

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MAGEE, DAMIAN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 10 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: DAMIAN MAGEE

Date: 07/02/2018

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

This statement relates to when I attended the Grenfell tower fire on the 14th of June 2017.

I have been a member of the London fire brigade for 20 years, initially I was a firefighter but I have been a temporary crew manager for many years. I officially passed my crew managers course in 2013 and since then I have been a crew manager, 2nd officer at Whitechapel fire station, Red Watch. As a 2nd officer for our watch I act up as manager when the governor is not in, I have additional work to the other firefighters on the watch. The additional duties that I carry out is admin and I ensure the smooth running of the watch, I like to deal with any issues that come up with the crews before it gets to management.

20 years ago I completed my initial fire fighter training which included fighting fires in high rise buildings and basements, it also includes training in breathing apparatus (BA). We have regular refresher courses and yearly we get sent away to carry out real fire training. In addition to our yearly training and refresher courses our regular training is completed at the stations, we don't have a tower at white chapel station but we use other peoples towers to train. We don't have a high rise tower to train on in the London fire brigade but we do complete high rise drills with a ladder, to comply with policy there is a computer package that we have to complete. The computer package tells you what equipment to take with you into a high rise fire and it explains what people's roles are. I am trained in EDBA (extended breathing apparatus) and I used this skill when I was previously attached to the CBRN (chemical, Biological, radiological and nuclear) team, I don't currently use EDBA.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

On the night of the 13th of June I was on my first night shift at Whitechapel fire station, my shift started that night at 8pm. We only have one appliance in the station now and this is a ladder, our call sign is F331.

When we come on duty we complete a role call, we check our breathing apparatus and our TIC's (thermal image cameras), we then do anything that needs to be done on the computer. Our checks can take you up to about 9pm, after that we normally complete training which is done on nights. We do all of this prior to dinner, I can't remember if we completed training that shift or what the training was.

I can't remember what I was doing before we went to the call at Grenfell, I think that we had already been out a few times that night. I remember that I wasn't asleep and it was gone midnight when we received the call. The bell dropped (rang) and I knew that there was a call as we are the only appliance in the building. I remember coming down to get onto the appliance and I shouted out to the crew asking what the call was, I shouted this as I was getting my fire gear on and I was told it was in west London and it was a 40 pump fire. The first thing that came into my head was normally a 40 pump fire would be a huge depot or industrial site, I never thought people would be in the fire and I don't remember anyone saying there would be people in the building.

It didn't dawn on me that it was 40 pumps, I just knew it was a massive number and I thought that it would be a huge depot on fire. When we get a call the driver and duty person go to the watch room, acknowledged the message and read where we are going and what we are going to. On our appliance that night we had 5 crew members, Richard Benaicha - Driver, Paul Godber - governor, John Aldrige - fire fighter, Alan Hanlon - fire fighter and myself.

We got into the appliance and I sat behind the driver, we headed west and on route we got the finer details of what we were going to. The governor was sat up front and everyone was asking the governor questions, I think that I heard him say something about high rise. On route we were getting information from the radio but I can't remember what was being said, I could hear high rise but I can't remember too much about it until I saw it for myself from the Westway. I saw it on and off when we were driving along, we were quite far away but I knew it was a tower on fire. I was thinking to myself is that an occupied

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

building, this thought kept going through my mind. To me it looked like something out of a film, it looked like a lit match, the whole building looked like it was on fire and I realised then what we were going to get involved in. I was hoping that it was a building under construction, I was not familiar with west London or that area as I never go over there so I didn't know the building.

As we were approaching I was thinking that there must be people in there and I was trying to process how a concrete building could be on fire like that on the outside. I thought that this was massive and I knew that an awful lot of people could be killed there. I knew that we didn't have helicopters or jets that could put that fire out, I knew that we would just need to do our best. To me it appeared like it was already 100% alight, there is nothing that I could compare it to other than what I have seen in movies. As we were getting closer we drove around it and it dawned on me that this was a real block of flats and I knew that there would be people in it, I don't remember being told that it was occupied.

