

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MARTIN, ZOE

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

Occupation:

This statement (consisting of 4 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: ZOE MARTIN

Date: 19/02/2018

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

This statement relates to my experiences on the night of 13th – 14th June in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire.

I am currently a Crew Manager for Kent Fire & Rescue Service and have worked for them for the past 6 ½ years. I am based within the Control Room, within the headquarters of Kent Police in Maidstone. Within the police Control Room, the Fire Service operate from a small corner consisting of 6 desks and staffed by a Watch Manager, Crew Manager and normally 2 operators. Our minimum strength is 4 but we do crew to 5 with the opportunity of crewing to full capacity of 6 within the next 2 months.

My training as a Control Room operator consisted of a 6-week training programme containing a number of modules that we would have to pass in order to progress. The basic training consisted of a lot of classroom based work which was led by a Station Manager. We would be taken through the basics of call signs, types of incidents, call handling and within that, special training regarding Fire Survival Guidance calls. On the completion of our training we are still monitored by more experienced staff when handling calls, which can be taken over by them at any stage should it be deemed that we are struggling. However once considered competent (completed training and probationary period) we will continue to be monitored as per our working guidelines but we will manage our way through the calls as necessary. Training is continually written in to the shift pattern and often takes place monthly. It is varied because of our roles and for interest. For example, we can cover training on animal rescue and fire alarms as well as

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2018

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Fire Survival Guidance. All are done with a view of familiarisation. In terms of Fire Survival Guidance calls, I have only dealt with one previously and they not very common.

My role as a Crew Manager would be to supervise all calls that our operators deal with to ensure that the right advice is given at all times. My other areas of responsibilities centre on handling operations, organising training and taking the lead on incident management in line with the Watch Manager. However, on any normal tour of duty, the Watch Manager will handle project based work given to them by senior management..

Primary importance of a call handler would be to acquire an address. This is important in the event that we should be cut off, we can still begin mobilising appliances to the location. We then move on to the incident type, to better understand what we are dealing with, and what crews need to attend. Once we know what type of incident we are attending, we utilise our computerised Pre Determined Attendance (PDA) which gives us the options that we require for the correct mobilising of appliances, depending on the incident type. Once we have mobilised the appliances we would inform the Station Manager of the incident that is currently ongoing. We would also pass messages on other agencies such as the police, ambulance or UK Power depending on the type. We would also try to get any specific landmarks from the caller to help narrow down the area if it is broad, such as near shops, post boxes etc.

Fire Survival Guidance calls relate to calls in which the caller tells us they are stuck within a premises and are unable to get out. In the event that this happens, we would advise that they move to a room furthest away from where the fire is and use anything they can to block out the smoke, whether that be bed sheets, curtains or towels. We then advise that if safe to do so, open a window for clean air and hang something out so that fire crews know they are there and can be rescued. We would also ensure that we stay on the phone to them to make sure they are rescued and offer reassurance. During all Fire Survival Guidance, we ensure that all call operators are monitored. However if any rank holders take calls they are not monitored.

My understanding of the stay put policy within buildings is that every building is different and have different policies. Some have stay put policies which are put in place by the building management team; and others do not. Personally I would ask each caller what the policy is for their building and then be guided by them. If a stay put policy is in place and the individual is unable to get out, we would enact the

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2018

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Fire Survival Guidance.

In the event that we take calls from other Brigades the protocol would be to keep the caller on the line and call the other Brigade simultaneously and introduce the caller to that Brigade having told them what was being reported. For a Brigade like London, we have them on speed dial. If we do not receive any answer, we would take ownership of the call and continue to take all relevant information whilst continuing to try and contact the necessary Brigade.

If a major incident was declared within our Brigade, a Major Incident Room would be set up within headquarters for officers and senior management. The logistics would be communicated by laptops and radios but the main crux of the decisions would be handled from the fire ground, not Control. I have not had to deal with any major incidents declared by KFRS and I am unaware if a Major Incident Room or anything like it was established in London but I assume something would have been.

Prior to the early hours of 14th June 2017, I had never heard of Grenfell Tower.

My shift started on the 13th June at 7pm as normal. I was the acting Watch Manager for the night and my team consisted of Mitch SAMSON (Crew Manager), Paul STABLES (Radio Operator) and Jade MILLSOM (Phone Operator). For the initial part of the shift we undertook a joint exercise with Kent Police, under Operation Plato, a counter terrorism operation. The exercise lasted a couple of hours before we returned to normal duties. At some point in the night, I cannot be sure of any times, we received a phone call from BT asking whether we would be prepared to take calls on behalf of the London Fire Brigade who were very busy dealing with a high volume of calls from a large scale incident. We, of course, agreed having checked with the on call senior management. For a few hours we received nothing. I was unaware of the incident they were referring to at that point but it prompted me to look at the news. When we looked at the news online, I told the team that we could receive some very difficult calls and that we should all be mindful of this. I felt devastated when seeing the images online and felt for those involved and for London Fire who would be dealing with such a horrific incident.

Eventually I received a call from a lady who was on the Isle of Sheppey enquiring about her husband who was trapped in the tower. Naturally she was very worried about them and could not get through to

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2018

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London. I explained that because she was in Sheppey, which is in Kent, she would be put through to us. She wanted to know what advice to give him when she spoke to him. I advised what I normally would for Fire Survival Guidance but also assured her that I would personally phone him as well. She gave me his name and number and I phoned him straight away. When I phoned him he could not talk much at all - I think due to the amount of smoke. I asked him whether he could get out and all I could hear were groans. I tried several times to get something out of him but I simply could not and eventually it sounded as though the phone had been dropped. It was a very difficult call to take.

I terminated the call and told my senior manager, Chris ELSE about the call I had taken. The wife then contacted KFRS again and I answered the call. I tried to reassure her and advised her that I had told him to try to exit the building via the stairwell. I advised her that it sounded as though he had dropped the phone and may have not been able to pick it up again because it was dark. I advised her to monitor the Met Police's website regarding a casualty bureau who may best be able to advise her further. I remember she sounded very calm the second time, it may have been down to shock. I cannot be sure.

The calls we took were logged as any normal call would be as CADs. At our level there is no need to keep decision logs.

The team call operator, Jade MILLSOM, who was only monitoring Kent calls looked at the news to give an up to date indication of what we were dealing with. We also had the advantage of using the 'helicam' which was a live feed of the incident from whatever police helicopter was at the scene. The camera is then fed back to the crews on the ground, the police and any Control Room looking on. I had it on my own monitor so I could see what was going on. The camera was kept on the 'heat camera' mode, which, for obvious reasons was showing an awful lot of heat from the building. There were also wall monitors that have CCTV however, none had the Grenfell Tower fire and we do not routinely have the news on.

Other than my colleague, Mitch, we did not take any further calls regarding Grenfell Tower. I had been in touch with London regarding the 'stay put' policy and we were advised that the policy had been withdrawn and were to tell any residents who called that they were to try and safely make their way out of the building. I told Mitch to do the same thing and ensure that the LFB were updated with the information and what floor the resident was on (I think mine was on the 20th floor but I cannot be sure).

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When I spoke with the LFB I spoke with a female operator. It was very quick and we did not exchange names, they sounded incredibly busy.

When Mitch and I finished with the calls we took, we were taken from the Control Room immediately and offered welfare counselling before we finished at our normal time of 7am. The Brigade have been very good at looking after us and I still receive calls from the Station Manager, checking that I am ok. I am unsure of any timings but I was at some point in the morning. The next few days I was still very upset by the events of the night. By now I am ok but it has taken time. I do not particularly like talking about it and have not talked about it much since then.

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