

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: ALDRIDGE, JON

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 11 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: JON ALDRIDGE

Date: 09/02/2018

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

This statement is in relation to my experience whilst being deployed to the Grenfell Tower Fire on 14th June 2017. At the time I was based at Whitechapel Fire Station, attached to the Red Watch.

During this statement I will refer to my original notes I made at Paddington Fire Station on the 14th June, I exhibit these notes at JWA/1. I have also marked on a map given to me by DC Lisa COOK various reference points whilst I was deployed, I exhibit this map as JWA/2.

The people I will mention in this statement are the Crew I travelled to and from Grenfell Tower with, Watch Manager Paul GODBER, the driver, and FireFighter, Richard BENAICHA, FireFighter Alan HANLON and Crew Manager Damien MAGEE. The other person I will mention is Commander Pat GOULBOURNE who was a senior member of staff working inside the Tower during the fire, and Commissioner Dani COTTON.

I have been working as a Firefighter for about 18 months and have been based at Whitechapel throughout this time. Whitechapel Station is named as F33, and the pump ladder appliance we ride is F331, which was the appliance we rode on the morning of Grenfell Tower Fire on the 14th June 2017.

The shift ran from 2000hours on the 13th June 2017, and was scheduled to finish at 0930hours on morning of the 14th June 2017. I was the duty man on this shift which meant that I was in charge of being

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the first person to pick up any shouts that came out, as well as keeping our log books upto date and other routine tasks. It also means that I sleep in the box, which is what we call the room next to where the call slip would be printed from.

I was resting in the box room and I remember hearing the call come out. I recall it was about 0100hours. I went to look at the call slip that was being printed. I remember it being very long and that it was printing off for a fair while, the slip had all the appliances on it that were attending the call. I recall it saying it was a 40 pump fire. My governor came out of his room and I remember him saying "WHAT IS THIS, THE BLITZ!" A 40 pump fire is not heard of and so I knew it would be something big. As well as it stating it was a 40 pump fire it stated the location, which I remember saying 'Grenfell Tower', there was an address on it but I don't remember what that address was. I shouted the details of the job to the rest of the Crew who were coming down I started putting my boots on and the rest of my gear on and was out the door as soon as possible. The LFB like us to be out the door ideally within 60 seconds but this isn't realistic. We were probably out the door between 90-120 seconds.

There were five of us on Crew that night, myself, my Watch Manager Paul GODBER, the driver FireFighter Richard BENAICHA, FireFighter Alan HANLON and Crew Manager Damien MAGEE.

As soon as we got in the appliance we were checking the route to the shout, Richard BENAICHA is currently doing his theory to be a black cab driver, and Alan HANLON is a black cab driver so both knew the route quite well and between them got us to the destination. I think Richard used an App on his phone as well to help get us there as we got a bit closer. I had never been to the location before, nor had I been on standby round there so not familiar with the location.

As I recall it, the route we took from Whitechapel Fire Station was towards Shoreditch Fire Station, then onto Old Street, then towards Islington, I was unfamiliar with the route from that point but I trusted Richard in that we were going the right way.

While on the way I was busy checking my BA (Breathing Apparatus) and other equipment which included my leggings, Fire PPE (personal protection equipment) my jacket, my personal radio, my lamp, and the other bits and pieces on my kit. I was listening to the radio as best as I could and listening trying

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to understand what we were going to and what was going on. We were talking to each other hoping that the fire was an industrial block and not a residential block. There was a lot of traffic on the radio and it was hard to understand what was going on. I was shocked to hear how many FSG's (Fire Survival Guidance calls) were coming out over the radio. I think I heard these on the radio as we got a bit closer coming onto the Westway in West London. It was at this point I realised it was a residential block because Fire Survival Guidance Calls are where call handlers stay on the phone to give advice and guidance to people who are trapped by the fire. It was at a similar point, on the Westway that we first saw the Tower, I could see a Tower that was engulfed in flames, again, it was at that point when I realised how serious it was.

