

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: STEVENSON, MARTIN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: M STEVENSON

Date: 30/01/2018

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

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This statement relates to the fire at Grenfell Tower on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and details my involvement.

I am currently employed as a Development Crew Manager at East Ham Fire Station where I have been working for the past eight years. I am classified as a competent Fire Fighter. I have never been to or had cause to go to Grenfell Tower in the past. I have had training in the past in how to tackle Fire in a High rise situation. We do high rise drills in which we have to go to certain floors and this would be every few months. This would also include discussions on what kit we would take, what we'd do when we arrive. The last time we had realistic training fighting fire in a High rise block would have been at Morton Training College. I have been on a Section 7(2)d familiarisation visit to High rise blocks on our ground but not Grenfell Tower. I have never been posted to the Fire safety Department. I have had experience fighting fire in High Rise blocks before and it's always been contained, it's never done what it did at Grenfell. I was unaware of any pre prepared Fire Fighting plan at Grenfell and un-aware of any training specifically for compartmentation failing.

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I was on Duty at East Ham Fire Station working a night duty. I was part of a Fire rescue Unit call sign F446 with FF Richard THOMAS (the driver of our appliance) FF Mark THORPE, FF Steve SUMMERS and FF Adrian TYLDESLEY. We received a call at about 03:30AM saw where it was and headed off. I thought that was a bit of a trek because of where it was. The information told us it was Grenfell tower and that it was a 40 pump fire. There was a lot of traffic on the radio which gave us an idea as to how big the fire was. We got to central London heading out West and I could see the

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fire in the distance, it was well alight with fire going up the outside of the Tower. We arrived on scene and pulled up near it and thought wow there's people in there! I found out where the on loading point was, I can't remember exactly where that was, we couldn't get past certain roads as they had been, cordoned off by the police so they pointed us in the right direction and found an RVP on an estate nearby. I said to the crew let's just take our sets now, so we took out our EDBA (Extended Breathing Apparatus, the orange one with twin cylinders) with us and made our way to the command unit to see where they wanted us and give them my Role Board. The Command unit is where the officers work out of. I can't remember if the chain of command changed during my time at the Tower but I do know at one point Andy ROW was in charge. By the time I arrived at the Tower, the fire was too far gone so I don't know if anyone was assigned to keep a look out for fire spread on the outside of the building. The most senior officer always stays outside and part of their job would be to watch for fire spread. There was an ALP (Aerial Ladder Appliance) tackling the fire outside. We were told to go to the BA holding area and that we would be going in. We were there about fifteen minutes and then went through to the other holding area which was on the other side of the Tower where the majority of the Fire Fighters were waiting. This was like a mezzanine by the car park area and we had to be escorted through by Police holding shields due to the debris fall down on us. I remember thinking wow this is surreal.

I can't remember how long we were waiting there but it was starting to get light when we were called into the bottom of the tower where we were again waiting in one of the side rooms. I remember hearing them request an EDBA crew. The officer came in and told us what was involved, I can't remember exactly what he said to us. We then reported to the BA entry control officer and was told to make our way up to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor with our crew and fight the fire, there's still people in there "do what you can do". I don't know what the Lifts were doing I can't remember if they were being used or not but we walked. Normally during a fire in a Tower, firefighters can take control of the lifts and use them manually, however we made our way up the stairs, it was dark and I don't remember there being any lighting, as we got higher it got darker. As far as I know there wasn't a smoke management system. I couldn't see anything that would have promoted the internal fire or smoke spread within the Tower. I can't remember if anyone had a TIC (Thermal Imaging Camera) but I'm sure either one of us or Croydon did. There was an SDBA (Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus) crew on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> floor bringing out a deceased past us on the stairs. As we approached the 13<sup>th</sup> Adrian said "there's a dead kid there" on the stairwell I said "is he dead?" he said "yeah", I then said "we'll carry on with our brief, we'll carry on with what we've got to do" which

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was to fight the fire, there was still people alive in there. I can't remember much about him but I think he was a little black boy, life was extinct no one could have survived those conditions!

