

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: POWER, JAMES

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 9 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: JAMES POWER

Date: 07/11/2017

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

This statement is about attending the Grenfell Tower fire on the 14th June 2017, whilst I was on duty as a Fire-fighter with the LFB (London Fire Brigade). I have worked for the LFB as a Fire-fighter for 25 years. At the start of my service I worked at Wembley Fire Station for 9 years, I then went to Heston (G38) and worked at this multi-appliance station for 16 years. In April of this year, 2017, I moved to Park Royal Fire Station which is designated as G29, because, although due to retire soon, I want to continue fire-fighting. There are more opportunities to fight fire at Park Royal because it is a 'one pump ladder' station. I am currently at Park Royal Fire Station and was based there when the fire happened at Grenfell Tower on the 14th June 2017. I have never been posted to a Fire Safety Unit.

A typical day shift for me in my current role as a Fire-fighter at Park Royal would be to check the equipment at the start of the shift including checking the BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets and checking the condition of the appliance. We would then respond to anything in the diary that was pre-arranged, and respond to calls as they come in. I would usually check the diary on the LFB computer before I did anything else to see if there were any scheduled appointments. These could be fitting smoke alarms or school visits. Other fire stations can also schedule appointments for us so I would also keep an eye out for that. Night shifts can vary, they can involve having lectures or training, on that night, the night of the 13th June 2017 there was nothing planned.

Within this statement I will refer to Phil TURSCI (G38). He was the Watch Manager on the night of the 13th June 2017. He was drafted in from Heston (Red Watch). I will also refer to Tony QUANN and 'Ronnie' BARKER who were both from Ealing Fire Station. I worked alongside them on the night. Also,

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I will speak about ADO Dan KIPLING (Headquarters, Union Street, SE1) and F/F Gary MOORE (G29) who I set up the Main BA Control with. I will refer to Dani COTTON, the LFB Commissioner who I saw a few times throughout the shift.

On the night of the fire I started at 2000hours and was due to finish at 0930hours the following day. I was posted to ride on G291 which is a pump ladder. I was working with F/F's Gary MOORE, Joe WORLEY and Simon GRANT. Within this statement I will refer to various places where I had been whilst deployed on the Grenfell Tower Fire. I will refer to Park Royal Fire Station, which is where I was when my team got the shout to the fire. We travelled along the A40 to get to Grenfell Tower. I will refer to the Corner of Dulford Street and Walmer Road W11, which is where the driver parked our appliance, and Walmer Road W11 specifically as that was where the Command Unit was parked on the night.

I will refer to an entrance at the base of Grenfell Tower, I can't say which entrance this was as I am unfamiliar with the Tower but I can describe it as having a glassed entrance and that it had a grassed area at the front, which I describe as a green. I don't recall the entrance having any signage on it. For the most part of the shout I was based on the BA Main Control which was set up outside the front of the Leisure centre. I was based at the front of the Leisure Centre, on the grassed area. At the end of the shift I attended Paddington Fire Station, along with my colleagues to write notes about the Grenfell incident. Before the call out on the 14th June 2017 I had never heard of Grenfell Tower. I had never been there before. Grenfell Tower was not on any of the grounds where I had worked, so I would not have come across it. There are no similar blocks to Grenfell Tower on Park Royals ground. My experience of high rise buildings is that most of them have one stair well. A similar high rise that on my group that I can think of is Amundsen House. I was involved in a visual inspection there. We looked at the water inlets, hydrants, smoke alarms and where we could locate appliances outside. I have also been to another high rise building in Wembley. It is of a similar height but I cannot remember the name of it. When we were there we looked at the lifts, stair wells, flats, and the hard wired 240 volt fire alarms. It had a nursery and a concierge. This familiarisation also involved understanding where best to park the appliances for the drivers. I have been involved in familiarisation training in Drill towers as part of LFB training.

Familiarisation visits would involve becoming familiar with water sources, understanding best parking for the appliances, accessing doors, consideration of any obstructions, locations of dry risers, estimating hose length requirements and having general walk arounds of the building. In the drills we would also set up and move the equipment that we had. The training would involve several fire engines being at the drill.

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On each occasion the Fire-fighters would be given different tasks to perform. The familiarisation drills as described above were probably done a couple of times a year.

