

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: GONNELLA, ENNIO

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 15 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: E GONNELLA

Date: 02/03/2018

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

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This is statement regarding the fire at Grenfell Tower which I attended on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

I am a Firefighter based at Croydon Fire Station (H31). I joined the London Fire Brigade in August 2009 and completed my initial 16 weeks training course at Southwark. As part of this course we had a week of first aid and manual handling; 4 weeks on pumps (fire appliances/engines) and pumping, which consisted of training in ladder pitches and operating the fire appliances and water capabilities, and about 3 weeks of training in breathing apparatus (BA) procedures. We also did a small amount of road traffic accident (RTA) training and also HAZMAT training. In this training, we learned how to set up certain procedures and measures relating to these type of incidents. We then went to Moreton on the Marsh where we completed real-fire training consisting of live incidents in houses and high-rise buildings that are designated for this purpose.

On completing my training, I was posted to Croydon Fire Station in December 2009 on the Red Watch and have remained at this fire station since then. On being posted to Croydon Fire Station I completed my firefighter development folder or workbook. There are certain aspects within that, areas that you have complete, such as rescues, firefighting and casualty handling. It took me approximately 2 years to complete this and I became competent Firefighter in around November 2011.

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In addition to my initial training, I am also Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) trained. The Fire Rescue Unit is an appliance that does not carry any water but has different types of rescue equipment on it. The FRU course was four weeks long and included training in line capabilities and water rescue technician training. As part of the FRU course, we also completed extended duration breathing apparatus training. This training is similar SDBA training, in that you wear EDBA sets and perform a drill exercises. However, in EDBA drills they show you how long you can stay in a fire, how much harder to you can potentially work using this apparatus and the distance you can penetrate within a job at incidents where there are multiple floors or a vast amount of ground to cover. EDBA sets are slightly heavier than SDBA set as they have a twin cylinder. They are only deployed at bigger incidents, referred to as stage 2 BA jobs, due to the amount of pumps there or the layout of what we are dealing with is bigger. Wearing EDBA doesn't affect my rationale or how I operate at incident other than that I know I have more air. I also did a driving familiarisation course, which allows me to drive the FRU appliance. This was completed after my FRU course.

As Firefighters, we also complete regular ongoing training. We complete 2 days of BA refresher training every 2 years, a 1-day BA refresher every other year and regular first aid refresher courses. As we also have water rescue capabilities at Croydon, we also complete a 1-day water refresher every year, which we do at an external site.

At Croydon Fire Station, we have lectures on various procedures and policies on a regular basis which includes training in high-rise procedures. I can't remember when we last completed high-rise training before attending Grenfell Tower but our fire station diary has details of all the training that we have completed. However, at some point before attending Grenfell Tower I remember completing high-rise training in the drill tower at Old Kent Road Fire Station. It had been recently refurbished and a new drill tower had been built there for high-rise incident training. This tower just had stairs that replicate an internal staircase therefore there are no rooms coming off it. The training we did there consisted of a formulated structured drill where we went through standard BA and high-rise procedures. We practised things such as getting up to a certain floor and making sure we had enough hose and enough equipment. We complete these standard drills every now and again. At Croydon Fire Station we have a BA chamber, which is a structure designed for BA drills and firefighting drills. We sometimes use this to have a 4-pump or 6-pump exercise, where we will carry out a drill based around a house or basement. The procedures that we are taught to follow at high-rise incidents work effectively therefore I would say our

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training is realistic. However, I hadn't received any input on the risk of cladding panels before Grenfell Tower and I was not aware of the risks relating to them.

From my training and experience, my understanding of the stay put policy is that in certain premises you stay in your property within the building in the case of the fire or a fire alarm going off, whereas with others you exit the building so that we have a blank canvas to work with. However, you can't tell which flats have this policy in place, as there is a lack of information, and I don't know anything about the stay put policy in relation to Grenfell Tower or the incident there.

I will mention several of my LFB colleagues who attended Grenfell Tower in this statement as follows. The other members of the crew on the pumping appliance I was driving that night, whom I knew as they also work at Croydon Fire Station, were Firefighter (FF) Ben DOTCHIN, FF Kyle McCLELLAND and Crew Manager (CM) Tom AITKINS. CM AITKINS was the officer in charge of the pump and I was crewed with him during my first BA wear. On my second BA wear, I was crewed with CM Dominic FUMLEY who I also knew before Grenfell, as he works at Croydon Fire Station. I also saw the Commissioner Danny COTTON near the end of the incident.

