

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: IOANNOU, LAURENCE

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

Occupation:

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: L.IOANNOU

Date: 26/01/2018

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

This statement relates to my attendance at the Grenfell Fire on 14th June 2017

This statement is a summary of the recorded interview that took place on Friday 26th January 2018 at Deptford Ambulance Station where I was interviewed by DC Amanda WEBSTER and DC Paul PHILLIPS.

During the interview I referred to my incident log book, the working CAD and notes that I made on my returning night duty on 14th June 2017. I exhibit these notes as LJI/1. I also marked a map of the scene which I exhibit as LJI/2.

On 14th June 2017 I attended the Grenfell Tower fire as part of the response of the London Ambulance Service (LAS). At the time of the fire my role within the LAS was as an Incident Response Officer (IRO), a position I still hold.

My experience within the LAS is that I joined New South Wales Ambulance Service in Sydney Australia July 2008. I was employed as a Paramedic and have a background in clinical science.

During my career I have done many roles. I have also held the position of manager in Sydney. I managed a station and oversaw around fifty (50) staff and also managed incidents. Whilst in Sydney I received a lot of major incident training and dealt with a lot of different situations.

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In Oct 2015 I heard about an advert for an Incident Response Officer (IRO) position in the London Ambulance Service. This was similar role to what I was doing in Sydney. I decided to apply for that role. I started working for the LAS on 15th Feb 2016. I was given role specific training which was similar to what I had received in Sydney. I was also given a driving course and shadowed other IRO's.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I did the operational commanders course with the LAS which is a five day course which all bronze officers are expected to complete. It is with the emergency planning team and includes theory and table top exercises.

All trusts around the world have procedures to handle major incidents which are similar. It is a blue print of how to deal with a major incident. You are assessed on the course and then you have to shadow another IRO in order to gain experience at two events. The IRO will then shadow you on the 2nd event. I managed multiple events back in Sydney and have spent a lot of time looking at policies and procedures.

I also completed some specific Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA) training as well as Operation PLATO theory training with the Met police. I have also had training courses around acid attacks and large scale events with multiple casualties.

I have also completed JESIP training and am aware the importance of it. JESIP stands for Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Program. During JESIP training Emergency response agencies come together and work as a team within the JESIP framework. It mainly effects how Bronze rank and above communicate with each other and work together at a major incident. It enforces how we work together and interact as different agencies. This effects the LAS, Police, Fire Service etc.

JESIP runs through the Emergency response agencies and we have had several training days where we worked together. We have an aide memoire for JESIP on the front cover of our Incident Log Books. We also have action cards where JESIP features heavily.

I started my second night shift on Tuesday 13th June 2017 at 1900hrs and was due to finish on Wednesday 14th June 2017 at 0700hrs.

On the 14th June just after midnight I was at the London Ambulance Control Room with LAS Silver medic Amanda WHEATON my radio started beeping. As I started to leave the officer to head to the job, I

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asked Amanda what the incident was and Amanda said it was a 25 pump fire. Amanda then looked up the CAD. Someone said it must have been a typo but Amanda stated there had been lots of calls. As I was walking out I asked for another IRO to attend with me. I then left and responded to the incident knowing that other IRO's would meet me there.

As I was leaving I saw Area Controller Helen WIGELY get the control vehicle ready and that's when I knew the job was serious.

The incident was created in CAD 247 at 0129hrs. My call sign is IR61. The reason I was assigned the job is that initially the control centre thought it was a SW11 that is an area I cover in South London. When I go in my vehicle I have Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) and sat nav which was taking me north so I was quite confused as to why the GPS was not taking me to south London.

I then pulled over and took out my phone and put the address into google maps. As I was typing I saw the MDT and it then showed a W11 postcode. I also noted there as a significant incident declared on the MDT. A significant incident will mean the LAS will despatch four (4) x Ambulance, two (2) x IRO's, Command Support Vehicle, Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) and Hazardous Area Response Team (HART). Control will also set up a channel dedicated to the incident. Some pagers also go out to senior manager and other staff will also come into work if they are on call. Someone will also take over the Silver role from Amanda as she is also looking after all of London. I then realised where I had to go. I was not given an RVP. I then activated my blue lights and sirens and headed toward the W11 area. The vehicle I was driving was a marked LAS response car. Within the vehicle I carry major incident kit which includes log books and tabards which enable me to start the Incident Response procedure at the scene.

