

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: GODDARD, LUKE

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 4 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: L S GODDARD

Date: 30/01/2018

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

This statement relates to my account of the events I witnessed during the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017 when I responded to a fire emergency at Grenfell Tower.

I am a member of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) based at Holloway Fire Station. I have been, a Firefighter attached to the Red Watch for the past 7 years. My duty for that shift commenced at 8pm on the 13th June 2017. I cannot recall if we had responded to any emergency earlier in the shift. We were directed to take up a standby position driving to Soho Fire Station to cover them as they were committed to an ongoing emergency. On route to Soho, we became aware (via radio traffic) of a 25 pump fire ongoing in West London.

I was the driver of the Holloway appliance (A311) crewed with Firefighter Albert FOLIVI, Firefighter Tamara WILKINSON, Crew Manager COTHER and Watch Manager COOPER. The reported fire was increased to a 40 pump incident; involving numerous Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) Calls. We were directed, at about 1.30am to attend the scene which was at the Grenfell Tower in the Lancaster Estate near to Ladbroke Grove, in West London. I have no previous knowledge of the building or the area.

We approached the scene via the A40 Westway (elevated section) I could see the fire clearly in the distance, WM COOPER was reading full details of the incident on the appliance mobile data terminal (MDT). He told us where the RVP was located, and the nature of the incident. On arrival I saw numerous

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fire appliances, ambulances and crowds of people everywhere, all watching the fire. I was also following events of the incident on Fire Ground radio-channel 1.

We arrived at about 2.15am, a few streets away from the building, managing to park near a community centre. I was directed to the scene by Firefighter WILKINSON so cannot recall any specific route. We immediately donned (put on) our Breathing Apparatus (BA) kit. We were making our way to the Command Unit (CU) where, CM COTHER reported to the (CU) whilst we followed a number of fire crews to a holding area close to a leisure centre. There was so much going on, with many crews at the scene. I could smell burning, I observed the behaviour of the fire it seemed so hot, pushing the flames upward, making a big column of smoke. I saw stuff (debris) falling from the building that was alight, landing at the base of the building. I could hear the sound of heavy thuds as the debris impacted on the ground.

The bottom of the tower was not really alight, but from the 4th floor upwards it was; like a huge burning candle. We were directed to a holding area for BA equipped crews. I saw others crews also awaiting briefing, I think we were waiting for about an hour. Many of us equipped in BA, we were being gathered to enter the building. We were held under a covered walkway, I could see the debris falling from above us. I, with others were moved forward to a 2nd holding area that led to an access point into the building, this involved being escorted into the building by police holding riot shields. Debris was continuing to fall at the base of the building, making the route into the building hazardous.

I entered the building via the route covered by police shields. The Bridgehead (area where firefighters wearing BA are deployed from) was located on the ground floor lobby. I could see the lobby was filled with smoke, it was due to in part, to a large fan being introduced which, I believe was designed to extract smoke, but it had the opposite effect, and was abandoned as an idea. The doors and windows at the ground lobby were either open, or smashed open, bringing in smoke, originating from the still burning debris at the base of the building.

The fire at this time started to spread downward as well as upward, this is why the Bridgehead was now located on the ground floor (I understood it was at an upper floor, earlier). Generally, the higher the Bridgehead the more effective is the firefighting operation.

I together with Albert (Firefighter FOLIVI) were tasked by Group Manager (GM) GOULDBOURNE as BA wearers to conduct search & rescue on the 5th 6th floors working our way up to the 7th floor. We

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made our way up to the 5th floor which was clear, we saw a number of firefighters without BA working there. We were assured that they had completed search & rescue on that floor. So we continued up to the 6th floor. We entered the 6th floor which was smoke logged, we had to open the fire door to operate our hose which had been left in situ.

The conditions on the 6th floor were completely different to that on the 5th I encountered thick white smoke, visibility was almost non-existent; I could hear the sound of burning which was contained within a number of flats on the floor.

I recall radio communications at the scene were poor, this may have been due to our radio batteries failing (power exhausted) and the sheer volume of radio traffic currently operating at the scene. We Albert and I, were reliant on being close together as a means of communication.

We had deployed in standard duration breathing apparatus (SDBA) which normally allows for 20-25 minutes of air subject to general fitness of the wearer and the level of physical work the wearer is likely to endure. The Fire Service also have personnel equipped in extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA).

This is not standard equipment and is only carried by specialist crews, firefighters need to be authorised to operate in (EDBA). (EDBA) extends the duration of air from 20-25 minutes up to 40-45 minutes again, dependent on the fitness and the extent of any arduous tasks assigned to the wearer.

