

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: NELSON, 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: DEAN NELSON

Date: 13/01/2018

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

On Saturday the 11th November 2017 I was interviewed by DC Paul SLAYMAKER and DC Heather RIGDEN, this was Audio recorded at Wandsworth Fire Station. Also present was Fire Union Representative Leoni MUNSLOW. Below is the information and account I provided to police around my involvement in the Fire at Grenfell Tower on and after the 14th June 2017. During this interview I referred to some notes that I made at Paddington Fire Station shortly after I left the Grenfell Tower on the 14th June 2017 these consist of three (3) pages and I exhibit these as DN/3

I am currently a Fire Fighter (FF) with the London Fire Brigade (LFB). I have Ten (10) years service to date. I am currently based at Battersea Fire Station and have been my entire time as a FF. I started my service as a FF in 2009 completing the compulsory training and then spending around Two (2) years at my base station being Battersea before being confirmed as Competent. I am currently attached to Red watch at Battersea Fire Station which basically confirms what shift pattern I am on. There are three other shift patterns called White, Green and Blue watch. I was on Red Watch at the time of the Grenfell Tower Fire. I have completed many different roles as a firefighter and our roles are generally assigned to us at the start of every shift. I am also Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) trained and a driver of the fire appliances.

On the 13th June 2017 I started my first night shift at 8pm at Battersea Fire Station on Red Watch for a night duty, which starts at 8pm and ends at 09:30am the next day. We have what we call role call which happens at a change of every watch, we present ourselves in our fire gear to the Watch Manager (WM),

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where he and the Crew Manager (CM) details our duty for that shift and what training we would be doing. The assigned watch room attendant will then put a Nominal Role Board on each appliance. The Nominal Role Board has our call sign on it which on the night was H276 and the names of all the crew riding that appliance. My duty was given to me which was being assigned as Driver of the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU). The FRU is a different fire Appliance to the Pump ladder that has ladders and hoses. It carries items such as spreaders used to open doors, cutting equipment, jacks, Strops, Shoring Equipment, an inflatable boat and Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA). EDBA is the same as Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA), but have two compressed Air cylinders enabling us to stay longer inside incidents under air. The FRU Appliance is bigger and a lot heavier. I was assigned as driving the FRU, (CM) Crew Manager Jamie MAYNE was in charge of the (FRU), (CM) Aldo DIANA FF Marcus LUNDQUIST and FF Robert CHART were also assigned to the FRU. As the driver one of my roles would be to check over the vehicle for any missing items or defects with the appliance and also would check the Breathing Apparatus (BA) that I would be using on that shift on the vehicle were at the correct pressures and working. At Battersea there is a Pump Appliance and an FRU

I also take responsibility in the role as Mess Manager, which means I cook the food for all the firefighters on my watch. After I completed the above checks I prepared the dinner and we all sat down and ate it. I then went to the gym in the fire station. From memory the start of the shift was normal and I don't remember there being any shouts (call outs) during the evening. At around midnight I went to sleep.

At around 00:30am to 01:00am I heard the bells go down, which means that the bells sound for a call out and the lights come on and you are informed what appliance is needed. In this case it was a shout for the pump ladder which was the other vehicle I described above. I went back to sleep and at around 2am the bells went down again this time for the FRU to attend an incident. I got out of my bed and went down the pole into the watch room. I went over to the Tele printer to get the information on where we were going and that is when I saw on the printout from the tele printer that we were going to a Forty (40) pump fire. This means that the incident required forty fire appliances. My only thought then was wow, as I had never seen that amount being requested before. I had seen before fifteen (15) to Twenty (20) pump fires and that would be a large incident. I got into the FRU and looked at the map on the MDT to see where I needed to go as I was going off of borough and didn't know the area. I was familiar on how to get to Shepherds Bush which I could see was nearby.

