

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: LAWRENCE, DEAN

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: D LAWRENCE

Date: 14/03/2018

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

My name is Dean LAWRENCE and I am a fire fighter (FF) from Brixton Fire Station. My statement is in relation to my attendance at an incident during the early hours of the morning on the 14th June 2017 at Grenfell Tower, Kensington, W11.

This statement is a summary of my interview, taken by DC ARAUJO and DC BARHAM, which took place on Monday 29th January 2018, at Brixton Fire Station.

During the interview, I referred to my notes I had made on the afternoon of the 14th June 2015 whilst at Paddington Fire Station. I exhibit these notes as DML/1. I also marked a map of the scene, which I exhibit as DML/2. I have mark exhibit DML/3 a Tower floor plan, the rooms I searched.

I have been a Fire Fighter for 12 years; I joined the London Fire Brigade (LFB) in January 2006. I work out of Brixton Fire Station and have spent all of my service on Red Watch. I enjoy my job and am very happy where I work. At Brixton Fire Station, we have two engines a pump and a pump ladder.

In my statement, I will mention the following people, Crew Manager JOHNSON who was in charge of the pump, FF Jo DEAN, FF Mick WOOD, FF Richie KNIGHT, FF SONSON, and FF CUTHBERT. The man who I met on the stairs looking for his children I will refer to as male 1. The female casualty carried down stairs, I will refer to as the casualty 1. The male I helped rescue from the stairwell I will refer to as casualty 2 and the casualty lying face down between stairwell 6 and 7, I will refer to as casualty 3. I will describe each of them later in my statement.

On the evening of the 13th June 2017, I came on duty at 8pm, which was red watch 1st night duty. At the beginning of our shift, we are designated duties and mine was to ride on the pump. There were five of us

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

on the machine and I was sitting in the middle at the back. Our call sign is H242. After roll call, we usually test all of our equipment. I tested my Breathing Apparatus (BA) set and checked we had all the gear we are supposed to have. It was just like any other normal night at work.

Then at about 2.05 am we got the call, the bells went down as they usually do. Both of the appliances, the pump ladder call sign H241 and the pump H242 were called at the same time, I made my way down both pole houses to the appliance bay and put my fire gear on boots, leggings and tunic before we left the station. We left within around 60 seconds our watch is good at turning out. The pump ladder left just before us they were quicker.

There were five of us on the pump, CM JOHNSON was in charge of the pump, FF DEAN was driving, I was in the back with FF WOOD to my left and FF KNIGHT to my right. We got the call slip to say it was a 40-pump fire. I knew it was something big. My first thoughts were that we were probably going to a warehouse fire or something along that sort of lines, maybe trees or a forest. Normally a 40 pump fires would be an industrial fire, we have been to industrial garbage units. I didn't think too much of it. I didn't think it was going to be what it was.

FF DEAN was a new driver. I think it was his first tour driving the pump. He was a little bit slower to get on and out as he didn't know where he was going, and was more cautious driving. I did not know the area we were going to we came from the south so I presume over Lambeth Bridge up along the Embankment towards Notting Hill. One of the guys is a black cab driver on his days off, he knew roughly where to go so he was directing most of the time along with CM JOHNSON who used the map on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) to assist us getting there.

On route, we were driving down a big road with lots of houses. I'm not sure where we were there was a park to my left hand side I don't know if it was Regents Park or Hyde Park. There was a break between the houses and I saw a tall building with massive flames going up one side of it towards the top, big red orangey flames, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I said to my colleagues, "I think I have just seen it". We continued driving and around 20 seconds later, there was another break between the houses, and I saw it again. From that point, I knew it would be something serious, I knew there was going to be people involved, I knew it was going to be a big job. It felt a little bit surreal.

I checked my phone to see if there was anything on twitter. There was nothing from the LFB, there was something from police, which said there was a fire and certain roads were closed, but nothing really about the extent of the incident. As we drew closer to the incident and were almost there, I could hear talk on the fire radio system about Fire Survival Guidance. The brigade control these 999 calls, which go through

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

to brigade control, the staff manning the phones will give fire survival guidance to the people in their properties and fire engines are allocated to deal but we wasn't one of them. From hearing this information, we knew people were inside.