We approached from the east via the Westway and made our way towards the tower, we didn't know where we were going as none of us were familiar with that area. We had the MDT (mobile data terminal) on the appliance and we went towards the RVP, unfortunately we couldn't get there because it was a dead end road. The driver turned around and we had to come back another way, the crew were trying to direct the driver towards the mayhem but we were not helping too much. It was a mild night and people were out and about, there were cars in the street and people blocking the street so there was no way of getting through. We didn't have time to move people or vehicles but we were close enough to the fire. We left the appliance, I believe that we left it in Stonely Place as that is what I have been told. We locked it as we could not progress any further and we were too far away to be able to use the machine.

As a crew we grabbed our BA sets and TIC and ran towards the tower. We ran the rest of the way in our breathing apparatus, I think that we ran a couple of streets. As we approached I could hear people and children screaming from the building "up here, help". There were people down on the ground shouting and screaming to the people in the tower "get out". We ran down Grenfell road, there were a few people stood around screaming. As we ran towards the tower I heard shouting and screaming, as we were making our way to the tower we bumped into another crew from Shoreditch. At that point there was debris falling from the building but it wasn't completely alight at that time, our Governor Paul Godber went to the command unit.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

We waited and met with our governor after he returned from the command unit to get some orders, he informed us that he hadn't been given anything specific to do so we decided to make our way to the lobby of the tower. We went in the South entrance via the underpass, we had SDBA on. There was debris falling all around us, small and big bits of metal, burnt plastic and what looked like concrete. As the debris was coming off we couldn't really tell what it was but it looked like the building was falling apart. The debris was still on fire as it was coming down and I knew that it was really dangerous, it was like a war zone. I couldn't work out what was on fire and how every flat was on fire, I knew that stuff was on fire on the outside of the building and I could see that the fire was going into the building from the outside. I could see people in windows waving and I could hear a little boy screaming, he was with his family and I could see that there were 3 people in the window saying "up here". There were people on the lower levels screaming up to the people inside "get out, get out".

At that stage one side of the building had fire all the way down, I saw 2 lines of fire coming down one side of the building. The south side was not completely on fire but the top of it was, the fire was already completely out of control at that time.

We did not have any actual tasks set for our crew and no one asked us to go into the tower, we just decided to go into the lobby and to entry control. I was guiding people across from the outside into the lobby in the bottom of the tower when it looked safe to do so. I was telling crews to go when it was clear and they were making a dash for the lobby, at that point we got quite a few firefighters inside the lobby. We all knew that it was a huge fire, I knew that there were crews inside the building and our aim was to get in and see what we could do to help. When I got into the lobby I had my crew with me but the governor was not with us. As we got into the lobby I saw Glyn Williams a watch manager who I know from the brigade, Glynn was doing FSG (fire survival guidance) as we initially entered the building. Glyn was shouting up to the station manager at the door on the mezzanine floor with information that he was receiving relating to FSG, I didn't know the station manager that was stood by the door but he was wearing a white hat hence I knew he was a manager. I could see that the station manager on the mezzanine wasn't hearing what Glyn was saying to him and I asked Glyn what it was that he needed, Glyn was pointing to the other station manager at the door of the mezzanine.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

At that point entry control was on the 3rd floor, I made my way up to the mezzanine floor with my crew and I tried to speak to the station manager by the door, I think his name was Steve. He was stood at the door which was the entrance to go up the stairs, I told him a number of times that Glyn was trying to pass information onto him. I wasn't aware how many FSG he had at that time but he had drawn things on the wall next to him. I don't think that he was passing the information to entry control, he didn't seem to be taking in the information that I was telling him. I got one of my crew, John Aldridge, to write on the wall the information that Glynn was trying to pass on, I can't remember what the information was. I knew that the information needed to be written down and it had to be passed on as there were people waiting in a room for us somewhere in that building. I was trying to write the information down but couldn't get a pad of paper as I had all of my kit on, John Aldridge wrote the information on the wall next to the door on the mezzanine floor. As we were stood at the door Alan and Richard were committed to the tower, they were the last 2 to be committed into the building in SDBA so we got separated at that point and I was left with John Aldridge.