This incident occurred at Grenfell Tower. I had not been to Grenfell Tower before the incident but I have completed 7 (2)D familiarisation visits on my ground as Croydon is quite a big Fire Station and we have quite lot of high-rise buildings therefore I understand the concept of a 7(2) D visit. On these visits, you check whether a building has a wet riser or dry riser and where this is located, the location of the closest hydrant, whether they have a firefighting lift and a protected stairwell, and you try to get an understanding of the layout of the building. The purpose of a familiarisation visit is to provide information about a building, local knowledge so to speak, as this may assist us at any future incidents we may attend at the location. I am not sure if I have had any previous experience firefighting in a high-rise building. If I had been to a high-rise incident, it would have only been something small or insignificant such as a fire in a kitchen oven, as I don't remember it. I have certainly never been to anything on the scale of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I started my shift at 2000 hours at Croydon Fire Station and was due to finish at 0930 the next day. That shift I was assigned to drive the pump (call sign H312). Also assigned to ride the pump was CM AITKINS, who was the officer in charge, FF DOTCHIN and FF McCLELLAND. Croydon Fire Station has a pump (call sign H312) and pump ladder (call sign H311), which have slightly

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different equipment, and a FRU (call sign H316). The pump is a fire appliance (engine) with a 9 metre ladder, whereas the pump ladder has a larger 13.5 metre ladder. The pump contains equipment such as SDBA sets, spare cylinders, a lightweight portable pump (LPP) to assist with removing water from locations, RTA equipment, lines, lighting, possibly air bags and firefighting media such as hose etc. The Watch Manager tends to ride in charge of pump ladder.

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 at about 3.45AM, I was sleeping in the dormitory at Croydon Fire Station when Croydon's Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) was mobilized. I don't remember going to any other calls before this. The bells went down and H316, which is the call sign for the FRU, was mentioned over the tannoy system. After this the duty person, who monitors the call slips that come through and allocates them to the driver of each appliance, came into our dormitory and said to us that the crew had gone out to a call where 40 pumps (fire engines or pumping alliances) had been requested, which we refer to as a 40 pump fire. We were in shock and awe. We thought he had read this incorrectly as a 40-pump fire suggests that there is a huge fire, but he confirmed again that the FRU had been called to a 40-pump fire. I personally would class any incident between 8 to 10 pumps as a serious fire. I remember going to a house collapse that was quite a big incident, which was an 8 to 10-pump fire. I think I have been to 15 to 20-pump incidents before but I can't really remember, as once an incidents done I tend to forget it unless there were any major rescues or something that made it stick in my mind. That is just how I deal with things. My initial thoughts on hearing that there was a 40 pump fire was that it might be terrorism related or another major incident such as a bridge collapsing.

This stirred our attention and a few of us in the dormitory overheard people talking, therefore me and 3 or 4 of the other guys went to the lecture room at Croydon and switched on the monitor. I remember FF DOTCHIN and FF McCLELLAND going with me but I am not sure who else was there. This was within about 15 minutes of the bells going down to mobilize the FRU, at about 0400 hours. BBC News was on and we were in shock at what we saw. It was still dark, although the sun was beginning, to rise, but the tower was fully a light on all floors. My initial thoughts were "Have we got the right channel on?" as it looked more like a film. Obviously it was the right channel and we could see the headline "BBC News" and "breaking news", but I was in shock as the tower looked like a raging inferno. We watched absorbing the images and commentary, and reading the headlines.

Approximately 20 to 30 minutes later, our pump (H312) was also mobilized. My understanding is that one of the crew managers had called control to tell them that all personnel and firefighters at Croydon

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were trained in extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA). To my knowledge, they were not aware that we were all trained in this, in addition to those riding the FRU. The pump ladder (H311) did not get mobilized that night. If control required EDBA crews, as they mobilized Croydon's FRU for this reason and I assume that the pump was also mobilized for this purpose, it would also have been helpful to mobilize the pump ladder, as they would have had 4 or 5 more EDBA wearers. However, they may have a reason for not mobilizing the pump ladder, such as needing to maintain fire cover for Croydon.

As soon as we were mobilized, I got dressed and ready to go the incident within a matter of seconds. Before leaving we brought as much EDBA kit with us that was available, such as sets, masks, carcasses and cylinders. We thought we would need this equipment if we had been called to the incident due to being EDBA wearers, as the pump we were riding only carries SDBA sets, and that if we could bring more sets for other personnel to wear, we might as well do this. It was all hands on pump and this took us about 5 to 10 minutes. After doing this we all got in the pump and we were on the road by 4.15 AM at the latest. CM ATKINS was sat next to me in the front of the pump but I'm not sure where the others were sat in the back.

We drove to the incident from Croydon via Wandsworth Bridge and I could see a plume of smoke in the distance from as far away as Wandsworth. When I saw this smoke, I tied this in with what I had seen on the TV and thought that this seemed to be a huge fire. We then went through Hammersmith and parked on Ladbroke Grove which was our original rendezvous point (RVP). The drive took about 45 minutes, as we didn't go on blue lights. I don't think we were mobilized to attend as an emergency, otherwise I would have put them on. I therefore drove at road speed. I don't remember anything else about route as I don't know the area or the route beyond Wandsworth Bridge. I was guided by my colleagues who knew the way. I didn't have any problems parking the pump but I don't know exactly where we parked on Ladbroke Grove. I remember we parked near a park bench, as I sat down on this while we were waiting for a few people before we left the incident later that day. There might have been a post box. We all have personal issue radios and an MDT in the vehicle that we can use to find out who is attending, and what it is about, such as a 40-pump fire at this address, involving these appliances etc. Someone might have looked at this while we were on route but as I was driving I didn't look at the MDT.

