

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: EDEN, CRAIG

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 12 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.

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Date: 22/12/2017

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

This statement is about the night of the 14th June 2017, when I attended a fire at Grenfell Tower. I have never been to Grenfell Tower prior to the 14th June 2017 and had no prior knowledge of it. In this statement, I will be mentioning my crewmates: Fire-fighter Tom WELCH, Fire-fighter Katie FOSTER, Fire-fighter Greg LAWSON and Watch Manager Alex CARDY.

I have been in the Fire Brigade since January 2006, when I joined Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. I completed 14 weeks initial training at Morton in the Marsh followed by a further 4 weeks of ISMS training, which was training specific to Bucks. It normally takes 2-3 years to become a competent fire-fighter and evidence of attending specific incidents, completing community safety, fire safety and school visits has to be made in order to achieve this competency. In Bucks, I was swift water rescue trained and powerboat rescue trained. I became a substantive crew manager in 2010, having taken promotion in Buckinghamshire, where I completed the Crew Managers Foundation Course at Morton in the Marsh which was a week long course where you learn how to manage different incidents and the facilities there assist in providing experience with working on and managing an incident ground. I also passed the Watch Managers ADC, however due to lack of available posts, I transferred to London Fire Brigade (LFB) in August 2016, as a Crew Manager. I completed a 3-week conversion course, before being posted to Red Watch at Willesden Fire Station and am presently Acting Watch Manager at Park Royal Fire Station.

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Training is continuous throughout the year and includes station based on site drills and on site exercises organised within the watch or borough. I have participated in simulated training exercises for high-rise buildings, where I have acted in various roles and I have also received numerous power point presentations and viewed case studies relating to high-rise fires. Due to fatal fires at Lakanal House in Camberwell and Shirley Towers in Southampton there has been a lot of training on how to fight these kinds of fires and the procedures for doing so, which are nationally agreed. Although I have never had to implement the procedure for a high rise fire, prior to Grenfell Tower, I feel that I have received sufficient training in that area and feel that I am competent with the high rise fire procedure that we follow, although there is always something new that can be learnt. I attended a high-rise fire at Trellick Towers, a couple of weeks before the fire at Grenfell Tower, and this fire was just down the road from Grenfell. I attended in BA for that fire, however the fire was contained to one flat and there was no requirement for me to move beyond the staging area below the bridgehead and this was the first serious high rise fire that I have attended in London. I have completed 7(2) D visits on the high rises covered by Willesden Station, however had no knowledge of the one for Grenfell Tower. 7(2) D visits are basically risk assessments and pre planning for buildings with more risk, so if there is a fire, the fire service will know where the fixed installations are, what safety information is available, initial plans and rendezvous points and other information like that.

On Wednesday 14th June 2017, I was Crew Manager at Willesden Fire Station, call sign G281, when at approximately 1.25am, the turn out system alarm went off. I had been in bed when the alarm woke me, so I got dressed and went down the pole. I'd started to put my fire gear on - tunic, leggings and boots, when I heard someone in the watch room say "It's make pumps 10, high rise building, Grenfell Tower, North Kens ground", and it sounded like a proper working job where we would be busy. The driver - Greg LAWSON, knew where it was and once we were all in the lorry, we got going. Alex was sat in the front and I was sat in the seat behind Greg. We turned right out of the station and as we got about ½ a mile down the road, there was another message on the radio stating that it was now a make pumps 15 fire. They had only just made it make pumps 10 so it was unusual that more pumps were required that quickly - we thought it was a proper job. We'd gone down Harlesden Road, towards Acton and as we came down Scrubs Lane, maybe 1-2 miles since the last message, a call on the radio now stated that it was a make pumps 20. This had happened within about 5 minutes and was very bizarre and abnormal and I thought something bad had happened. The crew were discussing what might have happened - whether it was an arson or a terrorist incident, because it's not standard for a call to a high rise incident to go from 10

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pumps to 20 so quickly, especially when you would normally need about 6 engines to a tower block fire. Alex was looking at the MDT and what the 7(2) D information stated, as none of us had any knowledge about Grenfell Tower. I don't recall him passing on any specific information and I couldn't see what was on the MDT. There was a little bit of radio traffic asking for certain appliances and equipment but there was no information being passed that was out of the ordinary - apart from the speed of the make pumps 20. Not long after this, I think as we were going over the railway line, someone said, "Oh my fucking God - it's over there" and we all looked to our left. I could see a tower on fire with flames running up the side. It was about 1/2 the way up but looked like a flame trail, similar to the trail left by the DeLorean in the Back to the Future films, when the car disappears in to the future. We were approximately 1-2 miles away when I first saw the tower and I began to smell the smoke. It smelt acrid and pungent and had that plastic! rubbish smell, although it wasn't over powering at that time.