It was quite a long drive; we arrived at 2.20 - 2.25 am. I don't know the name of the road we parked in. It was a side street, to the east of the Tower, there was a block of flats to the left of us, we parked on the left hand side, it might have been near the leisure centre. There were quite a few fire engines parked, we didn't have a problem parking although it was a long way from the Tower due to the amount of engines in that area. CM JOHNSON got off the fire engine first with the nominal role board, which is a board with the riders names in attendance. He went off with that to give to the command unit. The rest of us put on our BA sets and made our way towards the Tower. We walked down through a walkway, around BOMORE ROAD and come out near a sports hall.

I remember looking up at the Tower and seeing all the flames and a lot of smoke. The main bulk of the fire I believe was towards the top. On the east side there was a bolt of flame going across and up the tower at a slight angle. I can't remember seeing people at windows at that time I don't know if was focusing on that or not. I saw ash, dust and debris falling from the east side and the south side when we were under the ramp. There was bits of metal, glass, lots of different sizes, small bits and huge bits, 1 meter x 1 meter of metal and sheathing. Water was coming down, I am not sure if it was raining or not that day.

Whilst making our way towards the Tower we saw our other colleagues from Brixton who were on the pump ladder. We approached the Tower from the east side; I think the entrance to the Tower was on the south side. We made our way around under Grenfell Walk. We were there initially lined up outside the Tower underneath the ramp, hoping to go in to wear BA to rescue and firefight, we were waiting outside for roughly 10 - 15 min.

I could see what had fallen down in front of us, but I couldn't see the top of the Tower because we were so close to it and under a bit of a cover, which was blocking my view. I didn't feel scared or panicked. I was anxious to get in and help that is all I was thinking about. There as a lot of noise from the fire engines, from the fire, fire makes a roaring noise; there was people shouting, fire fighter who were watching for falling debris shouting.

There was a gap between the walk way and the Tower, because there was loads of debris falling they decided to move us into the building. From the initial area they moved us round into an area marked on exhibit DLM/2 on the west side of the building. I was waiting there for about 15 or 20 minutes before I

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

went into the building. We had to walk around the corner, I am not sure if it was a door way yet I think they had to force an opening on the west side of the tower I am not sure if it was a glass door and they knocked it through. I think I initially entered the building through entrance 2 marked on exhibit DLM/2 on the west side of the building.

There was a lot of fire fighters in there a lot of talking between each other, I could smell the smoke , I could hear a rough sort of rumble, people shouting, officers coming from entry control which was further into the tower, I could hear water dropping and again a lot of casualties coming out people crying and screaming. I don't recall hearing any fire alarms. People were coming past us and going out of the building via entrance 2. There were multiple casualties coming down, some were walking, some lifeless, fire fighters were coming down, some were really struggling, really exhausted, there was a lot going on within that room. We were on the ground floor for ½ hour or so when they decided to move us back out of the building into the fresh air because it was getting quite smoky. To take us out of the building safely to avoid the falling debris two FF at a time would go with the police under their riot shields to the safety area, which was behind the park. They didn't tell us why they had moved us there.

The park is marked on map exhibit DML/2 as Park. I could see the west side of the building from here. Essentially, there was more fire and more smoke on the left hand side towards top. As the night went on it gradually shifted over to the right hand side, there was a lot of debris falling from that side. There were people flashing lights and waving from their windows. I was begging to help; I just wanted to get in there. I was talking to my colleagues saying "I want to help, I want to go and rescue people".

I was waiting at the rear of the park for between 30 and 40 minutes, when an officer came up asking for BA wearers. I stepped forward with FF WOOD, FF SONSON and another FF CUTHBERT who is not a Brixton Fire Fighter; I think he was from Paddington. We went along the left hand side to Grenfell Walk and the right hand side of the park. We were ushered into the building entrance 3 marked on the map exhibit DLM/2

We were now in the building for a second time. It was a lot clearer in that area, there were no fire fighters in that area, and there were a few pieces of equipment, sledgehammers and axes. There was a room with tables and water. We waited in there for 5 to 10 minutes before going to the ground floor and entry control. We were briefed to go to the 4th floor and 5th Floor to search and rescue to make sure it was all clear. I think the Battersea Station Manager briefed us.