I have been a radio and there was an incident management desk talk group open which I could talk on as I travel to the scene.

It took me 16 minutes to get from Bow to Grenfell Tower and I arrived at 0149hrs. On route I noticed the MDT was going ballistic with updates. I also asked for an update over the radio and asked what resources had been assigned. I was informed that both HART teams had been assigned which I thought was strange as it is not usual that both teams go to a single job. I was then informed to switch to radio channel [REDACTED] I was originally on [REDACTED]

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Whilst I was driving on the A40 I first saw Grenfell Tower on fire. I then picked up the radio to give a Windscreen report about what I could see. I gave this report from about a mile away. In front of me was a 20 story building and one side, about half way up, was engulfed in flames. It was like a movie. I did not expect to see that. I then said "windscreen report I'm still a mile away. I can see a 20 story building completely engulfed in fire". There was also talk of a leisure centre nearby to potentially use as a casualty area. I then continued to drive and parked in Dulford Street W11. There were multiple fire engines on the scene. I then decided to park out of the way. I left my keys in the vehicle and noticed there was also an Advanced Paramedic on the scene. He did not see me and just made his way to the scene. I was wearing my green operational uniform. I then got my silver tabard out which say scene commander in bold letters and a white hat which say paramedic officer. The fire brigade officers also have white hats.

I also got the Incident log book out which is known as an LA434. An ambulance also pulled up and the staff approached me. They offered to park up the other ambulances so no other ambulances are blocked in. I could tell it would be gridlock when the other ambulances turned up. Parking is very important at a large job as you can find yourself blocked in and unable to take casualties to hospital.

I was the first IRO despatched. Arriving on scene as the first officer the working assumption is that you take on the Bronze Medic role. After arriving on scene I updated control that I was to be Bronze Medic at the scene.

As I looked at the tower I could see and hear the crackling of the fire. There was also people in the street just looking at the tower. I could also hear a lot of sirens in the area. I then walked from Dolphon Street and along Bomore Road. I then turned right onto a pathway. In front of the leisure centre there were hundreds of people stood looking at the tower. There were one or two police with a pseudo police line stopping people passing. I then stood on a slopped hill on the east side looking at the tower. The north side was engulfed in flames. The south side was clear of fire. I could not see the west side. I could see people in the tower, clearly on different levels, leaning out of windows yelling. I saw about 10 people on different levels. They were sticking their heads out yelling and screaming. They were clearly trapped. The crowd appeared stunned, emotional yelling and screaming.

What I was looking for was the London Fire Brigade (LFB). I need to speak to them to find out what I was dealing with and what LAS resources needed to be deployed. I then saw a cluster of white hats and forty (40) fire fighters. They were standing underneath a concrete walkway near the tower.

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I waked over to them just as several other members of LAS arrived and we all kind of got to this point at a similar time. I then waked over to the fire fighters and just as I got there someone wearing a tabard turned and walked into the building. I then thought I had missed my chance to speak with him. There were several other fire fighters still standing there. I walked over to them. Someone in a white hat and commander tabard then said "It's not as bad as it looks". "We believe it is an external fire and has not penetrated internally". He was wearing a white hat and was a white male. That comment is recorded in a number of places. It is recorded in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) log and also in an email I had sent myself that night which is exhibited as LJ1/1. I then considered if the fire is on the outside of the building there will possibly just be people with smoke inhalation. At this point we had no patients to deal with. LFB had not brought anyone out. I could see LFB had committed numerous Breathing Apparatus (BA) units to the building.

Debris was falling from the building on the north side which made the north side a no go area. It contained burning structural parts of the building. Where I was standing under the concrete walkaway, on the south east corner, I felt safe. It was around 20 meters from the building. The concrete walkway felt very secure. The LFB then asked me where they should send any casualties. I said here, under the concrete walkway, as it was secure. The LFB wanted the LAS to go into the building and receive patients inside the building foyer. There appeared to be so much going on at that time I knew I would get limited information from the LFB. I told them to bring casualties to under the walkway. This will be designated the Triage area as I had two HART personnel and an advanced Paramedic (APP) now with me.