A Fire-fighters high-rise training involves amongst other things knowing where the water supply is, what equipment to carry into the building and establishing a 'Bridgehead', which would usually be two floors below the fire. We would learn about entry control systems and report control points. We also learnt about tallies, which are handed into the control point. These record onto a computerised board how much air is left in the BA, and shows how hard someone is working. It involves quite a lot of manual labour. The priority is looking after the safety of yourself, and colleagues, preservation of life, then protecting property, then to extinguish fire. In terms of the last training drill for a high rise building, I haven't done any since joining Park Royal, probably the last time I did this training was 2016 at Wembley Fire Station. We use the 'Concrete Tower' at Wembley Fire Station, sometimes it's better than using real towers as we don't want to panic the public, even more so now, and practically it's a bit difficult when people are living in the towers. We would use the 'Concrete Tower' for drills something like twice a year as well. I can't remember the last time I did a drill in the tower, [REDACTED] this so I might have missed out on one.

In terms of my training, I am considered to be a competent Fire fighter. I personally haven't dealt with high rise fires a lot. I have mostly attended simple fires, not difficult ones. I vaguely remember one in Heston, very early on in my career. It was a flat in Brentford when a guy had started a BBQ on his balcony, but there was no threat to life. I am aware that there are firefighting plans for big buildings, but I am unaware of any plans for Grenfell Tower as this isn't on my ground. I am aware of plans for Wembley Stadium, and am also aware of plans for Twickenham rugby ground. Other than that, I am aware of the generic procedures, which would include forming a bridgehead, entry control, equipment being taken up, water supply, and parking appliances. There probably are different plans for when things are not going right, but Officers are paid to do this, not me.

At the end of the shift on the 14th June, once I had been relieved from Grenfell Tower, me and my colleagues went to Paddington Fire Station, where I made notes of my tasks on the night, I produce these as my exhibit, JPP/1. (Notes made at Paddington Fire Station day of fire). It's now difficult to remember in detail what happened on the night of the fire. I didn't know then that I would need to recall this five months later so it's a bit difficult.

On the 13th June 2017, at 2000hrs and on arrival at work, I would have checked the equipment, spoken to the previous watch, replaced any equipment if needed, had a cup of tea, checked the computers for

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emails, this would be an average night. I remember there were no lectures that night, I remember there was another shout out prior to the Grenfell Tower call but I cannot remember anything about that call at all. When I got back from that shout I went to bed and rested. I had not been to sleep when we then got the shout to Grenfell Tower which was around 0115 hours. We got onto the appliance, I initially thought I was sitting behind the driver, but I have been reminded that I was sitting in the middle. The OIC at the time was Phil TURSCI, and the driver was Gary MOORE. All I knew is the location of the fire from the slip and that it was a "20 pump" fire. We proceeded there. I didn't see the "call slip" myself or know any other information about the fire. On the way there I did hear radio messages but nothing specific and I didn't realise how big it was going to be. I have been to 20 pump fires before but not in a high rise tower block.

As we travelled along the A40 someone on the appliance was looking at a map to find out where we should go. I said, "Don't bother, look over there!" I could clearly see a tower on fire. I don't remember who it was looking at the map, it certainly wasn't me. I could see the actual fire on the tower as we were driving toward it. The Watch Manager swore. I could see it was a pretty big fire, more than I have ever seen. It was unusual. I have never seen anything like it before. I have seen warehouse fires but nothing as big as this. The fire extended up a number of floors on one side of the building, this was visible from the A40, I saw the fire, but I am not sure about any smoke because it was night time. There were flames on one side of the building. I cannot say whether the fire was on more than one side. It was an overwhelming fire. The side that was on fire was the side directly in front of us as we were approaching from the A40. It took about 15 minutes to get there, which meant we arrived around 0130hours.

When we were almost there, we turned off the A40, but we went down a dead end road. We reversed out and got back on the right road. I don't know exactly where this was but it was near to the fire and where we eventually parked. On reflection it wasn't a dead end, it was a road closed due to road works however I remember the road was caged off. I don't recall this taking too long to rectify. We got onto the road where we thought we needed to be, saw some other appliances that were parked up and parked behind them. I don't know the name of the road where we parked but from looking at Google Maps I am able to say I think the driver parked the engine on the corner of Dulford Street and Walmer Road, W11.