It was bewildering, as I couldn't understand how the outside of the building was on fire. Everyone in the engine was discussing how it was doing that and how it wasn't right and shouldn't be doing what it was doing. High risers are designed to be compartmented, so when there is a fire, it should be contained within the flat, which is also covered under fire safety regulations. Generally the flames would come out of the window and will sometimes jump a couple of floors, but the outside of the building shouldn't be on fire as concrete doesn't burn unless at a ridiculously high temperature perhaps. The radio started to get busy and lots of messages were being sent and there was some apprehension on the lorry as no one had seen anything like it before.

As we neared the fire, we had a bit of a discussion as to what we were going to do when we got there. I was thinking that LFB does not have a policy in place for a building that is on fire on the outside - no brigade does - so I was thinking what are we going to do as the only way to put out the fire is to cover it in water and because the fire is travelling upwards, water needs to be poured down on it, however we don't have enough hose or platforms high enough to do this as our aerial ladders are only 40 metres high. I was wondering how we were going to fight the fire and whether people would be committed and was unsure of what I would be doing, as there was no pre determined plan as to how a building on fire on the outside can be tackled. The closer we got, the more vivid I remember the flames being up the side of the building. We went past Ladbroke Grove Station on our right and ended up turning left and left again around the back of the tower. I don't know the road names but we stopped in a road about 50-60 metres away from the base of the tower, behind several other fire engines. There were no issues with us getting

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there - no traffic or stupidly placed cars. I think it took us about 10-12 minutes to arrive and when we pulled up, I saw a lot of members of the public watching the fire, on their phones or just filming it. It was dark, but there were streetlights. There wasn't much smoke around at this time but we were positioned up wind. I think that it was dry and clear. Where we parked had buildings on the left and a row of terraced houses on the right. It opened up on to a green, where one of the aerial ladders was. After the row of Victorian houses, there was a bank of trees and hedges. The leisure centre was up the stairs and towards the right and on the left was like an overpass and some garages or a bin store.

I saw a couple of people I knew from other stations, including a crew manager from North Kensington, who seemed to be running around manically, trying to get the hydrant and hose in and when we asked if he was alright, he said it was all going mental. Alex then radioed in to the commander, informing him that Willesden pump ladder was in attendance and asking what was required. The reply was that everyone was required to be in BA (breathing apparatus) and to go to the bridgehead at the 3rd floor. We had a quick drink - knowing that we would be getting hot if BA was required, got our BA sets on and started to move towards the tower. I was partnered with Tom and Kate and Greg were partnered, as Kate is new out of training school and Greg has over 20 years experience, so we said for them to go together and for her to stay with him and do what he does. Another message came out on the radio, stating that 45 millimetre hoses, branches, breaking in gear and thermal imaging cameras were required. We were going to just take equipment from the other lorries, but had to go back to our lorry to collect the thermal imaging camera (TIC), hooligan tool and enforcer, so decided to collect our own branches and hose.

Our BA sets are a bit like a scuba diving set and has a facemask, which seals to your face via certain straps and seals. Compressed air is breathed from the set which has a 300 bar cylinder, holding about 1800 litres of air, 9 litres of water and depending on how hard you are working, you breath roughly 50 litres per minute. It is worn over the shoulders on a harness and there is a belt that tightens up around the waist. There is a second set connection on it, so if you or someone else is running out of air, you can connect to a second set in order to breath. There is also a bodyguard, which is the gauge that tells you how much air you have used and a torch is also attached. The hoses carried on fire engines come in different sizes and are either 45 millimetres or 70 millimetres in diameter. These are lay flat hoses which can be connected together and they can then connect to the back of the fire engine or any fixed installations in high rises, which are the wet and dry risers, which means that hoses don't have to be run all the way through the building - they can connect to a wet or dry riser for water to be supplied. The

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hoses are quite heavy - weighing about 8 or 9kg and close to 100kg when full of water. The high rise procedure states that 45mm hose will be used, as it is easier to manoeuvre around a building and research in to compartmental fires states that a 45mm hose provides sufficient water to fight the fire, with a branch set at 230 litres per minute. The branch connects to the end of the hose and allows you to turn the water on and off and also allows you to control the amount of water that comes through and depending on the branch size, allows between 130 litres of water per minute, to 500 litres of water per minute to come through. The hooligan is similar to a crow bar and is a breaking in tool. It has something similar to a claw hammer on one end and a wedge on the other which allows you to break down doors or break hinges. The thermal imaging camera highlights the differences in temperature, so will show you where the fire is if you can't see it and it also allows you to locate casualties, so if they are lying on the floor, you will see a heat contrast, so they can be found quicker.

