command structure so that it is clear to see who in charge of what area. We then made our way to the main command unit which was Command Unit 8. There will normally be one command unit which is dedicated to the incident command and then the others will be support ones. It is usually the 1st command unit that arrives will be the incident command.

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Because we were coming from the south I couldn't see the tower until we got close and started parking up. Initially when I arrived and I look at the tower block I had never seen anything like it. It was like something out of a movie. I remember the crowd seemed very angry at the time. I remember seeing quite a number of police and it seemed like they were trying to protect us because there seemed to be a little bit of unrest. I think the police officers there were trying to calm the crowd. There was lots of crying, shock, distress and upset. Loads of people gathering and taking photos and videos on their phones. I definitely remember seeing a little bit of unrest and seeing people running towards the tower. There were a lot of people trying to move forwards and a quite a few police trying to move them away. There was a real state of anxiety, distress and bewilderment.

Dave and I reported in, said that we were in attendance and we spoke to Watch Manager Mark KENTFIELD who was sitting at the back of the Command Unit. We asked him if there was anything that he wanted us to do. He initially said for Dave and I to go and get as many BA wearers as we could, get them to report to main control at the front of the building and also take spare cylinders with them. So our job was to go to whoever we could find, tell them to get their set on and go to main control. Main control in an area where people are noting down how many BA wearers they have got and then it is a gathering area where people sit and wait and then they are passed on further up the chain as if they are going towards wearing their breathing apparatus. So that is what we did initially.

Then we went back and saw Mark and he said that we really needed to identify the command structure and could Dave and I go and tell him who is in charge of x y and z. So it was then we went towards the base of the tower to find out. So we found out. I think Station Manager KIPLING was in BA main control and then there was another station manager towards the front of the tower who seemed to have a couple of Watch Managers with him and they were dealing with the fire survival guidance reports. They had lots of pieces of paper with all the information on that we were getting from control and he seemed to be coordinating their efforts. Then we were trying to find out who was in the tower, who was in charge of the Bridgehead. Watch Manager SADLER was outside the building passing info to the manager on the Bridgehead. I had a note pad and pen, I was jotting names of these people down, what they were doing and giving out SER coats to people. Once I got as much as I could I would take that back to the Command Unit, CU8, and then go back to the foot of the tower to get more information. Dave was struggling to contact the Command Unit, CU8. On the Command Unit we use channel 10 and although the traffic is not as busy on that channel, on this night it did seem hard to get contact. You would call people up and you wouldn't necessarily hear back from them for a little while. So as the younger of the 2

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of us I said to Dave "I will be a runner. Get me some information and I will take it back to the Command Unit." So I started doing that. So anything Dave was finding out, he would pass onto me and I would go and talk to Mark as I was trying to give him information as and when we were finding it. Dave was getting information from Pat DELANY and then Dave was passing this onto me via the radio. Dave said for me to go to the Command Unit and he would give me the information over the radio. So Pat DELANEY was getting the information, he was passing this onto Dave, who was passing this onto me via radio channel 10 and then I was passing it to Mark KENTFIELD in the Command Unit. We were trying to get information back to the main Command Unit, Command Unit 8, about who was in charge of the different areas in and around the tower. Knowing who is in what positions helps with the decision making process as then whoever is in charge gets feedback from each area and depending on the feedback they can then make their decisions. I believe I was doing this for around half an hour to an hour. At one point Mark asked me to show the Incident Commander to CU1. So I walked with the Incident Commander to CU1 in Bramley Road, I left him there and then walked back.

Initially I was really close to the tower. There was lots of falling debris, which seemed to be burning plastic, so people were having to use riot shields to protect themselves. There was a bin store where the guys were doing all the fire survival guidance notes. They were doing them on the bins and where the water was it was up to your ankles or a little bit higher. You had to have riot shields to get round the outside. We were close to where crews were just starting to make their way round. I could see into the lobby area on the ground floor and I could see a lot of BA crews in there. I didn't get any closer than that. There was a strange eerie feel about the place. When I was walking around I had a real sense of disbelief. As I was carrying out my role I didn't focus on the tower. Initially when I saw it I would describe it as a fire ball. I've never seen anything like it all. It was completely shocking. I didn't focus on the tower because in my role there is nothing I can do. If I stood there and looked at the tower I would not be doing my job. I didn't want to be a rubber necker. I just had to get on with whatever I was told to do. I didn't want to be a rabbit in the head lights.

After this, I was asked to go to another Command Unit, Command Unit 1, that was parked in Bramley Road and inform them of the location of their 20 pump relief. The radios weren't working that well so I had to give them the information about where their 20 pump relief was going to be. Watch Manager Mark DEAN, who is based at Edmonton, was on board. I tried to tell him but he was really busy doing other jobs so I couldn't really get the information over that I needed to. So I went back to see Mark in CU8 again and he then sent me to meet the crews that were coming. He wanted me to meet and brief the 20

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pump relief who were meeting on Ladbroke Grove. So my next job was to co-ordinate all the fire engines that were going to turn up, find them somewhere to park and start directing them down towards the tower and BA main control. Again it was for them to take all their breathing apparatus, take spare sets and make your way down to the BA main control.

