

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: SIMPSON, JOHN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 10 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 SIMPSON

Date: 30/11/2017

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

I have been asked to give my account of events on the 14th June 2017, which was the night of the Grenfell Tower fire. I have been spoken to by DC Gary WILLIAMS and DC Lou JONES by way of an audio interview. The transcript of that interview is contained within this statement. During my interview I referred to two sets of notes. The first was a typed set, which unfortunately didn't save everything, these I produce as exhibit reference JES/1. The second set of notes I handwrote subsequently due to the first ones not saving. These I produce as exhibit reference JES/2. Both sets have been handed to DC Lou JONES.

I have 29 years' service within the London Fire Brigade. The make-up of which is 15 years on the front line riding fire engines, as junior officer, 5 years as a station manager all of which is station based. This was at Southwark and Old Kent Road. I was then promoted to Group Manager where I went to Headquarters at Union Street in community safety policy. I have been the Borough Commander at Dowgate, City of London, since January 2012. I am also Command CBRN Rapid Response Team (RRT) and I am an Operation Review Team officer, Hazmat officer, MTA Mass Casualty Retrieval Officer.

The night of the Grenfell Tower fire I was off duty. I normally keep my pager on 24/7 but something had happened at home and both my wife and I were really knackered, so unusually I turned my pager off. That's the first time I had done it for months. Had I had it on, I would have gone to the incident a lot earlier. As it was, the first I was aware of the incident was at 6am on the 14th June 2017 when my wife said she had heard on the TV that there had been a 40 pump fire that night. I rang in to speak to the two Operation Review Team (ORT) officers', who were on duty that night. I called the first one at 0609hrs

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who was Group Manager (GM) Matt COOK with no luck. I rang the second one at 0610hrs Station Manager (SM) Mick MULHOLLAND. After a short discussion, it was agreed that GM COOK and SM MULHOLLAND required immediate relief because they had been there pretty much since the start of incident. I made contact with another ORT officer who was also off duty to discuss whether to go together or not. He referred me to GM Andy CANE who was due to be the duty ORT that period starting at 8 o'clock. I spoke to him at 0614hrs. We had a short discussion and agreed he would contact control to book us both onto the incident. At 0637hrs I was mobilised. I stayed at the incident until 7pm so 13 hours on duty.

My role as an ORT officer is to audit performance v's policy. I audit what people do, their management of the incident or on the actual operational process. Basically I am a critical friend to the management of incident. It is not a role to get involved in the fire fighting or lugging hoses or that kind of stuff. I took up both the roles of operations and command during that day. One time I was sitting with incident commander and another time I was going out doing operation reviews as part of the job.

I arrived at the junction of Bramley Road and Whitchurch Road which was the RVP that I had agreed with GM CANE earlier. At about 0715hrs I rigged in my fire gear and booked in attendance with control at 0721hrs. GM CANE and I went to Command Unit (CU) 8 which was located on Bomore Road between the junctions with Grenfell Road and Treadgold Street and handed in our nominal role boards.

There was a Tactical Command Group (TCG) meeting in progress so we took a briefing from Commissioner Dany COTTON outside CU8 who outlined the nature of the incident and resources in attendance. GM CANE and I then took a tour of the incident ground to familiarise ourselves with the location, events, Command structure and operational tactics before returning to CU8. I could see the tower block and there was a large proportion of it still 100% alight. There were many floors well alight and we were still in the life saving stage at the time. There was a guy (whom I later found out was shown on TV,) who had been at one of the windows and he still hadn't come out by that point. I could see the basic structure in terms of holding points, how the incident had been sectorised and how we moved crews into the incident to carry out the rescue operations. I returned to CU8 where the Incident Commander (IC) was sitting with GM CANE. The IC Assistant Commissioner (AC) Andy ROE briefed us. I was tasked with the ORT Command role sitting with the IC. GM CANE was tasked with the ORT for Operations role.

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The first thing I noted was that it was really hot and clammy in CU8. It had a very much 'bunker' type atmosphere in there. They had obviously been in the thick of it. I pointed out this was not a good environment to make command decisions in. We opened the doors to let some cool air in. That's part of my role - to come on fresh and notice things other people have got used to. I mentally noted that AC Andy ROE was clearly fatigued and under a great deal of stress, although his decision making seemed rational. GM CANE pointed out that he had concerns, as much of the operations he had seen on the fireground were outside of policy. By this time we were about 7 hours after the time of call. He also had concerns about safety. As we had toured the incident ground it was clear we were working well outside normal operational policies. Our job is to monitor performance against policy, and it was clear that it had been necessary for the IC to move outside of ordinary policy under those circumstances. We were looking to see how much we could draw operations back into Policy at the time as we were about 7 hours into the incident.