We started a search operation on the 6th floor. The stairwell and landing was smoke logged. I was nervous, this was a massive job, and most of the fires in my experience are standard when you respond to them, rarely involving prolonged use of BA. I was struggling to see where Albert was, he was holding the branch (hose) whilst I had door breaking equipment.

We worked our way across the floor checking the flats to establish if any saveable life was in any of them. Many of the flat doors were either open or completely burnt. Many of the flats on the right hand side were completely burnt out, as I recall seeing daylight from that side. One flat on the left hand side number 30 or 31 , not sure which, the door was closed. I could see that the door and frame was blackened half way up.

From experience, I was sure that a fire was burning behind the door. Albert was ready to pulse water into the doorway, I forced the door and encountered sudden fierce heat, the flat was full of thick black smoke, and there seemed no oxygen in the flat. I could see fire burning on the ceiling as we entered the flat

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hallway, I was crawling while Albert, was behind me, pulsing water. It was obvious to me that no saveable life would be in the flat, the conditions were that bad. Albert pulsed water into the flat and we re-closed the door to contain the fire within that flat. It was strange, on this floor some flats seemed fairly intact, and others were completely burnt out or, still ablaze.

The general condition of the stairwell had in a short time deteriorated, the heat was oppressive and the smoke made movement difficult due to being unable to see clearly. Albert and I made our way back down to the Bridgehead, and out of the entry control as our air supply was almost exhausted. We dropped off our BA sets and made our way to the holding area in the leisure centre.

I recall the Incident Commander, an Assistant Commissioner; I don't know his name, spoke to us at least twice, I think in the first BA holding area. I believe the first time was to tell us how bad the incident was, he told us what management were trying to do. That people were trapped and this was a dangerous situation. The second time he came and told us that there was a deviation from Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) policy from the usual 'stay put' to 'self- evacuate'. He stated that he wanted us to deviate from firefighting practices if it was safe to do so, in order to save lives. He was very honest with us and we thought it was incredible that he took the time to tell us what was going on from his perspective. The incident in his words was 'unprecedented'.

At the leisure centre Albert and I rehydrated and awaited to be re-assigned. Albert and I, were tasked to take over from a Kentish Town crew and work in pump (hose) support using their appliance which was providing jet to the outside of the building. The Kentish Town crew who were fresh were to be deployed in BA to continue the search & rescue operation. Both Albert and I, remained in this role until relieved by another two Firefighters.

During the incident I saw a number of casualties being evacuated from the building. I, personally did not actually conduct any rescues, or encounter any deceased persons in or, around the building. I recall seeing a small child, I think a girl aged about 6 years old being carried out of the building by a Firefighter.

Almost immediately afterward I saw a Black lady leaving the building, she was hysterical, screaming, looking for her child. I was relieved to see that the child rescued, was hers and that they were reunited.

I was unaware the building had a communal gas supply. My observation of the fire was external, the whole of the outside of the building was alight with burning debris falling down toward the base of the

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building. I did not see any of my Firefighter colleagues sustain any injuries, however, I was aware afterward that a number were injured, thankfully none seriously. I was amazed that no Firefighter was killed or seriously injured.

WM COOPER found us and got the remainder of our crew together. We prepared to leave the scene. I recall a senior officer asked us to try and locate a number of other appliance drivers as the scene was congested and getting away was difficult. We left the scene at about 1.30pm making our way back to Holloway via Stratford after completing incident notes.

I have during my 7 year service, received quite a lot of high rise building fire training. Practical drills take place at fire stations which also include tactical and theoretical inputs. I, and my (Red) Watch are familiar with the high rise buildings on our ground and generally know where the dry risers are located, the operation of the fire lift and general fire prevention measures in place. I had not previously served in the LFB Fire Safety Department.

If the Brigade had known how the fire would behave or, what was going to happen, it is probable that everyone may have been advised to evacuate earlier. This is dependent on the condition of the stairways; they being the only means of escape for that building. Current Fire Safety Guidance is designed to expect that high rise fires are localised within a flat. You are, in most cases safe in your contained space whilst the Fire Brigade tackle the fire locally. A fire that climbs up the outside a building via windows, at speed. I have never seen this before.

Smoke, in view, is the greatest killer in fires. The advice to stay in 'clean air' and avoid smoke is to my mind, correct. The smoke at Grenfell Tower managed to penetrate the stairwells. General evacuation may, in my view have led to more casualties on the stairs blocking the only means of escape from the building. I believe the Brigade did the best that could have been done in the circumstances. Smoke, in my view is the likely cause of most of the fatalities at Grenfell Tower.

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