At that point another station manager came down the stairs and told us to wait as there were enough people on the stairs, we just waited where we were. Shortly after that I was aware that the fire had spread down the building so they had to move entry control down from the 3rd floor to the ground level. All of the firefighters on the mezzanine made our way back down stairs into the lobby area. At that point I passed the information that we had been given relating to the earlier FSG from Glyn Williams to entry control, I did this as they came down stairs but I don't know who I gave the information to. I pointed out the information that had been written on the wall, I checked a couple of times that the information was handed over and acknowledged by entry control. Whilst we were waiting in the lobby it was smoky, the visibility in that area and on the mezzanine floor was ok.

We stayed in the lobby area but it started filling up with firefighters. FSG and entry control had also moved into the lobby area so it was busy, we were getting in the way so everyone was pushed into a back room in the west of the building and we all just stood in there waiting in a holding area. That room then started filling with smoke so it wasn't a good holding area, there were 2 large windows and we smashed them out with some hammers. The windows were quite thin but that became an access point and we got everyone in and out that way, we got all of the firefighters away from the building to a clean air area at the west of the building which became a holding area. I was not happy with this area outside the building

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

as a holding area, there were 45 or 50 firefighters stood and sat outside of the building just looking up at it burning. I thought that there are people who were stuck in the building calling for help and all that they could see was us sat there doing nothing. The west of the building at that point was burning at the top but not all of the way down.

I can't remember who told us at that point that it was EDBA wearers only that were now being committed into the building, I didn't want to be sat outside in the holding area doing nothing looking at the people in the building. I heard someone say something about them needing assistance with casualties inside the building. Because SDBA users were not being used at that time I told John Aldrige that I was dropping my set and that I wanted to get in and help, we both dropped our sets so that we could go in to assist. I knew that if I had kept my SDBA set on I wouldn't have been allowed into the building at all and I would have been stopped, SDBA sets are clearly different from EDBA as they only have 1 cylinder. In my opinion at that point I think that SDBA wearers should have been used for the lower floors. I knew that if I wanted to be involved and help that I would have to go in without BA.

In normal circumstances you are not supposed to go past entry control but in this case it was on the ground floor and people were asking for help. Ideally we would have had our breathing apparatus on so we had clean air, we didn't so we just went into the bottom of the tower and we just got stuck in and started helping, we were not stopped. Before we even got in the stairwell I could hear that there were a lot of firefighter emergencies on the radio because someone hadn't answered his radio, I saw a firefighter being dragged out of the building. There were a lot of firefighters coming down the stairs, they were steaming because they were hot/wet and they were tired. It was chaotic in there, the stairwell was smoky and congested. I couldn't believe that they had an entry control point on the stairwell at the entrance.

The stair well was really narrow and small it was no more than 2 people wide, there was loads of hose on the mezzanine, 1st floor and on the stairs. I remember asking if there was another stairwell but I was told that this was it and everything was going up the stairs. John and I went to the first and second floors to see how bad the smoke was but we didn't get anyone out of those floors as they were already gone, the smoke was ok on those floors. At that point there were senior managers on the stairs with me with who were not wearing SDBA, one of them was Pat Gouldbourn. Firefighters were shouting and screaming that they wanted equipment brought up to them. When we were in there I decided our job was to help others with

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

hose and move hose around that was broken, also to assist with casualty management.

The only floor that I entered was the 1st floor because the door was open, I wasn't going to go into any of the other floors. I could see people in BA equipment going into other floors. There wasn't any fire on the 1st floor when I went in, I went in there to get hose as there was a lot of hose on that floor. I didn't have any dealings with the dry risers whilst I was in the building as they had been set up by the first crews that were there. My thought on the dry riser was that it was obsolete as soon as the debris had broken the hose outside, at that point we were just trying to get people out.

