

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: REED, DAVID

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 6 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:

Date: 11/10/2017

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

The content of this statement constitutes a summary of an interview conducted by DC Amanda WEBSTER and DC Judith KAYE at Dowgate Fire Station, 94-95 Upper Thames Street, London EC4R 3UE on the 10th October 2017 between 1029hrs and 1311hrs.

I, David Spencer Reed, am a Watch Manager (WM) in the London Fire Brigade. I have been employed by the Fire Authority for 20 Years and held my present rank for 8 years. I am currently serving as a Fire Investigator at Dowgate Fire Investigation Unit. I hold the following qualifications;

Level 7 BTEC in Advanced Investigative Practice,

Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation,

Level 4 Certificate in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Bureau Veritas Fire Investigation Foundation course,

Gardiner's Associates Practical Fire Investigation course.

I regularly undertake continual personal development training and receive peer review feedback on the fire scenes that I have investigated.

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I am also a registered Engineering Technician with the Engineering Council, a Fellow of the Institute of Fire Engineers and a member of the International Association of Arson Investigators. My principle duties are to investigate scenes of fire in order to determine their origin and cause and to observe how fire and people involved in fire behave.

I have been asked to give my account of events on the 14th June 2017 which was the night of the Grenfell Tower fire. I have been spoken to by DC Amanda Webster and DC KAYE by way of an audio interview. The summary of that interview is contained within this statement. During my interview I referred to three documents, the first being 'Fire Investigation Scene Contemporaneous Notes incident number 76029 dated 15th June 2017', this is exhibit DRE/3 and two sketches exhibited as DRE/1 & DRE/2

On Wednesday 14th June 2017 I began my shift at 2000hrs at Dowgate Fire Station.

During the initial part of the shift I was occupied completing paperwork. At approximately 0054hrs on Wednesday June 2017 a 'shout came in' regarding a fire at Grenfell Tower, Lancaster West Estate, W11 1TG.

I recall that the amount of Fire Fighters being called to this incident was increasing at a pace that would lead me to believe it was a 'significant and dynamic situation' which was far from routine.

The on scene Watch Commander requested for twenty (20) pumps to attend this incident within a about a ten minute frame. This was unusual and is a large amount of Fire Fighters and above the 'pre-determined' attendance normally requested. This decision I believe was brave and indicative of the incident escalating beyond the resources in attendance.

Initially WM Mathew "Matt" LEAVER was ordered to attend the incident in the role as a Fire Investigator as part of the makeup of fire engines. I was officially requested as the second Fire Investigator at 0158hrs on Wednesday 14th June 2017. I travelled with my Watch Manager (WM) - Steve GIRLING in a Fire Investigation Vehicle call sign OK15.

We travelled towards West London and utilising the 'Westway' this was my first sight of Grenfell Tower. I noted the building looked twenty (20) plus floors. My immediate thoughts were "this should not be happening." My thoughts were 'how has this fire spread so quickly?' The fire was already visible to the top of the building. Everything I know about fires and my experience of 'high rises' was making me

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question what I was seeing. The building was engulfed in flames and smoke was pouring straight up from the top of the building.

As we approached Grenfell Tower the surrounding streets were very tight. The roads were blocked with double parked vehicles and large numbers of members of the public and pedestrians. I also thought at this time that it would be extremely difficult for the attending fire engines to get close to Grenfell Tower. Some fire engines were behind my vehicle and were struggling to find an appropriate access road. We were unable to drive any further than a few streets away and eventually parked our vehicle approximately three (3) minutes' walk away in Stoneleigh Place. Both WM GIRLING and myself then walked through the crowds, through a police controlled cordon and found the Command Unit (CU) that had been set up to book in to the incident. This was Command Unit 8.

Following this I met up with colleague WM Matthew LEAVER. I found him amongst FireFighters close to the base of Grenfell Tower. When I looked at the tower my impression of was that it looked like a "glowing orange box". Fire had engulfed the building from around floor four (4) to the top. The eastern face of the building - Grenfell Tower was now well alight. I could see inside rooms that were destroyed. The north side of the building was similar. I could not hear anyone from inside the building or see anyone at the windows. I could hear shouts and noises from the crowds outside and around the cordons in place. There was lots of activity going on with Fire Crews everywhere and Police. My initial thoughts also as a Fire Fighter was to get inside to help and support my colleagues, but I knew I must remain calm and maintain focus with my specific role as a Fire Investigator. I needed to assess the overall picture and obtain information that would assist the on-going situation.

We had a quick meeting in relation to roles and urgent actions that needed to be completed. It was decided between my colleagues and I, that WM Steve GIRLING would take photographs and document everything that he could regarding the fire whilst WM Matthew 'Matt' LEAVER would try and track down the initial attending Fire Crew and try and find any occupants and witnesses' to establish access into the building, to find out the source of the fire, I would establish casualty numbers and also try to locate the senior Police Officer on the scene.

