

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: BERRY, JAMES

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 14 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: JAMES BERRY

Date: 07/02/2018

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

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I am Watch Manager James BERRY, I am currently employed by the London Fire Brigade as the Watch Manager of Red Watch at RICHMOND Fire Station and I have held this role for the past 11 months of my career.

I started in the Fire Service in 2002 at BECKENHAM Fire Station, I remained there for two years and after this I moved to CLAPHAM Fire Station for seven years. During this time I was successful in my promotion application to become Crew Manager. I moved to TOOTING in 2011 where I took on a further temporary promotion to Watch Manager, I eventually completed full promotion into this role in February 2017 and moved to RICHMOND. At present I am classed as in development.

I am trained as a standard duration breathing apparatus (SDBA) wearer. There is some form of Breathing Apparatus (BA) training almost every shift - this could be a standard BA wear or may involve an entrapment procedure scenario. Entrapment procedure is when a firefighter is trapped and this could be due to a number of factors such as damaged face mask, running out of air or stuck in cables. We then send in a rescue crew to do get them out. This is what we would call a firefighter emergency. We also complete larger scale training, the last one I attended was at NEW MALDEN FIRE STATION which focused on entrapment procedure and the elementary board

This statement is being provided in relation to my actions at the GRENFELL TOWER fire and I have

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referred to my contemporaneous notes in order to assist with my recall. My notes were made on the 14TH JUNE 2017 at PADDINGTON Fire Station between the hours of 14:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs. I exhibit these notes as JKB/1. I have also used a map print out to illustrate our approach and final position, this I exhibit as JKB/2.

The persons I will refer to in this statement are Fire Fighter (FF) MALIK, FF FAIRBROTHER, FF DWYER, FF WIGGLEY and FF PEREZ and Crew Manager FULKER - I had never been to or inside of GRENFELL TOWER before attending for the fire incident and therefore had no prior knowledge of its layout.

On TUESDAY the 13th of JUNE at RICHMOND Fire Station I started my first of two night shifts. I always arrive a minimum of an hour early for my shift which officially starts at 20:00 hrs and that was initially no different to my normal routine which begins at 19:00 hrs when I meet with the previous shift's Watch Manager to receive a handover. I would then set up any training that will be delivered to my firefighters an complete general admin before reporting for duty at 20:00 hrs with the rest of Red watch.

At 2000hrs I take the roll call and detail my riders their tasks for their shift; each night we formulate a plan for training and refreshers and if a shout comes in then that will always take priority. One of the first tasks I will ask them to complete is testing the BA sets.

Within my watch all of the riders are SDBA trained which is the basic level of BA wearer - other fire stations have Extended Duration BA (EDBA) wearers but these are specific Fire Rescue Units (FRU), RICHMOND is not an FRU.

At the beginning of the night shift I paraded with full ridership of seven firefighters but one of my firefighters, FF MALIK, was sent to FULHAM to make up for a short fall. That evening FF Simon FAIRBROTHER was detailed as the driver for the appliance, call sign H421, that left FF DWYER, FF WIGGLEY, FF PEREZ and Crew Manager FALKER in the back of the appliance should we be dispatched to a shout.

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The system of the appliance is that the two people sat on the outside of the appliance are the firefighters who are detailed to wear the BA, the driver operates the pump at the back of the appliance and the two in the middle are responsible for either sourcing the water or performing the highest priority task when reaching the scene of an incident. As the Watch Manager I take the front passenger seat.

I cannot recall which seats my firefighters took that night, at a normal incident I would know which of them was first off the appliance however due the fact all of the firefighters sat in the rear of the appliance were sent to perform BA tasks when we reached the scene I cannot remember who was initially detailed which role.

The typical routine for our watch is that once the register is uploaded on to the system, the BA apparatus is tested and a full inventory completed we will, more often than not, grab a cup of tea and go upstairs to complete any training. By about 21:00 - 22:00 hrs I will retire to my office and catch up with any admin.