When I saw the Tower it I couldn't believe it, it looked like something from a disaster movie, there was a diagonal line of fire going up the Tower, it looked like someone has hit it with a light saber. I couldn't tell you which side of the Tower I could see at this point, whether it was North, South, East, or West. From looking at it from the Westway I would say that there were about 20 floors on the Tower, at a guess, there must have been fire from floor 12-13 upwards. The flames were engulfing the Tower in bright orange and yellow flames, which usually meant the whole Tower, both inside and out were completely on fire. As we got closer, I could see break of fire in the windows with what looked like people in them, I was shocked. I don't really remember the smoke too much at this point, just that it was billowing up, and out of the top of the building. I do remember seeing debris falling from the building as we were approaching it.

I remember hearing a lot of traffic on the radio calling out the FRU's (Fire Rescue Units), FRU's are specialist Units and again, for what seemed like all of them to be called out meant it must have been serious. The FRU's are staffed with FireFighters that wear EDDBA's (Extended Durable Breathing Apparatus) rather than SDBA's (Standard Durable Breathing Apparatus) which means they needed FireFighters to enter the building for longer.

Normally, if you are the first unit to arrive at a fire you would be tasked to get the water set up straight away, and the jobs are fairly obvious and clearly structured thereafter. But at this, it was a case that we had to think on our feet. I didn't know what my role was going to be when we arrived but I thought I would probably have to wear my Breathing Apparatus. None of the staff on my appliance were EDDBA wearers, just SDBA wearers.

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I'd say the journey took us about 30 minutes, and would guess to say we arrived there between 0130hours and 0200hours. I think I remember the RVP point from the call slip being Bramley Road but as we got to the end of the journey, near to Bramley Road there were road works, I did wonder why someone would choose an RVP where there were road works. When we came to the road works we spun the appliance around and tried to get closer via another route, though I couldn't tell you which roads we drove down. I remember there being so many people in the streets, there were cars and people everywhere stopped in their tracks looking up at the fire. We parked up, I just remember debris falling from the building left right and centre. I think there had been about 14 FRU's that came across over the radio as well at that point.

Once we had parked up we all grabbed our BA sets and ran towards the RVP for what seemed like 1/2 mile, where the Command Unit was. I grabbed the TIC from the engine, a long line, which is a bag with a 31 metre line of rope inside. The long line is good for hauling things in high rise buildings. There were people running everywhere.

I could see the building closer from the RVP, I could see again how much it was on fire. There were lots of people gathered on the street, it seemed like more and more people were gathering, there were people in tears crying on their phones, police were trying to reassure people, and has also put a cordon in place by the time we got there. It was chaos.

Our Watch Manager Paul GODBER went into the Command Unit to see what we were required to do, the rest of us waited outside the Command Unit. About 10-15 minutes later Paul came back over to us and said the Command Unit is in utter chaos and that it was all hands on deck. Paul said that there were Senior Officers by the underpass by the entrance of Grenfell Tower gathering BA wearers. We all made our way to the underpass and got into the queue there. We all wanted to go in all guns blazing to try and save people and fight fire but there were Senior Officers controlling the queue and maintaining some order. We were all gathered under the underpass because there was lots of debris falling from the building and the underpass was protecting us from that. We were waiting in line, we had our BA sets on and our helmets on ready to go, I remember I still had my line and TIC with me at this point and I think one of the other guys from our Crew had the halogen bar.

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I could see from where we were waiting there were two aerial platforms, I have marked these on exhibit JWA/2, they are designed to try and tackle the fire from the outside on higher floors and the platform raises up, the platform would usually be staffed by two Firefighters but I am not sure on this occasion. There was one by the underpass and one round to what I thought was the front of the Tower. The one by the underpass wasn't raised at all, it was covered in debris, I could see there was stuff falling on it left right and centre The debris that was falling on it seemed to be a mix of everything. There were some hard pieces falling, then lighter pieces that were on fire, maybe pieces of curtains that seemed like feathers. I could hear windows breaking or being smashed. When I looked up I could see people using their lights on their mobile phones and torches trying to get attention. It was chaos. The other aerial round to the front, that one was raised.

