

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: EDWARDS, CRAIG

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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: CRAIG EDWARDS

Date: 28/03/2018

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

The following is my account of the fire that occurred at Grenfell Tower in the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I have been a Firefighter (FF) for the last 27 years. I am a FF posted on the Red Watch at F26 Bethnal Green and I have been at Bethnal Green Fire Station for the entirety of my service. The umbrella term "Appliance" is used to describe varying types of fire engines. I will use this term throughout my statement.

I will also mention the following people: CM (Crew Manager) Sean MURPHY, FF Anthony WELDEN, FF Ian MOORE, FF Pav SINGH and FF Paul HOWARD. Prior to my attendance in the early hours of 14/06/17, I had never been to Grenfell Tower nor did I have any information in regards to its layout.

In relation to training there are different criteria's that need to be hit, you have BPA which are your periodical assessments. Around once a year, we also have a BA (Breathing Apparatus) refresher that now incorporates real fire training. As a member of the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) there are many things that you need to be up to date with and as such, we train quite regularly.

On Tuesday 13th June at approximately 2000 hours I came on duty at Bethnal Green fire station where I

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am based. I am a driver on the FRU, which is a type of Appliance. Our call sign was F266. As the FRU, all crewmembers are trained in using EDBA, which is the extended duration breathing apparatus. It lasts for approximately 20 minutes more than the standard variation of the apparatus using two cylinders as opposed to one and dependant on task. Once I had been advised that I was riding the FRU, I tested the machine to check that everything was working such as the sirens and if it had enough diesel. Once I had confirmed there were no issues with the Appliance I checked my EDBA sets as you do at the beginning of all shifts.

The FRU has equipment that is not on a Pump Ladder. It is used for more complicated incidents or road traffic accidents. It carries various items including cutting equipment and a boat. We also do an inventory check on it to make sure that all your equipment is in place as there is quite a lot on the Appliance.

I was asleep when we got the call and were alerted to the incident. It was approximately 0245 am. As the call comes into the teleprinter it puts it through the station and audibly and visually alerts FF's. The lights come on and a voice alerts you to the call. The duty man who would have been in the watch room at the time was reading it and has in turn told me where the incident was. I didn't recognise the address so I was asking other people who sort of had better topographical knowledge than me if they knew it and they sort of knew the area. The call slip stated that this was a 40-pump fire and to me a 40-pump fire is a big fire. I've been to a 30 pump and 20 pump fire before and they are very large incidents. Even a 10-pump fire would be quite a substantial fire so a 40-pump fire it is probably the biggest fire I have been to in my career. I recall thinking the slip may have been incorrect and should have stated 4 pump but then I thought an FRU wouldn't be sent on a 4 pump fire because FRU's get sent on bigger fires. We left the station soon after receiving the order. It was myself and CM Sean MURPHY in the front of the Appliance with FF Ian MOORE and FF Anthony WELDEN in the back. Sean MURPHY wasn't actually from our station he was from Islington but he was on what we call an Out Duty on the day.

I do not remember the route we took too well as I was being guided by the others on the fire engine. I know I initially headed towards Shoreditch but I cannot remember exactly where we went from there. Once we were on the Westway right beside the incidents location, we could see a tower block that was alight which was quite dramatic, because even if you get just like a couple of flats on a Tower Block with flames punching out of it you know you've got like quite a big job. I do not recall what time it was nor

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can I remember how long it took us to get there. We came off the Westway and there was a roundabout that we turned left at. I cant remember where the RVP was but eventually we got to the smaller more residential roads and parked up next to a school. It was a normal residential road with a school on it. From a drivers point of view the road was rather narrow. You want to try and find a place where you can leave the truck that isn't going to block anyone else, as you know other trucks and ambulances will be turning up. You want to be out of the way but you also want to be close to the incident so it can be difficult. I could not see the tower at this point from this position.