The type of policies we had gone outside of were:

People wearing Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA), who under normal circumstances would only have one wear in a 24 hr period, they were going back in after repeated wears.

People were operating above the fire without any fire extinguishing media. This wouldn't normally happen. Extraordinary risks were being taken to save life.

Normal structures had had to be put to one side for a period of time. It was my role to see what we could possibly bring back within policy and still operate effectively at the time. So I had been tasked to stay with the IC for that period of time. AC ROE explained the priority for me was to liaise with DAC Lee DRAWBRIDGE and GM Keeley FOSTER to report on the progress of releasing appliances from the incident. At the time there was probably, on site, something like 70 appliances. Although it was a 40 pump fire, reliefs were coming in but others had not left yet. A big proportion of the entire fleet were at this one incident. There were lot of concerns about 'business as usual' being maintained. It was important we managed to release resources. They also had to go off and make notes as it was clear there would be an inquiry after this incident.

Lots of appliances were blocked in and the repatriation of people was not happening fast enough for IC. He wanted to check that processes to make it happen were happening effectively. DAC DRAWBRIDGE was located in another CU, which was in Bramley Road, midway between the junctions with Station

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Walk and Hurstway Walk. I went to Bramley Road and met with DAC Drawbridge in CU3, which seemed very calm and cool with the air conditioning working. There was a real marked difference between the two CU's. DAC DRAWBRIDGE assured me that the release of appliances was happening in as effective manner as practical under the circumstances but that he understood the IC's concerns. He explained that GM FOSTER was located remotely in front of the Kensington Leisure Centre from where she was directing the release of appliances and coordinating the repatriation of crews to appliances. So essentially, they had the job of organising that relief and getting appliances away. DAC DRAWBRIDGE was in overall charge of that and he had the GM working remotely trying to get crews together.

I went over and met GM FOSTER in front of Kensington Leisure Centre near the main entrance which was overlooking the green and with a clear view of Grenfell Tower. GM Foster appeared to have few resources at her disposal, perhaps just a Watch Manager (WM) and maybe a couple of other people. She was undertaking a complicated role without the facility to record details. She confirmed DAC DRAWBRIDGE'S view was correct and she was getting on with it, but explained that many crews were reluctant to leave as they were heavily invested in the incident and felt an obligation to remain on scene. So although she was telling people to go, lots of staff wanted to go back in to save lives. There were lots of people and a circulation of staff moving from area to area until they got to bridge head (BH) where they were then being committed to fight the fire.

As I said, many appliances were blocked in and a number had mechanical faults rendering them immovable until the mobile repair vehicle attended to fix them. Some of them had run out of diesel; some had broken down. GM KEELY explained that in addition to undertaking this highly complex task she was also fielding multiple phone calls as she is the Commissioner's Staff Officer (CSO). She was undertaking an operational role when normally she would just be the CSO. I suggested she would be better utilised as the CSO and suggested to the IC she be replaced and had a crew utilised to act as runners and help with repatriation of crews. She was trying really hard but she did not have the resources to make it happen as quickly as the IC wanted.

After that I met with Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) O'LOUGHLIN the Operations Commander (OC). The incident is structured with the IC who has a monitoring officer who was the Commissioner. Below the IC is the OC who has responsibility for the tactical operations part of the incident. A number of other support officers help reduce the span of control for the IC. The Operational Commander is really in charge of the firefighting on scene.

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2018

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DAC O'LOUGHLIN did not have his own CU because he wanted to move around at the time, I explained this made it difficult to get hold of him as we could only use the radio. These were very busy and sometimes not working, which made communications with him difficult. He didn't want his own CU, there already was a third CU but that was being used for fire survival guidance calls (FSG) and he felt this had the greater priority than somewhere for him to be. I went back to IC to get the relief for GM FOSTER, I was told to use GM NORMAN and GM JENKINS so I went with them and released her. They got a crew to assist with the job.