Just after this meeting at 02:40 hours, I updated my boss, Group Manager (GM) Charles PUGSLEY. I was not sure whether he was aware of the incident but thought that he needed to be aware of the severity of the incident.

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I located the senior Police Officer on scene who was Police Inspector THATCHER. He was trying to raise more Police Units to attend. I assisted Inspector THATCHER and other officers in controlling the cordon at this time. The crowds were escalating and some were trying to get inside and get closer to the building. They were agitated in my opinion but with good intentions'. The need to keep them out of the surrounding area was paramount due to the danger factor and allowing access for Fire Fighters.

After this I met up with WM Matt LEAVER again who informed me he had located the first Fire Crew who had attended Grenfell Tower. He had details of the crew and at this time confirmed that source of the fire to be Flat 16 on fourth (4th) floor. It was believed at this time to have originated from the rear of a Fridge Freezer from within the premises. I recall Fire Fighter BARTON being a name from the crew attending.

I then informed him that I would find the first Casualty Handling Area to try to establish the numbers of injured people we were dealing with. This had been established at the Leisure Centre next to Grenfell Tower. I liaised with a member of the London Ambulance Service (LAS) staff and confirmed they had three (3) deceased at the location. There were other residents being treated and levels of injuries were being established as to who would be treated and who would be sent onto Hospitals.

I was then told that there was a second Casualty Handling Area near Latimer Road Tube Station, and I progressed to this Casualty Handling Area to do the same. To get there I had to cross the cordon by CU 8 and pass through the crowds that had built up. As I did so it was quite difficult to move as members of the public were seeking advice and help. Lots of people were on their mobile phones and they were asking me to talk to parties who were still inside Grenfell Tower. They were seeking advice I believe and reassurance. There was too many to speak to individually so I asked the parties questions such as, the number of the specific flats, what floor and also how many parties were present in each flat? I tried to reassure them and wrote down the details they were supplying. I believe I took the details of approximately six (6) flats. I cannot now recall any specific details however, I would have recorded flat numbers, floor levels and numbers of people within the flats. I then took this information back to the Command Unit that was dealing with the Fire survival guidance calls and passed it on to the Officer in Charge ; I cannot remember this persons name. When passing the information on I did become aware that some of the information was already known as one (1) of the flats was already noted inside the Command Unit.

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I then again left the cordon and walked around to the Latimer Road Casualty Handling Area. At this location I noted two (2) further deceased and a larger proportion of injured. The location appeared much busier in general than the Leisure Centre. The injured were of varying degrees and again decisions were made in relation to hospital submissions.

Following this I returned to the Command Unit. Present at this time was our Fire Commissioner - Dany COTTON. I was able to pass on the information supplied by WM Matt LEAVER regarding the believed origin of the Fire and the initial attending Crew.

Following this and around 0500hrs on Wednesday 14th June 2017 I had a meeting with GM Charlie PUGSLEY and other Fire Investigators. A decision was made that all 'off going' crews would complete a contemporaneous memoir of their actions and observations at Grenfell Tower. We adapted a standard London Fire Brigade memoir and briefed GM Keeley FOSTER to ensure this was passed to all personnel prior to going 'off duty'. This was to be monitored by Station Manager (SM) ROBINSON and an additional Fire Investigator at Paddington Fire Station.

GM PUGSLEY at this time was trying to establish if we could gain access to the building. He sought advice from the officer in charge but I cannot recall the name of that officer. This would have been recorded in a decision making log. There was concern from our evidence gathering position that the building could be un-stable and also any additional fire damage would inhibit our role in evidence gathering.

We were granted permission to enter Grenfell Tower and specifically Flat 16 with the aim to assess the viability of a scene examination or the early recovery of evidence from the flat. I cannot remember the exact time, but I think that around 0900hrs on Wednesday 14th June 2017 I entered Grenfell Tower for the first time with my colleagues - WMs Steve GIRLING and Matt LEAVER.

My first impression were seeing Firefighters everywhere queuing to be committed into the tower to carry out rescues and fight the fire. Fire crews were coming down looking exhausted. Hose lines were on the floor and being laid up the stairs and stair wells, Water was flowing down the staircases like "Niagara Falls" and over us. One (1) person, a male of oriental appearance was being carried down the stairs by Firefighters. I cannot provide any more details about him at this time. The air was smoky and the water torrential.

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Eventually stepping over equipment and hoses we reached the fourth (4th) floor. From the stairwell the flat directly in the corner. I understood the floor had six (6) flats which duplicated on floors above. On entering Flat 16 I noted immediately fire damage in the hallway. I cannot remember if the front door was still intact. The flat flowed from the hallway to the first bedroom which was fairly devastated by the fire. The partition wall was virtually destroyed and the view could be seen through the bedroom into living room. I would describe the flat as four (4) useable rooms, by this I mean two (2) bedrooms, a kitchen and living room. In addition it had a bathroom and separate toilet.