Once we'd collected the kit and started walking towards the tower, I could see that the fire had started at the bottom and was working its way up but hadn't reached the top yet. The flames were running up the side of the tower and I could see bits falling down, but it wasn't too bad at this time. The fire hadn't touched some of the floors towards the top and it was on one face only - the face cover washer where everyone goes in. I could hear cracking, pops and hissing coming from the fire and there were people shouting orders to get more hose and water running. There were members of the public watching and saying things like "Oh my God", but they weren't interfering or asking us questions. The fire engines were revving up, which was quite noisy, as well as the sounds coming from the fire. I was feeling a bit nervous and it was a bit worrying. I was glad to be there as it was a once in a lifetime fire and I still had the belief that we were going to be able to fix it. I just wanted to get in and try and put the fire out.

As we walked towards the open lobby area, by the cover washer, I saw an aerial ladder, which was later moved as debris was landing on it and damaging it. There was one entrance to get in to the tower and it was quite obvious where it was, but we were following 5-10 other people in to the building. The front lobby area was all glass and you could see inside and up to the mezzanine level. I could see what I thought was a communal area with shops and some lifts. I saw stairs going up and coming back round the top and it was all steel glass. As I entered the lobby, I saw members of the public - some were in pyjamas and I assumed they had come from the flats and were milling about. I wasn't sure if they had come out of the lifts or if they'd walked down the stairs.

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On lifts, there is a fire-fighter switch and the fire brigade should be able to switch the key over, so that they can be commandeered and taken control of. Once the key is turned, the only way to operate the lift is from the inside, so someone has to be left inside in order to operate it, as the call buttons on the floors will no longer work. In a normal high rise incident; the lift should be kept at the bridgehead, which would then enable us to get equipment up and to casualties to the ground quicker. The reason they are commandeered is to prevent them being called to floors where the fire is, the lift will fill with smoke, fumes and even flames which would endanger others already in the lift. Having a lift on the fire floor is the last thing you want, which is why it is kept at the bridgehead, It never crossed my mind to use the lift, because the bridgehead was on the 3rd floor and putting a casualty inside would go against policy in these circumstances, due to the fire clearly spreading over several floors and from the lower floors upwards. I do not know if the fire brigade commandeered the lifts at Grenfell Tower that night.

The bridgehead is like a staging post. In high-rise procedures, the bridgehead has to be two floors below the fire floor, but at Grenfell, this was very difficult as the fire was on all floors from the 4th up. The bridgehead is not supposed to move, unless in extreme circumstances, as it is supposed to remain in the same place, so when you go in you know where it is for when you come out, however I think it was later moved to the ground floor at Grenfell due to it filling up with too much smoke. The incident commander would have set up the bridgehead and then a second commander would be assigned to run it. There is a list of equipment that needs to be taken to the bridgehead, as per the high rise policy, including BA boards, hose, branches, first aid kits, breaking in gear, TICs and spare BA sets. On the high rise procedure; there is a high-rise grab bag that you are meant to take and a list of items required. Initially at the early stage of a high rise incident, the incident commander will stay outside and a crew manager and his team will go and have a quick reconnaissance inside and if BA procedures are required, with the use of things like the wet/dry risers, a bridgehead will be set up. The crew manager will become sector commander at the bridgehead with two fire-fighters and a BA entry control officer and they will take as much of the equipment required and that they can carry with them. There is normally a spare person who will run anything else needed, to the bridgehead.

We walked up the stairs to an open area on the mezzanine on the 3rd floor, which was where about 20 fire-fighters were queuing to get in to the bridgehead, which was behind the closed fire door. We were all talking to each other, discussing what was going on with the fire and how abnormal it was. Equipment was being passed along the queue and in to the bridgehead, but I kept hold of my TIC. Kate and Greg

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were in front of Tom and I, in the queue and they got called in to the bridgehead first. I did not hear what they were told. Two extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA) teams were milling about and they were called in next, as two EDBA teams were required. I was then at the front of the queue and had to wait no longer than a minute before there was a call for call for two more standard BA to come forward, so I went in to the bridgehead with Tom. The bridgehead seemed chaotic with lots of people inside, 3 or 4 BA boards on the left and there was lots of things going on - talking and radio messages but everyone seemed to know what they were doing. I saw a Station Manager and a couple of other officers whom had white helmets on and there were a couple of fire-fighters donning up. Watch Manager O'KEEFE, who I think is stationed at Kensington, gave us our brief. He said that a BA team was required to go to the 20th floor and tell the bridgehead what we could see and find. I asked him to repeat the brief, as it was not the standard brief you would normally receive for a high-rise building. Normally I would expect to receive more information, such as where the fire was, what room, how many people are trapped, how many flats there are on the floor etc. It is normally quite specific. I did turn around to Tom and said "what the fuck sort of briefing is that?" but I accepted what was said, instead of challenging it, due to the situation and circumstances, but it felt like we were being sent up to the 20th floor to complete a reccy. I think someone had been sent up to the 20th floor before us, but still knew very little about Grenfell Tower itself. I had heard some information that there were 6 flats on each floor, which varied in size and that it had 24 floors and that there was one stairwell up and down, which wasn't very wide, but the floors were clearly marked. I think this information had come from when we were standing in the queue. I repeated the briefing back to Mr O'KEEFE and asked whether persons were reported, did we have water and what were we expecting to find on the 20th floor. He replied, "We're not sure about the water. We've got dry risers plumbed in and we're supplying water but we're not sure what water we're going to get. Yes it's persons reported, we don't know the numbers of people on that floor. We don't know what you're looking for or what you'll find". Tom and I then donned up, so I put my facemask on, turned the cylinder on to make sure there was air and check it's working and put on the flash hood. None of our fire gear is fire proof - it is heat resistant, so can withstand higher temperatures than normal clothing but can still burn. Helmet and gloves were then put on, checking that no skin was on show. Tom and I checked each other over, to ensure we were covered and no straps were hanging down and then went under air. We have a telemetry set, so took the tally out of the BA set and gave it to the officer running the board, with my name, call sign and brief. This connects via WI-FI so that the air usage can be monitored, however