On that day I headed to my quarters and tucked into my room at around midnight doing some reading. I woke up at 01:33 hrs to the sound of the bells dropping which signals to us that we are required at a shout. Again we followed the usual procedure. It has been tradition within the London Fire Brigade for over fifty years to have one of the outside BA wearers of the appliance adopt the role of the "Duty Man". The Duty Man is responsible for attending the Watch room to collect the call slip and meet the driver - my room is opposite the watch room and so I am always there just as quickly as the Duty Man. The call slip is a print out of the details of the shout; on that day FF Rob DWYER was the duty man and collected the call slip. I just remember him saying aloud, "TWENTY FIVE PUMP FIRE," upon reading the call slip; he did not intentionally leave out the address, which would have been on the call slip, but the printers are not the best and sometimes they are hard to read. There is a large map on the wall of the Watch room which we use to familiarise ourselves with the areas and the driver will use to visualise a route.

I looked at the location and I didn't recognise it; as well as being a Watch Manager I also work as a Black Cab driver and therefore I have a good grasp of the geography of most boroughs within London from completing the knowledge. I didn't recognise the exact location but I am familiar with the general demographic of KENSINGTON & CHELSEA - therefore I initially believed that a 25 Pump Fire would be located at a Royal premises or an Embassy. We were all sat on the appliance and I remember feeling

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the atmosphere, it was as if everyone was thinking ‘WHAT’S THIS ABOUT THEN?’, a 25 Pump Fire is not a common occurrence. I loaded up the mobile data terminal (MDT) within the appliance and it was blank. The MDT data is collected and loaded on to the computer system by a control operator and then tagged to the appliance MDT for mobilisation, it’s an old system and it doesn’t always work the way it should.

I asked one of the guys in the back to navigate to the location on his phone that we had managed to decipher from the call sheet and he passed his phone forward to the front so that I could give directions. As we left the fire station I booked our call sign “Status Two” which means that we are “mobile to incident” and pressed “7” on my radio which sends a message to dispatch that I require a call back.

As we reached the A316 en route to GRENFELL TOWER I received a reply on my radio; the lady on control replied “YOU’RE NOT GOING TO GET ANY DETAILS WE’RE TAKING FSG” which means Fire Survival Guidance.

At this point the realisation struck. You can get a shout ramped up to 25 pumps purely because of the amount of people calling in about the fire, but knowing that the controllers were taking FSG meant to me that people were trapped inside and taking in smoke - I think this was the moment that we all realised it was a residential tower block. Upon hearing this and whilst still en route I asked the four firefighters in the back to rig up in BA as I knew that FSG meant that they were going to be required.

The lack of MDT didn’t really hamper our progress to the incident location; it is a comfort to have the little blue dot the map showing you where you need to be but we used our initiative and got where we needed to go in the same time. We had got onto the A316 roundabout then come off through HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY where we continued on SHEPHERDS BUSH ROAD towards SHEPHERDS BUSH GREEN.

As we reached THE GREEN we had to stop our engine as three other Fire Appliances came roaring towards us and that moment felt eerie - at night in SHEPHERDS BUSH there should be people around but all that could be seen was the flashing of blue lights and other fire engines hurtling towards the Tower. We joined the convoy and eventually turned left on to ST ANNS ROAD and landed ourselves at

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STONELEIGH PLACE. This location is around a five-minute walk from the base of the Tower but due to the sheer enormity of the structure and its elevated position behind the buildings where I stood I could see the flames. Although we were called on a 25 pump don't believe I'd seen 24 pumps arrive ahead of us although fire fighter courtesy is that we will park our machines in different locations around the incident to prevent obstructions on the road which could stop people getting the help they need.