I completed measurements of all rooms and later produced sketches of the flat and kitchen area. I can produce these sketches as exhibits DRE/1 & DRE/2.

On these sketches I have shown the walls present for the overall layout of the flat but as described the connecting wall from the bedroom living room was virtually destroyed as was connecting doors to the kitchen from the living area.

I noted on the living room floor there was a mattress. I believed this was important as could be indicative of multi- occupancy use of the flat which could be duplicated elsewhere and would have an impact in relation to rescues and possible occupant numbers etc.

On entering the kitchen I saw that it was a galley style kitchen. There were kitchen units along the right hand wall. These units were more fire damaged towards the far end closest to the window. In this area I saw a tall fridge/freezer and two smaller fridges (under counter type. The tall fridge/freezer looked more fire damaged to the upper compartment and to the sides adjacent to the window. Nothing was touched at this time just observations, photographs and measurements taken. My initial assessment was that the fire had started from the location around the tall fridge/freezer and two smaller fridges. My initial thoughts questioned the two smaller fridges as they were completely destroyed. I have since learnt neither smaller fridges were connected to the mains so agree with the conclusion of the origin of the fire being closer to the tall fridge freezer.

The heavy proportion of fire damage around the appliances had caused the window to fail, by this I mean the window pane had been consumed by fire and the surrounding frame damaged. This included the insulation being 'burnt down'. My concern around the window also included the 'voids' between the window frame and building fabric. From the damage to the left area in comparison to the right I believed the fire had gone out of the window up and wrapped around the building. In my opinion these voids along

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with the insulation, would have created a chimney effect for flames and fire to spread up. The fitting of the window shocked me. I noted all this information to pass on and concluded the flat was safe for excavation for evidence purposes.

I would describe the conditions initially in Flat 16 as warm and smoky with a toxic smell.

There was water on the floor in all rooms. Photographs were taken of the flat at this time.

Following leaving Flat 16 we proceeded to floor three (3). At this time I viewed Flat Nine (9) which was fire damaged but flat Ten (10) was relatively un-touched by fire damage.

On leaving Grenfell Tower on this occasion I was made aware of another deceased party. This was a male that I was informed had jumped from the building and had unfortunately collided with something on his descent. This male was photographed and documented by WM GIRLING. I was aware his leg had been severed from his body. This was the only person I was ever made aware had jumped from the building.

I returned to GM Pugsley and informed him of our findings. I then transferred my measurements into diagrams as discussed and exhibited previously. These were emailed to SM ROBINSON at about 10:00 hours.

Following this I had a further meeting with GM Charlie PUGSLEY along with SM Dave GREEN and SM Jim FLIN, who are Fire Engineers. This was to discuss the flat excavation and what I had found with regards to the window installation. The Police Digital Team also needed access to flat 16 in order to take footage however at this time it was deemed too dangerous for Police Officers/Staff to enter so instructions were given to SM Jim FLIN who would complete the digital capture with the Police equipment within Flat 16.

The excavation plan was discussed with WM Barry KENT and WM Brian SWADDLING, the oncoming relief Fire Investigation officers and I again entered Grenfell Tower This time in the company of WM Steve GIRLING, SM Jim FUN, SM Dave GREEN, WM Barry KENT, and WM Brian SWADDLING. WM Matt LEAVER had left to accompany the police in an interview with one of the occupants of Flat 16, Grenfell Tower.

On entering flat 16 for a second time, the water levels had increased both inside and outside the flat. There was approximately four (4)" of water covering the hallway floor that led into the kitchen area. We

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decided that the best method to remove the water would be to use shovels. This involved effectively paddling the water out in stages until it flowed into the communal area and down the lift shaft.

Once the water was removed to a 'workable' level, the plan was to 'grid' the flat then excavate and bag up items from the specific grid/area and then remove and examine at a later stage in a safe and more sterile environment.

During my time within the flat on the second occasion I also pointed out my observations and concerns regarding the windows to my colleague SM David GREEN.

SM David GREEN is a Fire Safety Engineer and is knowledgeable surrounding buildings etc.

I specifically pointed out my concerns regarding the 'voids' in the window frames.

At approximately 1430-1500hrs I was relieved from the excavation duties and left WM Barry KENT in charge of Flat 16.

From my second visit to the flat I maintain my opinion that the Fire had initiated in the kitchen spread out of the window and 'attacked' the building. I could see burn marks around the cladding on the side of the building and it was obvious that the water had slowed down the fire but once under the cladding it was protected in a way and was therefore able to spread.

I left Grenfell Tower at approximately 1515hrs on Wednesday 14th June 2017 and returned to Dowgate Fire Station. I completed notes regarding my attendance at Grenfell Tower and then went 'off duty' at 1720hrs that date. I now exhibit my notes as DRE/3.

I remained at Dowgate had a little sleep and then resumed duty at 2000hrs that evening. Since the date of the fire I have returned to Grenfell Tower on many occasions to continue with the Fire Investigation work and liaise with other agencies and investigators.

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