I needed to make sure that the fire engines stayed where they were supposed to stay and keep the road as clear as possible. I had the fire engines park up on the west side of Ladbroke Grove junction with Elgin Crescent. Ladbroke Grove was used as it is a nice big wide road so there is lots of room. We will always try and have a nice big area so we can get a lot of fire engines in and not cause too much disruption. It was a case of making sure they were parked in the right place. I spoke to all the people in charge so they didn't just disappear because I wanted to make sure I had control of all the crews.

It was purely logistics and making sure the road was accessible and they had a focal point which was me. So I was flagging trucks down. So as and when they were coming I was waving them down, getting them parked up, taking their details, giving them the brief and sending the BA crews on their way. The brief was to take their BA sets, their spare cylinders and go to the BA main control which I was directing them to on the map I had. That was the last I saw of them. I was sending them down either Blenheim Crescent or Elgin Crescent, depending on where they parked, sending them down the road and they were going past a police officer in a passage way through a housing estate, then in front of them the leisure centre was on their right hand side I told them to keep it on their right hand side walk forward, turn right and BA main control would be right in front of them. That is where they were to report. No one came back and said they were lost. I did this for the 1st 12 appliances that arrived. So I had a big long list of everyone so I could make sure that we had the 20 fire engines that were in attendance so that we didn't have too many or too few.

Watch Manager Gary JOHNSTON come and join me for a little while. So the 2 of us were running that for a little while. I think he then said "looks like you have got this under control, so I'm going to go back." 1 thing we did have trouble with was radio communication as I was only on the hand held radio so it wasn't very good, to get traffic to and from the fire ground was really difficult.

A little while later Dean DILLARD, from Barking, came and joined me. He had more instructions and he was in contact with the station manager over the radio on a fire engine so that meant that after I had sent 12 crews we were to hold the rest. So we held the rest of the 8 trucks back. We were scattered along the west side of Ladbroke Grove junction with Elgin Crescent. I was directing everyone towards the leisure centre as that is where BA main control had moved to. From where I was on Ladbroke Grove I would say

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I was approximately 400 meters away from the tower and I could only see the very top of the tower.

Ladbroke Grove was initially very quiet. I remember a stage when people started waking up and looking out of the windows and they were asking what was going on. People were getting upset and some knew people who lived there so there was a lot of distress and upset amongst the residents.

I was also asked to scope another location and I had to walk a long way up Ladbroke Grove because they were going to put another 10 pump relief in after the 20. I said "no it's no good. Send them here again but we will just have a different access," so they were coming from the north part of Ladbroke Grove.

During the night I was in contact with Dave and at one point he asked me if I would benefit from having a Command Unit with me. I said yes so Dave managed to get our Command Unit, CU4, drive it up to me and leave it there whilst he did a few more jobs. Initially it was just me and a colleague with white helmets on flagging trucks down and just trying to get people into one area and hold them there. In our procedure everyone looks for a Command Unit. If you are in charge of an appliance and you turn up to a big job you will look for a Command Unit to go to to book in and get your information.

I can't remember when my Command Unit came up to me but I think it was whilst the 10 pump relief were on route. It was nice as it gave us a nice focal point for people to come to but it was still a case of flagging trucks down. I had my red and white check Command Unit SER coat on and my white helmet on. Now that I had my Command Unit I had somewhere proper to record who was attending rather than a clipboard and pen. I was trying to find out as and when they wanted crews sent down and when they did I would send them down. When the mini buses started arriving with Fire Rescue Unit crews they were a priority so as soon as they turned they were told to get their gear on and get down to the tower as quickly as possible.

At one point Mr DUDENEY came and joined us. He is a senior officer and he came spoke to us to find out what we were doing and helping us where needs be. There were a couple camera crews there and he spoke to them and it was nice to have someone with that training.

I did this role for the rest of time at Grenfell Tower.

It was a case of waiting for our turn to be relieved. I think we were relieved at 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Eventually we took our Command Unit to Paddington Fire Station to make our statements. We also had Fulham and Barking's crew with us. So we had 6 of us travelling to Paddington to make our statements. Some of the command units were left in situ.

The fire fighters were very focused. Everyone just wanted to get in and do their jobs. From a fire fighter point of view everyone was task orientated everyone really wanted to look professional. To me the

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officers handling the fire survival guidance calls were exceptional as they had so much paper work there and they were trying to relay all that information on to who was co-ordinating that further up on the Bridgehead. I remember seeing them working really hard. There is part of me that wanted to put breathing apparatus on and go up in the tower but I think I've got to do my job. My job wasn't as hands on as I would like but I was doing an important job.

I still don't know how anything like that can happen. I have never known compartmentation to fail. The FSG that came out of the Lakanal fire seemed to be very good up until Grenfell Tower. Grenfell Tower was such an unprecedented incident for us. A tower inferno is all I can liken it to. Even 9/11 didn't spread the way Grenfell Tower did. From what I saw I was really proud to be a member of the Fire Brigade because I just saw the ultimate professionalism. I saw people wanting to go in and do their jobs and I saw nobody panicking, I saw calmness and people waiting their turn to go to and do their jobs. We all thought about building collapse but there are peoples' lives to be saved so we are carrying on. I was very impressed to be honest.

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