We went in with our BA sets on to prevent us from breathing in toxic smoke. We made our way to entry control and told the female officer that we had been tasked to go to the 4th and 5th floors to search and

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

rescue. I went in with FF WOOD, we handed over our BA tallies and made our way up the first flight of stairs, which goes to a funny sort of balcony level, leading to the stairwell to the other floors. The stairs to the first floor were open and pretty wide there was loads of water coming down. Before the entrance to the next stairwell, I saw male 1 who was distraught, he was screaming and crying saying my girls my girls are in there, "help me, my girls". I said "Where are they where are they, which floor are they on", he said "I did not know". We told him to make his way down we were trying to tell him to go down to ground floor, where it was safe, where there was no smoke. He wouldn't go down and stayed in that area. We had to leave him because we were tasked to go up to the 4th and 5th floors. I didn't see him again after that.

As we got further up and made our way round into actual stairwell to the properties, these were a lot narrower. If you stood four people side by side, they would fill it. There was only that one stairwell, it was smoky so visibility wasn't great. There was a lot of water flowing down the stairs; the fire doors were open from the first floor stairwell leading to the flats. I think the rest of the doors were closed.

When we reached the 2nd floor we came across a BA crew, I think there was four of them, carrying casualty 1 down, she looked lifeless, her eyes were closed and she was pale and limp. FF WOOD assisted them in taking casualty 1 down. I followed them back down to the floor where I waited for FF WOOD in the stairwell. When he came back, we continued to make our way to the 4th floor.

We continued up and between the 3rd and 4th floor, I found casualty 2 staggering down the stairs coughing and choking, struggling to breath and complaining that he couldn't breathe. He more or less fell into my arms putting his arms around me. I shouted down to FF WOOD that we had a casualty. I went behind casualty 2 and grabbed underneath his arms and FF WOOD took his legs, we carried him down to the first floor. I remember having to pull up his tracksuit bottoms to protect his dignity. He was complaining a lot saying that he couldn't breathe. I remember saying "You are alright". He didn't feel too heavy for us to carry, it wasn't awkward getting him down, it went quite well, pretty smoothly. I shouted over the balcony that we had a casualty. Some of the FF who were down in entry control came up, took over from us and carried him the rest of the way.

I think I know who casualty 2 is, as FF WOODS mentioned to me that someone had shown him a newspaper article of the casualty he thought we had rescued. I looked on line and found who I believe to be casualty 2. His name was Christo or Christoph FAIRBARN, or FAIRBAIRN. He had spoken to the newspaper about his experience inside the property.

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

We made our way back up the stairs to the 4th floor, there was a lot of water coming down the stairs, it was still smoky. As we went into the 4th floor corridor it was a lot more smoky where the flats were, I couldn't see to the other side of the corridor. We weren't in there for long as we met FF SONSON and FF CUTHEBURT they said they would stay and continue working on the 4th floor. FF WOOD and I made our way up to the 5th Floor. Conditions on the stair hadn't changed, I couldn't see the number of the floors. In the communal hallway of the 5th floor it was very dark, there was no lighting, visibility wasn't that great but I could see a bit not much further than a couple of feet. It was smoky I definitely needed a BA mask.

We started to follow the right hand wall, I have marked flat on map plan of the floors exhibit DML/3. The door was completely burnt off flat 1. FF WOOD went in first, I followed, I looked in the room on the left. FF WOOD went further in then I did, he was still in my sight, we searched in every room of the flat as well as we could. It was so hot, there were multiple seats of fire in there, I had to stay so low almost on my knees, we couldn't stay in there too long because of the heat. Wearing the gear is not an issue to me, especially the BA, I am used to wearing it, I don't even realise I've got it on anymore. The issue was the heat was immense, I could see steam coming off us. The heat was penetrating the fire gear I could feel in on my skin it was starting to hurt.

By the time we came out of the 1st flat, FF SONSON and FF CUTHBERT had made their way up to the 5th floor, we could see them by the entrance. We explained we had searched the 1st flat on the right. They continued to search the flats on the right hand side and we went to search the left hand side. We went to Flat 2 marked on map exhibit DML/3, however, the door was locked, and we gave it a bit of a push and kick but couldn't gain entry.

