

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: BEALE, STUART KENNETH

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 3 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: S BEALE

Date: 26/03/2018

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

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This statement is in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire on WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017 and to answer further operational personnel questions post my first statement that I gave on 06/07/2017.

At the time of the incident, I was classed as competent, (and still am) and had been a firefighter for 22 years going on for 23 years. I am ultimately responsible for Red Watch training. High-rise training will be done quarterly throughout the year and we as Red Watch attend high-rise fires regularly. The training is a mixture of PowerPoint presentations and practical drill sessions, which we do at Soho Fire Station and at various other external locations. My job is mainly operational command but I have attended high-rise fires before but am unable to give exact dates. I have to attend annual Incident Command Training which part of that involves high-rise firefighting training. The training is done within a virtual Incident Command Suite and lasts for one day. As part of my role, I have to know the procedure for LFB firefighting policy for high-rise blocks of flats but was unaware of any pre-prepared plan for Grenfell Tower. The tower falls under the remit of North Kensington so we have no knowledge of it. I have never been on a Section 7(2)d familiarisation visit to Grenfell Tower but have been to similar high-rise blocks within A24 Station's ground.

I was aware that our Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) was attending the incident and had gone out. Shortly after that, the call came out to make pumps 20 which means the officer at the scene wants 20 fire appliances to attend so he can utilise them. In addition to the 20 fire engines there would have specialist units mobilised because of the incident size. In general terms the more appliances the bigger the fire.

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The request for additional resources was a request made from the scene. I thought this was pretty strange for it to jump from an initial 8- pump fire to now 20. It just does not jump up that big.

Our MDT was not working in the appliance. We were locked out and the screen had frozen. I had a paper copy of call that is called a tip sheet. The tip sheet provides the date, time of call, appliances needed, address, all additional appliances, and what the incident was, i.e. fire. What normally happens is that a green bar on the MDT screen, which says, acknowledge is touched and once that is done incident details are displayed. I would normally read this but was unable to. A phone call was made from the fire Brigade Control Room to ask Control if we required or not. Status 2, which means mobile to incident, could not be completed on the MDT so I think we had to individually try to book on with control that was very difficult due to the amount of radio traffic. At this time Control were relaying Fire Safety Guidance (FSG) to appliances on scene regarding persons stuck in flats within the tower.

When we pulled up in Bomore Road, I think one of my colleagues in the back of the appliance alerted me to fire. It looked to me that the tower had scaffolding that was wrapped in plastic. The tower looked like it was wrapped by something that was now alight. It was not usual or expected. Upon our arrival, there was no other appliance in front of us in Bomore Road but numerous emergency services were present at this time. After my team and I arrived at the tower, it was clear to see that there was an issue with cladding. It was visually obvious that the exterior was alight as well as some of the flats internally. I did not know of the entry and exit points from the tower.

I was in charge of the East side of the building and was monitoring the North side of the tower as well. When possible I was relaying information back to the Command Unit and the Bridgehead with regards to the burn rate of the fire. I am trained in various real fire operational command incidents. I noticed from where I was standing on the outside the windows to individual flats were top tilted in which would have been because it was a warm night. As the fire progressed, you could see the fire and smoke enter through the open windows. There was extensive external fire spread and an unusual burn pattern.

When I turned up the initial incident commander was trying to carry out a handover brief to a Station Manager (SM) that was at the base of the tower under the covered part. As the incident gets bigger, the incident commander will change to a higher rank and will normally be located at the Command Unit. North Kensington's Watch Manger was withdrawing from the tower with his crew following extinguishing the initial fire on the fourth floor and then at this point due to the size of the incident he was conducting a handing over brief to a Station Manager. I did not know how the operational tactics/approach was determined, how the decision making structure was established, or how decisions

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were made and conveyed. The Command Unit is a central hub for operational command and control which is utilised by incident commanders in making tactical decisions and liaising with other agencies. I think the dry riser was charged when I arrived. The standard process for high-rise firefighting is that the dry rising main would be utilised for water supply to fight fires on whichever floor the fire was located within a high-rise premise. To do that you have to locate a hydrant which then has to be connected to a fire appliance and that will be through 2 hoses out of one stand pipe then the fire appliance will be connected to dry riser inlet which will be located on the ground floor somewhere exterior or interior within the block. Once that has been secured the standard operating procedure is to fight the fire 2 floors below the fire floor and proceed up.

I have no knowledge of cutting the gas supply to the tower as the attendance of the gas board is requested by the officer in charge. Decisions regarding the application and withdrawal of the Stay Put Policy were made by the Incident Commander.

Due to the way the way high-rise building are designed, a fire in a flat should be contained within that flat for a period of up to one hour. With that in mind, residents who are involved in a fire within a high-rise tower block will be advised from our Control Room to stay put in their flat, go to an area of safety within their premises in fresh air, and by doing this it enables the fire service to then locate rescue remove those most affected by the fire first in a controlled and safe manor.

From the side of the tower I was on I needed an adequate water supply, which would have enabled me to carry out effective external firefighting. We did not have vehicular access to all four sides of the tower due to the design which prevented us locating the aerial ladders in effective positions.

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