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We then left the Fire Station and made our way to the incident. I believe the route I took was I turned right out of fire station onto Este Road, right onto Falcon Road, right onto Battersea Park Road, left onto Battersea Bridge Road and over the bridge, turned left into Cheyne Walk and followed this onto Long road that leads to Shepherds Bush. As we got closer the road I wanted to go down was closed with road works. I saw an ambulance that I thought would be going to the incident and followed this to Grenfell tower. Whilst on the way I remember the Radio going crazy about Fire Survival Guidance Calls (FSG), which are calls from people in the building that were trapped, from this I could tell that this was really bad. As I was driving I did not look at the MDT at all as I was concentrating on the road. Whilst on route I got my first site of Grenfell Tower on fire, I would guess that we were around five hundred (500) to Six Hundred (600) metres away and I could see only what I would describe as an Orange glow. Initially I thought Jesus Christ I hope none of our crews are in there, and that we should be fighting that fire from the outside that is what would normally be happening and no one would be going in there. The crew started to panic and were worried about FF's being in the building and were hoping no one was injured. I also thought there was no way on earth residents of that building would not be dead. It took around fifteen (15) minutes to get to the incident from out Fire Station and the drive seemed quite easy that time of night as the roads were quiet.

I have been provided a map by DC RiGDEN which I exhibit as DN/1, on this map I have marked a number one (1) where I believe I parked the FRU on the night I believe this was on Waynflete Square junction with Bramley Road. As I had been driving I needed to get my fire gear on which consisted of boots, tunic, leggings and then my EDBA set on. We then made our way to the Command Unit (CU) to hand over our Nominal Role Board. This is normal protocol when you turn up to a major incident and there is a CU present. The Nominal Role Board will indicate to the CU that you are on scene and deployable and will give your call sign and who is on the appliance. The Nominal Role Board would need to be collected when we eventually left the incident to indicate that we were no longer on scene and deployable. I cannot remember the location of the CU and there was more than one on scene. A CU is a big appliance with loads of equipment such as maps, role boards and is staffed with officers Watch Manager and higher ranking officers. At all Major incidents these officers would take control of the incident. I didn't go inside the CU, CM DIANA went in and gave over our Nominal Role Board. We then made our way straight to the BA holding area whilst on our way over there were loads of residents of

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Grenfell tower and other members of public and I remember them saying things like my family are in there and good luck. Prior to entering the building I would now say that seventy (70) to Eighty (80) percent of the building was on fire, all I could see was orange and it felt very warm, you could see bits of the building falling down constantly. I could also see people hanging out of the windows above and I also think I saw people jumping. You could see the heat radiating from the building. I could also see loads of appliances but not that near to the building as access close to the building was hard to get to for the appliances as it was very tight for space. I also saw an Ariel Appliance, some smaller ladders and FF's with hoses. I remember there being loads of FF's wearing BA. The police helped us with their shields to get into the building as there was a lot of stuff falling down from the building. We used the main entrance to Grenfell tower where initially you had to go through what I thought seemed like an underground area, I have marked this on the map that I exhibit as DN/2. We got into the Foyer of Grenfell Tower and there was again loads of FF's wearing BA all lined up and also lots of Senior Officers. We got into the queue and whilst we were waiting in line all I could hear was casualty, casualty and babies and people coming out of the building into the foyer limp, foaming at the mouth and burnt and what I would describe as being pretty much dead. No one was really coming out on their own. I also remember One (1) WM taking FSG calls, these are call information that was being passed to the WM from the control room about people trapped and there locations. Due to the amount of information being received this information was being written on the walls of the building, in my experience this is not normal procedure but we don't normally have an entire buildings on fire. Whilst in the holding area there was no smoke and total visibility, I could see up to the mezzanine floor above.

Whilst waiting inside the holding area we were briefed by an officer quite high up, I do not remember who he was but likely he was a DAC or above. We were told to do what we had to do, as we either do nothing or we do what we can. He said look gentleman/ladies, we have never had anything like this in my thirty (30) years' service, this is unprecedented, and I know we do not have the right equipment, but we cannot do nothing, people are dying in there. Do what you can. Normally you wouldn't go past the Entry control Point without a hose or behind a hose so you could fight the fire, pretty much everybody went in without this. I was just thinking to myself make sure me and my partner get out alive.