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there is no GPS. We did a comms check to make sure we are on the same radio channel - channel 6 and that we could hear each other and we then picked up our equipment and entered the stairwell.

The stairwell was busy with people queuing to go up. I have seen pictures from the World Trade Centre and it looked like that. The EDBA teams were in front of us and we slotted in behind them and started going up the stairs. Tom and I decided to go at a steady pace, so that we would have enough air if we needed to bring people down, but we couldn't have hurried even if we wanted to, due to the amount of people on the stairs. The stairwell was full of wispy smoke, but it wasn't vision obscuring, until we reached the 5th floor. At this point, it became much more smoky and I couldn't see the numbers on the wall and could just about see my feet. Tom and I had a little chat - I asked if he could see me to which he said no. I told him that I was just in front of him and he said that he was going to come past me. This isn't really the correct thing to do as I was BA number 1, however as we were only traversing the stairwell and he is bigger and taller than me, I was fine with it as I was carrying most of the gear and he could clear the way a little bit. Bottlenecking was obviously going on which is where people had to wait on the stairs whilst others went in through doors, due to the small stairwell and being unable to get past each other. We caught up with the EDBA team in front of us and Tom walked in to them as they were waiting on the stairs. It was so smoky that we couldn't see anything. As we were waiting in the queue, there was chatter going on - things like what team are you, where are you going and people were also coming down the stairs. We didn't have to wait too long before we started moving again. It was really tight in the stairwell and it was full of thick black smoke and we had to lean on the wall to take a reference point. I couldn't see Tom in front of me, even though he was right there with reflector straps on and I had to keep touching and banging him to let him know I was there. I heard someone say, "This is the 10th floor" and "Oh good, only 2 more to go". Tom and I were still checking with each other that we were alright and how much air we had used and at this point, I think that I had used 50 bar.

I asked Tom if he could see any numbers as it felt like we had been walking in the dark, blind and not knowing where we were and he said that he couldn't see anything. We continued up and I heard the EDBA team in front say, "We're going to 12 - this is us". We waited for about 30 seconds for them clear out of the way and continued up with the other EDBA team who were going to the 14th floor. The smoke had thinned out a little bit by now and coming up, I had seen that doors were being held open by bits of hose or were being wedged opened. I kept kicking things under foot, maybe bits of clothing and it started to feel like more of a fire situation as people were doing stuff and equipment could be seen. We followed the EDBA team to the 14th floor and I could see the number 14 on the wall. They said they were going in,

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we said go careful and then we did a gauge check to see how much air we had. I remember discussing with Tom why we were being sent to the 20th floor, when the EDBA teams, who had twice as much air than us, were only going to the 12th and 14th floors, but we continued on up. No one was in front of us and we were able to speed up a little bit. It went really quiet and I couldn't hear anything coming from above us. I could hear shouting coming from below but that is all. I saw the numbers 15 and 17 on the walls, but they were hard to make out and it was hard to figure out where we were. By the time we got to the 20th floor, it was much smokier again and we really struggled to see the number 20 on the wall and had to wipe it down, as there was a lot of soot. The concept of time is difficult to judge but I think it took between 8-10 minutes to get up to the 20th floor. I don't recall there being any obstructions on the stairwell and there must have been some lighting as it wasn't pitch black. It almost felt claustrophobic as I could barely see and had to rely on my training and other senses to negotiate my way up the stairs. I had to concentrate really hard to figure out where we were.

It was eerily quiet. I couldn't hear any of the machines or sirens - it had gone to 40 pumps by then, so engines must have been turning up. We did a gauge check and I had about 190-bar left and Tom had about 210-bar left. I knew that I had about 90 bar left before we needed to turn around and go back down, as Fire Brigade policy states that you must be out of the building with 76 bars of air remaining, plus or minus 5 bar. The warning whistle sounds at 76 bars, which is a safety measure.