When we arrived, which would have been around ten minutes after we left RICHMOND, the first side that I saw to be alight was that of the South East corner. The fire was so frequent and consistent over the floors that the only thing that I could imagine would have caused this was a fire in the bin rooms as the chutes are stacked throughout these sorts of buildings. I later obviously found out that the fire was spreading on the outside of the building; there is talk that the compartmentalisation of the building failed but I would say that the compartmentalisation didn't fail, the windows and external walls failed. I believe everything else worked the way it was meant to. As a firefighter there aren't any pre-prepared plans for a compartmentalisation failure because it is so unprecedented.

Normally you'll see a fire pattern go with which way the wind sends it — you couldn't see that on GRENFELL TOWER, it wasn't clear how or where it had travelled, everything on the outside was just alight. Quite a few windows were falling out where the plastic was burning; whole windows, parts and frames.

We've all been to fires before- you have enough knowledge to say "that has happened because this has failed" or "the fire has spread from the kitchen up the stairwells because they didn't close the fire door" and with a normal high rise "the fire has gone up from the 4th floor flat to the 5th floor because it's punched out the window and gone back in" but on this fire I couldn't see any evidence or indications of that at all. I have never seen that before at least not at that speed- even with the biggest gale I could think of it wouldn't move at that speed. In fact, that night it wasn't windy at all.

I led my watch over to the first White Hat I came across who happened to be Watch Manager DOWDEN who I know personally from doing a previous promotion round together. I asked him what he wanted us to do and he told me to go around the back of the Tower and dampen down any falling debris; I initially thought that there surely could have been a task of higher priority we could undertake but in hindsight,

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that was the best decision I've ever seen made in my 16 years in the Fire Service. I am totally in awe of what he did there, it was a great call.

At any fire over four pumps you have to hand in your board, it's our way of booking in to a fire ground - so en route to a 25 Pump Fire I rode to the Tower with the board at my feet. When I had got off the engine I'd taken it with me. I went around to the Command Unit (CU) which was parked somewhere around BOWMORE or GRENFELL ROAD. I couldn't tell you who was manning the CU but it was blatant that he was overwhelmed with the amounts of units booking in and so leaving the board on the desk was the fastest and best way to book in at the time, which is what I did.

People knew what had to be done; we threw our boards in - it might not have been the correct way but it was sufficient enough to have worked so that we were able to carry on with what needed to be done. He knew we were there but he wouldn't have known exactly where we were positioned.

I handed my BA wearers over to another supervisor as my role wouldn't have required this type of resource and FF FAIRBROTHER and I headed back to the appliance.

We began to drive around to the back, North West side, of the Tower which was not yet alight. We reversed our machine back and drove into WHITCHURCH ROAD and a car was coming towards us, I got out and shouted at the driver, at this point I hadn't realised he was a Station Manager so I was just shouting at him to move his car.

We manoeuvred into WHITCHURCH ROAD and as we cleared the first bend we came nose to nose with another engine that transpired to belong to WEST HAMPSTEAD fire Station who had been driving towards us. There was no way for us to pass and so I told WEST HAMPSTEAD that they had to reverse. The driver of their appliance was under a bit of pressure due to the tight road and the fire blazing in the corner of his eye and so another firefighter jumped into the driver's seat and together we negotiated their engine through the tight turns created by stationery vehicles and closed roads due to large holes which appeared to be for gas works irrelevant to the fire. When we had successfully reached BRAMLEY ROAD FF FAIRBROTHER positioned our machine in front of theirs and I directed them to follow me.

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There is a ramp opposite an entrance to LATIMER ROAD TUBE STATION which descends towards the base of the Tower. WEST HAMPSTEAD plotted up towards the top of the ramp and we positioned our engine lower down close to the playground. We were unable to get our engine any closer to the building due to the size of the playground fenced boundary which restricted the height of our water jet from the appliance however in the grand scheme of things I would not say that this impeded on the efficiency of our response to the fire.