We went to next door to flat 3, the door was closed, I pushed the handle and the door opened. There was light smoke, this flat wasn't as hot as flat 1, we were able to search it. FF WOOD was behind me, I went to the room to my left I think it was a bedroom and searched there. I think FF WOOD went to right. I remember coming out of 1st room and going further into the flat around the right hand side searching, no casualties were found. Once we realised it was all clear and had searched every room we came back out. FF WOODS's low warning whistle started sounding on this BA set, which meant his air was getting low. We decided it was time to go down back to entry control. Conditions were the same, water and light smoke, we told the others we were going down. Conditions going down were ok, I can't remember seeing any other crews or casualties.

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

We went back to entry control, there was a lot going on there, a lot of personnel. We explained to the officer where we had searched, got our BA Tally's back and plugged then into our ADSU's and made our way back to the initial holding area in the Tower. I think they had started to use exit 3 which I have marked on exhibit DML/1. We left with police escorting us under their riot shields. We went back alongside the park and the walk way and back to the BA holding area on the West side behind the park. From going in and coming back out of the Tower and looking at the west side, I could see the fire had shifted from the left to the right hand side. I have never seen a fire of that magnitude before. I know all fires are different but I have never seen it spreading on the outside of a building like that before. There were people at the windows, the fire was gradually moving along to their flats. It was at a distance that I couldn't make out any faces, I just knew there was someone in there because there was movement. There was a few higher up I remember one person lower down may be the 9th 10th floor the lights would be on you would see them for a while, then would go away then you would see them again.

I was at the back of the park when I took my BA sets off and I then left my set beside a community hall or site office.

I saw Watch Manager (WM) STEVENS who is the red watch governor at Brixton. He asked us to go with him to the adjacent flats to make sure everyone had cleared the area because of the possibility of the Tower collapsing, debris falling down and smoke blowing over. FF WOOD and WM STEVENS and I, made our way to the flats, which were in Grenfell Walk, they were not high-rise maybe 3 floors high, I believe flats 201-211. We knocked on the doors, I remember going into one flat towards the end, the door was open, we went in gave a little search no one was in there so came back out. There was a press guy lurking around the flats. That was the only person I remember seeing, I didn't speak to him.

I think I went back down the ramp by Hurst Way Road, 'A' tested a new BA set and waited in the BA holding area behind the park again. I waited for quite a while hoping to go back into the Tower. I heard that if you had already worn BA and gone in you were not going back in, as it was too demanding, plus they had lots of FF who hadn't worn BA and hadn't been in, so I decided to take my BA set off.

Whilst waiting an Officer asked for more personnel to go and takeover a covering jet situated in the park. I put my hand up and stepped forward. The covering jet is normally a 70 mm or 45mm jet with a hose branch on the end. It is designed to cover the outside, lower floors of the building to stop fire from spreading. I believe we were using a 70 mm hose, which is the biggest we carry on the fire appliances. I was working with a crew manager from another station I don't know which station.

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

The jet was already set up when we took over from another crew, so I don't know where it was plugged into. We were in the park for about 1 — 1½ hours, on our knees, based half underneath the slide in the playground to give us a bit of shelter from the falling debris. We had to force the hose under the slide and manipulate it at an angle to get into a position to hit the tower. We took it in turns holding the branch. From where we were on the west side it was probably hitting up to the 5th or 6th floor, we couldn't reach too much of the north or south side but was definitely hitting the west side area. We wasn't using a constant flow of water. We would turn it on and hit some flames, switch it off and change positions again, It believe it was working to some extent, there wasn't a lot of flames it wasn't punching on the outside but there was some little seats of fire internally.

The water supply to the jet was turned off when we were told it wasn't doing the job it was designed to do. I was ok with this decision because a lot of the fire we could see we had hit, the rest we could see we were struggling to hit and there were fire fighters going in to fight it internally. I don't know where the entrance to the park was we had to climb over ladders which had been pitched over metal railing to get in and out of the park. I went back to the holding area and waited.