I went to CU3 where DAC DRAWBRIDGE was, I let him go, although this was not my role as he needed to go and see IC to reassure him again that he was doing as much as he could to release people. He asked me to cover his CU and decision making whilst he went off and came back. He was away for about 20 mins maybe a bit more. That was before the final rescue at about 8.20am, so it was between 7.20-8.20am. He came back and I did another tour of the fireground. I think the sequence of events is; I went back to see the IC and he said he wanted me to swap roles with GM CANE. This was due to some feedback from the fireground. GM CANE was trying to reintroduce systems (that may have been a little too early as the incident was still in the rescue phase) causing some irritation and friction between GM CANE and areas of the fireground. The IC wanted to bring GM CANE in to assist him and send me out to the fireground. For example, under normal circumstances you would expect the sector commander to wear sector command tabards and some didn't have their tabards on, so GM CANE had been saying, "Where's your tabard? You need to get one to indicate who are." The Commanders had been working very hard for very long time. They got a little agitated as, maybe, that's not the most important thing at the time, so they were giving him a bit of a dose of 'take your tabard and sling it.' I think there was a breakdown in relationships after that, so we swapped roles so that I could go out and rebuild those relationships and be more effective in terms of introducing stuff.

The IC called us back to CU where he explained what he wanted to do regarding the swapping of roles. He discussed why that was but the decision had been made and that was it. Swapped roles and for remainder of my time at the incident I was doing the operational side of the job. I wanted to have a look inside the tower. Outside the tower it was clear the incident had been split into 4 external sectors. This was geographically and it was also vertically sectorised within the Tower. Sector 1 was the face of the building with the original main entrance to tower block. Sector 2 (going clockwise) was on the side with the playground where firefighters were being held and then committed to the building whilst being

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

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protected by police with their riot shields. Sector 3 was round the backside of the building, which didn't have much access and no one really working there but someone would have a watching brief. Sector 4 over looked by the leisure centre and later became the sector with the aerial appliance based there. Inside the building there was the lobby sector. Staff were being moved around the building - from being marshalled in sector 4, round through sector 1, into 2 where they were then 'stored' until required. That's the pictures in the press of the holding area. They were then moved to the lobby sector on ground floor, escorted by riot shields, they then would be called from there to the 4th floor bridgehead (BH.) They were then committed from the 4th floor to above that to fight fire or rescues or whatever was required which would be the fire sector. I went to the BH, at that time GM Richard WALSH was the BH commander, he was being assisted GM Pat GOLDBORNE. There were a significant number of firefighters in those sectors and the BH was busy. I got a briefing from the BH commander where he explained what he had going on. It's the most unusual briefing I've ever had in my entire career. He told me he had firefighters committed on the 5th/6th/7th/8th/9th/10th/and 11th floors at the time. He described to me the layout of those floors, number of flats etc. There were drawings on the wall with flat numbers and where firefighters had been. He explained he had firefighters committed to those areas, but at that time they couldn't get any water past the 10th floor, but he had jets on some of the intervening floors all of which were 100% alight. He also had firefighters committed into those floors with no extinguishing media, carrying out rescues, people were going to the 11th floor and perhaps beyond, to investigate how far they could get at the time. That's an extraordinary briefing to have. It was extraordinary circumstances to have. My judgement was this was acceptable and appropriate under the circumstances and his judgement on risk taking was proportionate because we were committing to save saveable lives. It was really busy there. I'd been talking to firefighters as well but it was the Commander whom I was getting info from. I could see they were really tired, really worn out and needed relieving, which they were shortly after that. GM John GRAHAM took over as BH commander after that.

The main issue at that time was about water and being able to get water above the 10th floor. So as I walked into the building and went in through lobby sector that was 8 inches deep in water. As I walked upstairs, water was flowing down them at a really high rate. I went to the 4th floor BH and by the time I got there I was absolutely soaked through, as water was falling down the middle of stairwell as well as coming down the stairs. It did not help coming through streams of water because it affects radios, phones and communications. The water was due to the firefighting going on and also because of burst hose lengths on some of the floors above, there was trouble identifying the source of that water and that the

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

Signature witnessed by:

hoses had all got tangled up at that level. What they were trying to do was identify the burst hose length and untangle all the hose to enable them to replace the burst length and extend the rest further up the tower block. This is why they were not getting beyond the 10th floor. They couldn't physically get them up. It wasn't until GM GRAHAM took over that I manage to have that discussion with him. They have got to make their own decisions, part of my role is to make suggestions, give guidance and support to people on the incident ground about actions and decision to take. GM GRAHAM was quite stressed, as he had taken over a really, really important function - he is the final point before fire-fighters committed into the fire sector, exposing them to really significant risk. We had a discussion centred around making a decision about whether to turn all of the water off, sort out hoses and start up again or to continue with untangling what was in place. If turn all the water was turned off it meant firefighting would stop for all that time. This decision should be taken by OP commander because it is a big decision but it was difficult to get hold of him due to radio difficulties, so we had the discussion and the outcome was for him to plant his feet and make the decision himself.