As I got out of the engine and began walking towards the base of the Tower, I noticed sheets of metal falling to the ground alight; it looked like it was raining fire. I could see plastic, thick black Smoke and metal sheeting coming towards me; at the time I had no clue what it was, I just knew it could only be part of the building. Later on through investigations we obviously found out it was cladding and having thought about it, it would have been cladding obviously because you don't get sheet metal on a brick built building. The fact that it was metal on fire was quite worrying and it was like nothing I've ever seen before. The North West side of the Tower was not alight; it was only burning debris when we first got around the back.

WEST HAMPSTEAD had located a water source and plugged in to the hydrant, I asked them to run their pump through ours and from here we ran a monitor off. The monitor is essentially an unmanned hose and so it wouldn't reduce our level of manpower resource. By this point the Station Manager that I had shouted at earlier in his car had followed and joined us to assist in our efforts. Instead of the debris falling straight down it started drifting towards us and so it became quite hazardous. I made the decision to withdraw to a safe distance, we couldn't risk people in this zone.

My plan B was to take a 9-meter ladder off my engine and pitch it against the mezzanine floor of the Academy neighbouring the Tower. The idea was to tie off the jet to the balustrade so that again we wouldn't have to commit any fire fighters to either the hose or the area. This would have allowed us to dampen down the debris at the base of the Tower and prevent the start of smaller ground fires. Quite soon into this plan it became apparent that the quantity of debris dropping down and with it continuing to land away from the Tower, the stationery hose was not going to be effective and so we shut the jet off and started to move away.

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It was at this moment, less than five minutes after that jet went off, that I saw the fire rip through the North façade of the Tower, a moment I will never forget. The air was filled with a sound that I can only liken to a rocket firework and it took no longer than two minutes for the fire to traverse up the building in a smooth diagonal motion falling just short of the top two floors. I have never seen anything like it before, I was absolutely lost for words and I didn't know how to act; all I could think was 'WHY THE HELL HAS IT JUST DONE THAT'. Our side of the Tower wasn't alight when I arrived but within mere minutes the fire had almost consumed the NORTH side frontage of the Tower.

To me, it kind of looked like that there was a gas pipe or something running externally between the brick and the cladding for example that failed and ignited to give that Bunsen burner effect and create that diagonal fire travel. On the outside there were quite a few areas where it was burning furiously which would give us the impression that there was some form of accelerant. I could see blue flame but I couldn't categorically attribute that to the presence of gas.

I was aware that we only had seven firefighters on this side of the Tower and so we withdrew from the academy and took up position at the front of the playground. I knew that we needed to act fast on the WEST side of the Tower to prevent a full wraparound.

I went to the base of the Tower underneath the bridge and could see a door where the other firefighters including my BA wearers had been going in. We jumped into action when the casualties started to emerge; first two I remember coming out were Indian females who were mother and daughter of about 7 years old. I guided the pair up to a blue sheet we had laid on the floor behind our engine. FF FAIRBROTHER was still manning the appliance and so I left them in his care - this became our salvage area and soon became full of the walking wounded. FF FAIRBROTHER was multitasking between pumping the water and giving oxygen to the casualties in the Salvage Area.

After those two females it appeared that all the kids came out first and once they were out the adults followed. The seven of us, myself, West Hampstead's watch and the Station Manager formed a shuttle - taking the casualties from the BA wearers inside and walking or carrying them over to the Salvage area. There was about ten or eleven rescues sat in the salvage area by now and I was then handed a small black girl who was about two years old. As soon as I took her in my arms, the way she looked, I knew she was

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in a bad way and I was doubtful that she was going to recover. I ran with her cradled in my arms up the ramp where I had seen blue lights; I ran straight past Simon (FF FAIRBROTHER) because I knew that she needed immediate treatment and began my search for an ambulance. As I ran up the ramp I started getting hassled by a group of Somali males who had congregated to watch the events unfold; undeterred by their comments I handed the small girl to a Paramedic - I'd willed to see her parents coming up the ramp behind me but there was no one. As I travelled back to the fire ground the Somali males continued their verbal onslaught and so I put in a request for Police Officers to attend and get rid of them which they later did.