I parked the Appliance and we all dismounted. As I was the driver, everyone else had already rigged in their fire clothing but I was in my work wear so I needed to get into my fire gear. I took this from the middle locker situated on the offside of the FRU and got into it.

I then took my EDBA set from the sliding rail within the FRU and joined the rest of my crew. I cannot remember locking the machine but if I am going to leave the machine there, I quite often will lock it. We walked along another road that went off to the right from the end of which we could see the Tower. Without being too flippant, it was completely alight, it was a tower block on fire. I recall seeing plenty of people heading towards it and we were heading in the same direction looking for the command unit. I cant remember that clearly but I know we were heading towards the command unit to get some sort of a briefing. Sean MURPHY would have been the one to get the briefing and hand out the nominal roll board.

Once Sean had spoken to the Command Unit we went to a marshalling point that was near the leisure centre. Myself and Tony WELDEN we were initially tasked with entering and checking the leisure centre as the AFA (Automatic Fire Alarm) had gone off within the building. It transpired it was just smoke from Grenfell tower that had set it off and we confirmed that. There was a marshalling area where there was a load of FF's carrying sets and it was from there that we were sent to a second area that was across a road from the Tower itself. I cannot remember exactly where the first marshalling area was. You could see all the debris coming off the tower from the second marshalling point, looked like bits just falling out of the sky. We are used to seeing a certain amount of debris falling, at a high rise job you are used to a certain amount of debris coming down and you know to watch out for it but there was a massive amount at Grenfell, like a constant flow of debris. We were approximately 20 metres from the Tower at this point

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and I was still with my crew.

I could see quite a few other FF's at the scene as well as the police, originally we saw police in the riot gear and they were moving as a group somewhere although I did not see where they went. It is difficult for me to recall specific timings, as at an incident such as this keeping time isn't something you actively think about.

I cannot remember who exactly it was that told us to move from one marshalling point to another although I do know that they were a senior officer. We were queuing up to go across a large gap to where the Tower was. Tony WELDEN was the first from our group to go across the gap followed by Sean MURPHY. As Sean made his way across the gap, a body fell from the Tower and he was suddenly struck by it. It was a couple of seconds before what happened before me was registered in my brain; you sort of heard the sound and saw it at the same time. Before I knew it, he was on his back with his shield over him and Ian MOORE who was slightly in front of me went forwards to try to drag him back. Sean was taken away and the next think I remember it was my turn to cross over, It was quite difficult to look up with the shield as well as your helmet to see what was going on. There was so much debris that was already on the floor I wanted to get across as quick as I could although you couldn't actually run. I remember not being able to run or not being able to look up so you kind of have to watch your step and pick out your footsteps, It was a bit of an awkward way of getting across. The visibility at that point wasn't too bad it was alright and you could see to place your feet but you couldn't look up at what was coming down. I saw the body fall on top of Sean right before my eyes. The body was then pulled off him and taken to the left. The leg had come off the body and was situated to my right. It sounded like you can imagine really it was like I wouldn't call it a thud well it was a thud but like a heavy sound but wet at the same time.

Sean just went down on his back underneath his shield. it was a black guy and I seem to remember him being bare chested, he wasn't naked but he didn't have a lot on. By the time I had worked out what had happened, I was sort of in shock. Ian was already half way across from him. I followed Ian and he had grabbed Sean and started pulling him backwards. I used my shield to cover the both of them. By then I could see that Sean was conscious and was moving about but he looked a bit shocked. I have since learnt that Sean did receive treatment and he was checked over at the time but he declined hospital treatment. He even declined having painkillers and afterwards went into the Tower twice. As Ian and Sean had moved, I am now at the front of the queue of people to across. There was a lot of water just on the floor

