

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: DEAN, JOE

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 4 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: J DEAN

Date: 20/12/2017

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

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This statement relates to the Grenfell Tower fire that occurred during the early hours of the morning of Wednesday 14 June 2017.

I am the above named person and I am a Firefighter employed by London Fire Brigade. I live at an address known to Police. I have been a firefighter since January 2015. I am currently attached to Red Watch at Brixton Fire Station, 84 Gresham Road, SW9 7NP. The code for Brixton Fire Station is H24.

On Tuesday 13 June 2017 I paraded for duty at 2000 hours at Brixton Fire Station for the night shift. At Brixton Fire Station there were two appliances posted that night, call sign H241, which is a Ladder Pump Appliance and call sign H242, which is a Pump Appliance. At role call I was assigned as driver of call sign H242. Also assigned to H242 was Crew Manager Marcus JOHNSON, Firefighter WOOD, Firefighter KNIGHT and Firefighter LAWRENCE. I believe that H241 had a full crew too, consisting of Watch Manager STEPHENS, Firefighter WHITING, Firefighter HOLMES-LEWIS, Firefighter SONSON and Firefighter KALIRAI. The evening started as normal, after role call we all conducted an inventory check where all equipment was tested.

I cannot remember if we had any calls that evening prior to 0200 hours on 14 June 2017 when the bell sounded for H242 to mobilise. I was in the TV room watching television when the bell sounded, as I was the driver I made my way to the watch room to get the address details of the incident we were required to attend. I noted the address was Grenfell Tower in W11 and was surprised to hear the call was to a 40

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pump fire. The term 40 pump fire refers to the amount of appliances required to attend an incident. At that point I had been a Firefighter for two and half years and I had never seen a call to such a large scale incident, I knew that a 40 pump fire was a serious incident. I did not have time to think about what we could be attending, I needed to find out where we were going. W11 is not an area of London that is covered by Brixton Fire Station, I do not know the area. I have never been to Grenfell Tower before and I did not know of the building by name before this incident. I used my mobile phone to find where the Grenfell Tower was and started to look at the route I was going to take to familiarise myself. Firefighter KNIGHT who was going to be sitting in the rear of my appliance passed me and told me he knew the way. I made my way to the appliance and got in the driver's seat.

We exited the Fire Station and I turned left onto Gresham Road. We travelled on blues and twos. At the junction with Brixton Road I headed straight across onto Stockwell Road heading North. At the end of Stockwell Road I turned onto South Lambeth Road, reaching Vauxhall I drove across Vauxhall Bridge. I cannot remember the route from this point onwards. Firefighter KNIGHT was directing me. Initially I was following H241 however at some point we took a different turning to them. On route I could hear messages being transmitted over the Main Scheme Radio in the appliance regarding the fire. As we approached the RVP I remember there being a road closure in place, this was due to road works, I cannot remember the exact road name where these roadworks were. I could see that another LFB appliance had also reached the road closure in front of us and was turning round in front. Instead of turning around and following that appliance, Firefighter KNIGHT directed me another route. I knew we were close to the tower, I could smell smoke in the air. I followed Firefighter KNIGHT'S directions and we stopped on Silchester Road which is North of Grenfell Tower, I cannot remember the road names we travelled down to get there. Silchester Road was not the nominated RVP for this incident, I cannot remember now where the RVP was, but Silchester Road was a good position for us to stop our appliance as it was clear. It was here that I first saw the tower itself. I could see flames on the external of the building. The flames were to the very top on the corner of the North and East sides of the building. My priority at this point was to park the appliance in a suitable position. Once we stopped Crew Manager JOHNSON told us all to put Breathing Equipment (BA) on and he went to see what we were required to do, taking the role board towards a Command Unit. As we were riding with a full set of firefighters, being the driver I initially was not assigned a BA set, however I took possession of Crew Manager JOHNSON'S set and put it on. The BA sets are not personal issue so swapping sets is not an issue. I performed a Fireground A set test, which

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is a check to ensure the BA set is working correctly and it was. Crew Manager JOHNSON would have tested the equipment himself however I still performed this test.