It took a long time to shut the water supply off and to pull out the hoses. SM CASMANLI was tasked with getting the hoses out and then back in more effectively and efficiently. The light weight portable pump was requested. This is actually 100 kilos and act as an intermediate pump. Basically water gets pumped to the portable pump and then that pumps water further up the building.

There was a lot of confusion about floor numbers for a long time throughout the incident. Floor numbers were marked on the walls, out outside of the lift, in the lobby on each floor. Where these had not been burnt off you could see the floor numbers. We always have issues as we number the floors ground, 1st, 2nd, and so in a building with 3 floor, the top floor as the 2nd floor, which can cause confusion for other agencies. Additionally there was a mezzanine floor, so is that 1 or what are we calling that? The general consensus was that we worked off the floor numbers that we could see on the floor where it was visible. I'm still not sure what floor some of the bodies were on. Could guess but may be 1-2 floors out. Got to say, there wasn't any confusion in terms of when firefighters were committed from the bridgehead because we were all working off the same hymn sheet. There were some numbers in the stairwell by the emergency lighting but sometimes you could not see that or it didn't tally up with the lift lobby number and of course there were intermediate landings as well. At that point I was also moving outside of policy myself. Normally, anyone going beyond the BH would be required to wear breathing apparatus (BA), but some officers were being committed passed there without BA. I was staying to the stairwell mostly, but I

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

Signature witnessed by:

went passed the BH without BA, and went up to some other floors to get idea of what the conditions were like and to ensure that I had proper understanding of the risk being taken on. I walked up the stairwell as I wanted to get to 10th floor to see the situation with the hoses.

As I got to the 7th floor, it was getting really hot and really quite smoky. You get a feeling with 29 years' experience in fire-fighting, you know when you've gone far enough, or it's getting too dodgy. At that time people the 7th floor definitely needed BA beyond the 7th floor. I went out into landing lobbies and to look at the flats and all were 100% alight. The non-structural internal walls had gone. I could see each concrete compartment but then the rooms within the flat had gone. They were like open plan. I did not go on every floor. The gas mains were alight in most of the flats, so I could see where the fires were. I took this information back to the BH and got the BH Commander to inform crews not to put gas fires out as this would cause a risk of explosion. Whilst burning they are relatively safe. They will keep burning, as fed by gas, but needed the supply turning off to extinguish them. People were looking for the individual flat gas valves to turn off but there was nothing obvious. A message went back to get the gas board to turn off the supply to whole block. At one point gas and electricity were in attendance and digging the road up to isolate the supply. I ensured fire-fighters had been briefed not to extinguish those fires but wait for isolation. As I said earlier it was really busy on the BH and the BH commander was trying to limit the number of people there. I had managed to develop a good relationship with the commander so any earlier issues with GM CANE had gone now and we were now working properly. What I was trying to do was reduce the number of people in the BH to calm things down, it was not out of control but just really busy. Everyone was stood in the lift lobby, standing round a china graph drawn map of the building on the wall.

In terms of timings, I kind of lost a bit of timing about this point. I went back down to have a look at the lobby and out into sector 2 where there was a SM who was the sector commander. I asked him how he had got the sector set up and the purpose for that, he gave me a briefing. I said to him that there would definitely be some kind of inquiry so he needed to record solid information around timings. I told him to get himself a forward information board and start noting times of events etc. and also keep a list of crews. Normally there would not be a mix of EDBA and SDBA but we were using lots of different crews. I asked him to run a tally of numbers of EDBA and SDBA and liaise with sector 4, so that as the BH said they needed more BA crews they would come from the lobby and then fire fighters in sector 2 could replace them and they in turn would be replaced from sector 4. He needed to know how many fire-fighters were in his sector so he could resource the other sectors. At that time, the last rescue that I'm

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

Signature witnessed by:

aware of happened - this was the guy that was on TV looking out of his window. I hadn't seen him at window but I did see him when crews shouted 'casualty' and escorted him across from the building into sector 2 with riot shields. I think that was about 8.20am. He was taken round the corner and he went to LAS casualty reception up near CU3.