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and I cant remember how deep maybe about ankle deep. It was clear and it was not smoky but it there was water dripping. I seem to remember there being two sides to it. One side where there was kind of people milling about and people sort of coming in from behind me and I think people were leaving as well. I can't remember that too clearly. Then the other side where the stairs were and the BA control where Pat GOLDBOURNE was, who was one of our senior officers was and I recognised him. First I was on the side opposite where the stairs were and then from there we were directed to line up and get our briefing. Pat GOLDBOURNE was the one that directed us. He gave us the briefing and essentially told us that unfortunately we were kind of not within policy because it had gone a little bit outside of policy, I don't think any policy could cover what was going on. He essentially told us we were outside of policy and he was asking us to go up the Tower and see if we can find anyone. Obviously I knew it was already outside of policy anyway because the BA control was now on the ground floor. I kind of guessed that we would be outside of policy by now. Things like Fire Safety Guidance I wouldn't have a clue about but from my point of view I knew that the policy would be like having a 45mm hose with a branch two floors below and I knew that wasn't going to be the case. Once we had started up and handed our tally to the entry control we started to make our way up the stairs. I had seen a bit of breaking in gear and I can't remember if it was a large axe or a crow bar. I saw it in on a glass partition by the stairwell so I picked it up.

It was now myself and Tony WELDEN and we were put in a crew of four with two other FF's. They were Pav SINGH and Paul HOWARD. Pav SINGH was actually from our station but he was on an out duty at Islington and Paul HOWARD was on an out duty from another station but we were put together on that EDBA crew. I think Ian did join us in the lobby but by then he was with a different crew. We didn't have water with us they were just sending crews up to see if they could get anyone out. I think they wanted us to go to the 11th floor. We started running up the stairs after I had collected the breaking gear. We just kept running straight up the stairs. I think the first two or three floors were fairly clear but then smoke gradually started getting a little bit thicker. I remember the 7th and 8th floor because that was clearly marked on the wall but the smoke was starting to get a little bit thicker then and when we got a little bit further we saw another crew coming down the stairs. The stairs are narrow so it slowed things down which was a way to have a little bit of a breather because you know it was constant activity. Almost a relief as it was an opportunity to slow down and get your breath back. Bit of info passed on from the crew coming out which is what you'd expect really and that's when they told us about the body on the

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stairs. They said there's a body on the stairs on the next floor. They said they had checked the body and there was no signs of life but be wary of it. We let them pass us and then we carried on going and that's when we came across the body ourselves. The people at the front of our crew sort of checked the body. There was a delay whilst they did this and then we continued. We went via the right hand wall so we continued past the body. At that time the smoke was too thick to see the body but you could feel it, the weight against your ankle. The body was on the stairs right across it and the stairs really were not that wide maybe 3-5 feet, so it was cramped. It was getting hot at this point and I seem to remember water flowing down which was almost hot water as you would expect. As far as smoke was concerned the first few floors were relatively clear and it just started getting thicker and thicker as we went further up the stairwell. It was fairly thick on the 7th and 8th floor but you could still see the numbers marked on the walls. Where we met the other crew we could see the crew with a torch you could basically see the shadowy impression of their fire gear.

Once we had passed the body we carried on running eventually arriving at what we thought was the 11th floor. I've been told since that we were actually on the 12th floor. I think we miscounted somewhere along the lines. I was the last one in the crew so I was following those in front of me and just waiting for them while they were checking flats etc. I am following their lead and by now the smoke was still thick but the actual texture of the smoke was starting to change. The actual texture of smoke is a thing that in a fire you are really conscious of. You know it gives an idea of conditions and what could or couldn't happen. The texture of the smoke changed quite a lot I think, it was almost like a cauliflowery or broccoli type. Which to me means that the particles in there are very hot and are dangerous. Well not only is it dangerous because it can now burn but its also dangerous because if anyone was up there without BA they are not going to survive long in that. There's not enough air in there and they would be breathing in toxins that will ultimately choke them.