We were all under the underpass together, there were about 50 Firefighters gathered under there waiting to be committed. Our Watch Manager GODBER went over to another Command Unit to try and get some more sense of tasks and told us to wait under the underpass. We were stood in our gear waiting to be committed. There was an order. Firefighters were being committed 2x2, the Senior Officers at the front of the queue would be checking to see when it was safe for us to run into the building, safe in the sense that they were trying to let us go when there were no big pieces of debris falling down from the Tower. A senior Officer would shout when it was clear and we would run into the building. We ran about 25-30 foot to get the main door of the building. There were rumours at this point that there had been jumpers, but I hadn't seen anyone jump myself.

When it was my turn to run into the building I ran in with CM Damien MAGEE. I was aware that Alan HANLON and Richard BENAICHA went in as a pair as well. We were telling each other to stick together. I don't know who the Senior Officers were at the front of the queue telling us when to go, they would have been Watch Managers or Station Managers. Once we got inside there were gathering us in the reception area on the ground floor.

I specifically remember a really horrible bit in the lobby area, before we went up to the mezzanine level. A young boy had been brought down into the lobby, I think his mum had already been brought through. Someone asked him if there was anybody else in the flat he had come from he said straight away "MY

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BROTHER IS DEAD". I heard is quite clearly, it was a horrible thing to hear. This kid was only about 6-7 years old. He was young black lad, African heritage if I was to guess. He spoke good English, but seemed shocked and overwhelmed. He said I as clear as day, everyone heard. I don't know which flat he came from.

They asked for a few people to go up one floor to the mezzanine floor so I went up to the mezzanine floor at that time. I was aware that the bridgehead was on the third floor at this point. Me and Firefighter MAGEE were waiting to be committed to go up. A Senior Officer handed a piece of paper to us saying that we needed to go to flat 114 to search. We were briefed about that and about to go up but a Senior Officer stopped us going. He said no-one else could go up the stairwell as a FireFighter was missing. I recall a FireFighter coming down from the stairs who had his mask off, was bright red and was being given oxygen, I thought it was maybe him who was missing and they hadn't checked him back out but obviously I wasn't sure. The Senior Officers said that no one could go up until we knew that FireFighter HILL was safe, reports were showing him still missing. It seemed to me that we were waiting for about 30-40 minutes. We tried to get one of the Senior Staff to let us go up but he wouldn't let us. Eventually they realised that the person I saw come down on oxygen was Firefighter HILL and that he was safe.

By that time the bridgehead had come down to the ground floor in the lobby area, we were still waiting to be committed. Senior staff were calling out flat numbers for FSG calls up to us while we were on the mezzanine level and we were writing the flat numbers on the walls, writing both the flat numbers and the amount of people in the flats so we had some kind of record of who was trapped and where. We were writing with a chinagraph pencil. I vaguely remember writing that there were three people trapped on the 15th floor. I only wrote a few things on the wall, and cannot remember what the other messages were. This information was being shouted upto us from a Watch Manager on the ground floor but I am not sure where he was getting his information from. At this point, EDBA wearers were being committed before SDBA wearers because they had longer time in the Tower so we were still waiting to be committed.

It was scary on the inside of the main entrance, I could hear stuff crashing on the outside of the building. I could hear people talking about the building collapsing, and I could see windows falling down from the building. The smoke wasn't terrible in the lobby but it was a little bit hazy. I could see, and was being told that there was only one set of stairs going up into the Tower.

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We were waiting to be committed, but it was clear that the EDBA wearers were always going to go as a priority, Crew Manager MCGEE said they wanted people to help with casualty extraction, so instead of waiting in the mezzanine area not doing much, we decided to help out with casualty extraction. Alan HANLON and Richard BENAICHA decided to stay where they were and waited to wear.