I put the hooligan bar and one length of hose down on the floor opposite where the door to the 20th floor opened and said to Tom that we'd better do some sort of door entry procedure as we didn't know what was behind the door. We didn't have water at this point, which is what is needed for a proper door entry procedure - to put out any flames and cool the area down a bit before going in. I wanted to know what was going on behind the door before we went in. We decided that we wouldn't be able to do much with the air that we had left, so we would set in the dry riser, run a length of hose, get it charged and knock on a couple of doors and then see what we would do. Tom opened the door and as it turns out, I couldn't see anything at all. There was no obvious fire and I can't recall anything about the door. The heat wasn't too bad, but when the door opened, it was like a wall of smoke and there was much more smoke in that area than in the stairwell. It was really dark and I don't think there was a light on.

I asked Tom if he knew where the dry riser was and he said that he had been told that if you stayed with the wall on the left, when we go in, it would be found. I started following the left wall and almost immediately went back round on myself before coming to a door. I couldn't see anything so had to feel

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my way around. I felt a door handle and said to Tom that there was a door and we would come back to it. Distance is hard to tell when you can't see, but I think I we took a few more strides before coming to another door on the left. I was thinking that the dry riser must be here somewhere and I was searching the whole wall up and down - down to the ground and up as high as I could reach, but I couldn't find it. I said to Tom that I couldn't find it and asked if knew exactly where it was. He said that he was told to stay on the left and we'll find it. I had walked back towards him a little bit to talk to him as sound doesn't travel very well in a smoky environment and it was hard to hear each other. We carried on a bit further and came to a third door and then there was a wall at the end, which went round to the right. As we turned round to the right again, I then felt the dry riser in its box, which was in front of me. I bent down and got up close to it, turned my torch on and saw that it was locked. I shouted to Tom that I had found it and told him to get the branch so I could smash the glass. I queried with Tom about why the dry riser wasn't out in the hall or in a protected area where it ideally should be and thought how crap it was, where it was placed. The placement of the dry riser in the lobby was a risk to fire fighters as if there had been a fire in the lobby area, we wouldn't have had any water to get in there safely. I would expect it to be in a protected stairwell or behind fire doors but assume that it was where it was because Grenfell was built before the change in fire regulations. I then turned the dry riser on to see if any water came out, which it did and I then attached the hose. Tom took the other end of the hose and started to unroll it and put the branch in the end. I turned the water back on and could feel the hose filling up but Tom said there was no water. We didn't have a lot of room to throw it out so had to pass it out by hand and it now obviously had a kink in it. The water pressure would normally open up the hose, but it wasn't very forceful so we had to fiddle around with it until the kinks were straightened and water started to come out of it and it was knocked off. We did a gauge check and I think I had about 120-bar left so decided that we would knock on some doors to see if we could speak to anyone and get them out. I turned around and the doors were now on my right and I started to go back the way I had originally come. I banged really loudly on the 3 doors that I found but there was no answer.

There was no noise - it was completely silent and very eerie. It felt like we were alone and it was abnormal to not hear any noise, especially from the radios. I didn't realise that the radios weren't working at this time even though I would normally expect there to be a fair amount of radio traffic. The smoke was blacker, thicker and denser and I literally couldn't see an inch in front of my face. Black smoke tends to mean that materials such as plastic and textiles are burning. We stopped and we were deciding what to do next as I had about 100 bar left at this point. We were discussing whether to go to the other side of the

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lobby to knock on doors or if we should go back down, and tried to send a message to the bridgehead to update them but it appeared that neither of our radios were working and I assumed that this was due to interference between the floors. We decided that we should turn around and go back down, when another crew came on to the 20th floor. At the time, I didn't know who they were but now know that one of them was Fire-fighter Aggy FERNANDES, who was one of my normal crewmembers but had gone to another station that night on standby. They said that they were on a Fire Survival Guide (FSG) call and there was a family of 5 that needed help getting out. I think they said the family was in flat 175, but I'm not 100% certain on this and they asked for help to bring them out. I think that I had about 100- bar left so we decided to stay and help them. Tom said that he would go with the other crew and I said that I would stay by the doors so I could shout at them and help them find their way back. I was thinking that we would struggle to get people down with the air we had left, but we had to get them down, as the other crew wouldn't be able to bring 5 people down on their own. I thought that it was going to be bad but we would just have to manage as we only had one go at it as we wouldn't be able to come back up all those stairs, like you would be able to in a normal house fire.