As I got back to the base of the Tower the children were still pouring out into the care of the waiting firefighters ready to shuttle them to the salvage area. Some were coming out with helmets on and I felt this was a wonderful idea by the BA wearers inside. The problem we faced was that whilst the casualties came out of the building the debris was still falling and the concerns were of further injury to them, so we took to having a few spotters who would be able to tell anyone coming out when it was clear to do so. In that time, I took four or five children to the salvage area, other firefighters were bringing them over to us and I was struck by how many children we had sat on the floor. Simon had set up the salvage area so that groups of between four and six people were sitting back to back sharing an oxygen cylinder. Most of the casualties that came out that day were walking fine, some were struggling, all of them were in shock. About fifteen minutes after my initial arrival at the West Side the first ambulances began to arrive. They remained at the top of the ramp.

I remember some of the children I took away, there was a couple of four year olds who weren't related who I set down in the salvage area - most memorable was a young boy about [REDACTED] 7 years old. A BA wearer handed him to me and I held him on my hip in the way that he had been held by the BA crew. When he was given to me, I was told "LOOK AFTER HIM, NO, HE NEEDS TO BE LOOKED AFTER"; this is the way that firefighters as adults will speak to other firefighters to mean that the kid needed some special attention because he'd seen something traumatising. As I turned to walk up the ramp from the Tower the kid spoke, he said to me "MY SISTER'S DEAD" in a very matter of fact way which took me by surprise. I don't know what happened to that boy. As firefighters you don't get given any follow up, we don't get to know, that stops us getting closure.

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I also saw two firefighters carrying a black male out of the Tower, he was totally naked and his skin was covered in burns, we know that this man was a fatality.

Of the people who came out of the Tower on the West side I remember most clearly an older gentleman, sixty or seventy years old, who was in quite a bad way. There was a family who came out, a man with his pregnant wife and two young kids. One man who really stood out to me was the guy who came out of the Tower about three hours after we had arrived at the fire ground who was as clean as a whistle; he had on a coat and a rucksack. He'd told me that he'd been in the Tower and there was no other way he could have gotten to where we were without this being true but he looked as though he had just walked through, I remember thinking that it was odd.

About an hour to two into our efforts I noted that the speed at which people were coming out of the Tower had slowed.

Throughout the majority of my time on the West side of the tower, or Sector 2 as it came to be known, I was aware of a family somewhere around the 9th floor on the corner of the North/West side. I knew they were trapped and I could see three or four people waving tea towels out of the window. They must have been waving like that for three hours, I kept looking up to them wondering why no-one had gone to them yet. I remember saying that we needed to get someone up to them, I would repeat the reminder that they were trapped on the radio so that they could be saved. My concern is that I didn't want them or any of the other trapped residents watching from their windows to feel like nothing was being done to save them because I believed that feeling of helplessness would cause people to jump from the high rise.

We had put the 135 ladder up to the metal platform on the West side of the Tower so that the persons trapped on that side and watching from the windows could see that we were making every effort to get to them - I had spoken to a firefighter who had come to our sector in the second wave of resources and he said that someone had jumped on the other side and he had been hit by their leg- we knew we were never going to get people out through the windows but we had a loud hailer and we were telling them to stay put, that we were coming to get them. I asked one of my firefighters to climb the ladder and he reported that all they could see was offices. Although it was set up we made no use of it - it showed work ethic — I had to, to prevent jumpers on the side where I was working and this is how I was going to stop it.

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From the beginning of our arrival at the North West side of the Tower, the Watch Manager from West Hampstead and I were managing the area. This area started being referred to as Sector Two.