We got off the engine, took out our roll call board and walked down to the Command Unit which was a bit further down on Walmer Road, W11. We handed it in and checked in.

When I was at the Command Unit I was initially tasked to assist with getting the 'arials' (arial platform unit) to work. This means rolling out a hose to the hydrant, connecting one end to the machine, there were

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a number of us doing that which I remember including F/F BARKER & QUANN from Ealing (G.25). It would normally take me a few seconds to open a hydrant but this one was difficult. At first I thought it was damaged but on reflection it might be the hydrant key/bar that was bent and not the hydrant itself. I think it took me no more than two minutes to get it open. I later went to a different engine, again I am not sure where it was but closer to the Tower, and I remember debris coming down on us. I can't tell you what time it was. At that point I didn't know where the rest of my crew were. I recall hearing A/DO Kipling radio F/F Gary MOORE to go to the Command Unit on Walmer Road. I also made my way over there but when I got there he had gone Fire-fighter MOORE wasn't there. I was then told to report to an Officer at the base of the Tower, where I was tasked to set up the BA Main Control for a major incident. When I got to the base of the tower, as before, I recall seeing debris falling from above. I could hear stuff falling and hitting the roof of the lobby. There was also lighter material floating down, some of it was alight, some of it not. It was chaotic at the base of the tower, there was a lot going on, a lot more compared to anything I have come across in my service. I went into the lobby, and was in there for a short amount of time, about 1 minute but it was very noisy, Fire-fighters were shouting at each other. Whilst in the lobby, I saw a casualty being carried out by 4 Fire-fighters, one on each arm and one on each leg. I didn't see any police in the lobby at that time, but later on I saw police carrying riot shields. I cannot remember if there was any smoke in the lobby area nor do I remember seeing any fire. I have been asked if I was wearing anybody worn cameras, I wasn't. When I was in the lobby area I didn't open any doors or go anywhere other than in the main lobby area. I wasn't aware of any lifts or sprinklers in the lobby. It had a glass entrance. There were stairs leading to a mezzanine floor. I don't recall seeing any lifts, sprinklers or any signage on the front. The entrance I went into had an area of grass outside that I would describe as a "green". I describe this area as having a grassed area at the front. When I was in the lobby I didn't open any doors or go anywhere other than the lobby area.

I was asked by someone to help move the appliance. I went out to the street, and disconnect the appliance hose so it could be moved. We did this because as it was too close to the Tower. During the incident, at no point did I put on BA equipment. I didn't go into the Tower apart from the lobby area where I only went up one flight of stairs to get to the mezzanine floor. Someone made the decision to move the BA Main Control from outside the lobby. I don't know who made that decision, but I think it was because it was too dangerous to be so close to the tower. I am aware that F/F Gary MOORE was called over the radio to go to the Main Control, which was outside the front of the Leisure Centre. Here my role was to liaise with Fire-fighters that had been in the Tower, I made sure they had refreshments, new equipment, it

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was an ongoing task. I did this from when I got there to when I left, which was around midday on the 14th June 2017.

Whilst at the BA Main Control I was dealing with cylinders, EDBA's (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) that had been exhausted, they were highly desirable on that night. I was initially reporting back to Gary MOORE about the availability of equipment, either by radioing him, or running over to him and telling him in person. This became difficult to record because of the overwhelming tasks as other equipment was arriving. BA wearers were coming to the Main Control Point, I was supplying them with water to drink, and also getting BA sets ready for use. I took it upon myself to give personal advice to Fire-fighters, who had been inside the Tower, using the benefit of my experience, similar to, "Don't go back until you are ready".

There was no problem with any lack of equipment to supply to the Fire-fighters, it was being shipped in by the OSUs (Operation Support Units) from all over the LFB district. My role was to make sure the equipment was available for use, and to help Fire-fighters to take breathing apparatus off, and prepare a new sets for them. I remember at one point I saw a Police Officer kick in the glass at the front of a drinks machine in the Leisure Centre so that the Fire-fighters could have a drink. I also remember at one point while at the BA Main Control, a police Officer said "You haven't got people in there have you?" I said "Yes" the Police Officer said "Holy fuck". I can't remember exactly when this was in the evening. In order to set up an area for fire-fighters to have a rest, I got some sheeting and put it on the grass area outside of the Leisure Centre, I put first aid kits on the corners of the sheet to keep it down. This also made the kits accessible if they were needed. Eventually there were Fire- fighters sitting everywhere, because the area just wasn't big enough. As far as I was aware at the time, this was the only BA Main Control.

