

STATEMENT PRINT

Surname: RANSON

Forenames: KATE

Age: Oveer 18 Date of Birth:

Address:

Postcode:

Occupation:

Telephone No:

Statement Date: 27/10/2017

Appearance Code:
Height (From):

Build:
Height (To):

Hair Details: Position Style Colour

Left Eye Colour:

Right Eye Colour:

Complexion1:

Complexion2:

Glasses Worn:

Glasses Use::

Accent Details: General Specific Qualifier

Number of Pages: 3

This statement refers to the night of the Grenfell Tower fire on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I am an Assistant Operations Manager for the London Fire Brigade with ten years' experience, based within the Control Room at our centre in Merton. I spent three years working as a Control Room Officer before being promoted to Assistant Operations Manager where I have worked for the last seven years.

My role consists of supporting the Operations Manager and at times, filling in for them, when they are not present. I support and manage staff including their workloads

and personal development. I am also responsible for the arranging and managing of resources in the event of an incident and I arrange further 'fire cover' for the rest of London to ensure resilience. There is no formal training to be an AOM. Although we can do a variety of courses. The main training we receive comes from 'on the watch' and levels of individual experience.

The Control Room is comprised of an Operations Manager, three Assistant Operations Managers and eight Control Room operators. The CROs are then sub divided in to varying roles from radio operators, pager operators, to answering 999 calls as and when they come in to the Control Room. All staff are trained in answering calls and in the event of major incidents, all members of the Control Room can be called upon to answer calls.

The shift pattern is comprised of 12 hour and 8 hour shifts - three shifts on, three shifts off. Each shift is referred to as a 'watch' and three duties referred to as a 'tour'. A day watch is 0800hrs-2000hrs, followed by a short watch of either 0800hrs-1600hrs or 1400hrs-2200hrs and finally a night watch of 2000hrs -0800hrs.

On the night of the fire I was not on duty and was on a period of rest days. 999 calls that come through to the LFB are first taken by BT who then redirect to us in the event of a 'fire call'. When the call comes through, anyone can take it. The main information that we need to collect is the address and the incident type. We validate the address using our computer systems and refer to our Incident Type Codes (ITCs) to best suggest the attendance required.

From there, we check and mobilise the necessary resources. In essence this is the responsibility of the CROs. As supervisors we manage and oversee that the deployment has been carried out correctly. For example, a routine fire would be classed as an 'A1'. From these codes, lists of recommended resources and strategies are advised and protocol set to be followed.

On the night of the fire I was aware that there were a number of Fire Survival Guidance calls. A FSG call becomes active at the point that the caller tells us that they cannot get out of the building. This could be based upon levels of smoke or the fire itself. In the event of an FSG call, a CRO will indicate to a supervisor that they have a FSG call. They can do this by either raising their hand or simply calling to a supervisor. A supervisor will then plug in and listen to the call to ensure that the right advice is being given by the CRO.

Advice such as blocking up doors and cracks with towels, staying low, opening windows to let fresh air in, moving to another room away from the fire or potentially making their way to exits or flat roofs that they may have forgotten about would all be standard advice in the case of a FSG. Normal procedure would also be to stay on the phone with the caller until we have confirmation that they have been rescued. It would also be standard practice for the LAS to be alerted to attend. I have dealt with a number of FSGs as a both a CRO and a supervisor, for example I dealt with a number during the Fred Wigg Tower fire about six or seven years ago.

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In the event that we have a large number of calls, we have a backup system to handle the overflow. BT will alert us that calls are stacking and then divert them to our 'buddy' Brigade which is in North West Fire & Rescue Service but can also send them to surrounding Brigades.

Before the 14th June, I had never had any previous experience of Grenfell Tower. I was on night watch the night before so had just started my rest days. I think it was about 2.30 in the morning when I received a phone call from Adam CRINION, one of the Senior Operations Managers (SOM). He said to me, "Hi Kate, it's 2.30 in the morning. We have a 40 pump fire going on. Do you think you can come in?" I said that I would and got up and dressed straight away. At that point I was very bleary eyed and had not acknowledged the time.

The other OM, Alexandra NORMAN, is a very good friend of mine and I knew that she would have been working that night. Alex is very experienced and would not have been requesting for off duty staff members to come in unless it was an absolute emergency. Therefore I decided to come in without question. It is extremely unusual to get a call regarding work when we are not on duty. For that to happen, I knew that the situation must have been extremely serious.

On that particular night we were working from our back up station in Stratford. There was routine maintenance at our base in Merton, which is not unusual, and as a result we sometimes work from Stratford. It is a much smaller Control Room, and in my opinion, easier to manage because you can hear the call handling better and are closer to the CROs which makes decision making and information gathering a lot easier. Stratford is a much easier base for me to get to as it is a straight drive on the A2 from my home in [REDACTED]

On the night I quickly got dressed and made my way in. It was only when I was in the car that I realised that Adam must have called me at 3.30am and not 2.30am. I arrived at the base between 4am-4.15am. At that point I had no idea what I was walking in to or what the situation was. I was not listening to a LFB radio or the car radio on my way in.

I immediately made my way to the back of the room, my normal position at work, so that we can get a better overview of the room. There was no time for a briefing - it was just straight in. I could see straight away by that point that we were dealing with something much bigger than a 40 pump fire. Another staff member, I cannot remember who, had shown me on their phone the extent of the fire from one of the news apps. By the time I came in I was well aware that the policy surrounding FSGs had changed and that advice was now to 'get out' as opposed to normal policy of 'stay put'. Although this was against normal practice, the level of fire at Grenfell Tower was unprecedented and I absolutely believe that is was the correct decision to make. From my understanding, it was the Assistant Commissioner, Andy ROE, who made the decision.

I was asked by Alex to put restricted attendance in place. This means that when resources are heavily depleted, as they were in the case of Grenfell Tower, we can

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restrict the movement of other appliances so we can maintain fire cover across London. This is a difficult decision to make however we have to bear in mind that we still have the rest of London to respond to in the event of another fire or incident. The restriction is flexible however, and allows us to have resilience in other areas. It allows us to keep a grip on resources we have available. The message regarding the restriction was relayed using a tele print.

Alex then took a break and I took over the running of the Control Room, taking internal calls and dealing with any administration issues. Part of my duties consisted of ensuring that there was enough Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) equipment at the scene as well as coordinating other resources. By the time I came in most things had been done but I took a lot of calls from officers and senior officers from the Command Unit at the scene regarding equipment and relief. I also received a number of calls from officers offering to come in and assist. Regarding resources, I cannot remember a lot of the calls but I do remember Surrey offering an aerial ladder for us.

From the time I arrived, things were beginning to calm down. The number of calls became fewer and the situation became more manageable. Personally, because I had come in to the Control Room at such a late stage I was not personally or emotionally affected. I was able to carry on with day-to-day business but I was acutely aware that other staff members who had dealt with the whole incident were badly affected. I checked and monitored all the CROs that were on duty and began to ensure that they could step out for 10 minute breaks and made sure that tea was being made for everyone. The Control Room, by this point, was very emotional. The sheer volume and nature of the calls had really taken their toll on the staff. We had a number who had worked on the Lakanal fire in 2009 where there was a heavy loss of life and I think this compounded those feelings even further.

From a personal point of view, because I had not been dealing with the incident from the outset I have managed to remain largely emotionally unaffected. However I have seen the effects that it has had on my colleagues.

Signed: KATE RANSON

Signature Witnessed By:

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