I had a hand held radio and it was on channel 1. The radio traffic was busy. Once all of us had our BA sets on we made our way to join a queue of firefighters that were held on the South East side of the tower. As we walked towards the queue I could see firefighters giving first aid to casualties that were on a grass area nearby. I passed Crew Manager JOHNSON on the way and handed him the keys to our appliance, informing him I was wearing the BA set initially assigned to him. I joined the queue, there were a lot of firefighters held here all in BA sets. There was debris falling from the building. I could not tell exactly what it was, possibly cladding and glass. I waited in the queue for approximately 30 minutes before I was directed into the building.

It was approximately 0300 hours, I was inside the building on the ground floor. I was held here with lots of other firefighters. We were all waiting to be committed to the fire. I could see casualties being assisted out of the building by other firefighters. A young male child was walking through the bridgehead area escorted by other firefighters. The child was approximately 7-8 years old and was middle eastern in appearance. The child said out loud that his brother had just died. The child said this in such a matter of fact way I was shocked. As there were so many of us in this area it was becoming crowded. We were moved out of the ground floor of the tower to a grass area to the West of the Tower. To reach this area we were escorted from the building by Police Officers who had long riot shields. The shields were held above our head to protect us from falling debris. The Police Officer would escort us out in teams of two, one of us would stand in front, one behind the Police Officer. Once I reached the West grass area I waited there for about an hour.

It was starting to get light, from my position West grass area I could see there was a lot of smoke coming from the building. It was thick dark smoke. I could see flames at the top of the building. I could see torches flashing and white towels waving in the windows quite high up. Smoke was taking over these floors. They must have been around floors 15, 16 and 17. After a while it appeared that the smoke had overcome these people, the torches were no longer flashing and they were no longer waving the towels. It was very sad. Firefighters were being called up from under the raised walkway towards the building. I got separated from the other firefighters from my appliance. I was escorted into the building by Police Officers with shields. The debris was still falling at a regular rate. I teamed up with Firefighter Chris PEREZ who had also lost contact with the firefighters from his appliance. Firefighter PEREZ is from

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either Richmond or Twickenham. Firefighter PEREZ had a Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC). We made our way to the bridgehead which was now on the ground floor, it had previously been higher up in the building. We waited about 45 minutes to be committed to the fire.

We reached Entry Control. Officer Pat GOLDBOURNE was in charge of the Entry Control Point. He verbally briefed us to go to the 5th floor and fight fire. We were also given the task of establishing a safe route of access to the floor. Officer GOLDBOURNE told us that there was equipment already on the floor. We handed in our tallies. The tally records the oxygen cylinder number and monitors its pressure electronically. The tally also records the time we are committed to the fire. Both Firefighter PEREZ and I placed our face masks on over our faces and entered the building via the main staircase. I was wearing an ear piece in order to hear the radio, we switched our radio to channel 6. As we reached the staircase I saw a causality walking out assisted by firefighters. The staircase was extremely narrow but clear of any major obstructions, there was a hose on the staircase. We climbed up the stairs in single file. Smoke appeared on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, the stairwell became smoke logged. I couldn't see any numbers on the staircase indicating what floor we were on so I kept count. I noticed a lot of water was on the staircase tumbling down. As we climbed the staircase the smoke intensity increased as we got higher. I could not hear any alarms sounding as we climbed the stairs. We reached the 5th floor.

The door to the lobby area from the staircase was open. We walked through. I tried to use my radio to inform the ECO that we had arrived on the 5th floor however the radio was not working. The lobby was filled with smoke. On the floor, at the entrance to the lobby area was a hose with a branch attached. The hose was set into the dry riser. Although there was a lot of smoke I was able to see, doors to the flats were open and I could see right into the flats, sunlight was shining through the broken windows. Working together Firefighter PEREZ and I started to search the flats, working left to right so to keep our search systematic. We communicated by talking to each other as we were always close. As we entered the first flat on the left the door was open. If on a search of a building a firefighter opens a door, it is normally left open so to show others that follow that someone has been in through that door. Searching inside the first flat we found a small fire and using the hose we extinguished it. The pressure of the water coming from the riser was good. We moved from room to room and then onto the next flat. We came across small fires and we extinguished them. I again tried to use my radio to communicate the situation to command however it was still not working, all I could hear was a piercing high pitched noise. We did not find any casualties. The temperature inside the building was hot, however I was able to deal with the heat. Once