Once I parked up, we then were rigged in our firefighting uniform, our tunics, leggings and helmets. As the pump only carries standard SDBA, we thought we would get rigged in our SDBA sets assigned to us that night and carry the rest of EDBA equipment with us. We took all the equipment we needed and I

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locked up the pump, as I knew we weren't that close to the fire. After we parked the pump we left it in situ and didn't move it again until we left later that day.

I think there were a few members of the public in an around the area but I didn't talk to them. I can't remember any fire appliances parked near us.

We then started making our way towards the fire ground as a crew. I don't remember anyone telling us where to go, we just made out way to the general area. FF McCLELLAND served at Chelsea Fire Station so he might have recognised the location and knew the area. It took us about 10 minutes to talk to the RVP, which was outside the Leisure Centre near Grenfell Tower. When we got there we saw personnel who I think were from the Protective Equipment Group (PEG) to the left of the Leisure Centre. I recognised a few of them as they are based at Croydon but I don't know their names. They are involved in sorting out BA sets amongst other things. They had their equipment there such as trollies to carry the BA sets and blue salvage sheets laid out with BA sets on them. We gave them our spare EDBA sets and I think was where we took EDBA sets for ourselves.

As we dropped off the equipment with the guys from PEG, I then saw the tower for the first time up close. Although the initial few floors on the side of Grenfell Tower facing the Leisure Centre appeared untouched however from around the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors upwards the building was blackened and alight. In some flats, the flames were licking out of it, coming through the windows outwards, or if the fire wasn't penetrating the window, you could still see an orangey/red glow within the carcass of the flat and it was 100% alight. There were multiple seats fire (fire sites), and bits of debris falling down from the sides of the building. There was also lots of thick, horrid, acrid smoke coming from the building.

We then waited in the initial firefighter staging area on the main green outside of the Leisure Centre. Straight away we did an A test on our EDBA sets so that they were ready to use. An "A Test" is a test that is performed on a BA set at the start of a shift or when you take over a BA set to check that it is fit for purpose and working. There's a certain format that you use an aid memoire for. You're testing that the set hasn't failed in any way so that you are happy it is working properly. There are certain criteria that the set has to pass in order to pass the A test. It was about half 5 or 6 in the morning when I completed this A test.

There wasn't panic at the scene at that time, as we weren't on the initial call, but there were a few people scurrying around the scene at that time looking quite concerned. There were lots of firefighters there,

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about 20 to 30 approximately, some with BA sets on their backs and others were resting. While we were there we spoke to other firefighters and asked things such as whether they had been in the tower yet. I don't think the people that I spoke to had been inside. I didn't know any of the firefighters that I saw there before the incident other than I think we met up with Croydon's FRU crew there who also hadn't been into Grenfell Tower yet.

There were a couple of staging areas at the incident, the area on the green at the front, one at the rear of the building, the lobby section inside the building and a room with the lifts in it. We waited for about 30 to 40 minutes in the initial staging area before an officer in a white helmet must have told us to go to rear of the tower. At this point, there was hose and water everywhere. Someone walked us over to the tower underneath a walkway through a sort of carpark area underneath the building. My crew of H312 went underneath there and to the right at the rear of the building. The FRU crew may have come with us but I can't remember.

As I walked through to the other side of the tower, there was a railing to the right sectioning off a green area, 90 degrees to my right was the rear face of the building and straight ahead there was a brick wall with a grass verge/bank in front it where there was a second staging area. There were at least 20 firefighters were sat down and standing there, waiting to be deployed or briefed. The rear (West) face of the building was more blackened than the East side that I had seen on arrival and the damage had spread noticeably lower down the West face. This side of the tower was also alight and smoke logged with debris falling down everywhere, therefore they had riot police there to help get us into the building using their shields.

Looking at the building I thought it was potentially structurally unsound. I thought this because fire weakens materials that it is involved with and at certain temperatures and certain points of the fire, those materials become weak and dangerous to step, on walk on and be near. I couldn't imagine the sort of temperatures it was reaching inside the tower. It was probably getting up to temperatures that we wouldn't have known or seen before and beyond any fire we've potentially been to before. I was therefore thinking that part of the tower might collapse, such a stairwell or a floor, or possibly all of it. This made me uneasy to a degree and a bit nervous about the building.