We went to the ground floor lobby area, there was another exit/entrance point at the other side of the building. I've marked on exhibit JWA/2 the side I am talking about. There were some windows that looked like they had been put through and were being used as an exit/entrance point. There was a playground by the side of the exit point, and an LAS casualty handling point behind that, again, I have marked both points on JWA/2. I could see people were being led out through these windows. They were like 7-foot floor to ceiling windows, there was a beam in the middle of two windows which meant that the space to get through either one of them was quite narrow. It looked difficult to squeeze people through. We walked towards that exit/entrance point; there was a room near to the lobby area, with a corridor and a toilet. There was a little table there with fold under legs in there, it was light so I grabbed it, at this point I was still with Crew Manager MCGEE.

We went out from the building on that side entrance, with the table over our heads to protect us, the Police weren't there at that point to help us with their riot shields. We dumped our BA sets on the floor and went back into the Tower through the side entrance. We decided we were going to help bring people out. We waked back up the stairs, passed a brief who left us through and went onto the second floor. It was here we bumped onto some BA wearers bringing a girl down, she looked conscious at the time, she looked Muslim, around 20-30's years old, although hard to judge her age, she had a patterned scarf on, looked terrified and was unsteady on her feet. I took her from the BA wearers and brought her down the stairs. I warned her that when we got to the bottom there would be a lot of yelling and not to worry. I kept shouting out "CLEAR THE WAY" people were good really at getting out the way. When we down the stairs and to the side entrance, through the broken windows the riot Police were there, I walked out with the girl and a riot Police Officer was helping by holding a shield over our heads to protect us There was a lot of debris on the floor and she only had little slip on's on her feet, she took one step outside and realised it was going to be difficult and so I carried her out in my arms. I didn't know what flat she came from, she was looking back at the Tower and whimpering, I think she was in shock but didn't have any

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other physical injuries I could see. I sat her down by the casualty handling area with the LAS and went in again. On our way back in, up the stairs, a Senior Officer warned us of our safety and advised us not to go too high as we didn't have BA on. We carried on and waked into the central stairwell for the first time, it was like a waterfall, there was so much water coming down the stairs. There were people running and screaming, I remember it being a bit hazy too with the smoke. The stairwell was tight, not wide at all, it was probably wide enough for two people to stand side by side to each other.

There were more casualties coming down the stairs, the next ones we came across were three elderly ladies, maybe in their 50's early 60's, they needed helping down. I met the BA wearers who were bringing them down, I took one of the ladies from them. They looked like Muslim ladies, they had patterned sari's on. I remember all three having black on their faces, and black around their noses, they looked like they had had a lot of smoke inhalation. They were covering their faces with their clothing which wasn't helping because there was a load of black smoke in their clothing. The three of them looked shocked, and were cautious on their feet. One was saying "WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER, WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER" "MY DAUGHTER IS STILL IN THERE" I took this one down to the lobby, and out again through the side entrance, trying to reassuring her. I didn't take her to the LAS handling area on the other side of the playground, because I was directed to take her to the other side, it was probably because it was a safer way to walk and she didn't seem to need immediate LAS treatment, I assumed she would be taken to the LAS handling area, but just walked round a safer way. As we left the building, again from the side entrance a Police Officer helped us with a riot shield and protected us from falling debris. I did offer to carry her but she refused, she was taking little steps because there was so much debris on the floor. As I was walking round a Firefighter took her from me, I told her I'd check for her daughter. I turned around and went back inside, again, a Police Officer protected me with a riot shield on my way back in. I'm not sure who took the two other ladies out who was initially with this lady, but I saw them leave the building so I knew they got out safely.

Again, on the way back in I was advised not to go into the Tower because I wasn't wearing BA, but I ignored that advice and went upto the 3rd floor .BA wearers were bringing a girl down who looked like she had severe burns to her face, and had burnt hair. I assumed she was the daughter of the mum I had just brought down previously, I'm not sure how she was so much more burned than her mum. She looked like she was in her late teens, early 20's and maybe Bangladeshi. I took this girl from the BA wearers I

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carried this girl as I think she was unconscious, or certainly really limp and not moving. I held her close to me to try and protect her by holding her head close and into my tunic. I took her out the side exit point of the building and again protected by Police riot shields, this time I was directed straight to the LAS handling area, I think because this female needed more urgent treatment. I handed her over to the LAS and saw her mum, the lady I had brought down previously. She was being treated with oxygen and when she saw her daughter she took off her mask and was quite distraught. I was a bit over whelmed at this point, I remember looking down at my tunic and seeing what I thought was some of the girl on me, something I needed to get off if I was going to carry on. I saw an appliance nearby, went to it and got a bottle of water. I washed off whatever it was on my tunic and carried on.