I got to the front of the queue and I was paired up with Crew Manager (CM) Aldo DIANA. We were briefed by a WM who I do not know to get to the sixteenth (16) floor, Flat 133, somebody had called 999

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and was trapped so needed our help. We went over to the bottom of the stairs giving access to the mezzanine floor and this is where the Entry Control Point was. The entry control point is where you go, put your BA mask on, hand over your tally which come from your BA set, to the Entry Control Officer who I also don't know who he was but would have been a WM or a Station Manager (SM) as he had a white helmet on. He would then make a note of how much air you have in your BA set, your name, what time you go in and what you were briefed to do. A Radio check was also completed to confirm our radios were working. All FF's carry a personal radio and that would be on channel one (1) which was the main channel for the incident. CM DIANA was also carrying another radio and had this on channel Six (6) which was a channel for BA wearers only. FF Diana and I then made our way up on to the mezzanine floor, then onto the main staircase. I remember the main stairwell was really narrow and you could just about get two people side by side at a push. The stairwell had a bannister and railings. Visibility was really low and from the third floor upwards you could not see anything. On our way up we passed some FF's coming down who must have been low on air. We made it up around two more flights of stairs and there was a big body on the floor in the way. And wasn't moving at all at this point visibility was okay down low. I tried to shake the body and the back was opened up and had been burnt, we paused for a second but in my opinion they were dead. We carried on up the stairwell visibility was poor and we were trying to confirm what floors we were on as we could not see the numbers. I knew if we went up one set of stairs and then another that was one floor. Around floor five (5) or six (6) we came across a gentleman that was either unconscious or semi-conscious on the stairwell. He was a Mediterranean looking male and was slumped on the steps, he looked around thirty seven (37) to forty five (45) years old. There was a brief interaction maybe a nod. CM DIANA and I picked him up with our arms under his arms each side and took him down to the mezzanine floor. As the stairwell was tight we were coming down at a slight angle, on the way down some other FF's helped us by picking up the gentleman's legs. Once onto the Mezzanine floor we shouted casualty and other FF's came and grabbed hold of the gentleman.

CM Diana and I went back up the main staircase, I didn't check my air but I hadn't been in there very long so knew it would be okay. We got to around the sixth (6th) floor, where we came across a lady that was suffering from smoke inhalation and was very floppy. I put my arm around her and took her down to the mezzanine floor where again other FF's took over.

CM DIANA and I went back up to between the Sixth (6th) and Eighth (8th) floor. This is when we saw

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three people, a pregnant lady, another female believed to be her neighbour and a girl. Visibility was now quite poor and I could only make out silhouettes, however I could see that the neighbour and the girl were trying to help the pregnant lady down the stairs. She was clearly heavily pregnant and I believe someone also told me she was pregnant. I put my arm around the pregnant lady and helped her down the stairs, CM DIANA helped the girl downstairs and the other lady walked herself down. The only communication we had was us telling them that it is okay and we are here to help. The pregnant lady had tanned skin, long hair, the neighbour was black and I cannot remember what the girl looked like. We assisted them down to the Mezzanine floor where other FF's took over. They were walking the whole time assisted by us, they were disorientated and distressed and not in a good way. I would say at this point as you came down the floors the smoke was getting less and less at this stage.

I was feeling hot and tired now and checked my air. I still had enough to carry on, I also checked that CM DIANA also had enough air and we both agreed we were okay to go up again. CM DIANA and I went back up the main stairwell. This time the visibility was very bad from the third floor and from the fifth floor there was smoke top to bottom on the stairwell, it wasn't pitch black but almost. We had torches but these only assisted us a little when close up to something. We got to around the ninth (9th) floor where we then came across a gentleman in the stairwell, who was quite hysterical saying that he had left his daughters behind two floors up as they had been overcome by smoke and lost consciousness he was crying. I would describe this man as tanned skin, bald head he was standing in the stairwell in a bad way. I was asking him where he had left his daughters and he was saying "up, up" I think he said around the eleventh (11th) floor. We left him as he was capable of getting down the stairs unaided.

