

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: HODSON, MARK

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

Occupation: HART PARAMEDIC

This statement (consisting of 8 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: M HODSON

Date: 21/04/2018

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

This statement refers to the Grenfell Tower Fire and my attendance at the scene. I have made this statement whilst referring to patient report form 234825946 and LA3 form which I completed at the incident.

I am Mark HODSON, a Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) paramedic based at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I have worked for the London Ambulance Service (LAS) since July 2013 and have been in my current role since the end of 2016. I previously worked at Deptford Ambulance Station. I qualified as a paramedic in 2013 having completed my initial training at South Central Ambulance Service. I have also completed initial HART training which was 2 weeks with the fire service with breathing apparatus and learning their techniques followed by a 4 week incident response course which includes HAZMAT and mass casualty and major incidents. I have also done working at height, Urban Search and Rescue Courses and swift water rescue courses. We complete regular refresher training in all of these skills.

The HART team is a specialist team which deal with hazardous and risky situations including at height, on water, at CRBN incident including working with breathing apparatus. The day- to-day work includes supporting the trust with more standard jobs such as difficult patient extractions, incidents with carbon monoxide and fires with persons reported as we can get a bit closer to the incident than other ambulance staff.

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On the night of the 13th June 2017 I was paired up with Kevin MANSORD and our call sign was Y132.

Also on the team that night was Ian SIBTHORPE, team leader, John DELL, Jennifer DOIDGE and Robbie HICKLING. Georgia SEAMAN was also working with us but in the clinical car and she did not attend Grenfell Tower.

Before the 14th June 2017 I had never been to Grenfell Tower and am not familiar with the area around it.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017 I was on a night shift which started at 1830 hours at Cody Road and it was a fairly slow start. We completed all of our equipment checks. I was working with Kevin MANSFORD with call sign Y132. We were deployed in a white minibus for the night that is difficult as it cannot carry the complete kit without being overweight so some of the more specialist kit such as breathing apparatus was left off but available for us to put on the minibus if required. I think I only had one job before going to Grenfell Tower that was to assist an ambulance crew move a patient. After that we came back to Cody Road at about 2330 or 0000 hours.

I first became aware of the incident when one of my colleagues, John DELL, saw on one of our computer systems that there was a lot of resources being deployed to the area. Ian SIBTHROPE, team leader, then got a call deploying us to the incident. He called us and the rest of the team; John DELL, Jennifer DOIDGE and Robbie HICKLING into the garage area for a short briefing about what the incident was. Ian told me and Kevin to grab the spare BA sets at Cody Road and any spare cylinders and put them onto the minibus. We got into our incident ground kit whilst still at the station, before leaving for the incident. The incident ground kit is not fire proof or rated for heat but does provide us more protection than the standard LAS uniform. I put my lime green trousers on as that takes the longest as you have to take your boots off.

Our vehicles did not have Mobile Data Terminals, only main set radios, so there was a little bit of a delay to set off whilst I programmed the Sat Nav. Kevin was driving the minibus and I was attending. We set off from Cody Road using blue lights. Prior to leaving, I knew it was a 20 pump fire with persons reported inside but did not know what the building was. I do not know the route that we took to Grenfell Tower but we did not see the building at all but could smell something burning as we got close. As we turned a corner, we saw the fire. I thought "Oh fuck." It looked like an absolute inferno. We could see the east side of the tower and the fire looked like it was going all the way from the 10th floor to the very top with the whole width of the tower on fire. It was a complete wall of flame. I have only ever scene

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anything like it in films. We started to go down one road but was told by a police officer that it was blocked so had to drive further around to try and get close. I cannot remember what was being said on the radio whilst we approached. HART East has its own talk group which is mostly used for communication between ourselves rather than updates from control.

Eventually we saw Ian and John's vehicle and parked up behind them at approximately 0218 hours. I think this was in between the leisure centre and school. I have marked this on a map with my call sign. I produce this map as exhibit MHO/01. I have also marked on this map Ian vehicle, Y133, and Johns Y151. We got off the vehicle and put on the rest of our gear, including green jacket and helmet. Ian went to the tower to see what was happening. Whilst we did this we took our paramedic bags, oxygen and urban search and rescue bags off the minibus and took it to the wall that runs in front of the leisure centre, next to where the London Fire Brigade (LFB) had set up a rest area. We left the kit here and went down to the base of the tower to speak to Ian, at the area I have marked as Sector One on the map. Ian was speaking to the HART West Team, finding out what was going on. Jennifer and Robbie came and joined us as they had parked elsewhere at the scene.