I stood at the door to the lobby and opened it, expecting it to be clearer out in the stairwell, but it wasn't. It was horrendous - full of smoke and it felt warm - hotter than on the way up. I shut the door again so as to not let any more smoke in. I don't know how long I was stood at the door area for but I then heard someone shout "casualty". Tom appeared and said that there was a family of 5 and that they were going to try and bring them out. I said ok and that I'd be ready but we needed to go soon because our air was running out. I'm not sure if Tom went back to the flat or if he stood back near to where I was but I then heard a man's voice say, "Help us. You've got to help us. We've got to get out". I asked him some questions as to where he had come from and how many of them there were and he said that it was him, his wife and kids - 2 kids and a baby. He said that it was horrible and he couldn't breathe. I told him not to panic and asked if he had something round his head. He said that he had as he'd been told on the phone to do so. I heard a woman's voice say, "My baby, don't forget my baby" and it was a real piercing scream. Tom was with me and I asked him where the others were and he said that Aggy had them. My low-pressure warning whistle went off - so I had 76-bar left- and I said to Tom that we had to go now. Because of this, I was quite urgent in the way I spoke to the man and told him to grab hold of my cylinder with both hands and lean against the wall with his left shoulder. The man was panicking and wasn't really listening to me - he was scared. I couldn't see him but he had an English accent. He kept trying to grab at me, saying that he couldn't breathe and I was trying to calm him and keep his hands away from my face. I

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was concerned that he would pull off my mask and we would both be in trouble, so kept trying to grab his hands, telling him to take hold of my cylinder so we could leave. I asked Tom if he had anyone with him and he said no but there was a woman here. I was getting nervous as my air was running out and it was a long way back and the man couldn't breathe. We had to go and we couldn't check where the woman was. I said to the man that we were going and wouldn't be hanging about and he said to just get him out as he couldn't breathe or see and his eyes were stinging.

We left the 20th floor and started making our way back down the stairs. I could feel that the man had hold of my right shoulder and he kept bumping in to me - his knee kept hitting the back of my leg and he was obviously trying to get down the stairs quickly. We got down 2-3 flights of stairs - 6-7 stairs before turning and I think there were 4 flights per floor. The man kept saying that he couldn't breath and his eyes were stinging and I kept trying to reassure him and encouraged him to keep going and that it clears up further down. The man was talking and then went quiet and I then heard a gurgling noise and felt more weight on me, so I turned toward him slightly and grabbed at him, just as he fell forward and landed on me, knocking me back and in to the wall. He then slid down the last couple of steps and was at the bottom on one of the half landing bits where the stairs change direction. I shouted to Tom that he's gone down and then tried to wake the man saying "Sir can you hear me"? I got no answer but could hear a sort of breathing noise. He had landed almost flat on his back with his legs down but across the stairs. As there wasn't a lot of room, his head must have been propped up against the side of the wall but I could only feel his legs. I shouted at Tom again that he's gone down and then heard Tom thud down the stairs, where I think he has tripped over the man and landed on him, hitting the wall and banging his leg. Tom said something like "Oh fuck" and I asked him if he was ok and that we had had to get going and drag the casualty out. I panicked a little as I thought Tom had hurt himself and I thought I would have to make a decision as to whether I would have to drag Tom out or the casualty but Tom said that he was Ok, he'd hurt his leg - it was a bit painful but he was alright and for us to get going. We checked how much air we had left - I had just under 50 bar and Tom said he had 70 and his warning whistle was going off now as well. The whistle goes off at 95 decibels, which causes more agitation - as not only are you running out of air but have a high pitched whining in your ear. We had to really shout at each other to be heard and had a brief discussion about what end we had. I picked up what I thought was the man's foot or leg and it was massive - it was like grabbing my thigh and it was a really big leg. I said to Tom that he was a big bloke and we were going to struggle, asking how big his end was. Tom said he was massive and that we were going to have to work really hard. I took hold of the mans legs and Tom took hold of him under the

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armpits and we started dragging him down. He was too big for us to carry down or pick up and he was being bumped down almost every stair. We just kept going and I started to panic that I was going to run out of air as we were working so hard and it was taking so long. I began to realise that we weren't going to get the guy out and this was devastating as you never leave someone in a building, especially once you've got them but we had to try a bit more. Getting down the floors felt like an eternity and I was breathing really hard. The stairs were so narrow and small and he was so big and it was almost impossible to get him round the stairs in one go. We had to stop to get a better grip and we did a gauge check. I couldn't see what floor we were on and it had gotten much hotter. I think this was a mix of the heat from the fire and from working so hard. The smoke was much worse than when we came up and it was really thick and dense. I said that we needed to go and Tom said that we couldn't just leave him so we started going a bit more. The man must have weighed 18-20 stones, was bigger than me and I have never worked so hard in my life - I was huffing and puffing and was knackered. I was breathing flat out and it was physically hard. It felt like I had ran 100 miles and I could feel the sweat running down the back of my legs.