In an event like this sectorisation allows others to identify quickly which area you are referring to when speaking about the fire ground. In every situation where sectorisation is used "SECTOR ONE" will be the front of the building, "SECTOR THREE" will refer to the rear and "SECTORS TWO AND FOUR" relate to the right and left of the building respectively. As we had focused our efforts predominantly on the West face of the Tower we became Sector Two.

Sector Two was relatively tucked away from Sector One and required almost a five-minute walk to negotiate to from Sector One. The falling debris meant that the shorter and more direct route going under the archway was obstructed and therefore unusable.

Having witnessed the fire spread on the North side I was concerned that the West face would have eventually gone up in the same way. The North had spread from the bottom left corner and spread upwards diagonally and so we focused our jets as high as we could on the West side to intercept that spread should it happen - although looking back now, I think if it wanted to go up it would have. We wouldn't have been able to prevent it.

We didn't have any unmanned hoses after the attempt on the Mezzanine floor of the academy as proved ineffective in tackling the blaze and was only causing flooding to the Sector. We hadn't been able to get enough height on the engines aerial hose because the playground stopped us getting closer; what we did have was firefighters under the playground equipment like the slides and climbing frames taking cover from the debris as they used a covering jet to stop it from spreading. The jets we had were reaching somewhere around the 6th floor. We had seen the North side burn from the bottom left corner upwards so that was how we'd planned to stop the spread but the West side burned differently, it started a lot higher up. The pattern of burning changed on each face of the Tower. This played to our advantage slightly as it gave us more time to deal with the evacuation of the lower floors - we just continued to move strategically where and when the jets were needed.

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I considered forcing entry, the fire was coming around to the West face now, there needed to be a point where we gained control of the incident. The FRU were trying to force entry into the bottom corner of the West side where there was a ground floor doorway. We didn't get involved in their work instead focussing our attentions on trying to find another door.

By out the third hour after our initial arrival we were operating with a good number of resources. We had a holding area within the ground floor and the Station Manager in there would ask for a certain number of BA wearers over the radio and we would send them in. On a few occasions we had oxygen being taken in from the engines to the casualties inside, we were shuttling to reduce the amount of people in the risk area. My appliance was obliterated for equipment and WEST HAMPSTEAD's was there as well, as we got more firefighters to our sector we also got more appliances with equipment. Any resource we needed, we had it there.

We had spotters on the outside telling the firefighters when it was safe to come out from the Tower and they were also Watching for casualties and developments in the appearance of the fire. I had a sheet of debris fall towards me and luckily someone saw it and pulled me back - there was a lot of this happening, we also had people tripping over or slipping due to the hoses under the calf high water.

The BA wearers on the outside of the Tower were sat on the blue sheeting that had been the salvage area, now cleared of casualties. Once we selected the number of BA wearers requested from the inside we would have them lined up against the wall and ready to go in. A lot of the BA wearers wore twice; in a normal situation this wouldn't have happened, it's not protocol, but this was not a normal incident. Part of my role in running a safe operation in Sector 2 was assessing the BA wearers to ensure they were in the right physical condition before committing them to the fire ground. Most of them, as firefighters are, were eager to go back in again; these firefighters were keen, fit and motivated to get back in there and just do everything they could to help people. So we allowed them to do it.

We had some of the EDBA wearers coming out and they looked a little bit worse for wear; we were having to hold them up and that's how we knew it was hot in there. EDBA have a hard task as they have a lot more time in there under air. They were coming out of the Tower like that an hour before the last casualty was brought out. Because of this I decided to use fresh firefighters.