We continued up the stairs and by now the visibility was terrible and there was water falling like a waterfall on the stairs, it was terrible. CM DIANA was in front of me and had got past something on the stairs. I believe we were between the eleventh (11th) and (13th) floor. I stopped as I had felt something and wasn't sure if it was a hose or a body. I bent down and realised it was two bodies I wasn't sure if they were alive. CM DIANA said he thought they were dead and wanted to get to the 16th floor as briefed. However I heard something like a gurgling noise. I said to CM DIANA I think these two girls are alive. I could tell they were female as they had long hair and her top half was exposed. Both of the females were found close together and they were face down when found. I picked up one of the girls grabbing her under her shoulders and put her onto my shoulders in a fireman's carry, this was difficult as I had EDPA

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on. CM DIANA did the same with the other girl. We started to make our way down and at some point I looked back and could not see CM DIANA. Usually you would not leave your partner but it was pitch black we were tired and believed I was just progressing slightly quicker than him. You would normally make sure you could even see or hear each other. I got to about the 6th floor but by now it was so wet from the water coming down the stairs like a waterfall that the girl slipped out of my hands and hit her head on the concrete floor, it was terrible but when she did hit the floor I heard something so knew she was alive. I then picked her up and was pulling, I then heard what I think was a sound of something popping. I put her down and realised her arm had got stuck in the bannisters. I managed to disentangle her arm. I then held her under her arms to get her up with her feet on the stairs and body raised but she was just slipping out of my hands. I was so tired, hot and very aware that my energy was fading, I started to feel disorientated and my head was spinning, I could also see steam coming off me. I had to decide to leave her and go and get her help and tried to use my radio but wasn't getting any signal (I don't know why). I sat down for a second and decided I was going to give it one last push. I put the girl on my lap and started to bump her down the stairs on my lap which wasn't really working. I think I must have been on either the eighth (8th) or sixth (6th) floor. I just remember saying if there is a god then give me some energy. I managed to get her down a few more flights and that is when I saw CM MAYNE and FF LUNDQUIST. I just thought thank god and they helped me get the girl down the stairs and handed over to other FF's.

It was then someone said to me who were you with, I said CM DIANA, I then panicked as the radios were still not working. I ran back up the stairs panicking I found him looking tired around four (4) floors up holding the girl in a cradle position, I helped him down. I would describe the girls as teenagers, when I handed her over to the other FF's she was quite limp but because I heard groaning I knew there was signs of life. CM DIANA and I were so exhausted that we went back to entry control turned off our BA sets and collected our tally's. We also told them what we had done. We left the tower to get some water and rest for a bit. We left through a different exit, as the one we had come in was too dangerous to use because of the stuff falling from the building. The exit/entrance was now to the right of the main doors if you were facing them and looked as if some glass had been smashed to make this exit. We again had to wait for police to assist us with the shields to get out to a safe area through the park and then around to where the front entrance would have been (see map exhibit DN/2 shows this route marked number three (3)). On this occasion it all seemed to go quick but we must have been in the building for around thirty

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(30) minutes.

We ended up resting on the grass area near to the leisure centre (marked up a four (4) on Exhibit DN/2), where we took out BA kit off and got some water. I was extremely tired and my shoulders were feeling tight. Whilst outside I could still hear people screaming, stuff from the building smashing on the floor and paramedics attending to people. The tower was still on fire and the whole building covered in orange flames. It seemed very unusual, it felt like every single window had fire in it. I could also see that one of the fire hoses going into the building had burst. As what happens in a flat fire is we plug a hose into the dry riser within the building, this pumps water up the dry riser which is a pipe and FF's can connect a hose to outlets on each floor and fight the fire. I could see that something had fallen and burst the pipe making it difficult to get water into the building.