We continued along the wall sticking to the right and then it bent round to the left. I cant remember how far along there we got, but we couldn't see anything. I heard one of the doors of the flats being opened but I personally did not enter and once that has been searched, I would just continue with my crew. I was at the back of the crew and I remember thinking to myself that there was definitely a possibility of danger. As there is always a danger when you've got smoke with texture I previously described because its got unburnt particles that are hot and it also contains carbon monoxide. Its an unbreathable atmosphere, an irrespirable atmosphere. I cant tell you in terms of distances because when you are in a situation like that

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and you cant see, it often feels like you've gone a long way but when you see it in a smokeless fully visual way it seems slightly different to how it was in your mind. To me it seemed we had gone quite a way in there. No idea how long we had been in there on that floor. You could hear the fires in the rooms as well like how the smoke was. I remember us having a discussion about needing to get some water up here saying this is not right. So we then left and the positions were reversed and I was then at the front of the crew. I sort of found the way back to the stairway and then we started making our way down to where we found some hoses and a branch, I cant remember what floor it was. I got the fifth floor in my mind but im not sure if that's right or not. We collected some hoses from the fifth floor and then started to work the hose up the middle of the stairs so then it was out of the way because the stairs were so narrow. We were sort of weaving the hose through the centre of the staircase. The hose wasn't charged and we were just kind of pulling it through the middle. We guided it through. It was a little tangled up, so you'd have someone else straighten it out as we went. I think we got it as far as the 10th floor and ultimately didn't get as far as the floor we were originally trying to get to. I then remember that Pav Singh's low pressure alarm began to sound. I think I was actually the one highest on the floor at the time and I was trying to pull it up. Pav was below I think he was one of the ones helping to guide the hose through.

I don't remember whether I actually heard his warning whistle go off at the time or whether it was someone called up to me and advised me that Pavs warning signal had gone off. That's when we regrouped and that's when I heard his low pressure warning. Our sets are measured in bars and when the alarm sounds it means that you have a low amount left in your set. We left the branch where it was and I think I pulled a little bit of hose through and left it with enough weight so it wouldn't fall back down so there would be something there for other crews to continue with. I know one thing that was strange was that although the smoke was much worse on the floor that we were on the smoke on the stairs when we went past the body the smoke had cleared enough for us to see the body and the stairs on the way down. So

although the conditions on the lobby were worse you could actually see a little better. I remember being able to see the body and the stairs on the way down. The body on the stairs was face down with her feet upwards the head was lower down like pointing downwards, it was face down, and I think wearing black clothes. I couldn't tell if it was a male or a female.

We then regrouped where Pav and the other members of the crew were and we just left quickly down the

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stairs. I can't remember if we ran or walk but I think we sort of walked quickly down the stairs. When we got to the bottom we then closed our sets down and collected our tally's and were debriefed by somebody but I can't remember who debriefed us. I think it might have been Pat GOLDBOURNE again. We then had to collect another shield to go back out across as there was still debris coming down. So we collected a shield and we went across to where we had originally come from. There was still debris coming down so you had to pick your way and watch your footing to get across. Seemed to be a constant flow of debris and things falling. The tower was still alight when we left it, you could hear the flames but I didn't see any within the building.

Pav looked a little pale and there was a little banter between us as Pav has [REDACTED] which [REDACTED] I remember taking our sets off and that is when there was a conversation with an Ambulance driver. The Ambulance driver suggested Pav go get some help and gave him the oxygen cylinder with a mask. I sort of went along and helped Pav who was a bit unsteady on his feet. I assisted him to go to where the walking wounded went and where the paramedics were. It was in a pub I'm not sure exactly where it was, it was not that far it was a short walk.

Once we had gotten to the Pub, the paramedics did some tests on him. They tested the carbon monoxide levels in his blood and various other tests. They were making him do things with his fingers like to test his brain function. Pav was given some treatment for heat exhaustion and we were there for quite a while. I think they also gave him some stuff in a tube like a paste with some water. I don't know how long we were there for but they did some tests on me too. Eventually they said that they were happy if he wanted to go so we made a move and found the rest of our crew but I can't remember exactly where we found them. That's when I think somebody took the cylinder covers as they needed extra cylinder covers for the EDBA sets. We found both of our respective crews. I think Ian had been in the building with a different crew from Hendon. Someone then said I needed to move my truck so I had to go back to the FRU and move it. I then stayed with the truck for a little while because there was a lot of other trucks moving about so I thought I might need to move it backwards or forwards to allow free movement. I was there for long enough to have a conversation with the caretaker from the school. He was at the gates of the school and we had a conversation about how a lot of the kids from the school lived in Grenfell Tower. He was about 5ft 9 or 10 I suppose. He was a bit older than I probably early 60's I suppose, medium build, that's about all I remember. He didn't mention any names but I tried to be sort of diplomatic with him and tried to