We got to maybe the 16th or 15th floor and did another gauge check. I had about 23- bar left and Tom had about 50. I said to him that we had to go, as we didn't have enough air left to get the man out. Tom said for me to go as he's got enough air to keep bringing him down. Policy says that you go in as a pair and come out as a pair, so I told Tom that he had to come with me, as we had to go. He said that I should go and that he would keep pulling the man down. I couldn't persuade him to come with me despite trying hard - he just said that he had enough air to keep going. The crew that had joined us on the 20th floor had gone before us - I thought they were behind us, so they wouldn't be able to help and we hadn't come across another crew coming up. In my head, I came up with a compromise so said to Tom that I would go down a couple of floors and try and find another crew to help him and take over from us and we would then make our way out. I told him that if I found another crew, I would wait for him and we'd then go out together and if I didn't find anyone then I would come back up the two flights of stairs, physically get him and he'd come with me. Tom agreed to this - I'm sure just because he wanted to get rid of me as I was trying to force him to come out. He wasn't thinking straight and appeared agitated - not with me, but the situation- and it felt like he was going to get that casualty out of the building if it was the last thing he was going to do. It was a difficult position to be in, because if I collapsed I would have no one to rescue me. I didn't end up pulling rank on him and went down a couple of floors and bumped in to a crew coming up. I don't know who they were. I told them what we had been doing and that Tom was still up

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there and we didn't have much air left and asked them if they could go and relieve him. They said that they would and I stayed where I was, waiting for Tom. It felt like I was waiting for a long time, but it was probably only a minute. I checked my gauge and it showed that I only had 17 or 18 bar left. I shouted up the stairs for Tom, saying that I had to go. I really thought that I was going to run out of air and wouldn't have enough air to get out. The smoke was really thick and nasty. It annoys me that I left but I didn't want to die on that stairwell, so I took a deep breath, held it and ran. I ran down 4 or 5 floors, stopped and did a gauge check. I held the banister on the right hand inside so that I would be out of people's way, should they be coming up the stairs. I saw that I hadn't used too much air, so took another deep breath and ran down another 4 or 5 floors, and kept doing this until I reached the 5th floor. It was really hot and I had to crouch down a little bit as I came down the stairs, as I could feel the heat on my ears and it was a bit tingly on my sleeves. The heat was quite impressive considering I was in a stairwell that hadn't been breached by the fire, so the heat must have been coming from the smoke or the brickwork. I didn't talk to anyone and didn't see anyone on the way down, but I do remember hearing things going on in the floors as I ran past, but I was really concentrating on getting out - it was a fight or flight scenario. There was a queue of fire-fighters at the 5th floor, waiting to exit out on to the 3rd floor. It was a very orderly queue and felt like we were queuing for an ice cream - it was the most bizarre thing I have seen. I didn't recognise anyone. I shit myself when I saw the queue - loads of whistles were going off and I asked what was going on and was told it was just the queue to get out. I only had 8 bar left, which is only about a minute of air, so asked if I could go in front but was told that everyone was on 10-15 bar, so I just waited. A fire-fighter came past carrying someone so we let them pass and all of a sudden the queue cleared and I was able to walk out. I don't know what the holdup was but assumed it was due to someone else being carried out as it doesn't normally take that long to get out. It was still smoky here but not as bad as it was higher up. The smoke appeared to be more of a lighter colour of grey and I think this was due to water being put on the fire lower down which caused more steam.

I was relieved to be out and removed my facemask and set, I was breathing heavily and just sat there, but I was worried and wondering where Tom was. I waited by the door, instead of speaking to entry control, as you're not supposed to report back without your BA partner. saw Greg and Kate and asked them some questions as to how they were and what they had done and they then asked where Tom was. I told them that he was coming but was still inside the stairwell and that he had refused to come out with me because he was dragging a guy down. Greg didn't appear to be very happy with me because I'd come out without Tom, but I took this with a pinch of salt. I get where he was coming from however Tom refused to come

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out when I needed to leave. We waited for about 2-3 minutes and Tom still hadn't come out and I went to speak to entry control, as I was getting radio messages from them about my lack of air. I looked at several boards and couldn't see my name so they found it for me and I returned my tally, shutting down my set. I was asked where Fire-fighter Welch was and told them that he was over there. I lied purely because I didn't want to get anything back from the brigade and I didn't want either of us to get in to trouble - he should have come out with me and I shouldn't have come out without him. I went and stood by the door again to wait for Tom and after about a minute, he came running out with no facemask on, no helmet and no flash hood. He looked confused, as though he wasn't all there and was coughing and spluttering, not looking very well. He ran straight through the bridgehead, straight down the stairs to the lobby and straight out of the building. I wondered what the hell had happened to his equipment but was so relieved to see him and could have laughed and jumped for joy. I had begun to think that he had been in there too long for the amount of air he had left and have never been so happy to see a man in my life. Tom ran past us so Kate and I got up and ran after him. We got shouted at by an officer, for not having our helmets on - there was so much debris falling down by this point, it was ridiculous, so we put our helmets on and continued after Tom. I lost sight of him for a little bit but as I rounded the corner, back to where our lorry was parked, I saw him on the grass area, by a wall, holding his head, coughing and breathing heavily. He was obviously over heated so I asked him if he was alright and started removing his tunic and leggings, so that he could get some fresh air on to his body and relax a little bit. Kate went and got some water to drink and some buckets of water to put his hands in to help cool him down. He initially refused the water as he said that his throat was burning, which was a concern, but then he started to drink. I asked Tom where his kit was and he said that he had ran out of air on the 10th or 12th floor and just took everything off and dumped it on the floor. He said that there were 2 fire-fighters with him but he had to just leave the casualty with them and he ran all the way out. I sat down with Kate, Greg and Tom and took all of my fire kit off. I was shattered and so hot and sweaty and sort of zoned out for several minutes. When I looked at the tower, it had spread to 3 sides and was working its way upward. Debris was falling down and there were people everywhere. The riot police had turned up and were escorting people in to the building with their shields. I then tried to get hold of entry control to let them know that Fire-fighter Welch had come out of the building, as I had heard them on the radio calling for him as they were worried due to the telemetry saying he had no air left, but they weren't responding and they were preparing to send in a rescue team after him. I tried to get back in to speak with them but wasn't able to due to not having any of my fire gear on. I saw a Station Manager or Group Manager walk past and asked him if he could get hold

