Statement of: TUCKER, LESLIE Form MG11(T)

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WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b	
Statement of: TUCKER, LESLIE	
Age if under 18: OVER18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')	Occupation: FIRE OFFICER
This statement (consisting of 13 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 TUCKER	Date: 21/12/2017
Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)	

I am the above named person and my details are known to the Police. This statement is in relation to the Grenfell Tower Fire that occurred on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017.

My name is Leslie TUCKER. I have been a Firefighter for sixteen (16) years and my Pay No is have been based at Wembley Fire Station for my whole career. On the night of the fire at Grenfell Tower I started a night duty shift at Wembley Fire Station at 8pm on TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017. I was posted as the driver of the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) appliance, call sign G306. I was on the Red Watch. Wembley Fire Station is a FRU station meaning we attend fires that require eight (8) pumps or more. The FRU appliance carries four (4) firefighters however there is space for five (5). The FRU carries specialist breaking and entering equipment as well as tools for rescue. Also on board is the Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA). Unlike the Pump and Pump Ladder appliances, the FRU does not carry water.

I will make reference to the following exhibits in this statement:

- I made very notes after the incident which I exhibit as LTU/01 Notes of Grenfell Tower Incident
- Whilst providing police with this statement I used a map of the area of Grenfell Planwhich I exhibit as LTU/02

Prior to making this statement to Police I was able to read my notes of the incident which I made on the afternoon of FRIDAY 16" JUNE 2017. This is exhibit LTU/01.

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I joined the London Fire Brigade in 2001. I completed a seventeen (17) week training course at Southwark when I started my career. As a Firefighter, I have had continuous training throughout my career. I also have training refreshers annually or bi-annually. These can be lectures or practical drills. I have also completed additional training for further qualifications in EDBA, FRU, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), Hazardous Materials, Mass Decontamination and Boat and Water. I am also qualified as a driver of the appliances.

I am trained to ride the FRU as well as the Pump or Pump Ladder appliances. The night of the Grenfell Tower fire I was riding the FRU with EDBA equipment. The EDBA has double the amount of air that the Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) has. The SDBA has one (1) cylinder of air whilst the EDBA has two (2). The amount of air used can be dependent on the individual Firefighter and their work rate.

I have had practical and lecture based training on high rises throughout my sixteen (16 years) service. These take place on a regular basis, at least once or twice a month. The lectures cover topics including water supply and refreshers on what policy dictates. It covers Bridgehead information, for example, where it will be sited or what happens when the Bridgehead is compromised. The Bridgehead is where the Entry Control Board will be sited, usually two (2) floors below a fire. Firefighters are committed from the Bridgehead and the Entry Control Board keeps a tally of those wearing Breathing Apparatus (BA) who are entering and exiting. This is usually manned by Designated Officers (DO). We use the tower in our yard at Wembley as well as derelict buildings, on and off our ground for practical training in high rises. The training procedures are what we follow however the Grenfell fire was a totally different entity.

I am a competent Firefighter and have attended lots of flat fires in high rises. Compartment fires, like kitchen fires in a flat, are run of the mill for us. In my experience of dealing with compartment fires, they are usually a simple job. The fire should stay within the room where it started. Sometimes the fire can heat up a room so hot that another part of the room ignites. This is called Flashover and this is not uncommon. It is when a fire in a room becomes a room on fire. This heat and flashover can cause the fire to burn throughout the room or through the ceiling. If compartmentation fails, the next step is to put the fire in the next room out. An example of a compartment fire that I have attended is the flat fire in Shepherds Bush around three years ago. The Shepherds Bush high rise building is around twenty (20) storeys. The fire was over three (3) floors of the high rise, however it was nothing compared to Grenfell.

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A Section 7(2)d is an annual check of a building. Firefighters check for any changes in layout, hazards or changes in egresses and exits. We also check that escape plans are in place. Information from 7(2)ds should be on the MDT (Mobile Data Terminal) inside the appliance when travelling to an incident. The Officer in Charge will then be able to read it en route. I have completed Section 7(2)d's on my own borough. I am not aware of a Section 7(2)d for the Grenfell Tower.

Before the night of fire I had never heard of Grenfell Tower. I have driven past the tower before but I did not know the name of that high rise. I know of Kensal Rise and Ladbroke Grove but I do not know the names of roads in the area.

On the night of the fire at Grenfell Tower, I had started my night duty at 8pm on TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017. This was the first of two night duties. I do not remember if there were any other calls before the Grenfell call. I was asleep at 0130am when the lights in the station came on and there was an audible alert. This tells the Firefighters in the station which appliances are needed. I heard the Pump and Pump Ladder leave the station due to the noise they were making but I did not know where they were headed. The FRU and another appliance, the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) remained in the station. About ten minutes later, I heard the call for the FRU.

Darren from the ALP said to me at some point after the FRU alert, "You've got a forty (40) pump fire". I was shocked, the biggest I had been to in years was thirty (30) pumps. I thought, due to the amount of appliances needed, that this is was bound to be a big warehouse or trading estate that had gone up. At this point I thought that the FRU would be needed for its breaking in equipment.

As the driver of the FRU, I need to get details of the incident and the location before we leave. This information is printed out by the Tele printer in the station. The sheet had already finished printing out when I got to the Tele printer. The sheet said 'forty (40) pump fire, make FRUs ten (10)'. I thought again that it must have been a warehouse on an estate due to the number of appliances and personnel that were needed.

The sheet also said, 'Area of Kensal Rise'. The sheet provides coordinates of where the location is. These can be checked on the large A to Z style map on the wall next to the printer. I knew the area was near Shepherds Bush so I decided to head in that direction. There is a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) in the appliance with a map if needed.

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From the time the FRU alarm went off to the time I was at the appliance ready to be on the road was less than a minute and a half. I was sat in the driver's seat, Paul CHARITY was in the passenger seat as Officer in Charge of the appliance. Firefighter Paul HARRIS and Firefighter Nicky SANDERS were in the back. The MDT was on in the appliance. The control radio was also on but I do not remember what was being said.

I drove on blue light condition from Wembley towards the A40. I joined the A40 towards London at Hanger Lane. I was able then to see a plume of smoke in the night sky. The smoke was in a diagonal line going from right to left as I looked towards it. I remember that we spoke in the appliance saying that must be where the fire was located. At that stage, we had not received any more information on the fire, just that it was a forty (40) pump fire.

We were on the overpass of the A40 at Wood Lane when we went past Grenfell Tower. It was blocked from view by other high rise buildings but I could see a glow like haze from around these towers. When Grenfell Tower came into full view it looked like a Roman Candle. I just thought this is horrendous. The one side of the tower that I could see was seventy-five (75) percent alight. The fire was to the top of the building. I could not understand how it got like that.

By now, the Westfield Shopping Centre was on my right, I could see there were fire appliances everywhere. There were appliances in front and behind our FRU. I followed the other appliances towards the location we were given for the Rendezvous Point (RVP) on Bramley Road. There were roadworks on BRAMLEY ROAD (I have marked this on exhibit LTU/02 as ROADWORKS) so I had to go toward Holland Park. All the appliances were prevented from getting through here due to the roadworks. There were cars parked on either side of the road, the access had been good until reaching the roadworks. It was difficult to park the appliance on Grenfell Road as there were so many people stood around. There were also appliances parked up and down Grenfell Road. I parked the FRU on Grenfell Road (I have marked this on exhibit LTU/02 and marked it as G306). It took around fifteen (15) minutes to get from Wembley to where I parked up the appliance. I did not return to the appliance again.

Paul CHARITY left the FRU and headed for a Command Unit, I did not see which one. Paul HARRIS, Nicky SANDERS and I remained. We started to get the EDBA kits out of the lockers on the appliance. I put on my tunic, leggings and gloves. I put my fire hood in my pocket and I carried my helmet. This kit is also called Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). I was in awe looking at the tower as I had never seen

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anything like this before. I remember thinking that we would not be committed to go into a fire like that and that it would be fought from outside. But at the same time I was thinking there could be many people who needed help, I knew I had to go in.

From where I was standing on Grenfell Road, I could not see the bottom of the tower. From my line of sight I could see four (4) or five (5) floors of Grenfell Tower. I could now see the side of the tower that I had not been able to see from the A40. This side was alight meaning that there were three sides alight I had seen and the fire was getting worse.

Paul CHARITY came back to where the three (3) of us still stood by the appliance. He told us to get our EDBA kits on and to take the spare cylinders from the lockers on the FRU. I had an EDBA set on and I was carrying two spare cylinders. Nicky was carrying the first aid kit. The equipment was heavy. I remember leaving the breaking in kit on the appliance as I thought we would probably use other crews stuff if we needed to. It took around five (5) to ten (10) minutes to walk nearer to the tower. I had to keep stopping and moving cylinders from shoulder to shoulder. There were lots of members of the public around, on their phones or just watching the tower. Some members of public helped us to carry our equipment.

As I walked closer to the tower (B on the map) I looked up. I could see up to about the eleventh (11th) and twelfth (12th) floor. I could see three (3) or four (4) people at windows, probably twelve (12) people in total across several windows. I cannot describe these people, they looked like shadows. I do not remember if there was fire in these flats. There was an awful lot of fire on the outside of the building and the fire looked like it licking over the windows, rolling up the side of the tower. The flames were covering the windows. The wind was blowing from west to north which meant from where I was stood there was no smoke.

There were large pieces of the building or cladding falling down. I remember thinking this was concrete spalling. This is when the concrete gets so hot it pops. I left the spare cylinder I had in an area near here where spare cylinders were being kept.

I do not remember who I spoke to, but I was told to direct the casualties coming out of the tower (I have marked this on exhibit LTU/02 as A). I was the only person stood at this place and I was there for about half an hour. During that time the only people I saw were Paramedics, they were carrying stretchers, on

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the stretchers were bodies of deceased people. I knew they were deceased as they were covered over. I could not describe those on the stretchers and I am not sure where the Paramedics took the stretchers.

Paul CHARITY called me forward as more SDBA and EDBA wearers were needed. I do not think anyone replaced me at the Casualty area. Myself, Paul and Nicky were now stood underneath a ramp (see map). I had on my EDBA equipment, fire hood and helmet. There was a Chiswick officer keeping a check on debris falling from above. He was popping his head out from under the ramp and shouting at firefighters letting them know when it was clear to run. When it was clear they would run from underneath the ramp to the entrance of Grenfell Tower. From where I was in the queue of firefighters I could see others running towards the tower.

The Chiswick officer told us to run. We made our way out to the open area between the tower and the ramp. As we got out into this area someone else called for us to run back towards underneath the ramp. I do not know why we were called back, I thought it must be due to the number of firefights backed up in the lobby area of the tower. I ran back to underneath the ramp. We did not wait there long before we were told to run towards the tower again. There were about three (3) Firefighters in front of me, one (1) of them had a shield up over his head. We ran ahead towards the tower. I was just out from under the ramp when I saw from the height of the ramp, a body fall towards the ground. The body hit the Firefighter with the shield. The body hit the shield with force causing the Firefighter to fall to the ground. I think the Firefighter was from Paddington or Edmonton, he managed to get up. He wobbled around for a bit and I think he had to sit down. A few of us dragged the Firefighter back underneath the cover of the ramp.

There was water cascading down from the outside of the tower. This was water from the firefighting on the exterior of the building. The water was around shin and knee deep in places. Three (3) or four (4) of us dragged the fallen body out of the path of the firefighters. We moved it near to where the water was. I could see that the body was that of a black male. He looked to be in his twenties (20s). The body was naked apart from a sock I believe. The body had one (1) leg missing from the hip down. There was sinew coming from the hip area where the leg had come off. I did not see where the leg landed. As this male had fallen on to his head, there were also injuries to this area. As the body hit the ground, I was splashed by body fluid coming from the body. I did not check for signs of life myself, I feel terrible for that. There was no way he could have survived his injuries from the fall and his leg being chopped off. I have seen people jump from high level floors before. This poor man was jumping to save himself not kill himself. It was like being in a disaster movie at that point, it was surreal. There was debris everywhere. As far as I

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was concerned at that point we had to get on with our jobs. Nicky, Paul and I ran back to underneath the ramp and waited to go into the tower.

Nicky and I were told to go and stand by the wall underneath the ramp. We were stood there for about 25 mins, I was thinking hurry up. I was watching the fire this whole time and it was just getting worse and worse every minute that it was still going. I knew by now that Nicky and I would be going in the tower, not for firefighting but for rescue. I kept thinking that this is where it ends, this is it. I thought there is no way the fire can be going like that and we would make it out. I thought of 9/11, the longer it goes the more chance the building could come down on top of us.

I could not see the top of the tower from where I was stood under the walkway but I could hear people shouting. I was not sure who was making the noise. I had my hood up and helmet over my ears which it difficult to hear clearly. I could hear muffled noises and the roar of the flames. I could hear glass breaking and the sound of the air being drawn in. There was still debris falling from the tower and landing on the ground in front of me. I just kept wanting to get inside and get on with it.

I had heard from others around me that there were around one hundred (100) people on Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) calls. This is when a designated Firefighter is on the phone to a person inside the location where the fire is. Control give them advice over the phone, telling the person what to do. Control will also use this call to guide crews to the location of the person. My understanding of the "Stay Put policy" is that when there are one hundred (100) to two hundred people (200) in a building, you cannot have them running out while Firefighters are trying to get in to fight the fire. Normally the fire stays contained.

Somebody gave Nicky and I a shield. Nicky was holding the shield and had it over her. I had my head tucked under the shield. The same Chiswick officer told us "Go" when he saw that it was clear. As I ran out from underneath the ramp, I felt a wallop on the shield. Something liquid had hit the shield. The force of the liquid had caused the shield to dip. The liquid went straight down my back. It had set my fire hood alight. I thought to myself "Oh fucking hell, I knew it, this is it". I did not know what it was, the Firefighter behind me told me it was molten aluminium. I ran towards the bottom of Grenfell tower to try and get water that was cascading down the side of the building on to my burnt neck. Other Firefighters from the lobby of the tower used bottled water to pour it down my back as it was on fire.

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I went into the tower through the lobby area. I was back with Nicky, we walked in through entrance one (1) (shown on exhibit LTU/02 as 1) Paul was already in there. The lobby was full of smoke and water, the water was well over my ankles. The smoke was grey but I could still see. My heart was racing but I was still able to breath without the BA equipment on. An officer said to me that I could not carry on due to the burn I had just suffered. There was also a hole in my fire hood. I talked that officer into letting me go in.

There was a queue of Firefighters waiting to be committed. I was aware that this area was the Bridgehead. The Entry Control Board was also there in the lobby. I saw two (2) or three (3) members of the public coming down the stairs of the lobby. They were being brought down by firefighting crews. I do not know if these people had been on phone calls for FSG. I remember one (1) lady at the bottom of the stairs. I saw her later at the hospital. I found out that she had been in the flat we were then tasked to search. I saw the lady walk out of the lobby. I do not know if anyone was logged as they were taken out of the building. The lady I saw leaving the lobby at that point was _______. I found out later that her name is Natasha ELCOCK.

I remember that there was a glass door in the lobby that firefighters were smashing. I thought this meant that the building was starting to fail. Often when doors start jamming and frames are bending it means the building is twisting. This worried me as I thought again of 9/11 and the building collapsing.

There was a queue of Firefighters in front of Nicky and I. We were all waiting to go up. We got to the Entry Control Point after about twenty (20) minutes. A Designated Officer (DO) Dick WALSH, told us our tasking. It was also written on the wall by the Entry Control Board. We were told to go to floor eleven (11) specifically flats eighty two (82) and eighty three (83). Also floor twelve (12) and to do what we could there in case of any casualties there. I did not know if this tasking related to FSG calls or not. Dick Walsh said they suspected there were people still in these flats. Dick Walsh also told us that there was a deceased bariatric person on the stairs of the eighth (8th) or ninth (9th) floor and that this person was already confirmed dead.

At Entry Control, I gave my name and tally over, my cylinders were checked and the tally is put into the Entry Control Board. This tells the Entry Control your status in terms of air in your BA. The tally is to make sure the Entry Control Board and the cylinders being carried show the same air levels. Nicky had with her a Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC) but we were not wearing body worn cameras. Once I passed Entry Control and handed over my tally, I turned on my EDBA at this point. I had ample enough air to

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make it to the eleventh (11th) and twelfth (12th) floors. I knew that people were taking their demand valves out to make the air last longer, this is against procedure. However, if some Firefighters had not done this they may not have made it further up the building.

I remember walking up the lobby stairs to the Mezzanine floor. The lobby staircase was wide enough for two (2) people to walk next to each other. I could see water gushing down these stairs. I walked past Firefighters as they made their way in. It was like a flow of traffic towards the main stairwell inside the tower. This internal stairwell was very narrow. On this stairwell we had to walk single file up the stairs, you could not walk abreast of each other. We had to lay down on the floor to let other Firefighters walk down the stairs. They had to step over us. It was much warmer in this part of the building. My BA mask was steaming up to a point that I could not see clearly. There was a rail on the left hand side of the stairs and a wall on the opposite side. I used the axe that I was holding as a crutch to help me up the stairs. It seemed to take forever to get up the stairs. It was a slow plodding climb. Every step was hard, I would guess it took fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes to get up to the tasking floors. The main stairwell was smokier than the lobby had been. As I walked up the stairs I could not see the floor numbers on the wall. The smoke layer was getting lower and lower. Someone had written in china graph the flat numbers on the walls.

I remember seeing hoses. There was no water cascading down this stairwell. I thought it was odd that there was hose reel rolled up not being used. It was getting smokier as I walked up the stairs. My neck was getting hotter because of the heat inside the building, the burn on my neck was getting hotter too. The visibility got worse from the seventh (7th) and eighth (8th) floor. The temperature was also considerably hotter on these floors, It was much smokier than it had been earlier. Somebody had scribbled the number eight (8) on this floor. Before this, I did not know what floor I was on. I had not counted floors during the walk up as I was concentrating on breathing. As I had been told about the bariatric person on the stairs, when I did come across the body I did not check for signs of life or try to move the body. At the time I thought it was a black male, who was around thirty (30) stone. The body had dreadlocks with a head band. It was later I realised the body was that of a female as I recognised the headband from photographs I have seen on the news. The body was lying face down with the head towards the bottom of the stairs and legs up between the eighth (8th) and ninth (9th) floor. I got over the body by putting my feet either side but I think I still pinched her sides. I did not see anyone try to move her.

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The three (3) of us waited on the ninth (9th) floor for a short time due to the congestion of firefighters going up the stairs. I was pleased for the rest to be honest as I was tired and blowing hard from carrying all the gear. I had picked up an enforcer somewhere near this floor. I let a Firefighter go down the stairs, you give priority for those coming down in case they are short of air. Paul CHARITY had the radio on him, a Barry set which is inside the BA mask. My hand held radio was connected to channel six (6) but I could not hear anything being said on the radio. I never tried to use it.

After a short breather on the ninth (9th) floor, we carried on to the eleventh (11th) floor. I had counted from the eighth (8th) floor to the eleventh (11th) floor knowing that there was two flights of stairs for each floor. It was zero visibility by this point and superhot. I did not hear any smoke alarms at all. I could hear my own heartbeat in my ears and my breathing inside the BA mask. I saw no sprinklers. When I walked first onto the 11th floor I had my body weight leaning against the wall to make sure I could find my way. I fell to the floor and thought immediately it was the lift shaft. Thankfully it was not and it was the end of the wall. I could see nothing except smoke, I could not see any flat doors. I was feeling around on the doors with my thick gloves to try and find any door numbers but I could not find any. I could feel the heat considerably more on this floor. It had been cooler in the stairwell. Nicky said it was too hot and that the TIC had reached a thousand (1000) degrees. This is as high as the TIC goes. We started to leave immediately. I started to walk back out of the eleventh (11th) floor towards the stairwell. By this point I was walking on my knees. I could not see Nicky or Paul, all you could see was smoke.

I walked back down to the ninth (9th) floor and waited for about five (5) minutes. It was just getting hotter and hotter the longer we left it. The three (3) of us said we needed to give it another try. We all agreed and went back up. I checked my air gauge and was surprised I had quite a bit left. We walked to the eleventh (11th) floor and had another try looking for flats. I banged on doors as hard as I could. I was not able to break the doors down as I had left the enforcer on the inside of the eleventh (11th) floor to try and find the numbers on the flat doors. I was shouting "Fire Brigade" but there was no response.

After five minutes, we left the eleventh (11th) floor and we walked up to the twelfth (12th) floor. I had tried to pull this door open but there was no handle, just a piece of string. When I pulled it the string broke. I used the enforcer to prop the door that had had the string handle open. So we could find our way out and also for some light. Paul went in first, then Nicky and then I went into the twelfth (12th) floor. As I walked further into the twelfth (12th) floor I noticed the light change and saw the door I had just propped open with the enforcer close. Somebody had taken the enforcer so I stayed at the door to keep it open.

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Nicky and Paul walked off to try the flats. I was on my knees by this point, nearly on my belly. It was so hot I was trying to stay as low as I could to get out of the heat layer. I was there for about ten (10) minutes. Paul must have done a loop of the twelfth (12th) floor as he came back towards me where I was stood by the door. I grabbed him as he went past me as he thought I was another Firefighter. He was on his way back round the loop again as he could not find his way out to the door we had come through.

Paul, Nicky and I were back in the stairwell now. We started to make our way back down the stairs. The conditions were worse now than they had been on the way up, it was a lot smokier. There were Firefighters still coming up the stairs towards us and I remember there were crews coming down behind us too. I had to sit down on the stairs so that others had room to pass by. I got back to the bariatric body, it was harder to get passed this body on the way back down. I had to climb over her and try not to slip. The body had not changed position from earlier. I noticed a 70mil hose up the centre of the stairs. It was charged but I do not know where it went.

As I went down floor by floor, it was less smoky than the higher floors but it was still smokier than it had been when we had left lobby earlier. The lobby looked different to me as it was now daylight. I could see out of the lobby windows. There was debris that had fallen around outside, to me it looked like a war zone. We went straight to entry control and briefed them about conditions and temperatures from the TIC as well as what we found and did not find.

I stayed for five (5) minutes in the lobby, I came out of point three (3) on the map (I have marked this on LTU/02 as 3). I had to run and jump over massive pieces of debris on the floor outside. Again there was an officer telling us when to go and when it was safe to run across from the tower. I did not look back towards the tower from where I was outside the tower. There was a Firefighter with a shield running us back and forth individually. I walked along an alleyway, I dropped my set and took my jacket off to get my burns treated. My legs were so wobbly that I could not stand up. One of the Firefighters said that I needed to get HEMS to look at my burns. I had a gel pack for my burns.

I did return to the FRU appliance before I went to hospital, it was still parked in the same place that I had left it. A few people came up to me to thank me for my help. I remember a police officer drove me to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. I was told I had full thickness burn to my neck. The burn was treated there, I was also checked for any carbon monoxide in my blood. This is when I saw the lady casualty

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from earlier in the lobby. I left the hospital at around 1030/1100am and went back to Wembley Fire Station.

I was off work for the next night shift, the next tour and three days of the following set. I did not return to the tower however I would have liked to.

During my time in Grenfell Tower I was not aware of a fire lift, if there had been one I would have used it. There was only one way in and out of Grenfell Tower that I saw. I was not aware of how flammable cladding was nor did make use of any Dry Risers. I saw Andy ROE and the Commissioner on the ground at Grenfell, telling us to do the best we could. I thought as the Commissioner was there, she was the Incident Commander. I cannot explain the role and structure of the command unit. I do not know who made the decisions regarding application or withdrawal of the "stay put policy".

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