We sat down for maybe twenty (20) to thirty (30) minutes and me and CM DIANA felt okay and got our BA sets back on and went to another BA holding area (marked four (4) on exhibit DN/1), where there were loads of FF's in BA waiting. Shortly after we were moved around one hundred (100) metres away to the right as debri was falling from the building and was toxic. They had also evacuated all the FF's from the building for a while as they were concerned around the buildings structure, as it had been on fire for some time now. I do not know who made that decision but heard on the radio to evacuate all crews. After what seemed like about an hour we were told we were going back into the building. They were holding crews on the grass and some inside the building. I remember at this time the sun was coming up and it was daylight. The building was still on fire but was not as bad and only parts of the building were still on fire and you could see this in some of the windows. We were told that we were going back into the building and was tasked with possible body retrieval and to look for any signs of life and to report back any findings. I was told I would be going in with CM DIANA, CM MAYNE and FF CHART. I am not certain of the floor but I believe we were tasked to go to the twelve (12th) and thirteenth (13th) floors. We were told to find the hose that should be on the twelfth (12th). The stairwell was badly smoke logged. We found the hose as we came up the stairwell and went through the door that was ajar into the lobby. This door was a solid door and was intact, I believe this was a fire door. I think the hose was connected to the dry riser but didn't check. I got the hose and opened the lever allowing water to come out this is called a branch but the pressure was not good and the water just started to trickle out. I was not surprised as I had heard on the radio throughout that they were having problems with hoses splitting and bursting. The hoses

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are hard and you can drive over them, however with hot products falling on them would over a period of time burst them. The water pressure issue might also have been because we were quite high up and the dry riser was feeding a lot of floors.

We started to make our way through the flats on the thirteenth (13th) floor. As you come out of the stairwell me and CM DIANA went left and went into nearest flat. The first flat was still intact with internal walls mostly in place. I looked in the bathroom and the kitchen. We then went into the next flat which had been pretty much wiped out. There were small fires on the floor and we were unable to put these out due to lack of water so we would have to come out of the flat and would be just searching for bodies. I also remember that in the flats where the gas pipes were, you would have a shut off valve there were flames coming out of them about thirty (30) centimetres long. It was daylight now and the floors we was on were not smoke logged any longer. We then went up to the fourteenth (14th) floor, and into the lobby and completed the same procedure on this floor as we had on the thirteenth (13th). This floor was much more fire damaged. The front doors would still be intact but inside there were less internal walls and the flats had been wiped out. We didn't find any intact bodies or signs of life on either floor. There was a lot of debris and it was difficult to see and work out what was what, but I believe I saw what I think was remains like ash, a bit of a bone and skull, it was very dangerous in there. My observations whilst on these floors was most of the doors to the flats and the stairwell were intact and I believe were fire doors, I noticed exposed but intact gas pipes in the lobby areas. I did not notice any fire alarms or sprinkler systems whilst in the building. I cannot tell you the number of the flats I searched as it is all a bit of a blur. I could not say for certain but I think the time would have been around 5am when we were completing these searches.

We completed our searches and then made our way back down the main staircase this was still Smokey and water was still coming down like a waterfall. However the lobby and flat areas were not as it was being ventilated. We went back to the entry control point and collected our tally's and updated them on our search. We then made our way out of the building. The building still had smoke coming from it but I could no longer see any flames and it just looked like a derelict building to me.