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of entry control for me. I explained that I needed to update them that Tom had come out and was sat there with us and that he was ok. The officer spoke to entry control and they wanted to know why Tom hadn't gone to the bridgehead so they were told it was because he had ran out of air. Entry control wanted to impound his set as they thought his equipment had failed so it was explained that there had been no malfunction, just not enough air left in his cylinder. A senior officer came over and spoke to Tom, telling him that he needed to go and see the paramedics, so I went with him and we were there for maybe 30 minutes, to an hour. He had all the checks done and they wanted to give him oxygen but he refused. I spoke to a couple of other firefighters who needed some treatment and saw some body bags being stored at the leisure centre. There were just fire-fighters and paramedics about in this area - no members of the public. By this point, I think it must have been some time after 3am.

The debris looked like burning lumps of charcoal, but was in fact the cladding burning and falling down. Big sheets of metal were coming down, with burning lumps of insulation, which looked like they were just wafting down in the breeze, like burning bits of paper. It was a very sombre atmosphere and everyone was looking at the fire in disbelief. Questions were still being asked as to how it was burning that way and everyone was really down. It was very clear that people weren't going to be able to get out and I thought that firefighters were going to die or get seriously hurt as the fire was that dodgy. There was lots of hissing and cracking coming from the metal and whistling types of noises. There was a constant drum coming from all of the fire engines, which were pumping and revving up and beeping coming from the aerials. There was lots of noise - people screaming and shouting. I could hear screams and shouts coming from inside the tower, asking for help. It was like being on a film set and felt very surreal and bizarre. It was very disturbing and felt unreal.

After seeing the paramedics, Tom and I joined back up with the rest of the team; we ate at the Salvation Army van and used the facilities in the leisure centre. We spoke to entry control, as they wanted more BA wearers. Tom said that he couldn't wear as he didn't have his kit and I offered to wear again, even though I was shattered and had mislaid my set, as it had been moved after I took it off. I was told that I could just take another set and if I was needed, I'd been informed. It was then decided that only EDBA teams would be going in, so I didn't have to enter the tower again.

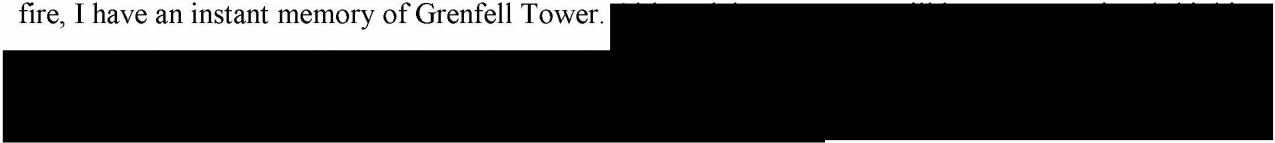
We were then tasked to complete other jobs around the incident ground and my crew worked on a pump supplying the aerial that was spraying water on to the tower face that was first to alight. There was a guy still in his flat, I think on the floor, who was there for the whole time and water was being sprayed on the

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flats surrounding his to protect him and to prevent his flat from catching fire. My crew also had to do diesel runs, so were tasked to find the OSU and ensure all the lorries were filled up with diesel so that they would continue to work. We were relieved from the incident ground at about 11-1130am and we went to Paddington to write notes. We couldn't get our engine out, so were given a lift.

For about a month after the fire, I was in a bad way. I was over thinking everything, regretting not doing things and thinking what if to all sorts. I was very grumpy and it was playing on my mind. In some ways I wish that I had never been to the fire and it has impacted me a lot. Now when I get called to a high-rise fire, I have an instant memory of Grenfell Tower.



I exhibit my contemporaneous notes as CME/1, a copy of which has been provided to the Metropolitan Police.

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