I remember then assisting at the side entrance. As I have said before the gap for people to get through on this entrance was quite small, there was a man in uniform I could see cutting into the entrance with a tool entrance to make it bigger, there was debris was falling on him so I grabbed a shield and ran over to him and held it over him to protect him. I think in the end he made it bigger by using a sledge hammer to open the space up. Once it was done the exit was bigger and better. People could move in and out of here easier.

I went back into the lobby area where I was briefed by a Senior Officer, Pat GOLDBORNE who told me and Crew Manager MCGEE that we needed to get as much hose as possible to the 5th floor because the fire had broken out quite badly on the 5th He knew we didn't have BA on, but also knew we wanted to go up and help. We got hose and equipment stacked up, and I took a length of 45m hose upto the fifth floor.

I noticed that as I went up to the 5th floor the conditions were getting worse and worse on each floor, and that there was more water coming down the stairs, and more smoke in the air. The stairwell had one fire door on each floor leading to the floor lobby, there was only one fire door rather than two, which meant as soon as you opened the door the smoke would seep out through the floors and into the stairwell. There are usually two doors. I remember the smoke making me cough. I noticed that there was no signage on the walls telling us what floor we were on. Luckily someone had written a big '5' on the wall to denote floor '5' which is how I knew where I was. There was also a burst hose on the 5th floor which was creating steam, they were horrible conditions to work in.

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As soon as I was there, there were three more gents with more hose, also not wearing BA. We tied the hose to the bannisters on the landing and threw it down the stairs, the idea was to link up a chain and run it down the building. We managed to get a hose ready and charged on the fifth floor. We ran it down from the 5th floor and connected to the dry riser on the mezzanine level.

While on the 5th floor I bumped into Richard BENAICHA and Alan HANLON, Richie was soaking wet and had water all over him, we weren't sure why but then it became clear that one of the hoses had burst. The burst hose was creating steam and we needed to get that hose out, I remember it took us about 20 minutes to go get that burst hose out, and get it switched off. The neutral plane of the smoke was about 3-4 feet off the ground at this point. From what I remember on the 5th floor all the doors were shut, of the ones I could see, I couldn't see them all. The smoke seemed to be coming through the flat doors rather than from anywhere else.

It became apparent that there was a problem with the water/dry riser because of the pressure in the charged hose so we ran the hose from the mezzanine level to the main lobby and outside the front of the building. Damien MAGEE smashed the glass through at the front entrance to get the hose going out of the front of the building, we threw the hose to a Firefighter outside the front of the building to connect it to a water source. We had a light portable pump on the inside of the lobby, we connected the hose to the light portable pump to try and create more pressure into the water supply running up to the 5th floor. There was a good group of us involved with getting that sorted out. I'm not sure if it worked, I was pulled away at that point .

Normally we would communicate over the radio for someone down at the bottom to plug into the water source, but there was so much radio traffic it was just impossible so me, MCGEE and the three other Firefighters sorted it out ourselves by running up and down the stairs getting the hoses connected.