The fire service were bringing people out of the tower and handing them to us. We had one carry chair and one trolley bed so people were being carried up to the Casualty Clearing Point (CCP) which had been set up by HART West inside the leisure centre. Me and Jennifer were given a patient by the fire service. We put them onto a chair and started to take them up the slope to the CCP. I do not think this patient was deceased but we were not triaging them at this point, just trying to move them up to the CCP quickly so we could move the next casualty away. We gave this patient to firefighters and told them to the CCP. I cannot remember any details about this patient.

I then went with one of the staff from the HART West team to go to an ambulance that had parked near our vehicles. We went and took the trolley bed, a chair and oxygen from the ambulance back down to the base of the tower.

On our vehicle had on it a Mass Casualty Cube that contains enough equipment to deal with 50 patients. There are 2 different ones, a red one for CRBN and a green one for Mass Casualties which treats most patients. Ian asked me which one we had and I told him the red one. The green one which would have been more suitable for the incident was in Robbie and Jennifer's van which was too far away. There were

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additional resources turning up with more kit as well so it was decided that we did not need to go and get it.

Closer to the tower you could see the lower floors were not on fire. It was very hot and smoky. It was very noisy with fire engines pumping and people shouting and screaming. There was debris falling from the tower but it was not large chunks at this point. The debris appeared to be polystyrene which was floating down. We were stood under the walkway in the garage area which was providing us with cover from the falling items.

When I got back to the tower with the equipment, the LFB had dragged a male out of the tower. He was white, quite a large gentleman about 6 foot tall. He was soaking wet and clearly deceased. He did not have a deceased tag on him but we put him onto a trolley. Myself, Jennifer and Russell LOBJOIT got a tarpaulin from the fire brigade and took him to the green in front of the sports centre. This was inside a police cordon and away from public view. I helped to pick him up off the trolley and put him onto the tarpaulin. His body was very squishy and it felt like most of his bones had been broken.

I went back down to the base of the tower. Kevin and a member of HART west had gone around to the other side of the tower as we had been given information that the LFB were bringing patients out of the other side of the tower. Kevin and the other person had gone around to see what was happening around there but now Ian was unable to raise them on the radio. Myself and John went with two officers, Simon WOODMORE and Maria CONYERS, around to the other side of the tower to see what was happening and if we could find Kevin.

It was difficult to get around to the other side of the tower. We went south down Grenfell Road and around the blocks immediately next to Grenfell. We had tried to get around between the blocks but there was no way around in-between them. There were a lot of people on the street and we asked them how to get around. They directed us to the main road. It seemed to take forever to get around.

We got around to Bramley Road and found Kevin next to a big tree close to a pub by the railway station. There was an ambulance parked up and the member of HART West staff was in the back of that ambulance doing CPR on what I have been told was a paediatric cardiac arrest. Kevin seemed to be swamped by patients who had been brought out of the tower. Kevin had minimal equipment and we had

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not brought any equipment with us. I asked Kevin what he needed and he said that we needed medical equipment, oxygen, triage tags and more staff.

I was still on the HART East radio channel, not having changed to the major incident channel. Ian was also on this channel so I radioed him with what we needed. This was about 0300 hours. I then went further down the ramp where the tree was towards the tower, to the corner of the block south of Grenfell Tower. I have marked this on the map as Sector 2. I would started triaging the patients that were being brought out of the tower here, so that they could then be sent up to Kevin already triaged. I did not have any medical equipment with me at this time or any tags to triage them but there were police officers who were taking the patients up the ramp to where Kevin and the CCP was. I was telling these police officers the priority category of each patient and telling them to tell Kevin when they took the patient up to them.

At one point a deceased male was brought out to me. He was white, approximately 60 years old and unshaven with greying hair. He was badly burnt, not responsive and did not have a pulse. I requested that a Lifepak 15 machine was brought down and Ian came over with one. I connected the machine to him, using defibrillator pads instead of the ECG ones in case I need to use the defibrillator on him straight after. The lifepak 15 printed out a rhythm strip which confirmed that he was deceased. I completed the recognition of life extinct (ROLE) procedure on the male at 0335 hours completing the relevant forms. As I did not have a decease tag with me I wrote the details on one of the defibrillator pads and used it to stick the paperwork to him. The male was moved to the side and I continued to triage the patients who were being brought out of the tower. Later on a deceased tag did get completed for the male and attached to him. The male was moved several times by various people to keep him out of the way of the work that was happening at the scene.