This man looked really weak; he was being escorted by two fire-fighters with his arms around their shoulders. He could just support his own weight, they weren't dragging him, he was walking with assistance. He had been through a really bad experience. His speech was really slow but he was conscious and aware of what the situation was. His face was sooty and his clothing had been opened a bit to cool him down as it would have been hot in the stairwell. In fire gear it insulates you from the heat so it would have been really, really hot in ordinary clothing. He had soot on his face, was dishevelled and been through the mill, pretty much what you would expect. I would say he was Asian, (Far Eastern) in heritage and skin colour, probably in his late 50-60's. At that time I was going to try to get photo because I thought it might be valuable, but my phone was not working because of the water.

When I had first arrived I thought GM Matt COOK looked really bad and needed to go. He told me he'd been standing outside at the beginning of the incident at the front of sector 1 and a person who jumped just missed him by an inch and landed on the floor next to him. He had to drag him out of the way because of the debris falling. The person that jumped lost a body part on landing and this also had to be retrieved. The body was off to one side under a covered area partially covered by a salvage sheet.

GM CANE had been in the area of the walkway and had to scare off members of public who were photographing the body of another person who had jumped. Both GM Matt COOK and Mick MULHOLLAND had clearly had enough and had really, really been through the mill, especially GM COOK. Trying to get them to go was difficult because they were so invested in the incident. I told them that we were there and they were relieved, so they should go and write some stuff down. I said they should go home, shower and sleep. They were constantly finding other jobs to do. Eventually I had to say 'look you're going to be back here at 6 o'clock tonight, when my eyes will be hanging out of my head. I wanted to go at 6pm so you should go and get rest, so you'll be able to come back and let me go' - as if they were doing me a favour, so it worked. They still did not leave until well gone 10-1030 that kind a time.

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

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At some point in the morning I walked up to 10th floor. There was a bariatric patient laying on the stairs and causing difficulties to pass up and down the stairs. As I came in the fire-fighters were moving the body just to the left of the lift lobby by the wall. A couple of other fire-fighters were carrying the body of a child, or young adult or very small adult in a small body bag and they'd moved that in the same place. I helped carry the bag to just in front of the lift, in the lobby. When I went back later, I noticed the body was still so hot it had melted part of the body bag at bottom. It was very hot in that area particularly as you went out of the lobby into flats, the winds were blowing really hot air. It's enough for you to pull back as you'd feel scorched if you stood in it too long.

Later on I made it to 14th floor and saw the body of small person who was in what would have been the bathroom - there were no walls but the bath was there and the body was next to bath. It was almost unrecognizable. I've seen lots of bodies like that but it was very difficult to identify.

At the time there was really bad spalling on the ceiling which was all way through to the metal reinforcing bars inside the concrete. I had a real concern about the structure and made a mental note. Where the services pass up inside a wall, service ducts and pipes, that kind of thing, these were all exposed. The first time I went in there the pipes were all straight, later on they were all kinked. You could see floors starting to sag, this was a real concern. I was passing information back to the IC because the level of risk was starting to change. About that time we had a change in the Operational Commander. DAC Andy O'LOUGHLIN handed over to Rick OGDEN (DAC.) From then on DAC OGDEN and I stuck together and ran tactical operations together. In terms of contact, it worked much better because we were physically together; I had not had much contact at all with DAC O'LOUGHLIN.

Things were starting to normalise a bit. Things were moving on. There was still lots of fire fighting still going on. I'd gone back down to CU and came back with Commissioner Dany COTTON, to the BH. She wanted to have a chat with everyone and see for herself what was going on. By now though the FSG had stopped coming in. We went into one of the flats where the Commissioner received a briefing from the BH Commander, the Operations Commander, the USAR (urban search and rescue) advisor, me and there were a couple of others. I took the Commissioner to the 14th floor where I showed her the spalling and the body in the bathroom. This gave her a much clearer idea of where we were at regarding risk and potential for the building to collapse.

