

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MARSHALL, KATRINA

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

Occupation: CONTROL ROOM OPERATOR

This statement (consisting of 5 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: K MARSHALL

Date: 11/03/2018

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

This statement refers to my account of the Grenfell Tower fire that took place on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I have been in Essex Fire and Rescue Service for 26 years. I originally joined in 1983 in the role of Control Room Operator. I was promoted to Senior Fire Control Room Operator before leaving the service in 1993. I re-joined the service in March 2002 as a Fire Control Operator. When I re-joined in 2002, I did six weeks of training in Great Baddow before doing a few weeks of shadowing in the Control Room to familiarise myself with the role. The experience comes with call handling and dealing with incidents on every shift.

Our control room is based in Kelvedon, Essex. In the control room we have an Officer of the Watch who is in overall control of the watch on duty, a Supervisor who monitors the calls, a Radio Operator, a dedicated call taker, and a back up call taker who always deals with administration. Our minimum staffing levels on a night duty is four, which includes an Officer of the Watch, Supervisor and two call takers. At the time of the Grenfell Tower fire we worked a four day shift pattern, two days shifts (7am-7pm), and two night shifts (7pm-7am).

When a call comes in on the system a red light flashes to indicate an emergency call is coming through. The call handler will pick up the call and the callers number will already have been automatically uploaded into the call take screen on the computer. I will answer the call saying "Fire and Rescue Service, what is the address of your emergency?". I will ask the caller what the address is, what the incident is, what it involves, and maybe more specific questions depending on the type of incident. Based on the type

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of the incident, the system will select the nearest appliances and the call handler will mobilise those appliances, and select whether any further appliances are required based on the type of incident.

If a call is taken on behalf of another brigade, we would create an incident number and log as if it is was our own incident.

We would obtain all the same information including address / type of incident. We would then contact the relevant brigade where the incident is through a direct phone line and pass on the details and incident number. If we had a call where a person was reported, the call handler will stay on the phone and another staff member will call the other brigade on their behalf.

With regards to Fire Survival Guidance, it is information that you would give to a caller to help them survive a fire or other life threatening incident. The advice given will depend on the type of incident and the situation. We have got laminated sheets that give guidance on certain call types that we can refer to if required, however our control room staff will have enough experience to deal with various types of calls. If a call involves fire survival guidance, a Supervisor will monitor the call to get an overview of what is taking place, and other call handlers may over hear the calls as we are in such close proximity to one another. We would all help each other if required. I have taken a few fire survival calls in my service with the brigade.

My understanding of the 'stay put' policy is that occupants are told to stay inside in the flat as the door to their property should be fire proof for a certain amount of time to allow for the fire to be extinguished and for firefighters to rescue them. If there is firefighting in the stairwells, it may be more dangerous for people to go outside of their flat and evacuate. The advice given depends on the type of situation and circumstances around the fire.

I have no previous knowledge of Grenfell Tower.

On Wednesday 14th June 2017 I was on a night shift with White Watch at the Essex Control Room. We started our shift at 1900 hours and I was a Temporary Leading Fire Control Operator. Also on duty was the below personnel:

Officer of the Watch — Russ WHITE

Supervisor — myself

Call taker position 5 — Sharon LANCASTER

Position 6 (next to 5) — Jayde PALMER

Radio Operator — Vanessa OSBORNE

Vanessa also had Claire BANNISTER shadowing her. Claire was a new recruit at the time.

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The night itself was quite peaceful in Essex and we were not dealing with many incidents.

Prior to the first call being received for Grenfell Tower, it was just myself and Sharon LANCASTER in the Control Room. The other staff members were on a rest break.

Whilst myself and Sharon were in the control room, Glasgow exchange contacted our control room via the Lync phone to ask if Essex Fire Control to help London Fire Brigade as they had a large incident going and there were too many calls for them and their fall back brigade to answer. Our Lync phone is the internal system for the whole of our Fire Service and is for admin purposes. This phone line is not taped. At that point, we did not know what was happening in London. I answered the phone and accepted the request, confirming that Essex Fire Control would take calls for London. We were not given the address of the fire.

Approximately 10-15 minutes after this call, our phone line rang in Essex Control. I answered the phone using my call log 'KM1'. The operator said to me that there was fire in London in Flat 17, Foreland House, Walmer Road, W11 4EX by the call had dropped out before we answered. Standard procedure for an abandoned call of fire is to ring the caller back for more information. At 0147 hours, I called the phone number of the caller [REDACTED] but there was no answer. This was recorded as incident number 56384.

At 0145 hours, we received a second phone call, incident number 56385. I answered this call using my call log 'KM1'. On the phone was a male caller using number [REDACTED] who said he was driving to Wales on the A40 and had seen a block of flats on fire in the W11 area. He said he could see a 'boom', which is another term for an Aerial Ladder Platform. This confirmed that the fire brigade were in attendance. This call ended at 0147 hours after I received all the information I required to mobilise. Incident number 56385 is where I annotated the fact that Glasgow exchange had asked us to take calls for London, and become our main incident log for the Grenfell Tower fire.