We waited in this rear staging area for a maximum of 5 minutes before someone told us to go in but I can't remember who this was. As we made our way towards the tower we had police officers guiding us

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in using their riot shields held above us to protect us and themselves from the falling debris. The floor we were walking over was a mess as there was lots of debris, bits of building, metal, window, ash and small embers burning on the floor. It was very unsure underfoot, as debris made it awkward and there wasn't a clear walkway. We could still hear and see things dropping down as we were walking.

The entered Grenfell Tower through glass doors to the right hand side of the West face. I walked into the tower there was a room with a corridor leading into the main lobby. In the larger lobby room, there was a stairwell that concertinaed upwards to a mezzanine level and a lift room to the left of the lobby, with the lift doors and a couple of chairs in it. I remember that I was surprised as I went into the tower, as apart from the windows, the mess outside and a bit of smoke in the air, it looked sound and quite clean considering the rest of the building was involved in a massive fire. It was generally clear of smoke but there was lots of hose everywhere. The lobby was also ankle deep in water and there was water coming down the stairs. I'm not sure if this was due to the amount of water we using or due to the dry riser failing, which I was informed of in my briefing.

As I went into the tower, I followed my crew past some SDBA crews in the first room and we were told to go into the lift room and wait there two or three other EBDA crews also waiting in the lift room already.

I was with all of the crew on pump H312 but I'm not sure if the FRU crew were also with us at that point. I assumed that because we were EDBA trained, we had been called through for a specific task for us, as we didn't have to wait long in the rear staging area and we walked straight past the SDBA crews inside. However we had to wait in the lift room before we got called through to be briefed, possibly about 20 minutes or slightly less, so I sat down. No one was using the lifts at that time and they didn't appear to be operable but I do not know anything about any issues with the fire lift. I didn't recognise the other crews in the lift room but we spoke to them briefly and they hadn't been in yet.

I was eventually called through to get briefed in a crew of 2 with CM AITKINS. CM AITKINS is a rank above me, therefore he takes lead of the crew, and he was in front of me so I followed him. We came out of the lift room into the larger lobby and then went to the bottom of the stairs where the bridgehead was located. A bridgehead is the staging or preparation area in high-rise incidents or the main hub inside an incident where you commit crews wearing BA. Ideally it should normally be 2 floors below the fire floor and in theory you can't go beyond this point without wearing BA. There weren't many firefighters or

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senior officers in this main lobby area, as everyone else was in the lift room or the holding area so it was quite calm.

When we got our brief at the bridgehead, I was standing behind CM ATKINS. We were briefed by a senior officer in charge. I'm not sure who this was but I would describe as a black male. The brief we were given was that there was a casualty at a window on the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> floor waving a flag or shirt or something. They knew that he was breathing and conscious as he was moving around therefore we were to go up to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors to conduct search and rescue for this person. We weren't told anything about the fire within the briefing other than that there was no firefighting media (hose) as the dry riser had failed. We therefore had no water, however they didn't say why this had failed. A dry rising main, which is also referred to as a dry riser, is a tube inside a building that you fill with water and on certain floors you can plug into that tube allowing access to water for that floor. As a driver, if you arrive at an incident where there is a dry riser, you find a hydrant and connect it to the pump, and then connect the pump to the dry riser. The dry riser charges the building with water and you've then got a constant supply of water into the building. Whether it had failed or was inoperable at Grenfell Tower I don't know, but it certainly wasn't working when I went in and there was no water. It's not common for this to fail, I've never known a dry riser to fail in my experience other than at this incident. The problem is that I believe that Grenfell Tower was an old building, and legislation and regulations at that time determined that a building that height could have a dry riser, whereas if it was built today it would require a wet riser. A wet riser has water continually charged in that pipe whereas a dry riser doesn't and we put the water in to charge it. Today I think any building over 60 metres is required to have a wet riser but those under 60 metres can still have a dry riser. In our briefing we were also warned that they were struggling with personal radio communications, which was quite on and off. They didn't say why this was, but I assumed it was due to the layout, distances we were travelling in the building and the layers of brick between us and the bridgehead as went up the tower. We were just told us to go up there and see what we could do.

Following this briefing, I told the person on the BA entry control board my name and what pressure I was working and started using in my EDBA set, which we refer to as getting under air. The entry control board is an information panel that allows the user to know what's going on with the BA wearers inside an incident. I don't know who was managing the board but it was located at bottom of the stairwell in the lobby to the side. I also handed over my tally from the bodyguard of my BA set so that it could be placed into the board to show I was committed into the incident. The tally has our name on it, shows the time we

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went under air, and the amount of air in each set.. It slots into the side of entry control board like a key. When you remove the tally to place it into the board, the bodyguard then becomes live. The tallies then give information to the board. Information about our BA sets about how we are getting on in terms of how much oxygen we are using. The person managing the board monitors this and may then contact a crew, if one of you is working too hard and using too much air, and can ask for the other person in the crew to take over whatever task you are doing.