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

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DAC Rick OGDEN called the change from saveable life to the next pre-recovery phase at about 1530hrs. This meant our attitude to risk changed in so much as we were not prepared to put fire-fighters at as much risk as before because the likelihood of anyone surviving passed this time was minimal. We would still take risk, just not as much. It was not long afterwards that we had a tactical withdrawal from building. It was the first of a couple of withdrawals.

Some of the fire-fighters were getting further and further up the building, but had not made it to the top yet. They were trying to commit to the top of the stairwell because we had lots of reports of bodies on the stairs, these needed to be discounted as saveable life. At the same time there were lots of USAR and DVI people in there. GM Julian SPOONER (USAR team) and I had a discussion with the DVI officers about the moving of bodies or recording them in situ etc. It was a real eye opener for me as to what the conditions were like. I said to the DVI guy 'you might be able to go to work in there and take pictures, the flats are still burning but there is a breeze so it might be ok,' we got to one of the floors to look at a body and he just said there was no way he would work in there or bring people in there, as the conditions were way too arduous for his staff with their level of PPE. He thought it was horrendous.

There were lots of different assessments going on around DVI, structural stability, making decisions about the amount of risk we were putting fire-fighters at. Weighing up the information and the need to continue fire fighting because we couldn't have a tower block in middle of London on fire for days on end - not publicly acceptable.

The person responsible for safety on the BH came in and said they were really concerned about the building's structural stability. Reports received from fire-fighters on the 17th floor and above about cracks in the central core, the main shaft in the middle of the building and loud bangs. Fire-fighters were starting to be worried about being up there. About five of us went to the 17th floor. There was a difference between the floors in that some were really hot and smoky and some not so bad, it would get better and worse as you went up. On the 17th floor we had a look but couldn't find any cracks in the core but there was a really loud bang from floors above which shook the whole building. You could feel it vibrating. They were really loud bangs. Another one and then another one. We went into the stairwell to have a listen, and then the bangs got really, really loud. A sequence of bangs, the pace of which sounded like the top of building had started to pancake and at that time we were convinced the building was starting to collapse. We had a brief discussion about blowing our evacuation whistles (the signal for the emergency withdrawal) then ran down the stairs and properly ran. The banging and vibrations were

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

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getting worse. I was at the back, but I had to stop because I had to talk on the radio. I called the BH and told them to get out of the building. The bangs were still going. I was that convinced the building was collapsing as I was running down the stairs I was looking at where the floors and wall meet thinking if I get in there, there may be a gap and I might be able to survive if it catches up with me. I was fully convinced that it was collapsing. I got down to 4th floor where DAC Rick OGDEN had stopped to check everyone was out of the BH. By the time we got there the rhythm had stopped but I fully expected to see top floors had collapsed when I got out. DAC Rick OGDEN and I were the last two out of the building, so we knew everyone was out. SM WILLIAMS had gone into basement because there is a big electrical substation in basement with the electrical authority to isolate that, I had called him up on the radio and told him to get out as well.

At that time the IC decided to not commit anyone back in unless really necessary. Later on, it was suggested that elderly people had been trying to use the lift to try and get out but no one had checked lift cars. DAC Rick OGDEN and I went back in and checked these, but no one was in there.

Late afternoon, we went back to the IC who had changed to AC Dom ELLIS. The Commissioner was now dealing with political figures. After our tactical withdrawal the only fire fighting going on was Surrey aerial ladder platform. There were still fires on numerous floors. Around this time the gas had been turned off which was allowing lots of fires to go out. There had been a big relief to get lots of people away. DAC Rick OGDEN got all appliance commanders to come to the Leisure centre and he briefed them about what going on; he also received advice from the DSE who basically said the building might stand up for long time but might collapse without notice - this was really vague as to whether we could recommit people back in the building and what risk we would be taking. After that a lot of stuff I was involved in was administrative - people keeping safe, double checking on decision making, making sure stuff was logged. One stage when GM Charlie PUGSLEY was in charge of fire investigation, he made the decision (with the IC) to commit a crew to retrieve a domestic appliance from the flat or origin, which had caught fire, as this might prove to be vital evidence which we didn't really want to lose.

I have been asked a few questions from the officers and these I shall answer now.

Prior to this incident I have never been to Grenfell Tower before. It was difficult to access the area around Grenfell due to the cordons and the number of appliances present but nobody made any specific points to me about access. There were members of public straying in and out of the cordons with phones, talking to

Signature: J SIMPSON
2018

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family or asking what is going on? I have a bulk standard reply to that at any incident I attend which is, 'I have only just got here so I don't know what is going on yet.'