At the same time, we started to wonder what was happening. Sharon LANCASTER started to look on Google to see what was going on. We were aware that London had quite a large flat on fire and was amazed at how much it was on fire. We found the address to be in W11, Grenfell Tower.

At 0148 hours, Sharon took a call relating to the Grenfell Tower fire.

At 0157 hours, I took another call in relation to the fire. I answered the call using my call log 'KM1'. The call was from a Romaphone (a call that has no number attached to it), and was relating to the fire at Grenfell Tower in W11 1TQ. The caller was not in a flat but could see a fire from the distance. I advised

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the caller that the London Fire Brigade were aware and dealing with a major incident in that area. The call then ended.

Now we had started taking calls, I needed to contact the London Fire Brigade and pass on the information from the calls received. I rang them on their direct line but there was no answer. I took the decision to page G102 Nigel DILLEY who is a divisional officer within the Brigade and was the NILO duty officer. I wanted to discuss passing the call information to the London Fire Brigade. I thought Nigel may have been able to speak to a colleague in the LFB Command who I was unable to contact or contact them via the Airwave radio. In the background, Sharon was investigating Grenfell Tower via the internet to ascertain details of the incident, such as how many floors it had, how many flats, and other general information to familiarise ourselves. We ascertained that Grenfell Tower had 23 floors.

At 0208 hours, Nigel DILLEY called our Control Room and I answered the phone. Everything we knew at that point was passed on to Nigel. We talked about making contact with the London Fire Brigade via Airwave radio as we knew it would be difficult via telephone due to the sheer volume of calls. We can monitor and use the airwave radio to contact, however we did not know what channels the London Fire Brigade were using at the time, and it could have been multiple channels. We discussed the 'stay put' policy and knew it was a general policy for high-rise buildings and would continue to follow that until London informed us of other advice and if they have changed advice. We had an idea of how severe the fire was at that point.

At the same time, Sharon found the correct address of the fire on Google. This was Grenfell Tower, Grenfell Walk, London, W11 1TG.

At 0213 hours, I took another call in relation to the fire again using my call log 'KM1'. This was from telephone number 07 [REDACTED] 753 and a female on the 11th floor in flat 82. The female said "Is someone coming to get us out?" I asked for her name which she gave as 'Natasha ELCOCK' and confirmed her flat/floor number. She said the fire was spreading rapidly and was getting concerned that the fire brigade were delayed in getting them out. There was no fire in her flat, but because she was concerned I gave her advice in line with the 'stay put' policy telling her to stay put and await rescue. I advised that I would pass on her details to the LFB where she said "hurry up".

At the same time, Sharon LANCASTER was investigating the internet for information regarding Grenfell Tower and the emergency fire arrangements stating a stay put policy 'To stay put unless otherwise advised. Grenfell was designed to rigorous fire safety standards. Each front door for each flat can withstand a fire for up to 30 minutes'. This information was taken from the website for Grenfell Tower.

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The other staff members then came back into the Control Room, and Sharon went on her break. This left myself / Russ WHITE / Vanessa OSBORNE / Claire BANNISTER in the Control Room. I stayed in the room to continue to liaise with Nigel.

At 0126 hours, Nigel DILLEY phoned me to say that he had tried all of the talk groups on the Airwave radio, but had no response. He put the phone down and called me again a few minutes later at 0221 hours to tell me that he had now spoken to London Fire Control.

They wanted to know the following details from any callers we had spoken too:

- How many people?
- Flat number?
- Floor number?
- Is the fire effecting their flat?

Everyone in our Control Room was made aware of these details that London had requested. I think around this time, someone had put Sky News on the television, and they were reporting a live feed of the fire. It looked pretty awful at that point, and the building was engulfed in flames.

I then went to get a cup of tea and went on my rest break, leaving Russ in charge as the Officer of the Watch with Vanessa as call handlers, and Claire who was just shadowing Vanessa.

I returned to the Control Room at approximately 0500 hours after my rest break.

After this, I did not deal with anything else in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire and finished my night shift at 0700 hours. I was part of the handover to our day shift who was our Red Watch. This was just a verbal handover telling them that we received numerous calls relating to a fire and that the last call was listed at 0345 hours. The incident log would have been printed and reviewed.

A stop message was put on the incident log at 0621 hours. This was done by Russ WHITE. A stop message is generally put on an incident when the fire has stopped and no further assistance is required.

The incident log itself was closed on Wednesday 14th June 2017 at 2045 hours.

Since the incident, I have looked at the incident log and obtained the exact timings from that. I have also sat and listened to the calls post incident.

I feel like we needed a de-brief post incident to discuss what we had dealt with on the night, and how we can deal with incidents like these in the future. In Essex, we do not have many high-rise building fires, but we could learn from the Grenfell Tower fire.

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