The patients were being brought out in waves, with none being brought out then all of a sudden 5 or 6 would be brought out in one go. John joined me and I would triage the patient and he would complete the paperwork, including the triage tags which had now arrived as part of a triage pack that had been brought down to us. The majority of patients who were being brought out were Priority 3 (P3) patients. Some of them where walking up to us and some were being carried. Most of those who were being carried could walk with some encouragement and were still only P3's however there were some priority 2 (P2)'s that we dealt with. I could not see where the patients were coming from as we were on the corner of the block next to it, next to that area where the firefighter were waiting. This seemed to be a safe area for us to be triaging patients as we were underneath a footbridge that provided us with some protection. This now

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seemed to be the main place that the firefighters were bring patients out to and we were joined by Russell LOBJOIT and Dominc STARK from HART West who also started triaging as a pair. An officer, who I do not know, came down as Bronze Triage and it seemed like a management structure for the Sector was set in to place. The triage area eventually got set up properly with triage sheets and we told the firefighters to put any casualties they brought over straight onto a triage sheet.

There was a man who came out wearing swimming goggles and there was a lady who came over with a family who said that she had not been in the building but had just come around. Later in the morning some kids also came riding through towards us on pedal cycles.

When we had moved around to the west side of the tower at Sector 2, the fire had not spread around to it but you could see it on the north side of the tower. Over the course of a few hours, the fire spread around from the north side to the west side and then up to the top of the building on this side. When we first came around you could see people in the windows of the tower. As the fire started to spread around, it looked like molten metal was dripping from the walls in between the windows but this eventually turned into large pieces of debris and later in the morning pieces of debris started to fall closer to us. I think the triage area was set up about 50 metres from the building. There was an LAS safety officer who was concerned that we were too close to the building and we had a discussion with them that that was what we were trained to do and needed to be close to the building to take the patients from the LFB. The safety officer was concerned by the falling debris but we were sheltered by the footbridge above us but they did move us back further up the ramp to a point I have marked on the map.

At one point a fire service officer came and spoke to us and told us that there was a bariatric patient in the stairwell who was blocking the stairs. I was aware that they were asking if we could go in and remove her. Simon WOODMORE, the HART West Operations Manager, made the decision that we should not go in to do this as we did not have fire proof clothing and the LFB could not guarantee that where we would be going was clear of fire.

There was one firefighter who had been injured and looked like he needed assistance but was not willing to be treated. He was very stressed and clearly dehydrated but was calmed down and dealt with by other firefighters. This was just before 0300 hours. There was another firefighter later who came over and was clearly exhausted. We gave him oxygen and he was walked up to the pub where the P3's were being treated. I think this was about 0430 hours.

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At one point a LFB officer asked me to give them all our oxygen so that they could take it up to the first or second floor to start treating patients inside the tower. I told him that this would make the system that we had ineffective as we would not be able to triage the patients and they would end up by passing us and going straight to the CCP. I also did not think that it was a very good idea to take oxygen canisters into a burning building. The officer was not happy with this.

I continued to do this triaging role until we were relieved by day turn but by about 0545 hours the casualties stopped being brought out so we were able to go to the pub and get water and have some respite. After this, we stayed at the triaging area waiting to see if there were more patients brought out but there were not.

I am not sure when but the day duty team arrived and we were sent back to Sector 1. There was a lot of news reports who had lined up at the police cordon but I did not speak to anyone about the incident and have not done subsequently. They had arrived in a minibus so we removed our kit from our vehicles and put it on the minibus so that the operational vehicles were left at the scene and could be used by the day turn. We then came back to Cody Road in the minibus, arriving here at about 0930 hours. There was a debate as to whether it was worth us going home or just sleeping at the station as we were back on duty that night but we decided to go home.

I was back at work that evening at 1830 hours and we had a team de-brief about the incident with Lee EMMETT, a training officer. There was another de-brief a couple of months later someone from NHS England and was for all the HART staff who had attended the fire.

I did not suffer any injuries and did not take any photographs or videos of the incident. I have never attended an incident quite like this and it is the highest casualty incident I have attended. We have completed training for incidents of this size but the size and scale of it at first was shocking.

Since the 14th June 2017 I have returned to the tower to provide HART support to the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) body recovery process. I was there simply to provide coverage for the staff who were working on this and did not ROLE anyone. I went back twice approximately one week after the fire.

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