This was the last time I entered Grenfell tower and shortly after we were dismissed. I drove the FRU back to Paddington Fire Station and between 10am and 12pm I made notes on what I had done. Shortly after

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we went back to Battersea Fire Station and went home. Whilst in the building Radio Communication was not great and once we were inside I didn't hear anything on the radio. I believe this was poor because of the fire and the water dripping. Whilst in the building on both occasions I can say the main stairwell was very narrow but it was accessible. There was hoses that were in the stairwell being used to fight the fire but you were able to get up and down the stairs. I didn't notice any Smoke alarms, Sprinkler systems or emergency lighting in the tower. I did not see the lift or it being used by LFB and I also had no involvement with the dry riser at any point, it was only later I was aware that the water pressure was low when attempting to use the hose. In regards to the lobby doors I did not notice anything strange or abnormal about them, I believe they were fire doors and pretty sure they were self-closing. However once FF's started going through the door with hoses, these doors would be left slightly open due to the hose coming through and this would likely assist with the fire. In regards to the gas pipes being alight in the flats I was searching, I would assume that the gas valves had been shut off but may have ruptured. I often see gas in high rise buildings but was surprised to see exposed pipes in the lobby and stairwell area's I am not sure but believe this is normally boxed in.

Prior to this incident I had never been to Grenfell Tower before. I have never been on a section 7(2) familiarisation visit to Grenfell Tower or any similar Tower nearby. I have completed these visits on my own ground. These are where we visit premises and observe the building layout so we can see how we would fight a fire if there was one in the future. I have also never worked for the fire safety department.

In regards to my training, I completed my initial training, then was attached to Battersea Fire Station, I had to complete around two (2) years and be confirmed as Competent. To drive a Fire Appliance you have to complete a driving course and pass which I did this is called EFAD. I can also drive the FRU this involves a one day familiarisation course which I also passed. Being able to be posted on to the FRU you need to have completed the FRU course which involves training on all the items that are on the FRU and also around specialist rescues, within this course you would also do a conversion course to wear EDBA, as in your initial training you would be taught Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA). Wearing EDBA is quite a lot heavier when worn. On almost every shift we will be doing some sort of training. This ranges from sitting learning from policies, lectures and PowerPoint, to practical exercises. The practical's range from using the tower in the yard at the fire station practising pitching ladders, going into the tower with hoses. We also complete exercises with other stations and with senior officers where

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we talk about going into scenarios such as High Rise towers, then we will do a drill re-enacting the scenario, this is completed a couple of times a month.

I have quite a lot of experience of fighting fires in high rise buildings as there are loads of high rise buildings in Battersea. The last one I attended prior to Grenfell Tower was around five (5) to six (6) weeks before the incident at Grenfell Tower, a washing machine had caught alight, we attended and the fire was put out and was contained to just one flat, which is what is supposed to happen and usually happens. We are trained that especially in blocks of flats that a fire if it starts and doors and windows are shut that the fire should stay contained inside that flat for a period of time in order for us to fight the fire before it escalates. We do not have any specific training in regards to if compartmentation fails, we are trained to deal with a fire as we see it. I was not aware of any issues with cladding on buildings prior to Grenfell Tower and had had no training on any dangers. I have also never personally experienced issues with cladding on any fires in the past.

In regards to the stay put policy I am aware that if members of the public call 999 and there is a fire and they are trapped but safe at present from the fire or smoke, they would be advised to stay where they were and if conditions worsened then they would need to let us know. The reason for this advice is generally fires are kept contained in the room/flat they start in and other occupants are safe, if they start leaving and rushing out it may affect FF's getting to the fire and deal with the incident. I was not aware on the night of the Grenfell Tower incident anything around the stay put policy and any decisions around the withdrawal, however I did hear FSG calls so assume from that members of the public were told to stay put as I believe this is generally the policy.

In regards to Command structure. Usually at a general call a WM would take charge, At a bigger incident someone higher would assume command so that the WM can concentrate on the task at hand. In regards to the Grenfell Tower incident, I do not know who exactly was in charge or what rank but it would likely have been a Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) or Assistant Commissioner (AC), they would have been within the CU. There would have been several command units there on the night, I saw one which was positioned by the leisure centre (Marked two (2) on Exhibit DN/1).

During and for a while after the incident I had pains in my shoulders and to some extent I still have a bit

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now. I did not see a doctor for this at the time or since.

I have never been to a fire before like this, and would say this is the worst fire I have ever been to. Just the scale of people involved and the bodies I saw is something that I have never experienced in my ten (10) years as a FF.

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