There was some lighting on the stairwell when we went in, when the doors were opened to the 3rd or 4th floor and there was smoke coming out of the doors and going up the stair well. I don't remember there being a lot of water coming down the stairs but I do remember that it was warm, I don't remember it being really hot as we wouldn't have been in there. Early on in the evening the lower stairs were full of wispy grey smoke, the higher up the building you went when the doors were opened the smoke was thicker, I can't stand smoke so it wasn't acrid or unbearable in the stairwell.

At some point during the evening we caught up with the rest of my crew Richard and Alan, they had done the same as us and had come back into the building after they had completed their SDBA wear. My crew, F331, Shoreditch crew F24 and a few other people were working between the 2nd floor Mezzanine and the 9th/10th floor without BA, we were doing hose management and casualty handling. I think that I went to the 6th or 7th floor but people have since told me that I had gone higher, I don't remember that.

I was still unaware when we were in there if the flats were on fire or if it was still the outside of the building that was burning. At one point I had to go upstairs and get my crew out as they had gone up too high and it was too smoky, it was really hard work pulling hose around up and down the stairs. We were carrying up empty hose to try and get them to higher floors so that they could be used by firefighters fighting the fire. It came down to our own recognition as to when we needed to come down which we did throughout the night, when we came back down the stairs we used the mezzanine level as our meeting point. At one point during the evening the lobby area was full of smoke as there was a small petrol mobile pump pumping water into the building and filling the area with fumes, it was ridiculous.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I was concerned with the level of smoke in the stairwell, we were working with just t-shirts over our faces. I was aware that John is a relatively new guy and that he didn't have to go in and that he had followed me, I was his manager and I looked out for him. I knew that we were breaking all of the rules and we were not following procedures. If we were to follow procedures, we would have been roads away and no one would have gone into the building.

Throughout the night I was up and down between the ground floor and 6th floor on the stairwell, helping with burst delivery hose and assisting with casualties. I was passing information on to the entry control and I was organising and liaising with officers below. Crews were coming in and out of the building and they were often coming out without casualties. Some casualties were walking out of the building, some casualties were being handed over when the crew got to the mezzanine as the crew were tired and exhausted. The radio traffic was difficult as people were on different channels, communication was mental on the radio and you had to wait for gaps to talk. Firefighters were writing information on bits of paper and the paper was being given to crews directing them where to go. During the evening I had to run outside to turn off a positive pressure fan that was blowing smoke into the building, this was a fan that was supposed to ventilate the lobby area but it didn't work. Ventilation inside the building was a problem, I don't remember there being any ventilation in the stairwell.

At one point during the evening when we were downstairs I was handed a casualty, I don't know what time it was. I carried the casualty who was a young teenager approximately 13 or 14 out of the building, she was a light skinned black girl. She had clothing on but I don't think she was wearing pyjamas, she had longish 'black curly hair. I exited the building and ran out under the shield of a police man and ran over the debris. I ran around the corner to the LAS in the West area and I handed the girl over to the LAS, I didn't speak to them and I don't know who I handed her over to. The female didn't have any burns on her at all but she looked dead to me.

I went to go back into the building but whilst I was out there I saw that there was still a lady and child, maybe 2 children waving from the 9th floor, at that point the fire was not near her flat. I also saw a torch been signalled from what I think was the 11th floor, the torch was above the family on 9th I also saw another person above the torch, I think that they were on the 12th floor. I went back into the building and told people that there are still people trapped on the 9th floor, they said that they knew. I took all of this

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

information into the lobby and I spoke to the FSG and senior officers, they said they knew about the people on the 9th, 11th and 12th floor. I went out the back a few times to look up to the family on the 9th floor and they were still waving. I was thinking that if I had a BA set on I would have gone to the 9th floor and got the people out. I came back in and again informed senior officers about the people trapped, they seemed to think it was known by other senior officers. I wanted to tell BA control but it was so chaotic, I was told they were on the FSG list and that they knew about it. I went back out and I could see that the fire was spreading towards these flats, downwards.