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We had only heard one firefighter emergency over the radio during our time at Sector 2. I think it was around 02:30 hrs that we heard shouts for a firefighter who could not be accounted for and hadn't answered his radio messages, I remember hearing "HAS ANYONE SEEN FIREFIGHTER HILL?" continuously over the radio. Mike DOWDEN came over to Sector 2 in complete shock looking for FF HILL, there was quite a bit of panic in the fire ground over this. I knew immediately that we would have noticed if FF HILL had come over to our side because we didn't have any BA wearers in Sector 2 at that stage of the efforts so I confirmed that I hadn't seen him. I didn't hear any more about that missing firefighter because I was so task orientated that all the radio traffic just faded into the background. That's strange for us because that's a firefighter's priority, the safety of colleagues.

You felt like, if we do lose only one person here we are lucky. It wasn't until a lot later when we booked out that I found out FF HILL had been found safe.

I do recall hearing numerous radio messages for further firefighters to assist with the movement of a bariatric patient. I had also been using my radio to convey messages about the family that I could still see waving frantically from the 9<sup>th</sup> floor window - It's hard to give exact floor numbers when you're there because our side of the Tower appeared to start lower than the other side, Sector 2 was at the bottom of the ramp and so what I called ground floor might be called lower ground to someone on the other side. It was a strange layout.

For around the first three hours of our efforts we weren't necessarily adhering to usual protocol. At a normal incident we would stand back and assess, commit firefighters to particular tasks and thus form a strategic plan. I think we all came to the realisation once we saw the devastation the fire was causing that we had to get people out rather than taking that time to set up as we would usually do - we prioritised our time to save life than set up the safe system of work - we relied on the firefighters to use their initiative to keep themselves safe and it worked. I'm amazed at how everyone performed bearing in mind we didn't have the normal set up. To all of us, at the start, it seemed more beneficial to rescue people than having the incident ground laid out perfectly.

Within the third hour of our efforts we were able to start getting command and control in place as the number of casualties leaving the Tower reduced to about one an hour. We had a structure, the Watch Managers, a Station Manager and the safety officers all working together to make the environment safe

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and keep the work flowing. It resorted back to a typical incident control wise for us - we had risks nullified.

We had been using the police arrival to our further advantage; the officers stood with shields raised above their heads and created a safe pathway for anyone going in or out of the Tower.

I know that the Station Manager from our Sector disappeared for a while, I'm not sure where he went but effectively in sector 2 there was myself and the Watch manager from WEST HAMPSTEAD running the operation and in a way we didn't want anyone else's involvement in this - not through selfishness but we both felt that if we changed it in any way it may not run as effectively.

At some point the Watch Manger from WEST HAMPSTEAD and I turned to each other and remarked on how amazed we were about how many casualties we had got out of the Tower in the initial stages when we looked at what little resources we actually had at that point. People could get out easier from our side because nothing on the West was alight, at the front they had so much more restriction on the movement of the casualties.

I don't know who was running the other sectors and how they were operating; to me it didn't matter who was running anything except Sector 2. I just thought to myself that if our sector is working then that's a quarter of it running properly. As I later said to the boys on my watch, when I look back, I have no regrets. The Watch Manager from WEST HAMPSTEAD would probably say the same thing, everyone wanted to get everyone out of the Tower but I have no regrets about how I ran things from my side.

I had no idea about time whilst at the incident, so much so that I hadn't even realised the sun had come up until I first looked at the time around 7am. As humans you go to a fire and you're thinking to yourself "it's okay because we're getting relieved soon" or "I'll just nip to the Salvation Army for a drink" but at this incident it didn't even cross my mind, we were just running on adrenaline and had no concept of timing.

In the daylight hours whilst we continued to run the sector with the fresh BA wearers the final casualty emerged, an older Chinese guy.

I didn't move from that sector until maybe 12:00 hrs - 13:00 hrs when I was relieved by WM Helen

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CHRISTMAS from HESTON FIRE STATION. Once I was relieved and had handed over I went back to the Command Unit to wait for the rest of my men and collect our board. There was a Chief Officer there who couldn't praise us more.

We still didn't really have any exposure to what had actually gone on until we go to the top of the ramp because people weren't allowed down the ramp- when we got to the top we saw so many members of the public; around sector one I remember thinking that the people were able to get quite close to the fire ground stood close to the Leisure Centre.