After this I tried to work more hose upto the 7th floor. This is where I bumped into a Crew from Bethnal Green. I then went back down to the second floor as this is where the hose as that time was plugged in and I passed another Crew who asked me if I had seen the Crew from Bethnal Green. They said they were trying to find them to check their safety and tell them they needed to leave as they were on the whistle. I said that I had just seen them. I said I'd run down to Entry Control and let them know the Bethnal Green

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Crew were safe and that they were on the 7th floor. I went to Entry Control, and told a Senior member of staff the Bethnal Green Crew were safe, the Officer asked if I was sure, I said that I was. I was told to go back upto the 7th floor and tell them they were on the whistle and needed to get out. I went back upto the floor, told the Bethnal Green Crew they needed to get out, and I walked back down to Entry Control with them, to make sure the Entry Control Officer knew who I was talking about and that it was the right people. The conditions on the 7th floor were worse than on the 5th, my eyes started to sting and there was a lot more smoke. Whilst I was walking them down to the Entry Control Point they told me they needed more water on the 7th floor. I ran back down to the lobby to see if the light portable pump had worked, the branch was charged so I followed that line upto the fifth and tried to carry the charged hose from the 5th to the 7th, but this is quite a hard job, a charged hose is a very difficult thing to carry, a good few FireFighters tried to do this but we struggled. When we were trying to move it there was a lot of water coming down on us, this must have been from the turntable ladder, because it wasn't from charged hoses inside.

After that me and a group of Firefighters worked hoses upto the 9th floor, however we didn't manage to get them charged. Linking the hoses together was hard work, normally we would communicate over the radio to get the job done but because there was so much traffic there was a lot of running up and down the stairs to communicate face to face.

The highest I got when trying to work the hose up the Tower was the 11th floor but as I said the highest I worked hose up to was the 9th floor. The conditions on the 11th floor were quite difficult, I remember thinking there must have been an air vent because at times there was smoke, but then the smoke would go away, so it must have been vented someone how, although I wasn't sure how. It was generally darker and smokier on the 11th than lower down.

I remember there being a large casualty on the 9th floor stairwell, she was quite a large person. When I came across the body in the stairwell I thought it was a man but now I know that it was a woman. She was face down, had dreadlocks and I recall that she was on a level plane, not across stairs. If I was to guess I would have said she was about 20 stone. Initially we had to step over her to get to the 11th floor and I know that she was left in situ for a bit. I didn't like the idea of stepping over her, we always try to treat bodies with as much respect as we can, but we were still trying to save life so we had to continue up

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at that point.

I remember between the 9th floor and 11th floor Senior Officers told us to make our way down, we started making our way down but on the way down I thought that I would try to help with the body in the stairwell on the 9th floor. I helped to bring her down to the 8th floor with other Firefighters, although it was difficult as she was large, and it wasn't something that could be rushed as we didn't want to damage her body. I left her at the 8th floor, there were lots of us trying to move her down, I didn't see her being put back down, so not sure how far down the other Officers got her. I did handle this casualty to get her from the 9th floor to the 8th floor, there was a salvage sheet under her but to help manoeuvre her I did get my hands on her.

I remember thinking around this time, how quickly could I get out if the building started to collapse, the lights went out and I was conscious of collapse, the lights only went out for 3-4 seconds but it was long enough.

Pat GOULBOURNE was there at that point, he was really good in checking that we were ok. He seemed to be everywhere, checking everything was ok. Eventually he told us that we had been there for hours without BA and that we needed to get out. At this point, we exited out the Tower, into day light, it I had lost track of time but it must have been.

Other than the female on the stairwell, the only other casualty I saw was when I left the building, I saw someone on the ground but under a sheet, I assumed that this person had jumped out the building. It was about 0800hours. I remember sitting down somewhere, me Damien MCGEE and Alan HANLON sat for a while, just looking up at the tower, exhausted. I remember seeing a Chinese man being carried out by Firefighters, he was alive, I was amazed, it was incredible that he had been in there and he was still alive. He was the last person I had seen being come out the Tower.

The whole thing was alight from the outside, and the smoke still coming out from the top, black and Grey, even starting to look a bit brown at this point. There were still plenty of Firefighters in BA waiting to be committed to the Tower. We were told not to go back in. We got a drink and tried to get some energy back. We found Richard BENAICHA, and then tried to find our Governor, GODBER. We found

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him close by, he was doing entry control at that point. We tried to take as much of our gear off, we were soaked through then I remember hunger kicking in. We went to the Salvation Army to get some food, I remember the Commissioner came over and spoke to us. There were Firefighters around, most had been in trying to fight the fire, we were exchanging our experiences with each other. It became apparent that lots of people had been found and rescued, but also that lots of people hadn't.