After handing in our tallies, we got under air and went up the stairs in lobby to the balcony/mezzanine area. We then walked along the mezzanine level and through a door at the rear of that level to enter the main stairwell.

The stairwell was an enclosed shaft, with no windows, running the height of the building and was quite intact. I thought it would have been in a worse condition considering what I had seen of the fire from outside and on TV earlier. There was lots of hose, both charged with water flowing through it and uncharged, running up the stairwell. As we were going up past the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors, we passed a lots of firefighters on the stairwell. They were in firefighting gear but the majority were not wearing BA. They were managing hose and assisting crews or casualties. It wasn't that hot on the stairs but it was still warm and smoke logged, and if you are in a smoke logged area you should really be wearing BA. The smoke wasn't horrendous but I felt it was smoky enough to warrant wearing BA.

We managed to get up to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. It was heavily smoke logged on the stairwell outside the 9<sup>th</sup> floor and also inside the 9<sup>th</sup> floor when we went in. As we went into the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, and later the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, I'm not sure where the lifts were but there were doors to the flats on either side of the floor, to the left and right, round in a square. Half of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, to the left, was relatively untouched by fire and in a better condition but still smoke logged, however the right side was still 100% alight. We therefore went to our left first and started our left hand wall search. I can't remember whether all the flat doors were open or closed but we went into any available opening or doorway and searched room by room, flat by flat. If a door was closed, I didn't pay much attention to it as I couldn't gain access but I can't remember. I was quite content that the flats on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor were empty as we did a thorough search. I remember going into one flat with CM ATKINS and I searched the bathroom, inside the bath tub and I looked behind the door. I then went along the corridor and searched the rooms off that. It wasn't a big apartment. We then came out and searched the rooms in each flat as we gradually made our way round to the right side of the floor.

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The right side of the 9<sup>th</sup> floor was a mess, It was 100% alight and there were seats of fire all over the place. There were beds of embers glowing red hot and deep orange pockets of flames. The flats were fire damaged to the point that I could see through to the grass area outside because the windows had fallen from their shells and gone as they had failed. On that part of the floor there was nothing in those particular rooms and everything was at waist height. I thought the floor might potentially have been structurally unsafe so we couldn't progress into those rooms to search but everything within that area was burnt. If we had gone into those rooms, it would have been unsafe as the damage was too much and we didn't have firefighting media to protect us. We therefore retreated to the stairwell.

We then progressed up the stairwell to the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. On the stairwell landing outside the 10<sup>th</sup> floor there was the body of a person in the way of the door who appeared to be a large black woman. She was face down, lifeless, not moving and it was obvious she was no longer alive. She appeared to have been there for some time and I think we had been told she was there in our briefing. Her body was slightly overhanging the top few steps going down, but I'm not sure whether her face and hands were overhanging the stairs or her feet. I'm not sure which way she was facing other than that she was face down. Unfortunately, the door to the floor opened towards us into the stairwell, therefore every time we withdrew into the stairwell we had to open the door onto her. There was enough room for us to get through and gain access but I could only open the door halfway due to her body being in the way. Unfortunately, I have seen dead people and things like this before at previous incidents but it wasn't nice. However, I had task to do. There was possibly a person on the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> floor waving a flag or a shirt that we needed to rescue so I was switched on for that and I needed to get into that floor.

When we got onto the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, it was a similar scenario to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor in that one side was considerably more damaged than the other and potentially structurally unsound. The route we took on this floor was dictated for us, as there was almost nothing there on the right side of the floor. This therefore drove us to the left hand side and searched this side first before moving towards the right hand side of the floor. However, it was harder to search the 10<sup>th</sup> floor due to the heat, as it was considerably hotter than the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. The atmosphere and the temperature in the air was hotter and it was more smoke logged than the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. I had to sit lower as I went into each room due to the heat and we couldn't stay in the floor or flats for as long. We had to withdraw to the stairwell 2 or 3 times, closed the door, had a breath, rested for 20 to 30 seconds and then went straight back in. Each time we committed onto this floor, the time frame within our search patterns was shorter and we weren't on this floor for as long due the heat but we tried to

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search as best as we could. We still did a relatively good search of this floor however I couldn't say that the 10<sup>th</sup> floor was clear, as we couldn't search as thoroughly due to how hot it was. I still felt good, strong and that I had enough air but it was harder to thoroughly search due to the heat. I needed to withdraw to the stairwell for a breather. On the 9<sup>th</sup> floor I could say that I was happy that where I had searched was clear, but I couldn't say that on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor.