Once we were all together we boarded a minibus to Paddington Fire Station. We couldn't take our machine from the Tower because it was in such a good position, in fact it stayed there for two days after and eventually got condemned so we have a new one now. It was rinsed for equipment anyway so we wouldn't have been able to use it.

When we got to PADDINGTON Fire Station I glazed over a bit, I believe it was around 14:00 hrs to 14:30 hrs. The adrenaline started to wear off and I got myself some food. We had been at the Tower for almost 12 hours. We sat around and did our contemporaneous notes before getting into another minibus that took us back to RICHMOND Fire Station for around half four, five o'clock.

We were due back in at 20:00 hrs and I told the lads that they were obviously off duty and free to go home but that I'd prefer us to all stay together- I've been through a few fatals before and I didn't think it right for them to go home in that state, they needed to unwind and being with the rest of the crew makes it easier to talk about things if they wanted to. We all went off to sleep.

I set my alarm for 20:00 hrs to hand over to the next watch and I left the boys sleeping until around 22:00 hrs telling them that even though we had no engine, we were still on duty. We all got together and had a cup of tea just like we normally would at that time in the shift. We went and bought some food at the Sainsbury's next door and then all went to bed again shortly afterwards. We were woken up by White Watch the following morning who all greeted us and shook our hands.

It took me a long time to recover from the tiredness; running on adrenaline and the sheer physicality of

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the task we faced with the added weight of our personal protective equipment (PPE). The PPE retains the heat and it was a warm night, but I didn't even register how physically demanding the night was until the adrenaline started to wear off.

A few of the boys have been to counselling since, and there are a few more that I keep a watchful eye on. I wish that we could get closure on the small kids we brought out — I really feel that this would help with our state of mind. For what they saw on that night, we know that 71 died and not everyone got out but we don't get a follow up or closure of any sort.

I wasn't aware of the Stay Put Policy being implemented at the scene but it was not the wrong thing to do. Stay Put policy works. There is no point risking more lives going through the fire area- if they stay put they're safe. If a fire happens in another tower block the same advice should be given. The policy did not fail. The building did.

We know if we go to another building, a tower block, protocols wouldn't change because the building was wrong, not the way we dealt with it. You could have demanded everything in terms of fire prevention but it's all reactive; I believe that it could have benefited the situation if everyone was trained in EDBA moving forward but I hope we will never have cause to need that level of EDBA ever again.

If you look at the way that GRENFELL TOWER is laid out, if the playground wasn't there then things would have changed dramatically; although the fire wasn't around the side of the playground for a long time so it didn't hamper any of the casualty rescues on the WEST side. All in all our sector ran really smooth, we do not train for that severity of fire in a residential block. We train for high rise but never anything that big and we don't train for situations that resource heavy.

The Tower wasn't very well sign posted either, when we were waiting for the ambulances if we hadn't had said "LATIMER ROAD STATION" on the request they would have driven straight past us on that ramp. The signage for the access routes wasn't clear enough and as I've already mentioned the floors on each face of the Tower were not aligned and so my first floor may be someone's ground floor on the other side and this can lead to confusion.

In regards to the radios we were using I never experienced any radio traffic issues on Channel 1 as I was so task orientated and so never used it much; it would have been helpful to have a spare set of batteries or

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a charging station on the appliance because the batteries don't last long enough at an incident like that. I honestly look back now, and think you could probably run that incident again in a controlled environment and you wouldn't get it as good as we had it. I'm honestly quite amazed at how well it went.

As I say it all comes down to that initial order we received from Mike DOWDEN when we arrived on scene telling us to go around the back- if he never had said that- if we had not got round to where we did I think things could have been very different. It just so happens that when we went investigating we found that ramp and managed to get ourselves into, what transpired to be, the best possible position.

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