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steer the conversation away from what he was talking about. While that was going on there was quite a few other people turning up because they had staff delivering stuff, I think the caretaker was directing them to a rugby club that they had opened. There was people bringing like bottles of water food etc. By now its fairly well into the morning and the fire is still going. It was getting on a bit I think but I don't know exactly what time it was, I had lost track of time by then.

I reversed the fire engine and moved it back a little bit further so it wasn't on the corner blocking the turn. There was a space a little bit further along so I just moved it there. After having the chat to the caretaker, I cannot remember what I did to be honest. Someone may have come back to the Appliance. I know we ended up going back to where the tower was because we ended up going into the sports centre. We went in the sports centre because by then they were trying to implement a relief because obviously people needed to get away and there was the question of who was going to get away first and they are trying to locate the different crews and stuff like that. I remember being there for quite a long time as it was very complicated because now there was two lots of machines there making it an awkward changeover.

We were seated with a few other crews in the sports hall. I think East Hams crew were there I remember them being there. There was other people that I recognised but I cant remember what crews that were there. It was quite a few of us and we were somewhat just waiting there to see. We were eventually dismissed but I cant remember by who. I was with my original crew but the Islington crew were still there at the same time as us. When we were finally released, we went to Paddington. I can't remember who told us to go to Paddington but I think we had already been briefed by somebody who was present in the sports hall, asked to go to Paddington to write statements whilst the incident was still fresh in our memories. I do not know how long it took but I know that I drove to Paddington but the journey back to the fire station I didn't drive, It took a long time to get to Paddington I mean I don't know the area but a lot of the other guys were aware that it took longer than it would normally take to get there. Again, we were at Paddington for quite a long time. We were waiting to go up and give statements and then obviously the process of giving the statement took quite a while.

I was offered counselling but I didn't take any counselling there. I wasn't offered medical assistance but as I say I was given medical assistance when I was with Pav earlier on. They checked me out and I was alright and you know Pav was suffering from dehydration and heat exhaustion. At this point in time I was

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feeling quite relieved really, I was quite pleased not to be in the tower anymore because to be honest I think we were expecting it to collapse. The last time seeing anything like that was obviously the twin towers which collapsed so when you see something burning like that you think the same thing is going to happen. So to be out of the tower was a relief. When I was inside the tower I felt exhausted because it was hard work. It was tremendously hot and it was very hard work. The initial running up to the 12th floor was hard but the pulling the hose was even harder, because you are pulling as hard and fast as you can so you can get some water in there to make a difference but your limbs are just not working. If anything it felt like you were moving too slow. Tony WELDEN drove from Paddington to Bethnal Green. I think Sean left us at Paddington and went to hospital from there. I was sat in the front with Tony and he drove back from Paddington to Bethnal Green. I think it was about quarter to 5 in the afternoon when we got to Bethnal Green. I then stayed at Bethnal Green, phoned home and let them know the situation.

Prior to Grenfell Tower I went on a 72d with our old governor John SCOTT. He did a lot of 72d's on various places around sort of Bethnal Green and we also did quite a few high rise visits as well. It was a thing that he was personally interested in because high rises are notoriously difficult things to deal with. So he would make sure that we did plenty of visits to high rises on our area round the Bethnal Green Bow etc.

At the time I provided this statement to police officers, I referred to my notes that I wrote at Paddington. I have exhibited these as CBE/1.

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