I knew that very soon people would start coming out of the building. I made the decision that HART would remain and receive them as they have better equipment, training and experience. I then made the casualty clearing location at the top of the hill by the leisure centre. I said to paramedic, call sign AP60, that he was to setup casualty clearing and to go to the top of the hill and set it up. I gave him the role of Bronze Clearing. The idea was that HART could triage under the concrete walkway and take them to Bronze clearing in the casualty clearing area.

All of this happened within 10 minutes of my arrival. We have an acronym named METHANE which we use. It's essentially a way of reporting an incident. I then gave the METHANE report over the radio at 0159hrs and I confirmed it was a significant incident. I stated it was a massive fire which was query superficial. Debris was falling. Access is the leisure centre and all ambulance crews to the leisure centre. There was an unknown number of patients at that time. My thoughts were that despite seeing people

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trapped in the flats of the tower that didn't automatically make them a patient, although I knew we would definitely be getting patients from this incident. The LFB had previously informed me there had been multiple 999 calls.

I then started to write in my log book and made several entries at the beginning of it. I felt I did not have enough information at that point and felt that I needed to know more. I then saw two LAS staff walking towards me. I then posted one male to casualty clearing. The other male was Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Keiran LEGGATT and he was a trainee at the time. I then told Keiran to be my loggist for me.

I thought patients would then start coming but at least we had somewhere to start accepting them. Around this time IRO Paul HAMMOND (Call sign IRO11) arrived and I gave him an update about what the LFB had told me about the external fire and keeping the incident at a "significant" level. I informed him what LFB hold told me about the fire being on the outside of the building and had not penetrated internally.

I then assigned him the role of Bronze sector to look after the initial set up of the Triage to the casualty clearing area. His role would be to manage that area. This formed my early command structure and plan.

I was still unsure who was in charge of the LFB at this point. I then gave a report at 0204hrs stating LFB fighting fire and casualty clearing has been set up. I also had a look at my Incident Response book to make sure I had done a lot of actions I should have in line with policy. I was then directed to an LFB command vehicle which I have logged as Command Unit 7 (CU7). CU7 was parked on Grenfell Road adjacent to the electricity station. I get there and ask to speak to the LFB commander. I was informed he was in Command Unit 2 (CU2). So I then walked towards CU2. On my arrival at CU2 there were lots of fire fighters there. There were also lots of members of the public milling around. I became aware that I had to be careful what I was saying in earshot as there were a lot of emotional people around who may act on information they over hear.

I then knocked on the door of CU2 and the Assistant Commissioner stated he had only just arrived and he needed to get his head around the incident. I state that I urgently wanted to know how many people were in the building. He then pointed to someone and told him to take me to CU7.

As I walked from CU2 to CU7 I gave an update over the radio at 0223hrs. I also think around this time I was asked if I needed any more resources. I believe we had up to 25 LAS personal already committed and

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thought this would be enough given we still had no patients, and no indication of the number of people still within the building.

I was also aware of the Shepard's Bush building where LAS declared a major incident. There were only 3 people who came out of that fire. I was aware this building fire was different to that, but it was a consideration in my decision.

I then got to CU7 and opened the door. I believe this was the CU dealing with the fire survival calls. I asked how many people were trapped and they advised that there were 25 Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) calls involving over to 40 people trapped. As I go that information and walk out of the CU I was informed that the first two patents had come out of the building. I was informed they were two unconscious children. They were in a critical condition. Based on that information at 0255hrs I declared the Grenfell Tower a Major incident and updated control over the radio.

If I declared the incident a major incident I will get 20 ambulances, 8 officers, the HART team, HEMS and APP. The main benefit is that 20 ambulances will attend and four (4) hospitals will be put on standby to receive casualties. The radio channels will also be split for the incident.

My next concern is where all of the coming resources were going to park. I had no local knowledge of the area but realise parking was going to be a problem. A recommendation was then made to make the RVP for ambulances Clarendon Road jnc Cornwall Crescent W11 which I agreed with.

I then gave another METHANE report over the radio stating it was now a major incident. There were over 40 people trapped and 2 x P1 unconscious children.

I then asked for all LAS Officers to meet me outside CU7. HEMS then arrive and were assigned to Bronze Doctor role. Despite being a separate organisation HEMS fall under my responsibility at the scene.