Everything was burnt on the right side of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. Similar to the floor below, there were beds of red hot embers with pockets (areas) of deep orange flame. I remember that as I went to search the right side of the floor on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, and earlier on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, I touched the door to the stairwell as I went past to get my bearings and make sure I knew how to get out. The door was still shut each time therefore the doors had definitely closed behind us as we went in and out. I assume the door had a slow closer or an automatic closer on it. I can't say this for definite and I can't remember if the doors to the floors were open or closed as we went up and down the stairwell, but the door to these floors were definitely shut when I touched them.

On our last committal onto the 10<sup>th</sup> floor from the stairwell, we were about to search a flat or an area we hadn't yet search and went towards the flat that was in at 1 o'clock direction as you entered that floor. As we did this I saw flames coming from the flat door licking across the ceiling and into the corridor of that floor towards us. The fire wasn't spreading quickly or ferociously towards us, it was just moving at a steady pace towards us. However I am trained to look for these tell-tail signs, as they are not good. As soon as this happens the heat rises. If I had firefighting media, I would have taken measures to penetrate deeper as there are ways we are trained to deal with flames coming at us in that instance. However, as I didn't have firefighting media, such a hose or a jet, I thought that was as much as I could take at that point. After this we withdrew to the stairwell again and I took a deep breath. I then spoke to CM ATKINS to confirm that we had done all we could on that floor, and that the temperatures were too high to continue. We had searched the 9<sup>th</sup> floor and some of the 10<sup>th</sup> and made the decision between us that we should go back down.

We made our way down the stairwell to the lobby area we passed more firefighters without firefighting equipment and there was still a lot of hose on the stairs. The stairwell was still smoke logged at this time. When I got down to about the mezzanine floor, my bodyguard started sounding. The bodyguard is a piece of equipment that is attached to your BA set and it gives you all the information that you need for that BA set. Everything from the amount of bar pressure you have for that set to the amount of minutes of air you

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have in your set. It also has a light, and provides a form of communication, if necessary, with the BA board. For example, if I wanted to tell the person running the BA board that I am on my way down I can press a button to communicate this. The bodyguard is therefore an information tool that you have as part of your set. There is also an option for person downstairs managing the BA entry control board to use it to tell us to withdraw and as far as I could tell this what was coming up on my bodyguard. I don't know whether they had activated this when I got down to that level, or whether my bodyguard started sounding then, as I had come within range of the telemetry signal. They could have activated this alarm when I was on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor or when I left the bridgehead, due to information they had heard. But I wouldn't know when they activated this. This may show that the telemetry signal was inhibited within that building, as well as the radio communication issues that they mentioned in our brief, however I can't say this for sure. I might not have heard the bodyguard alarm until I got to the mezzanine level because of the sound of my breathing and footsteps on the stairs. However, I'm fairly certain I would have still heard it going off, therefore it may only have started activating when I was on the mezzanine level. I didn't think about this at the time, only later I began wondering why the bodyguard started to go off then, and if it was because I didn't have reception.

We got back down the lobby stairs to the lobby level. I didn't notice anything different when I came back down. Between Tom and I, we then gave a debrief, which is standard practice when you come out of an incident. You either tell other crews going in what you have done, what needs to be done and the conditions going in, or you brief the entry control board officer or whoever is in charge. We told them that we did as much searching as we could but we didn't find the casualty. We also told them the areas we had searched on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor were clear but we couldn't be sure for the 10<sup>th</sup>. I believe the casualty who were initially told to search for and rescue on the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> floors ended up being on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor but someone got them out.

I then de-rigged and took my BA set off. We exited the building, and were escorted by police with their riot shields and went back under the walkway to the 1st staging area by the grass next to the Leisure Centre. I took my tunic and BA set there and recouped for a while. We immediately did another A test on my EDBA sets so that they were ready to go. I then took on some water and was sat with some of my other crew members there, FF Ben DOTCHIN and FF Tom BUNDY. I think we asked each other what we had done and where we had been but I can't remember the specifics of the conversation. The strange thing was that while we were resting and having a conversation, the tower was still right there in front of

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us in the background, still on fire with smoke coming out of it. I was still taking in where I had been and what I had done but I felt OK.

It was light and a sunny clear day by this time and I could see ambulance services, firefighters and other emergency services. I couldn't really see any debris falling on the floor on the Leisure Centre side of the tower, as we were set back and there were trees in the way, but the building looked more blackened than it had been before. The window frames of several flats had crumbled and cracked and you could see through into the flats. The windows were also similar on the rear side. There wasn't as much fire at this time but there was still smoke bellowing of the building and the glow of different apartments on fire. I could also see a bit of the South side of Grenfell Tower from there which had similar damage to the other sides but I couldn't really see the North side.

I can't remember what time I had come out of the building and I'm not sure how long I was in this staging area for but eventually after we had rested, myself and other Croydon personnel got rigged up again but I can't remember who was with me specifically. We put our EDBA sets back on and this time an officer told us to go to the rear of the property but again, I don't know who this officer was. We went to the staging area at the rear of the property and the police were still there escorting people in and out with their shields. We were in this area for a while before we got our second briefing from one of the officer's in charge while we were outside. Myself and other personnel was put in a crew and were briefed to assist a bariatric casualty who had unfortunately passed away. She was quite a large casualty and was impeding progress on the stairs. People were struggling to gain access and egress so we need to get her on a stretcher and get her out. My understanding was that it was the same lady we had seen earlier.