I was aware that Senior Officers were trying to relieve us to leave the area. When we were told we could leave we were told that we needed to go straight to Paddington to write notes and be briefed. I think it was about 1100-1200 hours when we got back into our truck to go to Paddington, but were then delayed a bit further because an appliance was blocking us in. We went to Paddington, had a brief, wrote some notes about our experiences, JWA/1.

While I was in the building, I didn't hear any alarms, or see any sprinklers in the Tower. I never saw the dry riser on the outside of the building, although I did see the inlets on the inside of the building.

The scale of the fire was so unusual, I did not really know how it happened at the time. It was unbelievable.

When asked if anything else could have made it easier, I'm not sure, we couldn't have prepared for it really, we are not able to get the water that high up with the resources we have, and we all pushed ourselves to the limit. I would say that communication was very difficult because there was so much traffic but would more channels have made it easier or more complicated? I'm not sure. Communication was difficult. How many channels do we need to make it work.

In terms of procedures and planning, we didn't really have a plan before we got there, it was a case where it was all hands on deck and we all need to get involved. I wasn't aware of a policy or procedure specifically for that block. I remember seeing the lifts, I saw them by the dry riser. I saw the lift doors but never saw them open, or see anybody use the lift. As far as I was aware they were not working. Normally they are shut off in the event of an alarm and you wouldn't usually use the lift unless it was a specific fire lift.

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Access for us to get to the Tower was quite difficult but that's because we arrived later on, I'd say that there were enough appliances close to the Tower. I wasn't aware of the cutting of the gas supply or that the gas supply in the Tower was a problem, nor do I know who would make a decision to cut the gas supply, other than that it would be a Senior Officer. I have been asked about the windows, I didn't really notice the windows on the tower, I was in the stairwell the most of the time and didn't see much of the windows.

In terms of what could be better, I think there should have been more than one door linking the corridor to the stairwell, as soon as one door opened the smoke went into stairwell, which should be better protected. I'd want to see two doors in a situation like this. When asked about the fire doors in the Tower, the one I noticed seemed to be doing their job. I have been asked if I had any contact with any members of public, I heard members shouting, but I passed very little on.

Since the fire I have had treatment in a hypobaric chamber, this was about 1 month afterwards. This is basically a small space with depressurized oxygen to get rid of any toxins, this was in Kent somewhere which was offered to Firefighters that needed it as a free treatment. I was coughing up black or about 3-4 weeks so thought this would be good to do. I haven't had myself checked out yet at a GP, but have raised my health through work.

In terms of the Command Structure on the night/morning, I wasn't really sure who was in charge. Generally, depending on the size of the incident would dictate which rank would be in charge. I know the Commissioner was there but I don't know what her involvement was. I know Commander Pat GOULBOURNE was making decisions on the night but that is because I know who he is and I saw him in the Tower on the incident. He was very involved inside the building, but I couldn't say specific.

With respect to the Stay put policy, we give guidance to stay put so we know where people are and that they are safe, and that we can fight the fire while the people are contained and safe. I am not sure if the policy changed on the night, and I don't know who would make that decision, it's above my pay grade to get involved in decisions like that.

In terms of training we had training 1 month before the fire. In training I normally train the older boys and girls as I am the new boy, we usually have lectures in the night shifts. I would say I am still in

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developmental stage as I have only been in the service for 18 months, I just need a driving qualification and I will be there.

I had realistic training a high rise a few tours ago. I had been to a few high rise fires. There is quite a lot of high rise blocks in Whitechapel, I had been to a high rise fire before Grenfell. I probably only one. I wasn't aware of any pre-prepared firefighting plans for Grenfell Tower.

In terms of how I feel about it now, I wish it had never happened, it will stay with me for life. But I am glad it's being investigated like it is. Hope it stops anything further like that happening again.

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