There were less flames on the outside of the Tower now, the majority of flames were on the higher levels of the property, I could see more flames internally but smoke was still coming out of most of it.

It had come to a point where there was no more people in the windows. It started to get a little bit earlie; there was still a lot of noise, debris was still falling down.

For some reason about ½ later, there was a decision to turn the covering jet in the park back on. Because I had already been in, I went back into the park with a couple of fire fighters from Old Kent Road and helped them to set it up again because we had tied it off. We tied the jet onto the slide to keep it in position because after a while you do get tired holding it. I was there 5 or 10 minutes and left them with the jet, climbed back over railings and back to the holding area.

It was around 8am now when another Officer, I can't remember his name was asking for more fire fighters to carry some equipment, lengths of hose and branches up into the Tower to the 8th and 9th floors. Firstly, we had to go and find this equipment. There was six of us, who went off to collect, four hoses and two branches. I remember going around to the east side of the Tower. We walked underneath the south side I think via a car park or walkway, out into Grenfell Road where there were fire engines parked. We found the equipment we needed and made our way back with it back through the car park on Grenfell Walk to the side of the park where the officer was waiting for us.

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

We were given a choice it was all a choice he said word to the effect of, we are going in without BA, you haven't got to come if you don't want to it is totally up to you. I was happy to go in without BA. Whether we wear BA or not depends on the circumstances, the nature of the smoke and how bad or thick it is. It wasn't really needed for what we were doing.

We queued up by the riot police and with their help followed the Officer into the Tower through entrance 3. We walked up the stairs and past others BA crew being briefed in different lobbies. The conditions were still a little bit smoky; visibility was fine, a little bit dark because there were no lights.

I remember specifically there was a very large casualty in the stairwell, Casualty 3. I am not sure what floor it was on maybe between the 6th and 7th who was apparently dead, lifeless, it was hard to distinguish at the time if it was male or female as they were lying face down, there was no movement. I think it was on the news that I saw a picture of a female who it possible was. I assume other fire fighters who had been up there before and seen her. We had to climb over the casualty trying not to step on her and continued to make our way up to the 8th and 9th floor. We dropped off a hose and branch on both floors before making our way back down to the ground floor back out of the west side through entrance 3 and back to the holding area.

The Tower looked more or less the same, a lot of smoke bellowing out of the top half of the tower, still visible flames internally. I do not recall seeing any people at their windows at this stage. Debris was still falling, not as much as when we first turned up when it was a lot and often, it was now a lot less but still lots of different sizes ranging from square meters to centimetres of ash and stuff.

I was the only one from my watch to take the equipment up into the Tower on this occasion, when I came back down they weren't in the holding area. I decided to go and find the rest of my firefighting crew from Brixton. I believe I went from the west to south side underneath the car park at Grenfell Walk and made my way to the east side of the tower between the east and the north. I think this is where they had loads of BA equipment oxygen cylinders; I have marked this as o2 cylinders on exhibit DML/2. This is where I met a couple of my fellow FF around this area. They were either changing their sets or carrying out 'A' tests to their sets. An 'A' test is testing a new set when taking it over. Once we met up, we all stayed together.

Towards this area on the north side of the Tower, was an Ariel Ladder, which is a fire engine with a huge ladder on the back of it. This Ariel ladder wasn't from London it was from a different brigade. I think they took over from another Aerial that was already there. Chris PATON our Station Manager asked us to help their crew set in the water. We rolled out a length of 70mm hose and helped them to plug the hose

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

into their appliance so they could put water on that side of the Tower. We assisted them for about 30 minutes.

The north side of the Tower looked somewhat broken, as a lot of debris had fallen from it. There were large pieces 6ft by 6ft I don't know what part of the building it was. There was a tree in front of the Tower, debris was falling on the tree and there was a massive build-up of debris at the bottom of the block. Higher up the Tower maybe between 15th – 20th floors there were internal seats of fire I think the Aerial was going up to attack that. I think the fire was more concentrated in the middle of the Tower and to one side of it.