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all the flats on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor were searched and all fires extinguished we returned into the lobby area. We checked periodically to ensure that no new fires had started in the areas we had been, they hadn't. We then returned to the staircase entrance/exit. I checked my oxygen pressure gauge monitor and it told me that I was nearly out of air in my BA set. We were committed to the fire for approximately 30 minutes. We left the hose and branch on the floor near the staircase entrance/exit and made our way back down the staircase. As we walked down the staircase I could hear lots of noise, I could hear screams coming from higher up the building. It was very frustrating to hear these screams. As we reached the bridgehead we reported back to ECO Pat GOLDBOURNE. We told him that we had extinguished the fires that we had come across and that we did not find any casualties. We received our tallies and exited the building, escorted back out of the building by Police Officers with shields.

We reached the West grass area and I put my BA set down. I was hot and so I went to get a drink, the Salvation Army were supplying drinks close by. I grabbed a chocolate bar too. I looked up at the building, the fire had got worse since I had been inside. There was a lot of smoke and the fire appeared to have spread. I met up with Firefighter LAWRENCE and Firefighter WOOD from Brixton. We exchanged stories about our experience inside the building. I walked back to the West grass area. I noticed an appliance pump parked nearby, I cannot remember the pumps call sign. I went over and spoke with a Firefighter asking him if there were any spare oxygen cylinders on the appliance. As there was a spare cylinder, I took it and exchanged my used one. I tested my new set and it was working. I joined the queue of firefighters waiting to be called forward to enter the building. I felt fine. I waited in this queue for approximately 1 hour, it was now daylight. I again was split from my colleagues from Brixton as I entered the ground floor of the building. While waiting I saw an oriental male, approximately 50-60 years old, being assisted out of the building by firefighters. He was being carried out. I later saw this male on the news, I think he was rescued from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. Entry to the building was through an open tall window, the window was from the floor to ceiling, someone had smashed the glass leaving just the frame. The bridgehead was on the ground floor. I waited here for approximately 1 hour.

I reached Officer Pat GOLDBOURNE. I was partnered up with another Firefighter, I do not know his name or where he is stationed. Officer GOLDBOURNE briefed us to conduct search and rescue on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors. I was told not to go above the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. I found an enforcer and a hand axe. Together my BA partner and I handed in our tallies and were committed to the fire. We climbed the narrow staircase. As we climbed higher in the building the smoke intensified. When we reached the 7<sup>th</sup> floor we found a

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hose laying by the staircase. The hose did not have a branch fitted to the end. We started to search the floor by the right hand wall. I cannot remember any specific door numbers. If when searching the floor a door was closed, we used our breaking in equipment to break open the door. On each closed door we performed the entry procedure, checking for heat before opening. Entering each flat, we systematically searched each room looking for any casualties. In one flat there was a fire, using the hose that was connected to the riser we managed to extinguish it even though the hose did not have a branch. In another room I could see that a gas pipe was on fire. We tried to extinguish it however we could not as the gas kept pouring out and catching light. We were unable to isolate the gas, the pipes had melted. I tried to use the radio to update control on the situation however, once again it was not working. We searched the entire floor, this took approximately 15 minutes. We were slowed by the closed doors that needed breaking through. We did not find any casualties. With the 7<sup>th</sup> floor clear, we returned to the staircase and climbed one level to floor 8. There was a lot of smoke filling the staircase.