We got a stretcher and the other equipment that we needed for this task from an FRU in the area, I'm not sure if it was ours or not, and then made our way to the bridgehead. The officer who briefed us went with us to the bridgehead, which I think was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor this time. As we went into the lobby this time, there were more fire firefighters waiting to be committed but we were lead straight past them because we had a specific task to do.

When we went up the main stairwell for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time it was darker for some reason, although I'm not sure why, and there was still loads of hose on the stairwell. It was also heavily waterlogged. The first time there had been a bit of water on the stairs but not as much as this. The 2<sup>nd</sup> time we got absolutely soaked going up due to this water. It was almost like a waterfall coming down the stairwell.

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When we got to the bridgehead on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor there were a couple of officers there running the entry control board. There were also BA crews, either being committed or exiting the building. A conversation took place between the officers that we had been brought there to do the specific task, we were then told that we were not going to carry out that brief now, as it could wait. Instead, we were going to be doing an alternative task. They told to sit and wait in a room in one of the flats on that floor, which was another staging area within the building. I'm not sure which flat this was.

I'm not sure how long we waited for but my 2<sup>nd</sup> BA wear was at around 1300-1400 hours. We were eventually given a new task and were told to investigate on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors to see if there were any seats of fire. We were told that there were potentially gas mains alight within those areas, which were also to investigate. I don't know how gas mains work but they run into the building and they then spur off into the apartments. They didn't say why they wanted us to do this, only that they wanted these floors checked.

We then made our way up the main stairwell to investigate on those floors. There was still loads of water cascading down the stairs and lots of hose, however it wasn't as smoke logged in the stairwell at that time.

When we reached the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and went into the lobby. It appeared empty as there was no one there. It wasn't as hot on this floor as the higher floors but it was still hard work. There was a small amount of smoke but it wasn't thick and visibility was OK. It was also easier to negative through the corridor as there was less smoke and easier move around the floor and I wasn't having to climb over things to get from one door to the next, as I had to on other floors. We therefore searched this floor flat by flat and room by room. I wasn't assuming everyone had been rescued therefore I searched for fire or traces of anything else.

In some apartments, although it wasn't as bad as the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, it had certainly been destroyed by fire. There were a few areas of hot embers and few pockets of flame which we extinguished within a few minutes.

As we entered flat 35 and took a few steps inside, we highlighted that there was a gas main alight on corner. I'm confident it was that flat as I could see the number on door of the flat, as I'm sure of this and I have written this flat number in my original notes. The flat was quite burnt out so I couldn't tell where the flame was within the flat specifically but it was somewhere on the right as I went in. The flame had a blue

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base going into yellow flame at the top. It was coming from the floor upwards, possibly coming from a pipe but I can't remember. When I saw this I thought it was gas that was alight, as gas burns slightly differently. It wasn't a normal seat of flame, it was quite singular and the flame itself was quite neat and skinny. I also thought that we wouldn't be able to extinguish this, as it was connected to the main feed therefore there was no point trying to hit it with water. I have dealt with gas fires before and I know that once gas is involved, unless you isolate the supply, it's very difficult, if not impossible, to extinguish it.. The best way is to kill the source of the gas, therefore this fire couldn't be extinguished as it was on a main feed. We didn't go fully into the flat or progress any further on seeing the flame for this reason. We went back out of the flat and searched the rest of this floor. We then went up the next floors to see if it was also alight in this location on those floors.

After leaving the 6<sup>th</sup> floor we went to the floor. We didn't pass anyone on the stairs from what I remember. As I opened the door to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor and stepped into the lobby there was another firefighter already on this floor. They said something like they had already searched this floor. We therefore didn't search this floor and continued to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor instead.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, the conditions were similar to the those on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor except there was no door on flat which was in the same position as the one we had seen with the gas flame inside on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, as it had been burnt clean off the hinges. I therefore don't know the number of this flat. I had a look inside this flat but it was quite burnt out so I wasn't able to penetrate very deep inside. However, I could see that again there was a similar gas-like flame the right hand side of this flat.

After this, as we had completed our brief, we decided between us to go back down. The stairs were still full of water coming down from above. We went back to the bridgehead on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor to handover our findings to whoever was in charge of that area but I can't remember who we gave this information to. I can't remember as much about my 2<sup>nd</sup> BA wear as I felt quite tired by this time. I also felt a bit tired while I was waiting in the holding area to get briefed before I had entering the building but I happy to wear EDBA the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, as I knew the building was sound by then and I knew the layout, however I was getting tired.