After helping, we tried to allocate the other members of our watch. I don't know how we met up or arranged to meet up, it's a bit of a blur now. We went back our machine, parked in the same place we had left it. At around 11 am we were told by Chris PATON that we would be going back to Paddington fire station for a debrief and write our statements, we arrived at Paddington around midday. From there we went back to Brixton fire station arriving around 3.30 pm. I decided to go home, as I wanted to see my family. Some of the guys stayed on. I was back on duty again that evening at 8pm.

In my statement, I mentioned casualty 1, casualty 2 and casualty 3 and male 1.

I would describe casualty 1 as female AA 18-40, pale skin, medium to slim build, long dark hair, she may have been wearing a white top and black trousers.

I would describe male 1 as baldish I am sure he had glasses, shortish he looked kind of Greek or Turkish, Mediterranean, I think he had a bit of a stubble.

I would describe casualty 2 as a [REDACTED] male AA [REDACTED] no taller the F509-F510, medium build on the athletic side, with short black hair. I can't recall his accent, he had no facial hair or glasses. I think he was wearing a white V-neck t-shirt and either grey or black tracksuit bottoms.

I would describe casualty 3 as a black female, very large build, with dreadlocks or plaits.

Further to my recollection of the events of the 14th June, the following is regarding my training, my understanding of the stay put policy, and operations and command:

I have never had any realistic training fighting fire in a high-rise block of flats. Before the incident, it was probably about a year before the fire received training in fighting high-rise block of flats. Although we do complete high-rise training at the station more or less every tour, so we would have completed that within a few days before the incident. We have a drill yard and tower, and the fire engine will be in the yard. The training involves using the ladders, and all the equipment off the engine. We put up the ladders, climb and use them as if there is an incident in the tower. We haul the hose aloft plug it into the hydrants and the

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by:

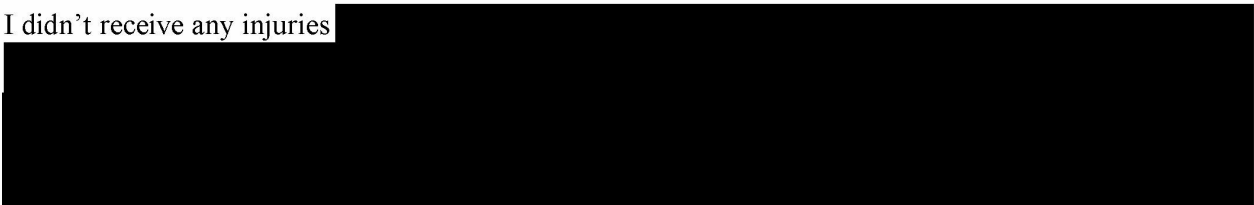
appliance. We also have lectures at the station when there are changes or amendments to policy they are sporadic about once a month. We also go on BA course refresher every year I think the last time would have been before Grenfell may have been in December 2016.

I have had experience fighting fires in high-rise blocks. I can't remember what year I think it was about 4 years ago. I was in a block near Brixton Station it may have been Wooley House, Loughborough Estate. There was a fire, which I think started on the seventh floor, which started at the rear of the property. The occupier had left and we had to force entry to the front door, put the hose in the dry riser, water mains to the block, we followed procedure and put the fire out, there were no casualties. I wore BA that day, hoses were put into the dry rise mains of that block, so we used those to put out the fire, it was a pretty standard job for what we do really.

On the 14th I assume the dry riser was already charged when we arrived at the Tower but I didn't use the hoses so I don't know if they were. The rising main works by plugging the hoses externally into the inlets of the building and then fill that inlet with water. Hoses are then, plugged into that outlet internally and that is used to fight fire instead of carrying the hose all through the building and up the stairs.

I don't know who or when any decision were made on the on the 14th June 2017 regarding the stay put policy. It is a policy the fire brigade use, if there is a fire in your property and you can't get out safely, it's there to keep you safe and away from the fire until the fire brigade come to you. It has worked for however many years it has been going for. Every scenario is different but it usually works.

I didn't receive any injuries



Lastly I didn't see anyone go above and beyond their duty that evening we were just doing what we had to do. Our BA sets only have around only have 33 minutes of oxygen. The Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) have Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus EDBA, perhaps if we had longer BA sets it might have assisted us a bit better.

Signature: D LAWRENCE
2018

Signature witnessed by: