

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: WATTS, DAVID

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

Occupation: T/WM(B)S

This statement (consisting of 4 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: D WATTS

Date: 01/03/2018

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

I am a serving Watch Manager at [REDACTED] and have been since 2010. I am part of a specialist CBRN team. In this statement I will describe my actions on the 14 June 2017 when I was deployed to the Grenfell Tower Fire. I will also provide details of my training history.

I am currently stationed at [REDACTED] and was on the night of the Grenfell Tower Fire. On this particular evening, I was completing a night shift. That night I was posted to CBRN team — [REDACTED] I was an acting Watch Manager (b) at the time. Also part of this crew were colleagues Watch Manager SMITH, Watch Manager COOPER and perhaps somebody else I cannot recall. Throughout the night I interacted and was teamed with other fire fighters from different fire stations. I didn't always get to know their names.

I am a specialist CBRN officer where the team's duties usually just involve MCR (mass casualty rescue) and HAZMAT (hazardous materials). The team doesn't respond to fires unless it has those particular features. I have never been to Grenfell Tower nor am I aware of any fire-fighting plan in relation to this particular building as it completely off my ground of coverage. I am familiar with high rise buildings and the existence of these particular plans. I have completed familiarisation visits to other high rise buildings. I have attended high rise fires in my career but I haven't attended any fires as a fire fighting since 2010. We frequently complete relevant training in similar building type and size. This involves theoretical training. Our role does not involve fire fighting so we do not complete practical training in this field. I am trained in Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus. We have to regularly take training refreshers (yearly) in this and other areas such as first aid. I am aware of the 'stay put policy' and the operator will advise

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that if they are not directly affected by the fire, the caller is to stay inside their premises, place wet towels at the bottom of doors, stand next to an open window and wait until rescued by a fire fighter. I have had awareness training on sandwich panels that are very similar to cladding panels. I am at a competent level. On Tuesday 13th June 2017, I began my night shift at 8pm. There was nothing out of the ordinary at the beginning of the shift and as usual we began with roll call followed by checks of equipment. We also complete checks that is specific to the vehicle we are riding. [REDACTED] that contains specialist equipment appropriate for the CBRN role. Apart from breathing apparatus, we do not carry any fire- fighting equipment. Around 0120 hours we were alerted to the mobilisation via pager. It stated that it was a major incident to a 20 pump, 10 FRU fire at Grenfell Tower. A 20 pump fire isn't that unusual, however 10 FRU teams is. This indicated that something very major was happening. A phone call was made to control to obtain further details. We always do that because for HAZMAT incidents, we need to know the circumstances prior to attending. We weren't deployed immediately, however [REDACTED] was. They were deployed because of their EDBA ability. Around 30 minutes later, we received a telephone call from our station manager. We already knew the severity of this incident because of the news coverage. He explained they were still short of EDBA wearers and equipment. He asked to attend with our BA sets and any spare cylinders we had. We gathered around a dozen cylinders and 3-4 extra BA sets. We made our way to Grenfell Tower with WM SMITH driving. I can't remember the exact route but we turned somewhere off Edgware Road, W2. It was difficult to get close to it because of existing cordons, pre-parked emergency vehicles and the masses of distressed people around. I'm not sure exactly where we parked because we had to zig zag around the backstreets. I know it was around a 10 minute walk away from Grenfell Tower and may have been something like Cromwell Road. It wasn't just us that struggled, there was another dozen or so emergency service vehicles trying to get in. I left my crew where we parked whilst I took the roll board to command control.

There was a lot of members of the public in the area. Some were screaming and crying, many asked me for information, 'what was going on? Have you got anybody out? What is being done?' I made my way through the cordon and continued towards the command unit. The leisure centre was to my right so it is likely I was walking west along Bomore Road. I could see Grenfell Tower properly now. I looked at it from the south east and saw that it was almost completely alight. From the fourth floor up on the south side, it was a big torch. The south and east sides were fully alight, however the west side wasn't that bad. It didn't look real. It was like it was a scene from a disaster movie. It was only maybe the top four floors

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on the east side that it was smoke. At this time 2-3 command units had been established. I attended one and handed my roll board in. I was instructed to attend the BA control area that just in front of the leisure centre. I have marked these areas on a map that I exhibit as DAW/01. I made my way to this area and briefed them on the equipment and EDBA capability of the crew. He stated that they don't have enough and that we need as many EDBA wearers as possible. I made my way back to the van and explained the situation to the rest of the crew. We gathered the spare equipment and walked to the BA control centre to deposit before briefly returning to the van to collect our own. We returned to the BA control and I liaised with the SM. We were there for around 30 minutes waiting for further instruction. There was a lot of activity whilst resources were organised. Our crew helped with this, including the unloading of cylinders that had just arrived from PEG (protective equipment group). It was around 0300 hours at this point. The SM requested the use of our EDBA skills and asked if we would go inside the building. I ensured the rest of the crew were happy to go inside the tower. A lot of us haven't done traditional fire fighting for years. We were prepared to assist with this operation. I informed this SM that should we go inside, as [REDACTED]

He brought this to the attention of incident command and we waited for a decision to be made. The briefing from AC ROWE was be safe but we need to get in there and get people out. I sat and watched the fire continue and saw the amount of debris fall from the building. They were a significant size and included double window frames and large pieces of cladding.

During the wait, I spoke to former colleagues of mine who had already been into the building. They were traumatised from what they had seen inside and during the initial stages of the fire when they could see residents at windows from the outside. The BA holding area is close to building that has a flat roof. At one point, I heard an almighty thud from its direction. It was a different sound to when windows and other bits of debris fell. One of the fire fighters asked if we'd seen that. He said somebody had just hit the roof. This person was attended to by other emergency service colleagues. We continued to wait for another two hours. At around 0530 hours, the crew of [REDACTED] entered a green area just in between the tower and where we were. A number of crews were here just after being inside the tower. They were on their knees from exhaustion and stress. I noticed a couple of members from [REDACTED] and began talking to them. I was made aware that WM PARKIN had been directed to operation assistance on the west side of building. I then found WM MORRISON on the grass area in quite a rough state. I gathered them together and brought them back to the BA holding area. They were wiped out and absolutely drenched with sweat. I think they'd been up the 12th floor and brought people down too. They were trying to get their sets ready to go

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in again. I told them to rest, drink some water and we will go in. This allowed CBRN to continue. I explained this to the SM of the BA holding area who agreed. My crew then joined another to form the next group of 10 moving to the next holding area. We moved along to the west of the tower by passing through a covered car park to the south. There was still debris falling close by but we were protected. This is the area where the initial pumps were working to charge the hose going up the building stair wells. This area was quite flooded. I saw WM Brian O'KEEFE and some of the initial crews. They looked spaced out and clearly in shock. We were held in additional holding area just to the west of the children's playground. It must've been about at least hour. I continued to watch large pieces of debris, including cladding and double glazing, fall from the building. They struggled to get people in. Riot shields would not have helped if they were hit with that. I saw a monitor located in the children's playground that was expelling water onto the building. I saw a few casualties come out of the building even at that time. We were eventually called forward to go in and escorted in underneath a riot shield. We were momentarily stopped when firefighters brought out a casualty. Even considering the time and the fire had been burning, this man looked generally unscathed. When inside the tower I saw signs for a boxing club, an office and a kitchen area with chairs. There was about 20 firefighters in the kitchen. We joined them and waited to be called up to the Bridgehead to be briefed. This area was flooded with water. There wasn't really much smoke down there. Just outside this kitchen area was a small corridor that led to the ground floor atrium. You could hear the noise from two of the pump generators located in this atrium. One of the firefighters was aware of my HAZMAT specialty and mentioned the smell of exhaust fumes from these generators. You expect some sort of carbon monoxide presence at all fires but people were starting to get concerned about the levels. I brought this to the attention of the senior manager in charge of this area. He obtained a GfG monitor to measure the carbon monoxide levels. It was alarming to indicate the level was high. I looked at it was measuring at 74 parts per million. I approached him and advised to immediately ventilate this area.

At around 0700 hours, we were informed that the hose on the stair well required management and that they intended on now using the dry riser system. It wasn't possible to use these dry risers before this time. The team requested to complete this task and advised that it may be easier without BA sets. This was optional. We were told that if we chose to do this, we were to be safe. Everybody available in that area was tasked to manage the hose. We dropped out BA sets in the kitchen area and made our way up to the fourth floor where the Bridgehead was located. I passed the atrium and noticed used first aid sets and BA sets that had been cut off from what only I presume to be distressed wearers. I heard the alarm going off