In terms of problems I experienced on the BA Main Control, at one point there were twenty EDBA's delivered, they use "telemetry" that require batteries to broadcast information. When we fitted the batteries I discovered they were flat, which made the BA kits unusable. I reported this and some more batteries were shipped in. This wasn't a major problem, there were still enough Fire-fighters with equipment to go into the Tower and to continue with their work. This didn't create a situation where fire-fighting flow was affected. New batteries were eventually delivered, I don't know where the batteries were delivered from, and it didn't seem to take a very long time for them to be re-delivered.

Another issue was cylinder covers. These are designed to prevent cable entanglement whilst the BA is being worn. They have been introduced within the last couple of years to the LFB. Whilst on the BA

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Main Control some cylinder covers went missing, some Fire-fighters tried to go into the Tower and had BA sets on without the cylinder covers. I had to stop them using the BA's, as this is against LFB regulations. I don't think this affected the flow of the firefighting. At some point I heard on the radio that they were short of EDBA wearers, I heard a request for EDBA qualified wearers to go to the main BA Control. These are Fire-fighters who are trained to use the Extended Durable Breathing Apparatus. I wasn't involved in this conversation or any actions that might have come from it.

During the shout I left the BA Main Control and returned more than once. I recall about three or four times. I went to the fire appliances on Walmer Road to get FIB's (Forward Information Boards), first aid kits, and other equipment to bring back to the BA Main Control. I also left to have toilet breaks where I used the facilities in the Leisure Centre. At one point when I [was] walking from the BA Main Control to an appliance I crossed a group of people, one lady spoke to me and said her sister, her sister's husband and three children were in the Tower. This woman was a Muslim lady in her late 30's, she was wearing a veil but I could see her face, there were other people around her, she had her phone in her hand, she spoke good English but I don't remember whether she had an accent. She tried to give me her phone, I didn't take it, I was aware of my task and so I reported it the formal way and walked to the Command Centre, and they said they were already aware of it. Later on, again when I was walking from the BA Main Control to an appliance a gentleman in his 20's spoke to me. I can't say anything else about his description, not even the colour of his skin. He said that his father who was wheelchair bound was in the Tower, I reported this to the Command Centre, and again they were already aware of it. Neither the woman, nor the gentleman who spoke to me gave me any name or details although I vaguely remember one of them mentioning the 18th floor but I am not 100% about this.

Whilst I was at the BA Main Control it was never left unstaffed at any point. I made sure that the equipment was properly replenished. I have been shown exhibit LJH/23, (ARC form for James Power Fire Fighter) and asked about a comment in the "which other locations?" section in relation to my experiences on that night. I didn't carry a hose to the 12/13th floor. I stayed working on the BA Main Control until I was relieved at noon but not 100% sure of the exact time. Usually Fire-fighters are released when other pumps arrive, but this was not the case at this shout. I didn't want to leave the scene because this fire was something different, I had never been involved in anything like it before. There was no option to stay. When we were relieved from the incident, I went to the appliance with my crew to Paddington Fire Station where there was counselling available, I spoke to a lady counsellor for about ten

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minutes and then I made some notes which I produced as exhibit JPP/1 .(Notes made at Paddington Fire Station day of the fire)

I became aware of the seriousness of what had happened by looking at picture on my phone. There were pictures showing Fire-fighters resting at the back of the building, but at the time I didn't know that that was the case. During the time I was there, I saw three dead casualties in the Leisure Centre. They were on the floor but were covered up. I saw them when I went on a toilet break. I didn't really have much interaction with the general public, I was aware that members of the public were there, and were becoming agitated. Police moved them away, but no point did they affect me and my work.