Reaching the 8<sup>th</sup> floor we entered through the door leading to the lobby area. We found that there was another BA Crew working on the floor. Checking that they did not need any help, we left the 8<sup>th</sup> floor without searching. I tried to use my radio again to update control. The radio was working intermittently. I was unsure if my message got through. We decided to climb one more level, we returned to the staircase and climbed one more level to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. We again came across another BA Crew already searching this floor. We checked with them if they needed help. As they didn't we returned to the staircase. I did not see either of the crews on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> floor with casualties.

Both my BA partner and I decided to climb to the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. Using the staircase we climbed to the next level. As we reached the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, we became aware of an object on the floor stopping us from gaining entry into the lobby. Looking closely through the heavy thick smoke I realised it was a body. It was a large body that was lying between the staircase and the lobby. I could not tell if the body was a male or a female. I think it was a male due to the size. I touched the body and it was firm. Directing my torch onto the body I could tell that this person was deceased. It appeared as if the body had been burnt, I describe it as if the temperature had steamed the skin off. I stepped over the body into the lobby area and saw that another BA crew were working on the floor. I checked the oxygen pressure left in my cylinder and realised that I was nearly out. I told my BA partner that we needed to leave. We passed the body, we could not have moved the body in the conditions with the time we had remaining. We made our way back down the staircase. As we descended the smoke eased. On the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, we found the bridgehead, it had

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moved up while we were working in the building. I spoke to the ECO, telling him that we searched the 7th floor and met other BA Crews on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors. I told the ECO about the deceased body on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. I exited the building. As I exited the building I made my way to the East grass area and I saw an Ariel Appliance with a long ladder deployed. The appliance was from Leatherhead, Surrey Fire Brigade. I made my way to the grass area on the East side of the building and rested by a wall. I met most of my crew from Brixton there.

After resting I made my way towards the Leisure Centre, I had heard that there were spare cylinders there. As I started to walk there I spoke with Crew Manager JOHNSON, I was told to take my BA set off as we were being stood down from the fire. We waited by the East side of the building to be dismissed from the scene for about 45 minutes. While waiting I watched the building, it was still smoking and smouldering. There were lots of firefighters still working on the building. I kept hearing conflicting stories about what our orders were going to be, however we were told to go to Paddington Fire Station. As a group, both H241 and H242 returned to our Brixton appliances. I got into the driver's seat of H242 and once everyone was on board drove to Paddington Fire Station. I cannot remember what time this was. At Paddington Fire Station we made notes about the incident. Once everyone had completed their notes, I drove H242 back to Brixton Fire Station. I finished duty at 1630 hours. I had a few hours off, I went to a family member's house who lives close to Brixton to rest before returning for night duty at 2000 hours.

I have recently completed my Firefighter training and have been signed off as competent. At the time of the fire, I had been a firefighter for two and a half years and was in development, completing my training shortly after. As part of the training and as recent as one month before the Grenfell Tower fire, I delivered lectures on high rise building fires. I am familiar with the procedures. Often the entire crew at Brixton take part in training drills and that includes high rise firefighting. Part of our training includes inputs on materials that can act as accelerants. I had attended three high rise fires before the Grenfell Tower fire. In all of those occasions the fire was extinguished successfully without casualties. I am aware of the LFB stay put policy. The policy advice to stay in a high rise fire is given as fire doors should prevent a fire spreading rapidly, allowing the fire brigade the time to extinguish it and conduct any rescue needed.

In conclusion there are a few factors that I think could have been done better. I am aware that generic Near Miss form was submitted due to the amount of firefighters that were held in the bridgehead on my first entry. This area was too crowded and smokey. In my opinion the staircase for a building of that size

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was too narrow. The gas supply for the entire building needed to be turned off by the relevant gas company quicker than it was.

I exhibit the following two documents,

Exhibit JOD/1 — Notes Made After Incident — Sealed with MPSZ13114897.

Exhibit JOD/2 — Map of Grenfell Tower Area — Sealed with MPSZ13114898

I have marked on the map the following:

Marked as A on the Map is where I parked the appliance.

Marked as B on the Map is where the firefighters were giving first aid to casualties.

Marked as C on the Map is the entry point to the building through the smash tall window.

Marked as D on the Map is the Ariel Appliance from Leatherhead.

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