The HEMS doctor and I worked closely throughout the night.

At 0238hrs I was made aware there was an adult in cardiac arrest. I do not know how I was informed of this. I was also informed by LFB that there were fifty (58) adults trapped and sixteen (16) children making a total of seventy four (74).

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I was also asked by LFB if we have any carry sheets in the vehicles that they could use. The yellow carry sheets enable several people to carry an unconscious person. These were given to the LFB.

At 0245hrs an entry was made in the Incident log book that our Command unit was on scene but was unable to join us at CU7 due to access issues. The LAS command unit was not used although kit such as radios were taken from it.

Helen WIGELY then arrived and took over as my loggist. The previous loggist then went to casualty clearing. Helen is an area controller from the EOC. She is trained to operate the command vehicle and is a trained loggist. Helen then took over listening to the radio and I turned mine off.

Just after 0245hrs I received a report from Paul HAMMOND that there were patients now on the west side of Grenfell Tower having been removed from the building my resources were on the east side of the building. Paul sent two HART officers from the Triage area to the West side of the building to find out what was going on. I then made the decision to Sectorise the incident. I then made the original casualty area on the east side of the building as Sector 1 and then the new casualty area on the west side of the building as sector 2. There no longer seemed to be patients coming out onto Sector 1.

At 0259hrs my tactical advisor Geoff LONG arrived on scene and is recorded in my log as "update EP04". His role is to offer tactical advice and guidance. There were no patients coming out onto sector 1 which made me think that LFB were now only taking patients to Sector 2. I did not close down Sector 1 in case casualties started returning to Sector 1, and also to treat firefighters on that side as they exit the building.

Around 0300hrs 3 x IRO's arrived which I know and who are fairly senior in the role. It was IRO Tom GLEESON call sign IR71. IRO Maria CONYERS call sign IR51 and IRO Graham BARWICK call sign IR41. I was relieved as I had just set up sector 2 and needed a command structure in place on that side. I sent Tom GLEESON as the Bronze Sector 2 and Maria CONYERS was there to help him. I was happy and confident knowing that they could do the role and I could leave them to it. I then tasked Graham BARWICK to start at Bronze Triage in sector 1. This involved him walking the entire sector 1 and making sure that all roles are being performed correctly and that all areas are "flowing" ie that casualties move from the triage area to the casualty clearing area. Graham later reported back to me that all systems are working correctly.

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At 0310hrs I had a Silver meeting with LFB and the MPS in Command Unit 2. Present was myself, Geoff LONG (my tactical advisor), HEMS doctor, the LFB deputy Commissioner and MPS gold. There were also some additional LFB operation staff. The meeting was lead and chaired by the LFB. The meeting lasted around 25 minutes. I was informed by the LFB that this was unprecedented event and was beyond anything they had experienced before. I explained to the LFB what I had put in place at the scene. I was also informed there were multiple 999 calls and that there were water issues within the building and they could not get to the people that were trapped in the building.

The LFB person then informed MPS Gold that they had to clear the crowds as the area was not under control at that stage. The MPS Gold informed him that people were very emotional and that a public disorder situation may arise. Despite this it was made very clear to the MPS Gold that the crowds had to be cleared.

I also relayed how many casualties that the LAS had contact with. I also asked why people were being brought out the other side, West Side. I believed that there was so much debris falling in Sector 1 that it was proving difficult to take people there. It was also asked of LFB if the building was going to fall down. LFB assured us that the building was structurally sound although engineers were coming to the scene. We then made an arrangement to have the second silver meeting at 0430hrs. this is standard procedure to have updated meetings every hour after the first one.

After the meeting I informed Loggist Helen WIGLEY who then feeds the information back to the control room. At around 0400hrs I received information that there were 6 x P2 and 1 x P1 currently in Sector 2. I was made aware that 10 further ambulances were required in sector 2.

In consultation with Bronze Doctor – we sent two further HEMS teams to Sector 2 but kept one HEMS team at Sector 1. I also noticed there were lots of exhausted fire fighters sat near sector 1. This made me think that if the fire fighters were happy to rest at the bottom of the building then we could continue to accept casualties there.