There was a change in the 'stay put' policy for the fire survival calls. That is the standard policy and what I would have expected to be in place initially. I am aware it was later changed to people being advised to get out because we weren't getting above the 10th / 11th floors, so if they were above that then they had to try to get down to the fire fighters. When I arrived the latter advice was already in place.

In relation to the fire doors I have to say that there is a difference between what a normal fire does and this one. This one was burning a lot longer than normal so I make no judgements about those fixed installations and whether they had performed as they should. If a 60 minute fire door was in place, the fire was still burning still well after 60 minutes. I saw fire doors burnt through, which I was not surprised at because they were subject to fire for 6 hours, not much can withstand that. Doors on landings that had burnt through or they were not there for whatever reason were then letting smoke and heat from that floor go up the stairwell. Some doors were burnt though, some were not. In some the glass had gone but not the whole door, so it varied on which floor they were on. The extent of damage was such that if something was missing I wouldn't know it was missing. Walls were missing; the outside of the building was missing. You could have gone to 17th floor and into a flat and then walked out where the external walls should be and plummeted to death if you wanted to.

There were areas I had to crawl along the ground due to the heat and smoke. That said it never got so thick I couldn't see. If it had got to this level I would be coughing my guts up. Normally it's my job to tell people off for doing that but I felt it was necessary to get the information to share. I had no interaction with the smoke extraction system.

The layout of stairs was a relatively narrow stairway, as you came in through the lobby you went up a set of stairs to the mezzanine floor, across a little balcony and upstairs a little bit. If you then turned right it got you into the actual stairwell. That one was quite narrow but it also had 4 inches of water coming down, flooding the stairs. It also had lots of hose lines so it was difficult to walk as that created trip hazards. It was quite dark; I do not remember for sure if the lights were on, I don't think they were. The smoke was acrid, the type of smoke that makes your eyes sting very quickly. It was acidic in terms of it being - there's smoke you can breathe and smoke that makes you instantly cough. It was like that. It had lots of products of combustion in it. It varied from thin and wispy, to proper greeny-brown in places.

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This I wouldn't have gone into, I thought 'I'll die if I go in there.' Would have been like that due to what was burning, it would vary from flat to flat. If the whole floor was completely ventilated then it produced a different type of smoke. So where gas was burning, it was clean burning, of course it still had lots of nasties in it, but where there was stuff containing plastics, that was burning as well.

As for the fire, on arrival I had an overall view of the fire. I could see it had travelled round the building. I could see bits had burnt and some had not. Some silver bits and some black bits. Big bits of the building's cladding were falling off at the time. There was a structure at the top which was concerning because it looked really unstable. A lot of the building was still on fire and producing lots of smoke, a big smoke plume was travelling over London. It's unusual to see the outside of a building alight like that, flaming extensively, producing lots of smoke. This is completely unusual and outside of my experience. It was a big fire and all unusual. I remember thinking, 'Good god, the whole of the building is on fire.'

I have been asked whether I can recall there being a helicopter. When I was standing out in sector 2 at some stage, I think there was. It's not something I particularly took note of or was intrusive enough to get my attention. Had there been then this would have the effect of a great big fan over the top of the fire. I'd never expect to use a helicopter in that situation as a rescue helicopter and I am not aware of any advice being given that there would be a rescue helicopter. It could have encouraged the fire to travel or spread in another direction, put it out or increase it. Any number of things could have happened. To clarify I am not saying it did do that but it could have the potential to have done that.

With regards to injuries, nobody reported any injuries to me. I didn't have any nor did I need any medical treatment.

I spoke about a pancake effect earlier. Since the building hadn't collapsed as I thought it might have, I believe the bangs were the cables in the pre-stressed concrete snapping. The cables were no longer encased in or being supported by the concrete so they were being pulled apart, as they snapped they were just banging. Scared me I can tell you, I have never had to run like that.

I have been asked whether I wore any thermal imaging camera or video recording equipment. I personally did not, but lots of fire-fighters were using thermal imaging cameras. Ironically, we have just finished a trial of wearing body cameras for the ORT. It was a real shame the trial stopped before this, otherwise we would have had lots of footage; it would have been very useful for recording command decisions and the subsequent operations taken.

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Page 15 of 15

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