When I was downstairs in the lobby a family came out, the woman who was Arabic looking had 2 kids with her, she looked dazed. When they were coming out a firefighter was asking them questions asking where they had come from, what flat and floor and if there was anyone else in the flat. One of the children was a little boy and I heard him say "just my brother, I think he is dead now". There was a stream of casualties coming out throughout the night and getting handed over to clean air, as they were exiting we were asking what flat, what floor they had been on and if there was anyone else in the flat. There was a woman who came out screaming, she had brought her children out but I don't think that they all made it out with her, I can't describe this woman. One of the last casualties that I saw coming out was a male who walked out with swimming goggles on, he had a towel on with pyjamas, he was a Mediterranean male. This was hours after we had arrived and casualties had stopped coming out at that point.

They started using SDBA later on in the evening and firefighters were queuing to get in on Grenfell walk, they were being taken into the building under police shields. I was still going in and out of the building helping people but I was not wearing BA. Once we had changed the hose over and got an extra line of hose to the 9th I went outside to get my BA set but my set was gone, I saw the flat with the people waving from the 9th floor was now destroyed, no live casualties had come out recently so I don't know if they got out. Throughout the night there was a lot of banging and thuds outside but I think that was the debris falling.

In the morning when I came out there was an additional appliance on the East side, there was also a ALP under cover but I don't know why it was there. I don't know what appliances were near the tower. If a building only has one dry riser you only need one appliance, it doesn't matter how many appliances you have. Accessibility was very difficult here, we didn't have any ladders or jets that could get that high.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I was made aware by other firefighters that people had been jumping from the building, I was also told a baby was thrown into the crowd but I didn't see any of this happen. When I went outside I would look up at the building burning and it was immense. We went into the building at lam and we were in there consistently until the morning around 6am, it was daylight when my crew came out. The crew looked wrecked by this point, we went and sat by the LAS area. I am aware that we were all working in a smoky environment for many hours, and we probably need carbon monoxide poisoning treatment, we all inhaled way too much smoke.

We took a break for about 20 minutes, we were soaking wet from sweat. After our break we got back up and went back into the building, we still didn't have BA equipment on. We assisted people with whatever they needed on the stairwell and in the mezzanine. We took bottles of water in for crews inside the building and we were hanging around in the holding area and basically being runners for what anyone needed. The hose towards the end was just futile, I had tried replacing burst hose but we were just adding to lines and lines of hose in the stairwell. I did what I could that night to help anyone and everyone.

My crew left the building and ended up on the grass area off Grenfell road where we spoke to Dany Cotton who thanked us for our hard work. This area was where we got a drink and met with other crews and discussed what had happened. As we left to go back towards the appliance I was approached by a woman who wanted to know about her family on 21st floor. I couldn't tell her anything, I just told her that a lot of people had got out but we didn't know what had happened to people and that they had been taken to various different hospitals. We were approached by a 2 or 3 people who were patting us on the back and thanking us. The community were really good with us, I sent people to the community hall to get information as I didn't have any information to give to them.

We arrived just after lam and we left at 11.30am, when we left we were told to go to Paddington fire station where I was given a clean t-shirt and we were told to write notes, I sat down and wrote my notes and fell asleep. We got back to Whitechapel fire station around 4 or 5pm I slept at the station, I think that I made a couple of phone calls. We were on duty again that night and we were told that we could stand down until 9pm but I stayed at work, I went back on duty where we were called out to a different fire.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I have not returned to Grenfell tower since the fire and I have never been there before the fire. The problem that evening was not man power, it was a tiny stairwell, a fire that was burning from the outside in and multiple fires in a building. When we talking about high rise fire we talk about it being compartmentalised. If it punches out of the window it might be 2 flats but we have the resources to deal with that and contain it, in essence it's a fire within a building and is normally contained in the concrete box. I have been to a couple of high rise fires over the years but I have never been to anything similar to Grenfell tower. Most of my training went of the window for Grenfell tower.



I asked the brigade to give me a lung capacity test, I have completed this and it turned out to be fine. I didn't have any real injuries I had a couple of trips and falls but nothing serious.

I have provided police with a copy of the notes that I made on the 14th of June 2017 and I exhibit these as DMM/1.

Signature: Damian MAGEE
2018

Signature witnessed by: