

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: RICE, LEWIS

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 15 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 RICE

Date: 20/12/2017

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

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This statement has been prepared from the information I gave during an audio recorded interview with DC Jenny THORP and PC Terry SOUSTER on the 12th December 2017 between 10:51 and 15:15 hours at Mitcham Fire Station. For the details I rely on the information I provided in that interview.

During this interview I referred to my contemporaneous notes that I made on the 14th June 2017 at Paddington Fire Station at the end of my shift. I also referred to four (4) maps and plans in relation to Grenfell Tower on which I made notes to help explain and indicate where I remembered things being on the night. I exhibit these documents as follows:

LDR/1 — One A4 sheet of contemporaneous notes, seal MPSZ13184829

LDR/2 — Large map area of incident location, seal MPSZ13184830

LDR/3 — Detailed map with text on, seal MPSZ13184831

LDR/4 — Floor plan with text, seal MPSZ13184832

LDR/5 — Elevation of tower showing fire, seal MPSZ13111728

This statement is my account of my involvement as a Fire fighter attending the Grenfell Tower Fire on the 14th June 2017.

I am a firefighter (FF) for the London Fire Brigade. I have fourteen (14) years' service. I am currently based at Wimbledon fire station on Red watch H34. During my career I spent the first 9 years on Blue watch at Wimbledon followed by a year on Green watch at Clapham, 2 or 3 years at Wandsworth and four months at Kingston before returning to Wimbledon.

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At the time of the incident we were on Night Duty. I arrived at work at 7pm (19:00hrs) for a change of duty at 8pm (20:00hrs). I was stationed that shift on the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) which has call sign H346. You are given your postings during roll call at the start of the shift so you know what appliance you are on and what position/role you will be taking. On the FRU with me was FF Adam CLARKE who was acting up that shift as the Temporary Crew Manager (CM), he acts up to this rank quite often, FF Dave FRIEND was the driver, and in the back with me was FF Matt HAROLD and FF Richard PEACOCK. We are all Extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA) trained and this is what we carry on the FRU. All our sets have our surnames on them so you know whose is whose.

We have three appliances at Wimbledon, a normal pump ladder engine which carries standard duration breathing apparatus (SDBA), call sign H341 ; we also have an Arial ladder platform (ALP) which is H345. This is long ladder like a cherry picker with a cage on the top for FF to go up in and has a seat on the outside of the appliance that can operate it. It can be used for rescues of for squirting water from height. It goes up about 100 foot.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 after starting shift I think we had a lecture and then I used the gym. We had dinner before heading to bed about 12:30am on the 14th June 2017. I think the shout for Grenfell came through about 01:40am whilst we were sleeping. When a call comes through the lights go on and there is a ring tone and "Mobilise, mobilise" followed by the call sign of the unit being requested. There is a watch room attendant that goes and gets the call slip print off from the tele-printer. Whoever is posted to this sleeps in the box room where the tele-printer is. The print off gives the details of where you're going which can include the rendezvous point (RVP), what it is, who else is there, any requirements, initial time of the call, generally all details of the call you're being sent to. With location it also gives the map page number and grid reference so you can find the location quickly in the map books kept on the appliance. I got down and heard someone saying it was a 40 pump fire and people were asking where. This means 40 appliances required at the incident. From my experience as a FF I instantly knew this was a big incident. The highest I had previously heard of was maybe 20, I think some of us thought someone was joking saying 40. From experience you wouldn't expect to be doing too much when you get sent to the scene of something this big as you are normally being called in for reserve or fire fighter rescues. Our pump ladder (H341) were already out on a different shout and the ALP (H345) had already been sent to standby somewhere.

I went straight to the appliance and started getting my kit on which consists of boots, leggings and tunic. I then grabbed the map to start looking up where we were going, it was North London and none of us knew

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the area. We don't have a proper satellite navigation system (satnav) on the engine, there is a Mobile data terminal (MDT) in the front with a map and shows the call details but it is so slow you can't really use it for navigating to somewhere. I told those on the FRU that I could get them to the area but the roads in the grid square where we were being told to go to were too small to see properly so I couldn't work out how to actually get to scene. This was made worse when we got going as it was dark, night time and we were moving about and travelling fast so no way of reading a map in the back.

It probably took us 2 minutes to leave the station from the time the call came through, this is a little longer than normal but was due to us having to figure out where we were going as it was not an area any of us knew. I got us out onto the main route and was able to give a general direction, I think we went over Putney Bridge and up. One of the guys had his phone and was able to use google maps or something to direct us in. I was sat in the rear nearside seat with FF HAROLD and FF PEACOCK in the back with me. I wouldn't know how far away Grenfell tower is from our Wimbledon fire station. I'd guess maybe eight miles. We travelled up using blue lights. I think we ended up on Shepherds Bush Roundabout and I don't remember seeing flames on the side we approached from. I then heard the others in the back say "LOOK AT THAT!" I was still looking down at the map so hadn't seen what they had, they said to me "YOU DIDN'T SEE IT DID YOU?" I said "NO", I looked out and had to wait for us to pass some houses before I saw the tower and saw a thin strip of flame on the top half of the building.

There didn't appear to be flames on the side we were approaching but I could see all the flames around the side. I can't be sure which, but it would have been either the South or East side of the Grenfell Tower that we were facing as we approached in our vehicle. As we got to the area it was a real struggle to find our way in, there were lots of roads closed/no entry and we were missing turnings as we were moving quickly and the roads were small turnings. It was like a rabbit warren, we could see the fire but couldn't get to it. I think in the end CM CLARKE said let's stop, it will be quicker to get in on foot.

I can't remember the name of the road we got parked on but it was to the south east corner of the tower and I'd say we were about 500 metres away, we had got as close as we could and stopped behind a couple of other appliances that had already stopped and parked up in the middle of the road. The road itself was wide enough to get fire engines down but not enough to get 2 past each other so we couldn't get any further than the engines that had stopped in front of us. We heard a radio message update on the engines comms (radio communication) which is on the main radio channel from the control operator saying there were 50-60 adults and 16 children on fire safety guidance (FSG) calls and reports, I remember it shocking me. On looking up at the tower all I could think was 'That's a lot of kids!' I knew it was a residential

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tower so I guessed there would be a lot of children in it. I would estimate that it had taken us about twenty to twenty-five (20-25) minutes to get to scene from Wimbledon. We jumped off and got our EDBA kits on which takes seconds to do, it's already all set up and you are just putting them on your backs to carry not going under air at that point. CM CLARKE didn't put his BA set on as he was acting up as CM so was likely to have other roles to carry out. We grabbed equipment off the truck including breaking in equipment and thermal imaging cameras (TIC), none of us were wearing body worn cameras; and began walking towards the tower in a general North direction we could see the tower off to the left in front of us so would have been looking at the South and East sides of the tower. We couldn't see the bottom half of the building from where we were but could see that the top half of the building was alight, I could see smoke going up and debris falling off every now and again. When we first set off on foot there weren't many people on the street around this point. As we walked I was just thinking about the numbers, the amount of people in there, I had never seen anything like it before. It was like a maze getting there and we got lost on the side streets and we hit a dead end. I was at the back of the line, there were lots of people out on the streets and I have a vague memory of a woman saying "DON'T GO THAT WAY" and the others in front of me stopped going around the corner. A young lad about 12 years old on a push bike said he could show us the way. He got us back out onto a main road and we could find our way from there. I think it was Grenfell Road we walked up to get to the tower. By now there were loads of people milling about on the street watching the fire and what was going on. There was people of all ethnicities, it was quite different to see. They all seemed really supportive of us, they were making room for us to get through standing more on the pavements. We walked up to the tower as a complete crew. I think there was a police cordon as we got to the top of Grenfell Road about 100 metres from the tower. As we turned the corner at the top of the road we finally saw the whole of the building and see all the FF's that were there already, this is when I could start to really take on how big the fire was, there was a hell of a lot of flames. The Turntable Ladder (TL) Aerial appliance was in front of this south east corner of the tower and was being used to get water on the tower with FF's on the TL fighting fire hosing down that bottom corner of the building, I think it goes about 30 metres /10 floors but it was a bit further back so that would have effected how high they could get the water due to the distance and angles. This TL was being supplied water from a pump ladder appliance. There was a main holding area behind it near the leisure centre. I can't remember if it was then or later on that the fire looked like it was going diagonally up and back down again forming like a triangle shape up the top half of the tower, this was the South and East sides we were looking at. My memory is a bit hazy about exactly what happened and when, I know the

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TL was being used with about 10 FF's carrying out roles in that bottom corner but I also know at some point the TL was moved back I presume because of the amount of debris coming down making it dangerous, but I can't say at what point I noticed it had moved.

CM CLARKE was chatting to an officer (fire) to find out where we were needed, I don't know who the officer was it was just the first crews we found. There was a grassy area in front of the South side of the building and the bottom of the tower was glass fronted so I could see in. I could see about 15-20 FF's moving around inside the building, I think this is where the stairs up the tower were located. There was FF's and officers. As I could see Yellow and White helmets. FF's acting up might wear a White helmet or Yellow with stripes. I think it must have been about 02:10am by now, this is a guess based on travel time from Wimbledon and then about 5-10 minutes' walk in from our FRU engine.

We were directed to go to a holding area round to the west side of the building near a playground. I could see there was smoke all the way down the tower to the ground floor. There were lots of flames and lots of smoke was going straight up from the top of the tower with debris falling down all around. There was hose and debris everywhere all over the floor as we made our way around past the south side of the tower, we had to run where there was no overhead protection from the falling debris which was coming down in different size pieces, some large including glass, window frames, panelling. There were also wispy bits of burning plastic floating down constantly that looked like spider webs. During my time at Grenfell I never saw the North side of the tower but from everything going on I presumed it was the same situation as the three sides I did see. We ran to near the South West corner of the tower and were able to partially get under a little covered area. We were really close to the tower maybe about 10 metres back from it, it is so high that from this angle you couldn't really see up it properly but I could see the flames above. There was smoke coming around from the South West (SW) corner where we were trying to get to and the smoke was lingering. I put my flash hood, which is like a balaclava, over my head because of the smoke. It was quite a decent amount of smoke but not thick black. It was just enough to worry slightly and effect the eyes a little. We moved back a little so that the covered area offered us some protection and the debris wasn't hitting us. The ground was littered with glass, frames and hose. We saw a crew come around the SW corner, I had a little look and saw that there was a little covered bridge. This crew told us to run round and under it. There were FF's acting as spotters watching the falling debris and telling you when it was clear to run, it was only took a couple of seconds to run to get under the bridge and round the corner so you were only exposed with no overhead cover for a few metres until you got to the outside waiting

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area. CM CLARKE was leading us and we all ran together. I am not sure if I had turned on my handheld radio yet.

Once in the playground holding area we were now on the West / South West corner of the tower. The area was just a bit back behind the playground as there was an area of cover. There were lots of FF's waiting about, I would say about 60-80, they had their sets on waiting to go in; on looking at them I would say that some of them had already been in at least once. I could see that there was stuff being delivered — equipment like BA cylinders, boxes which I didn't know what they had in. We dropped off our EDBA kits and were immediately asked by a Watch Manager (WM) to go and look for drinking water. CM CLARKE had been tasked with something else and was off doing that. We walked about, checked in cages that had been delivered and asked about but couldn't find any. We found someone from the Operation Support Unit (OSU) which is a vehicle that attends with equipment etc. He said that his vehicle was parked miles away and that there was no water on it. I'd say we were searching for about 5 minutes all around the West side area before we returned to the WM and told him there was none and then returned to where we had left our BA kits. We were then told to move to an area just behind the playground, it might even have been CM CLARKE that told us to do this. We were only in that area for a minute when an officer asked me and FF PEACOCK to go and do casualty handling, we told him that we were EDBA wearers but he said to do it anyway. From what I had seen, people were being brought down the tower by crews and handed to FF's in Entry control who were then running or dragging the casualties out of the tower and were being handed to FF's outside near the playground who then took them to London Ambulance service (LAS) post. We were only doing this for a couple of minutes and only a small number of casualties were escorted out during this time. The officer in charge of the handling area where we were outside was shouting asking for EDBA wearers so we made ourselves known to him and went to retrieve and get our kits on. You put the BA set in standby mode which is where you start up the air but there is a lever on your mask that stops the air so it is not being wasted but you are ready to go as soon as needed. All the EDBA wearers were getting pushed to the front as we can go in for longer, there were lots of people (FF's) around. I think I had turned my handheld radio on at this point. I remember there being a lot of radio traffic and messages coming through but nothing that particularly stood out. I had heard messages about FF's missing but then almost straight away updates to say they were located, and lots of reports about sightings of people in the tower. This was all on the West side of the tower. All I could think was that the building shouldn't burn in this way and that there must be something burning on the outside. I wasn't aware of the cladding at that stage. It was unlike anything I had ever seen before; you

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should only see a few flats on fire with fire punching out of the windows but never a building alight like that with the outside appearing to be on fire too. There was burning and melting plastic like spiders webs floating down everywhere.

Eventually the WM controlling the outside holding area tasked us to go into Entry control on the ground floor of the tower. We were sent in as a team of four: FF's FRIEND, HAROLD and PEACOCK and myself; CM CLARKE had been tasked off elsewhere, and a few other FF's also tasked in at the same time. There were FF's outside acting as spotters and they were watching the debris falling and telling us when to run in, we had to run and dodge the debris both falling and on the ground. There was some meshing outside above the ground floor that seemed to be part of the building and this was catching some of the debris stopping bits from falling all the way down. We ran in through a smashed glass door on the West side, it might have been a tall window but either way you could walk through it into the ground floor. As we got inside to the ground floor of the tower there were lots of FF's inside, maybe 30+ in this first area and bits of equipment like breaking equipment, hoses and branches. It was like a reception room where they were all waiting, maybe about 8 x 8 metres, there were a few chairs and tables that had been pushed to the sides. I think the room was pretty dry at this stage, I wasn't aware of any flooding. Some of the crews were smashing doors and windows to make more exit room out of the building. There was also more FF's waiting in another room next door. We were stood in there for about 5 minutes, no one was using air as it wasn't necessary in on the ground floor, it was a bit smoky but nothing to really effect anyone. The FF's were chatting waiting to be used to go up the tower, we all knew it was bad but I don't think any of us had really imagined just how bad it really was like we hadn't quite taken on the full extent of it at that stage. Then the atmosphere changed as lots of people started coming down, adults and children, walking wounded and collapsed casualties, people without shoes. I saw a FF come down carrying a small child in their arms, a boy about 3-4 years old and I could see he was frothing/foaming at their mouth, it was horrible to see. Behind them a young boy came down with a woman and a FF behind him. He just stopped and seemed to look at all of us in the room and just said "MY BROTHER IS DEAD". All the FF who was with him could do was to put his hand on his shoulder and say Come on' and guide him out of the tower. It was a really difficult thing to witness. I know it sounds like a horrible strange thing to say but I remember thinking that I hoped the young boy I'd seen being carried ahead of him was the brother as that would mean there wasn't another dead child still up in the tower. That little boy coming down and saying that is something that has hit me quite hard, it gets me quite emotional remembering it.

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There were FF's removing their tunics and helmets to cover the young ones and others as they ran them out of the building to hand them over to FF's outside. I saw a large piece of burning debris come down and hit a FF, I think it was a window. He had been running back into the building and where there were so many people he was briefly held up just outside, I think he may have just taken his helmet off at that moment as he was just stepping inside. The debris fell down his back and we started patting his back to put out any flames not realising that glass had fallen down the back inside his tunic.

Shortly after this my crew and six other EDBA wearers from other stations were told to go into the holding area by the lifts to get ready to go up. It was working a bit like a conveyer belt, as people were sent up the tower the next ones were moved forward ready to go. The lift lobby area was maybe 3 x 4 or 5 metres, there was still only a little bit of smoke lingering which didn't require people to be using air, it was like misty smoke and there were no signs of fire on the ground floor. I don't recall it being dark so I can only assume there was some lighting. I don't recall hearing any smoke alarms; I don't recall hearing any smoke alarms at any point during my time at Grenfell Tower. I did however see a red LED light on a smoke alarm, indicating that it had activated. But there was no noise/alarms sounding and I didn't see any sprinkler system in any part of the building I went to. There were only a couple of chairs in the lift lobby area with maybe 12-15 FF's waiting in that area. It was tough as the EDBA kits are heavy and you ideally want to sit down in them until the moment before you get sent in but there wasn't enough chairs so you just had to take a seat as they became free. I had a TIC and also got some breaking equipment. At some point I remember being told that the lifts were not in use. Normally you have access to a lift to use as a fire fighter lift to help get equipment up the floors. Eventually it was our time to be committed up the tower. We were given a slip of paper with our task on it, I was partnered with FF FRIEND and the initial task handed to me was to go to the 14th floor to rescue people stuck by the lifts. FF's HAROLD and PEACOCK were handed a different task. From here you go to the Entry control officer hand in your tally, put your hoods up, check your air and 'go under air', so you have your mask on and you are breathing the air supply from your cylinders. But when we went to the entry control officer he informed us our task had changed. This can happen, circumstances can change by the second in a search and rescue situation and they are the ones receiving the updates as to where people are needed and which tasks take priority. He informed us that we would be going up as a crew of four and going up to the 4th and 5th floors to carry out a search and rescue of any persons found. As a crew of four you will still remain within your pairings. SDBA were also being used at the same time as us as I remember questioning as I think the SDBA before us had been committed higher than us, but you never know what their task is and how time consuming,

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it's for the officer in charge of entry control to decide who is going where. We took an enforcer and sledgehammer with us and I think we had 2 TIC's with spare batteries between us. We asked if we had water but we were told there was no water available to us, he said to us that if we can find any and it's not being used then we can take it. Basically this means that there were already lines up the floors with other FF's already committed in but that maybe not all the connected hoses would be in use so if we saw available connected hose as we went up then we could make use of it. I didn't have my handheld radio anymore as earlier an CM Officer had asked me for my battery as his had run out so I'd given mine to him. My BA set didn't have comms (radio communication) as a general rule every other wearer has a BA radio set and FF FRIEND had the set between me and him. The sets in the BA aren't great and quite often the comms fail or have issues, they are awkward to use as you are wearing fire gloves and you have to lift up the helmet to send messages; so most FF revert to their handheld radios. We carried out our BA set checks and went under air and made our way up.

From the ground floor you go up a couple of floors which I remember being quite open plan before going across to where the main stairwell up the tower starts. I can't remember what lighting there was but again I remember that we could still see which makes me think there may have been lighting on these first two floors. There was misty smoke but not much else in the ground floor and up the first few floors. We started calling out the floor numbers as we went up the flights of stairs as the smoke did increase but still had some visibility. The floor numbers were painted on the walls but these were only visible for the first couple of floors, after that the walls started becoming blackened from the smoke covering the numbers and I could see that FF's had been trying to write the floor numbers in chino graph on the walls. We all carry chino graph pencils in our kits. From what we had been told earlier the Bridgehead (BH) had been compromised and was now being run at entry control so we knew there would be issues as we went up. The BH is normally run 2 floors below the fire. As soon as we entered the stairwell I immediately thought it was narrow. It was maybe only a metre wide so no real room to manoeuvre on or pass people especially us FF's with all our BA kits on. It was awkward and tight trying to move up and down the stairs, on our way up we were constantly passing FF's and casualties coming down and we gave priority to them as much as we could but it was a squeeze.

When we got up to the 4th floor a message was sent on the radio to say that we were on the 4th floor and starting to search. There was smoke hanging in the ceiling area around head height, we could see but it wasn't great vision. We opened the door from the stairwell out into the lobby area of the floor. I know the fire door was closed between the stairwell and the 4th floor lobby as I remember the smoke coming out

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when it was opened. The smoke in here was much heavier and darker, and was mainly in the top section so again we had some limited vision but not great, we had our torches on to help see. When you enter the lobby area the lifts are in front of you with three flats each side I think. I was 3rd or 4th the line into this floor. We all went to the left with FF's HAROLD and PEACOCK going to the first flat door on the left, FF FRIEND and I turned left and almost back on ourselves to the flat behind. I cannot remember the door numbers but I have been able to show where the flats were located by using the floor plan I exhibited as LDR/4. The other two had the enforcer and were trying to break open their door. FF FRIEND and I were horse kicking our door trying to force it open but it wasn't budging, as soon as the other 2 were in their flat we took the enforcer from them to get into ours. The smoke was building up as we started trying to break open the doors but you could still see enough. Our door was hinged so that I was having to use my left arm side which is my weaker side, it was using up all our energy and it exhausted me. I think it took us a couple of minutes to finally get through the door taking it in turns to use the enforcer and we ended up going through the panels on the door as the door itself was holding strongly. I would assume that they were proper fire doors from the strength of them, they were proper solid doors and they were doing their job as when we finally got in thick black smoke came out of the flat and visibility was down to nothing inside. The others have told me that it was hot but I don't remember noticing it being hot whilst I was in the tower, it was warm but not uncomfortable. I did notice increases in temperatures in some areas but nothing too much.

Once we got in we began a search of the flat. I had the TIC and used that to search around the flat. The TIC has different settings on it that can show you the hottest and the coldest thing in a room. It has cross hairs on it to pinpoint these areas. The screen shows a black and white image with silhouette outlines of all the objects on it, you can easily make out what everything is and then has colour shades to show hot and cold. As I entered the flat I followed the wall to the right and worked my way around. There was a large heat signature in a strip across the far corner ceiling in what I think was the lounge or could have been a bedroom, it was quite a weird place to be the hottest point. I told Dave about the heat patch in the corner as he was searching blind so wouldn't know about it otherwise. The other two had come and got the enforcer and were moving on to the other flats. We searched the flat we were in which took a minute or two, we were working as quick as we could, and crossing over each other to make sure nothing was missed. We had to use the TIC for the entire search as the smoke was so thick and black you couldn't see anything. We were calling out and searching all the obvious places like around corners, under the bed (I think there was only one in this flat), in cupboards. The TIC would have picked up if there had been

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anyone in that flat, it would have been obvious to make out the shape of a person. Once we had finished we went back out to the 4th floor lobby to find the other two to tell them what we had done. My memory goes vague on me after this but I know we searched other flats on the 4th floor but I have no memory of it. It's weird, I am struggling with my memory of events, it's like I can recollect so much in detail but then other bits I can't remember a thing, just a complete blank. I can only assume we searched the rest of the flats on the 4th but couldn't tell you who searched which flats or even if I went in any other flats on that floor, but if we were moving up to the next floor then we would have cleared the 4th completely. We returned to the stairwell as a team of four before moving up to the next floor.

I remember the stairwell being wet, there was water dripping down the stairs and lengths of hose on the stairs. In a fire you would never normally deploy into it if your gear is wet as you risk steam burns where the water on your clothing gets heated inside burning your skin. No one made the decision to go against the policy, it was more of an unsaid thing. We had all got wet whilst waiting on the ground floor, so much water was being pumped into the building and dripping down it was unavoidable. The stairwell was a little smokier but you were still able to see. We got up to the 5th floor and again went to repeat what we had just done on the floor below. The conditions in the 5th floor lobby were pretty similar to the 4th there was a thick cloudy smoke from around head height upwards but you could still kind of see. My memory remains hazy at this point, I don't know how long I was on that floor for or what flats I went to or tried to enter or search. All I remember is FF FRIEND shout "CASUALTY", I immediately went to him at the stairwell door and he said that another crew of 1 FF on the stairwell had told him they'd had a couple of casualties in the stairwell and had to abandon one. They had continued down with one and the other casualty was in the stairwell around the 6th or 7th floor. I immediately went into the stairwell with FF FRIEND and followed him up the stairs to find the casualty. The smoke was much heavier and visibility was not great but you could just make out shapes. We found a young girl in her early teens lying on her back on the flat section of the stairs between floors. We were so close to her that I could see her without the TIC, she first appeared at head height as we moved up the stairs. I could see she had foam around her mouth and wasn't breathing, as far as I could tell she was unconscious and wasn't responding. She looked like she was mixed race or Arabic or similar and only about 12-14 years old. She was laying on her front with her head facing away from the stairs I believe. She was wearing nightwear and was slim built with loads of curly hair I remember this because I remember being concerned about standing on her hair as we carried her down. We grabbed her by a shoulder each and quickly dragged her down to the 5th floor where we shouted out for the other 2 (FF's HAROLD & PEACOCK). They quickly came out and we

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grabbed a limb each to get her out as quick as we could, I ended up holding one of her legs and she was being carried head first. We were concerned about hitting her head but there was an urgent need to get her out so we were dragging her down any which way and moving as fast as we could whilst minding her head. It was hard work with how narrow the stairwell was, you couldn't get two of us in our EDBA sets side by side. I noticed she started coughing and spluttering and remember thinking that I was glad she was still alive but she was still out of it and not speaking. We struggled past other FF crews who were heading up the tower along with hose on the stairs and the wet stairs it made it all quite challenging and awkward. Together we managed to get her down to the bottom of the stairs to entry control on the ground floor where we screamed out for help. A couple of FF's came running over and dragged her away to get her out of the building whilst we removed our masks and went straight to entry control to the officer in charge to report what we had done and that we weren't sure if we had completed the 5th floor search. There was a short moment of panic when we thought we had lost FF HAROLD, he hadn't collected his tally and we were concerned he might still be up the stairs, but then we saw him sat collapsed in a corner totally shattered and red faced. He had forgotten to pick up his tally as he was so tired, we were all exhausted. Control (Entry control) asked us what we wanted to do, I looked and I had less than the 180-190 bar minimum you are meant to have to be able to go back in. At that stage everyone was still kind of abiding by regulations and policies. You are not meant to re-commit if you are under 180-190 bar but some rules were being pushed because of the urgency and scale of the incident. My legs felt alright but my arms had completely gone, they were beyond tired from smashing in the doors and carrying the girl down. I wanted to go again but I just wasn't capable yet. Control told us to go out and rest, get new cylinders and clean and test our kit so we were ready to go again.

We went back to the room where you enter and leave the tower. Police with riot shields were in the ground floor holding area and were being used to run FF's and casualties out of the building under riot shields. There was so much debris raining down and it was all over the floor outside. I ran out behind an officer almost like you would in a congo line with him in front holding the riot shield above us and me holding onto his back running behind him. I tripped on some of the debris and fell and he had to stop and help me up and we continued running, thankfully I wasn't injured. Outside there were loads of FF's waiting in the holding area behind the playground. It was still me with my crew of four (FF HAROLD, PEACOCK and FRIEND). We briefly rested and took our BA sets off. I was sat there looking up at the tower and could see it had gotten so much worse. It was still the west side of the tower that I was sat looking at. The flames had come down to lower floors and had also taken over all of the top whereas

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earlier there had been like a triangle of flames to the top. The fire was clearly increasing and at speed with smoke filling the sky above. It was still dark outside so I know it was still night time but couldn't tell you the time.

I could see people at windows when I looked up at the tower, there were lights flashing like people were trying to signal where they were. We were probably stood outside about ten minutes. The top half of the building had huge diagonal strips of fire from halfway up in a triangle shape going up to top of the building, I could see individual flats on fire and could see that there were people in flats above the fire as I could make out their silhouettes at the windows. We would pass on this information to say that there were people and trying to work out which floor and flat. There were people at windows higher than the lowest point of the fire, I think they were on the 14th or so floor. All we could do was make sure we passed this information on to control. We didn't rest here for long before we started hunting around for new EDBA cylinders. Some other EDBA trained wearers from a different station came over to us to ask if they could borrow our sets. They were only carrying SDBA but wanted to use their skills as EDBA, but we had to tell them no as we had been told to prep ours ready to go in again. We went off together to search for new cylinders and after finding none nearby one of us said to go and get the spare ones off our appliance H346. The FRU carries spare ones which we normally use for things like pumping up air bags etc. at RTC's. They can be sat on an appliance for days and you never know just how much air they have until you attach them to your BA set and test them. As soon as we set off we lost FE HAROLD almost immediately, someone in the crowd had grabbed him to help someone who had collapsed whilst watching the tower. The three of us continued but none of us could remember how to get back to our appliance and ended up jumping onto the first FRU that we came to and took the cylinders off that one, we got a sack barrow which is like a wheelbarrow and filled it with cylinders and carried what others we could manage. Operational Support Unit (OSU) would have been at scene and would have been carrying spare cylinders but we couldn't find that either. On our way back we were stopped by a girl who said that her friend was stuck on one of the upper floors, twenty something, and asked why we couldn't get up there. None of us had been that high and couldn't say anything to her. All we could do was pass on the information to control so they were aware there was someone trapped still possibly alive on that floor. She was on the east side of the building. We told the girl that we were trying to push our way up the floors, there wasn't a lot else we could say to her.

As we made our way back to the main holding area I could see that the members of public had been pushed further back away from the tower being held behind cordons put in by the police. People were

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holding cans and bottles of drinks and trying to hand them to us and they were wishing us well and saying things like 'Good Luck'. We got back to the main holding area by the leisure centre and were told to leave the cylinders there. We asked if we could take some back to our BA sets over by the playground so we could get ready to go back in but we were told we couldn't. I noticed that new crews were arriving, I have no idea what the time was. An officer asked us what we were doing and tasked me and FF PEACOCK to escort some of the new crews over to the playground holding area seeing as we had already been and knew our way. The route in had changed so you came in more under the covered walkway area where there were open garages and parking areas. This walkway offered partial protection from debris falling from above as you walked past the South side of the tower. I saw a dead body who I think had jumped, it was covered with a tarpaulin and had been dragged into one of the garage areas. We showed the new crews where to go and then went to retrieve our BA sets. We had also lost FF FRIEND by this point after me and FF PEACOCK had been tasked, we later found out that he had gone back into the tower with another group of EDBA wearers. Our BA sets had gone from where we had left them so instead we had to look for any sets not being used. We found a FF who was exhausted and overheating, he was with his partner and being seen by LAS tucked around the west corner. There was no way he would be deploying again so we asked to borrow their sets and took them back to the main holding and got new cylinders, cleaned up and tested the kits ready to go. We were told to wait in this holding area as the new crews were being used first. I sat watching the tower from the east side. There was still a crew squirting water up the side of the tower. Members of public had delivered water and Salvation Army had delivered some snacks so we were able to get a proper rest, I also went and got some energy gels from a paramedic as we were still feeling pretty exhausted. There was someone from Urban Search and Rescue there who was talking about there being a real concern the building could collapse, but even hearing this didn't change any of our opinions that we wanted to get back in there and do everything we could. I have no idea how long we were waiting until we were called back to the holding area by the playground. We made our way round with our kits ready to go. We found FF HAROLD in that area and found out that he had been dealing with a member of public who had collapsed backwards whilst looking at the tower and had knocked themselves out. Again we were told to wait as fresh new crews had been turning up so they kept going in ahead of us as there was no point us trying to go in before them when we are already tired from the first time and the running around doing other tasks. This is also when FF FRIEND re-joined us and we learnt he had just been deployed up the tower again. It had started getting a bit light and I think I became aware of the time being about 6 or 7am as people's alarms started going off. Our pump

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ladder turned up as part of a 20 pump relief. Although they were on a normal pump with SDBA they are all EDBA trained so they could be used for that. They just wanted as many EDBA wearers there as possible. I think on that pump was WM Andy MCKAY and FF's Andy ALLISTON, Jonathan EARL, Ian JONES and Rodney STEWART.

I think we were waiting in the playground for about an hour just sat watching the fire working its way further down the tower on the west side, it was consuming the whole building dropping down the floors so the tower was completely alight from below half way all the way to the top, all the flats on those floors were on fire. All the lights had gone out and I could no longer see anyone at any windows. There was still a great deal of debris falling down and there were more police with riot shields running people back and forth from the tower. I watched as a large piece on fire fell and landed on a coppers shield as he was running a FF behind. I don't think either of them were hurt as they continued on after.

Eventually it was our turn to go back in, we all felt much better like we had our energy back, FF FRIEND wasn't going back in as he had already deployed in twice so he wouldn't be used again. We ran back into the ground floor again waiting for the spotters to tell us when it was clear to go and the police to run us in holding shields above us. The debris had not stopped, it was piling up and constantly falling. When we got back into the ground floor I could see that it was all flooded, maybe six inches of water. The sides of the building on the ground floor had all been opened up with doors and windows smashed, and there was a submersible pump from Surrey Fire and Rescue I believe. Because the sides had all been opened and the windows all smashed open the smoke had been cleared out of the ground floor but instead the submersible pump was filling the area with fumes. I couldn't tell you if there was lighting in there or if it was daylight outside that was providing natural light. There was now about 10-15 chairs in the lift lobby area which was still not enough for us all and now the floor was flooded there was no way of sitting on the floor. All you could do was stand and wait until a chair became free as people were committed, this is hard work in itself with our heavy EDBA kits on our backs. The kit I had now borrowed had comms on it. As we were waiting there an Officer said to us to wait there as there was a problem with the water supply. He said we needed to wait a minute as they were pulling all crews out to get the water sorted and then they would flood the building with FF's again. I think it was a Station Manager (SM) who said this, it was the one in charge of that lobby area, and I believe he is called Pat. I think it was a burst branch and a dry riser hose had split. It took about 5-10 minutes until we were ready to go again. The water would have only been off for a very short time during that, it wasn't off for the whole time we were waiting. As soon as it was back up and running an officer summonsed us to go in as two crews of two.

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FF PEACOCK was paired up with the other Wimbledon watch that had turned up. I was paired up with FF HAROLD and we got tasked along with 2 others from a different station who I didn't know. Entry control officer told us "There's someone still up there, a guy, we're not giving up on him, he's on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor in that corner" I don't remember the flat number we were given but there was a crude floor plan that had been drawn on the wall and he pointed to the flat over in the top far left corner as you looked from the stairwell. We still didn't have any proper maps of the building from what I could see. We grabbed breaking in equipment and started up our sets and tested our comms. The comms on the BA set I was wearing was working during this test. I had picked up a large sledge hammer and saw the others also picking up bits and then we made our way into the stairwell and headed up. As we went up the floors I noticed that the stairwell wasn't as smoky as it had been last time on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. There were bits of equipment discarded on the stairwells as we made our way up and I swapped for better lighter equipment as we went. We were counting the floors from the 5<sup>th</sup> upwards, as the walls in the stairwell were heavily blackened so no numbers could be seen, we were also rubbing the walls as we went up to try and find the numbers to confirm which floor we were on. There was water and hose all over the floor making it harder to walk up the stairs.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> floor we came across a length of burst hose. It had a gash of about a foot in it and the pressure of the water coming out was making a massive roar and was enough to nearly take your legs out from under you. We tried to twist up the hose and bend it round but the force of the water was too much and it tired us out straight away. Up another floor we came across a crew of two who were trying to move a very large body. It looked like they were trying to drag this casualty down the stairs but were unable to move them. From what I could see it was a very large black person, they were very obese. At this time I didn't know if it was a male or female and they were all tangled up in the hose. One of Automatic distress signal unit's (ADSU) started sounding on one of the guys we had committed with, if you don't move for a period of time it goes off automatically. It took us a short while to figure out whose it was. Ordinarily if one of your crews ADSU sounds then you all leave together as a crew but we still hadn't made it up to the 11<sup>th</sup>. This large person obstructing the stairs had no signs of life and we had heard earlier there was a large casualty on the stairwell around the 10<sup>th</sup> floor so we knew they had been there for a long time, in this situation you would leave them and make a note of where they were. I tried to get through on the radio to send a message and ask control what they wanted us to do but it kept breaking up and there was still the huge roar of the burst hose on the floor below so I couldn't hear anything and have no idea if any of my message was received by control. As we had no comms we had to collectively make a decision for

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ourselves. The two we were with had to go because of the ADSU alarm on one of their sets, but me and FF HAROLD agreed we would continue up to complete our task as there was possibly someone alive trapped on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. I didn't realise at this time that the casualty we had been sent up to find actually passed us in the stairwell as he was brought down by another crew. I think this had happened below the 8th floor, somewhere between the 4th and 8th. FF HAROLD and I stepped over the casualty to make it up to the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. As soon as we got to what we believed to be the 11<sup>th</sup> floor I radioed to say that I was unsure which floor we were on, so gave flat numbers hoping BAECO (Breathing Apparatus Entry Control Officer) would be able to tell us which floor but I received no response. There was fire directly in front of us to the left which was where the door to the flat we had come to check would be. We found a 70mm jet hose curled up and we used this to fight and push back this fire. We did a quick search of the 1<sup>st</sup> flat to the left, it was completely smoke filled but no flame. There was no one in there and once we put the fire out in the corridor we made it to the flat in the top left corner. As we entered the flat I think there were bedrooms in front and the corridor bent around to the right. I could see flames around the corner to the right and we tried to bend the hose around the corner to be able to fight that fire but we didn't have enough length, we pulled the hose as much as we could but we weren't getting any further. The flames had a blueish colour to them which made me think that it was a gas rich fire, it wasn't a huge fire but it kept going. I tried to get through on the radio to ask for hose management as we needed more length to get into the flat enough to fight this fire but I could not get through at all. I left FF HAROLD in the flat which you are not meant to do but I had to as we had no comms and I ran back to the stairwell and down one floor to try and pull more hose length up so we could push more into the flat but still I couldn't get anything. I returned straight away to FF HAROLD and we searched half of the flat but not the area where the hose wouldn't reach. We couldn't reach the lounge area and there was thick black smoke. We didn't have a TIC with us either.

The comms on my BA set had worked when I'd run the check with entry control but I couldn't tell you which channel it was on. We have 10 channels, normally Channel 1 is the fire ground and channel 6 is BA Control, but when we first arrived we had been told to go on channel 2 as there was so much radio traffic. I didn't check which channel it was on, I just knew it worked from my entry check. The signal on the set was patchy and worsened the further up we went. There was just too much traffic on the channel and with the noise in the building and the poor signal and quality of our BA sets it was difficult to understand any messages or to make yourself be heard. Halfway up on our route to floor 11 the message transmissions were becoming intermittent before it failed on about the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> floor I had sent a message

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on the 9th about the burst hose and the body but it was breaking, then when I tried again on the 11<sup>th</sup> I couldn't get through at all.

Once we had searched what we could reach in that flat we withdrew to search the other flats on that floor. We had done the 1st one to the left already and had to go into the one that is left out of stairwell and back on yourself. This flat was completely burnt out, even the front door. There was nothing left of it other than the bath and some bits of stud wall making the place feel almost open plan. The bathroom was a small room about 2 x 2 metres. There was a heavily charred body wrapped around parallel with the side of the bath, this person was lying on their back but I couldn't see their face. Their intestines were out resting on the stomach and I could see both of their shin bones exposed. I couldn't give anything descriptive about this person as they were so heavily burnt, any clothing they may have been wearing had gone, all I could tell was that they were maybe slightly overweight. Both FF HAROLD and I confirmed the casualty. I was still trying to get through on the radio to request hose management to fight the fire in the other flat and continued to get no response. Another crew came up the stairs and I almost had to have a slight giggle as one of them looked like he was doing stair management where you sweep and stamp with your foot to check its secure before you step on it. He was doing this even though the stairs were concrete. I had to tell him they were fine as I needed to brief them quick so we could get down as we were low on air. I would estimate that we spent about 10-15 minutes in total on the 11th floor. We went down back past the large casualty on the stairs who looked like they had been moved some more so that they were a bit into the stairwell doorway on a flat section to clear them from the stairs as best as possible, we also got past the burst hose that was still sending out water at high pressure.

When we reported back to entry control we were soaking wet. We went to collect our tally and inform the officer in charge of what we had done. I told them about the body in the flat on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. I think I gave them the wrong flat number but I was able to indicate which flat I meant. I told them that we had only searched the flats on the left side so the 11<sup>th</sup> floor was only half searched. I also told them about the apparently gas fuelled fire in the other flat, the top left one. I made a suggestion to them about the dry riser, I had noticed that the dry riser wasn't in use on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, the door had burnt off it but the hydrant appeared in-tact and I was sure the dry riser had been in use on some of the floors we'd been to lower down and I remembered being told it was working earlier. I made sure I pointed this out to entry control when we got down as thought this would be the way to get hose into that top left corner flat to fight the fire in there. I also made another suggestion to entry control about using the 'do not disturb' signs/door markers that we now have that you can hang outside a door to show that it has been searched. I

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had realised that with all the confusion going on flats were being searched more than once. Normally you get your role and you stick to it, especially as EDBA trained wearers; but there was just so much going on at Grenfell that briefings were being changed and so there was always going to be confusion. Control told us that we had now been in twice so wouldn't be used again so to go outside and dump our kit. I would estimate that this second time we had been in the tower for about an hour including being in the inside waiting area before being committed.

We were escorted out of the tower under police shields again and made our way out firstly to the playground holding area and then around to the leisure centre holding area to dump our kits there. We went and found some food and drink and sat in the grassy area for a while. I'd estimate that we were there for about 10-15 minutes until about 09.30am when we were told we would be going soon. Whilst sat waiting I saw Surrey brigade with their ALP which is bigger than ours. It was over on the top east side of the building. I could recognise it was Surrey from their different uniform. By this time I would say more than the top half of the tower was either on fire or burnt out. FE HAROLD and I found all our other Wimbledon crew. The ones on the pump ladder had only been in once so they were told they would be going in again. CM CLARKE had been in too with someone from another station. We now had our whole FRU crew together and were informed we could leave but had to go to Paddington Fire Station to make notes. As we walked back to our appliance a member of public asked for our help for her neighbour, an elderly lady who had collapsed on hearing her family were in the fire. I went to get a first aid kit from an engine but instead was able to find an ambulance doctor who took over from us so we could get on our way. It was just after 09:30am when we got back to our engine but we found that we had been blocked in by an appliance from Croydon who had only just been committed into the tower for their second wear and had their keys with them so we had to wait.

Blue watch were being bussed in as we waited. This is unusual as normally a crew will wait for their appliance to return to their station, but with so many appliances caught up at Grenfell I guess it was far easier to bus the relief in ready to go immediately. A young lad also ran up whilst we were sat there waiting. He was red eyed and said to us that his Grandad was up on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor. He asked if any of us had been up there but none of us had been that high. It felt horrible not being able to say anything to him or help him. I noticed the fire seem to get a second wind, it looked as though it flashed over; the smoke got thicker and was billowing out and I could see fire crews in the building. Eventually we were able to get the Croydon truck moved and we made our way to Paddington Fire Station. We were told that was where everyone was to go to do their notes, they had also set up counsellors there who took our details

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and said that they would be in touch. We had to sit and wait to make notes, all we wanted to do was get back and go home. They had set things up on the third floor and none of us had the energy to climb the stairs we all struggled to get up and once we were up there it was like a glass house, it was a hot sunny day and the room had windows all around, it felt like a sauna.

As soon as we were done we made our way back to Wimbledon Fire Station where I showered and changed. This was about 3.30pm (15:30 hours) we all needed a little chat as a team so we went over the road to the pub quickly before heading home as we had to be back in for our next night shift in 4 hours. The brigade said we could have an extra 3 hours which I took but I know some of my colleagues didn't. I spent the next few day thinking constantly about what had happened, what I had done, could I have done anything more? [REDACTED]

It did feel good to go back to work so you could be with your team and talk it through with them. Some of the guys have been really cut up and we always pull together as a team to help each other through.

I am trained as fire rescue unit (FRU) fire fighter which is an extension on normal firefighting. We receive additional training on things such as dealing with road traffic collisions, trains into stations, retrieving casualties from under trains, extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA) so we can go into fires for longer — this isn't necessarily for fighting fire for longer, it's generally for rescue's and carrying out other tasks. I was trained on FRU for six (6) years then came off it for 3 or 4 years but at the time of Grenfell tower fire I had been back on it for about six (6) months. I have not undertaken a posting on the fire safety team.

FF's use Standard duration breathing apparatus (SDBA) and EDBA. The SDBA is one cylinder and you get approximately 30 minutes of air. EDBA has two cylinders and gives you a little bit more time, I can't remember how much; but also the training teaches you to slow down to be able to maximise the air and time you can get from it. The additional air also affords you the time to take breathers during deployment to keep your heart rate down. Prior to Grenfell I had only really used EDBA in a fire fighting situation in training rather than at live incidents. I had worn it operationally to a number of chemical incidents.

Grenfell was my first real experience of wearing EDBA at an operational fire. I remember the adrenalin and exhaustion I felt that night and remember the kit didn't feel as heavy as it normally does. It was only after the adrenalin started running out that I started to notice the weight of the kit.

During my service I have received regular training on high rise buildings. We run training in the drill tower every other week simulating a high rise and practising high rise techniques but not running full implementation of everything that gets put in for high rises. We generally only run these drills up to the

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third floor. Maybe about a year ago was the last time I did a proper full simulation training of a high rise putting in all controls, equipment etc. that you would do for a high rise with Bridge heads, control and everything set up; we did that one here at Mitcham fire station. I've probably only done full simulations of a high rise a few times in my career. I don't believe I've ever undertaken or received any training in relation to compartment failure in a high rise, not that I remember anyway. The last time I attended a proper high rise incident was probably over seven (7) years ago where I undertook firefighting.

Prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I had no previous knowledge of the Grenfell Tower, I had never been to it before. I had no knowledge of any pre-prepared plans for it or received familiarisation on it. We were not called to attend Grenfell until the fire had spread beyond the initial flat fire. The exterior fire was evident straightaway on our arrival and the fire was still going when I left the incident. I had no knowledge of the cladding on the Grenfell Tower until afterwards.

I do remember being concerned that there was just one staircase as a means of escape, I remember asking if it was the only one and I knew early on that the lifts could not be used as a FF lift. The staircase was an internal one made of concrete so there was nowhere for the smoke to go, I didn't see any means of smoke management. From the floors that I went on it seemed that the flat doors were closed, the flats we tried to get into we had to smash our way in through the doors; but the communal stairwell doors seemed to stay open which was letting smoke fill the stairwell.

What I understand of the 'stay put' policy is that unless the fire is effecting you and your premises then stay put until you get other instructions. I do not know who made decisions to implement or remove the Stay put policy at Grenfell. I can't really comment on any of the command structure, it was all in place from what I could tell but I just take my orders from the Officers running the holding/entry control areas. My predominant role at Grenfell was as an EDBA wearer carrying out search and rescue. There did seem to be a lack of knowledge about the fire spread amongst those of us on the ground (the firefighters) we could only see one side of the building and so had no idea what was happening with the fire on the other sides. At no point did I have any vision of or knowledge of what was occurring on the North side of the tower. However I do know that throughout the time I was at Grenfell there were spotters outside watching for falling debris, calling when it was safe to move so I can only imagine they were reporting back on the spread of the fire.

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