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in this room. During the journey up to the Bridgehead, I noticed how much hose there really was. We weren't in BA sets but I can imagine how difficult it would have been walking with that on. We continued up and managed hose up until the 14th or 15th floor. The stairwell was around a metre wide. It was quite small for a building of its size. There was probably around 4 lines of hose up until 11th/12th floor that made it quite difficult to manoeuvre up. It was quite difficult to manage the hose. It was quite a contained area. Between us all we manage to untangle and make up hose up until around the 14th floor. If there was a branch connected to hose that went inside the floor landing, we would break it from the cutlets and place into that lobby, enabling the fire door to be closed properly. The visibility and air quality was manageable but cleared up quite quickly when these doors were closed. It was quite hot but not unbearable. The building was still alight from around the 7th floor. The emergency lighting was working inside the building. Once complete, we made our way down and I was detailed to clear all non BA wearers from the floors. BA wearers would now be tasked with entering each floor, plug hose into the dry risers and fight fire. I began this task without BA. By the time I reached the 12th floor, I found a non BA wearing crew from Wembley FRU on the landing. They explained they were acting as safety for two BA wearers. These two BA wearers were plugging hose into that floors dry risers and completing search and rescue. The Wembley crew were holding a charged branch that was plugged in from two floors below. They stood next to the open lobby door on the stairwell. They had verbal contact with each other. I was happy they completed this task before exiting the building. I had cleared all other non BA wearers and so left with them. The Wembley crew was keen to get back in. As we got down to around the 9th floor, I explained my actions to a group manager. He gave me a new responsibility so I was now tasked to guide firefighters into the floors 10 - 14, brief and debrief. This included advising them of the floor number as it was sometimes unclear, informing them of what activities had already been complete and then taking information of their actions as they left. I kept in contact with BA control at the Bridgehead who informed me of any changes or problems. This included details of fires reigniting on certain floors. I had to risk assess this information and make the decision on where to send the crews. The radio system was quite intermittent and had heavy traffic. The majority of communication I had with crews was by shouting. At one point, I was called by a female fire fighter from Edmonton who was tasked with fire fighting and search and rescue on the 11th or 12th floor. Her and her partner went in but quickly came out, asking me to look at a flame shooting out of the wall. I went inside the lobby and saw a blue pressurised flame coming from the wall. It was around 2 metres in length. This was fire from a gas main. I told her to leave this burning. Normally gas is isolated straight away. We had been briefed that it was still on but was getting

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mixed messages throughout the night. Up until this point I was unsure about the gas supply. I used my radio to inform control but unsure if I received a response. Eventually floors 10 — 14 had hose connected to the dry riser.

Occasionally a crew would inform me that they thought there was a deceased person within a flat but they were burnt so bad you couldn't be sure. Crews would come and go after completing what they could before they ran out of air. At times I would be stood in the stair well on my own. As my radio was quite intermittent and surprisingly not much other noise. It was quite eerie. The level of smoke in the stair well remained manageable until the 14th floor where I think the fire was still quite substantial. Throughout this task I saw a large black lady on the 10th floor stairwell. She was moved into the lobby by other fire fighters. I saw a small deceased terrier sized dog on one of the stairwells. I can't remember which one. I moved that to the lobby area. Around the 14th floor was an adult and child next to each other near the lift. They were clearly deceased and were very badly burnt. I was alerted to this by a crew completing search and rescue on that floor. Based on what I was told, I made the decision to leave them in situ to allow the crew to search for survivors. I saw two more deceased people on floors between 10 and 14. One was covered with a sheet and the other I just saw their legs. Around 1600 hours, I heard my name on the radio. I thought I'd heard it before but because of the radio situation, I wasn't sure. I answered and they asked me where I was. My crew were unaware because at that point there was no record of non BA wearers going into the tower. They informed me that I was dismissed. On my way down the tower I briefed a senior officer and left. I collected my BA set and was escorted out by TSG officers. The debris wasn't as bad but still coming down. I made my way to the east side of the tower at the green. I realised how hot it was in there because when I took off my protective clothing, I was drenched with sweat. I looked up at the tower and there was still bits of flame. They were in the process of using a drone and was just sitting the ALP from Surrey. Firefighters continued to go in and out of the building. At 1630 — 1700 hours, I collected our roll board. They said we were one of the last red watch to leave. We walked back to our van. On the way back, I saw people digging up the road to access the gas supply. I spoke to them and they informed me they were trying to cap it now. We were approached by members of the public who asked if we had managed to get anybody or what was happening. People were still really distressed. We reached our van and drove to Paddington Fire Station to be debriefed. We eventually arrived back at [REDACTED] around 8pm. We completed another night duty shift.

Upon reflection, I don't think anything could have assisted the fire brigade. I don't think additional resources or equipment would have helped. Hopefully it was a unique event.

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