Other than investigating these floors I don't have any knowledge about anything to do with the gas supply at the scene or any issues with this. Additionally, I didn't hear any fire alarms within the tower at any point during the incident, I didn't see any sprinklers and I didn't notice a smoke management system with Grenfell Tower.

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I can't remember the time I came out of the tower but when we exited we went over to the staging area near the Leisure Centre, but further along a concrete area towards the road. When I got there I totally de-rigged. I took off my tunic, leggings and BA off, I had a couple of bottles of water and laid down on the grass area for a bit. I knew I was done, as I had worn BA a couple of times and I was very tired and hot by this point. The Leisure Centre was full of people and there were a few food stalls that had popped up, like the Good Samaritans. They had set up food areas near the road on the pavement. While I was lying down there I saw the LFB Commissioner. She spoke to the firefighters in this area and praised the group of people I was in for what we had done. I didn't see any other members of the command structure at the incident and I don't remember seeing any Command Units. Command Units take over messaging at an incident and they are hub or point for people to go to in order to make decisions and relay information.

We were then allowed to leave the incident, although I'm not sure how this came about. We left the incident at 4PM as a crew on our pump and then went to Paddington Fire Station to debrief. There we were told to write down notes on what we had done. It was a good idea because it was fresh in our brain as I might not have been able to remember this as well a few days or a week later. I think they gave us a question sheet to answer which we referred to. We handed our notes in at Paddington and left them there. While giving my statement I referred to a copy of these notes which I exhibit as ESG/1. I have also annotated a map of Grenfell Tower showing where we dropped off equipment with PEG, the 1<sup>st</sup> staging area on the Leisure Centre (East) side, the 2<sup>nd</sup> staging area at the rear (West) of the tower and my route to this. I have also the location of an appliance, possibly an aerial appliance, that I saw at the South side of the tower with an "A" in a rectangle. This was underneath the walkway and wasn't extended or in use. Surrey's aerial ladder platform (ALP), as "Surrey" in a rectangle, which I saw at some point after my first BA wear. An aerial appliance is an appliance with a large ladder with the ability to squirt water from the end of this ladder. I exhibit this map as ESG/2.

I think we were at Paddington for about an hour before we left. We then had to go to the hospital near Paddington train station to pick up FF McCLELLAND who had suffered some heat exhaustion and had to go to hospital. He was alright and probably could have been sorted out at the scene but the ambulance crew took him away. I didn't have any injuries myself and I didn't know of anyone who was injured. We picked him up and drove back to Croydon. We got back to Croydon Fire Station between 7:40-7:45PM and we were due to report for duty at 2000 hours that night. We are asked if we wanted to go home but we chose to stay on duty. We just about had time for a shower, we changed into fresh gear, sorted out the

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pump and then it was time to start work. We reported for duty at 2000 hours and all then stayed for the next night shift.

That shift we did our standard checks that we do at the start of the shift such as testing our BA sets. We then had something to eat and all sat down to watch the 10 o'clock news and we tried to take in the day before going to our resting areas. I don't think we had another shout (call) that night and I then went off duty at 0930 hours on 15/06/2017.

As I professional I was honoured to be involved in helping at the incident, although I didn't do much. It was the biggest incident I've dealt with in my career. From a human point of view, I'm devastated as it was a horrible disaster that happened. Despite this, I'm dealing with it OK. It is something that should never had happened, everything from the loss of life, to the amount of fire, to the to speed at which it spread and that we didn't have the measures in place to effectively deal with it. I think the reason it happened in such a vast way was due to the scale of the incident but it shouldn't have happened. The main thing I think we could have had in place that might have helped us was better communications. There are also only a handful of people training in EDBA therefore perhaps if they could extend the duration or the normal sets or train more people to use EDBA sets it may be beneficial. However, the sets are quite heavy and cumbersome therefore to get into tight areas it might not be as effective. Therefore, perhaps they could keep the cylinders the same size but extend the duration. On the flip side to this, putting yourself in a fire environment for a longer duration isn't good. I wouldn't want to be in a fire environment for very extended periods of time. It was also a little frustrating that we were briefed to go to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floor to look for the casualty I mentioned, when he was actually on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, but they weren't to know what floor he was on. I didn't understand how it came about and how they knew the casualty was there, how long he'd been there or what floor he was on. Whether they counted the floors from the outside, he was shouting down and there was a mistake in communication or if they were given this information somehow I don't know. If we had been told to search the 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> floors, potentially it could have been us to help get him out, but the main is thing is that he got out, regardless of who helped him, and that he was safe.

I will now describe the deceased person that I have mentioned in this statement. I would describe the body of the deceased person that I saw on the stairwell landing outside the 10<sup>th</sup> floor as a black woman of large build with long dark hair. I think she was wearing dark clothing, possibly a blue top and bottoms but I'm not sure. I don't think she was wearing any shoes.

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