I have been asked if I saw any tapes and cordons in place. There may have been near the casualty handling area but I can't remember now. As well as the BA Main Control that I was working at, I think there were also two BA entry controls. One was at the lobby of the Tower, but I am not sure where the other one was, it might have been on the third floor, but again I cannot be certain. From my position at the BA Main Control I could see something like the top seven or eight floors of the Tower, trees were blocking the rest of the building. I have been asked if there were any unusual smells when I went into the Tower, there was nothing that sticks in my mind. Usually I would be able to judge what type of fire it was by the smell of the smoke, I can tell the different between wood fire smoke, plastic, electrical, or food. During the shift I remember seeing the Chief Officer Dani COTTON a couple of times, I said "HELLO" to her a few times. I saw her once when I was returning a roll call board at the Main Command area, and once in the Leisure Centre when she was talking to members of the public. I have been asked what I know about the "Stay put Policy". I am aware that it is all about 'Fire Survival Guidance,' if someone is potentially trapped by fire. The policy says the Operator will keep talking to them on the telephone line when they call 999 emergency service. I am aware of it, even more so now. I wasn't aware that the "Stay put Policy" changed at any point during the incident. If the policy changed, it would have probably been the Incident Commander, but, as I said I wasn't aware of this. This was a dynamic incident. It had never happened before. I have never know a situation where the "Stay put Policy" had changed.

I was aware there could have been quite a lot of casualties from the fire because of the circumstances. It was late at night people were at home, it was warm, I could see windows were open. At the time I didn't know the cause of the fire. I didn't keep any paper work from the night. I started a cylinder count by keeping a tally by drawing four vertical lines and then crossing them through diagonally to make the count of five. I wrote it down early on, the tally was at 48 cylinders, then it went to 60. I was reporting to

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Gary MOORE on the radio, but this didn't last as there was too much else going on. I don't have that piece of paper that I first started the tally on.

I've been asked about the Command Structure. On the night, the Command Structure would have changed. Initially there was a Watch Manager with a couple of Crew Managers and a team of Firefighters. It was a dynamic incident so generally, as the fire grew, the Borough Commander would be in charge, then the Divisional Commander, then the Assistant Commissioner, then the Commissioner. In this case I do not know specific name of the people in these roles, but I do know who the Commissioner is.

In relation to the window design it didn't seem unusual to me, although I did see one frame on fire. I don't remember where on the building. There was debris falling off the building bigger and smaller but at the time I didn't know what it was. I later found out that it was the cladding. I could tell the fire had gone into the building. I was told on the night that the building had been refurbished about two years ago, but I didn't know this before I arrived. Whilst on the Main Control Point was talking to Fire-fighters that had been in the Tower, I specifically remember Vince from Heston Red Watch, saying he had been to the 20th floor and he assisted in getting people out of the building, I thought that was awesome that he got up that high. The conversation was very brief. I can't recall Vince's surname.

From when I first arrived I saw the flames were coming up from the front and across to the left. Later on it looked like the whole of the upper floor was on fire, it went from right to left. I have been asked about my thoughts on what could have been done better at the incident. In my opinion the LFB communication equipment isn't fit for purpose. I have thought this for years, they are not well designed for the purpose we use them for. For years I have thought the communications were inadequate and needed to be replaced. I am aware of plans for this to happen but we don't have the funding. There is better equipment out there that we could be using, I just think the BA communications were a complete failure. This is because radio traffic was limited, I didn't hear much over the radio over the incident, which meant the Fire-fighters inside the building were pretty much in the dark. With regards to the BA communications the radios are similar to our hand held ones. We have a "bone microphone" and an ear piece, we press a switch to talk through the microphone, but it's awkward and difficult to use when carrying a hose or casualties. LFB appliances couldn't reach the top of the Tower, bigger booms would need a bigger floor base, but with the small streets of London that would be very to get round some the small streets in London. LFB staff should all be trained to use EDBA's. They are the same as BA's but just have a longer duration time. At the moment only Fire Rescue Units are trained to use them. If all Fire-fighters were trained and qualified they could have taken over from other EDBA wearers. However, I don't believe this

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would have changed the outcome on the night of the Grenfell Fire. I am aware other countries use “smoke bombs” to put fires out. Some of our equipment is out of date. We have the same fabricated metal tool boxes now that were used when I joined 25 years ago. You can get plastic ones now that are much lighter. I was not injured at the incident nor did I see any other colleagues get injured. I have not been referred to my GP or the NHS for medical reasons resulting from the incident. My next shift was on the 14th June 2017 starting at 2000hours [REDACTED] This didn't give me the opportunity for me to talk to my colleagues about what had happened.

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