With all roles assigned my job was then to keep control updated and make sure everything is running smoothly. Graham BARIWCK was then assigned as Bronze Safety. His role would be to walk around both sectors and make sure everything was being performed safely and in line with policy. Later on in the incident Sector 1 triage was moved further away from the building.

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The MPS riot squad then arrived in full tactical gear and pushed the crowd back. The area becomes secure and I felt we could talk more freely in a now sterile area. This needed to be done although it looked harsh at the time pushing family members back.

In either the first or second Silver meeting it was discussed that the LFB were not going to be going above the 14th floor as it was too dangerous.

Before the second silver meeting I received an update about casualty numbers. I was also informed there were several jumpers from the building one of which a HART officer recorded Record of Life Extinct. A temporary mortuary was also set up at the scene by the police on my request.

At 0430hrs we had the second Silver meeting in CU2 with the same personnel from the first one and LFB Commissioner Danny COTTON. I asked if the building was structurally safe. They confirmed it was but the engineers were still on route. The word super structure was used a lot and that the building was still intact.

LFB further stated they still hadn't had plans from the council and that it was an unprecedented event. Also the scale of the fire meant that they were operating outside protocol. It was confirmed that no LFB staff were to go above floor 14 and that people who were trapped should be told to self-evacuate. I was informed that the building was lost and that all the LFB were trying to do were rescue people.

I gave a further update about casualty numbers.

After the silver meeting it was relayed over the radio that the building was safe and was not going to fall down but if LAS staff wanted to move further away they could. I also updated LAS silver Bill ANYKL that this incident was going to run all throughout the day and we needed to plan for further staff attendance at the scene. I was asked how many people were needed and I relayed the same amount that were at the scene now.

At around 0500hrs I walked through sector 1 and had a chat with staff to make sure they were ok. Helen WIGELY and I then walked around the scene from Sector 1 to Sector 2. It was only then I realised how far it was between the sectors. I also had a chance to look at the West side of the building. It was engulfed in flames and appeared to be the worst side of the building. I made sure Maria and Tom were ok and I noticed there were a lot of LAS staff standing around and virtually no patients coming out of the building.

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As I was walking back I was asked by a lady if the LFB had got to the 20th floor. I informed her that I did not know.

At 0550hrs I returned to CU2 for the third silver meeting. There were the same people present as in the second silver meeting. LFB informed me that they had stopped at floor 12 and there were 116 people unaccounted for. Surrounding buildings had been evacuated and structural integrity of the building was still sound. The MPS had also set up a casualty bureau and provided a phone number. I informed everyone that we were having very few casualties coming out of the building.

After this meeting I then walked through the scene again including both Sectors. At around 0700hrs I bumped into LAS IR71 Colin PASSEY who state he would relieve me at scene.

At 0710hrs the fourth Silver meeting took place which Colin attended. The same people were there and I informed them that IR71 Colin PASSEY would be taking over from me. He was there to shadow me in that meeting. The LFB Assistant Commissioner told me not to scale back the LAS response. I informed him we weren't but we had to change staff over. I was confident we could have handled 50 casualties at that point.

After the meeting I walked Colin PASSEY around the scene showing him what had been set up and where everything was. I also explained my decisions to him. We were at Sector 2 when the last survivor came out of the building being carried by LFB. The HART team then met the LFB and put him on a yellow sheet and gave him oxygen. He was then taken straight to hospital.

At 0738hrs Colin PASSEY formally took over my role as Bronze Medic and Amanda CASSIDY took over the loggist role. I handed my tabard to Colin.

It appeared that some of the other roles were being relieved but other such as Bronze safety were not. I then took over Grahams role as Bronze safety and took his tabard. My role then resulted in me walking around the scene and seeing what night duty staff were still on scene and trying to relieve them. At 0930hrs I had no relief so I handed my tabard back to Colin and informed him I was leaving the scene. My role had become redundant at that time. I then went back to my vehicle and then drove to Woolwich Ambulance station where I ended my shift at around 1200hrs.

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An LAS hot debrief took place on 15th June 2017 at Bow Control centre. An official debrief took place on 3rd and 10th July 2017. I attended the debrief on 10th July 2017.

Following the incident I feel that the LAS performed well at the scene. I don't feel we could have done much differently. The one thing that could have been better is the staff shift change.

I have signed this statement electronically.

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