It was around this point I was aware that there was a crew behind us who stopped us, I think it was Croydon I'm not 100% and said you've got to go to the Eleventh, so me and Adrian came back down to the Eleventh. The smoke up to this level wasn't too bad it was quite light but when we opened up the door to the 11<sup>th</sup> it just totally deteriorated and the heat was immense it was like a furnace. When the door was opened I was stood to the side of the door and the heat was mental and I was sort of having to run down three or four steps to get out of the heat, I remember my ears burning. The crew manager said "we've been told to fight the fire on the eleventh as two teams". The Hose was all over the place but we found a branch and started to fight the Fire but the conditions were so bad we were having no effect. I can't remember if the hose was attached to the Dry Riser or came up from the appliance however I do know the Riser was charged. The riser runs up the inside of the Tower and has an outlet on each floor where hoses can be attached and fire tackled. I don't remember any sprinklers in the Tower or what the condition of the windows were. The Stay put policy means stay where you are, because normally fires are contained! Every other situation where I've dealt with flat fires we've told them to get in shut the door and stay there, we'll put the fire out. Control would be telling people to stay put with the assistance of Fire Survival Guidance. If the stay put policy was withdrawn during this incident I didn't know about it. In my opinion, If anyone had tried to escape they would have been overcome by the smoke and fire. Every now and then I could hear a really loud bang which I thought was the metal bracket in the concrete breaking. Suddenly out of nowhere it was like somebody had opened up a tank of water above us, it was like Niagra Falls, we were just getting drenched, it was really hot, we were getting more and more wet. I don't know what caused this, I didn't think anyone was above us. A couple of my colleagues were getting concerned about that because it was like being boiled in a bag. We carried on fighting the fire for a while then me and the crew manager from Croydon or wherever it was said let's make our way down, so we took the crews down, On the 11<sup>th</sup> floor in the stairwell there was a deceased lady with hose all around her, a big lady laying up the stairs with her feet pointing down, who we attempted to move out of the way but we just couldn't. I remember the door to the stairwell closing as we finished and made our way back down again to the entry control officer to report what we had done. We took our gear off, we were all drenched so we laid it out at which point we were told by a senior officer that we would be going in again, and were we happy to go in again. So I went round and asked the crew "do you want to go in again?" some of

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them said “yes” some said “no”. The ones that said no said they were just too wet, “if we go in we’re going to burn, so we’ll wait for our kit to dry off then go back in”.

At around this time I looked at my phone and saw I had loads of missed calls, so I phoned my wife and told her I was ok, but I don’t know what time this was. I then went back in with three of my crew and we got another Fire Fighter from another crew Paul HOWARD to join us who was stationed at Islington on out duty on this night. He’s usually based at East Ham. We made our way to the holding area and waited for what seemed like ages. We were told that they’ve already got a lot of crews in there. We were told that because we were a rescue crew, we would go in with the basket stretcher and remove the lady on the 11<sup>th</sup> with another crew. That didn’t happen in the end, we saw the Croydon crew who were on their way to do it instead. After a while we were again escorted in by police and were waiting at the bottom of the Tower which seemed like forever. I think I heard someone say that they were moving the Bridgehead but I can’t remember. Eventually they called us forward to the bridgehead which had moved further up the Tower to the 5<sup>th</sup> or I got told to take my crew into a flat just off the corridor there and wait and that we would be going up again. In respect of our communications every firefighter has a radio on channel 1, we also have BA comms on channel 6 which we can talk to the BA entry control officer. I can’t remember what the comms were like on the night, I can’t even remember using it however I could hear people talking and if someone needed to get hold of me they would have been able to. We were waiting ages so I spoke to an Officer and asked him what was going on. He told me that we would be going back in again so I went back and told the crew what was happening and then as I walked away a more senior officer came up to the bridgehead and asked “is there any red Watch personnel still on duty?” and I said “yeah we’re red Watch” and he said “You need to go, you’ve been here too long” so we came out about 3 or 4 O’clock in the afternoon. We were told to go back to the holding area then we’d be escorted back across. There was an officer stood there on the green and he said “you can get yourself away now” so we collected our Roll Board and went back to our truck which we couldn’t find, I don’t know whether someone moved it but I think I remember at some point during the incident someone asked us about moving the truck because someone needed to get through. We took our BA sets back to the truck (someone from PEG had taken mine to give to someone else) and were told to report to Paddington Fire Station to do our statements. My crew asked “can we just go?” but we were told by the officer that they must be done today so I told him that we’d do it when were back on duty. We got back to East Ham at about 17:30 — 18:00hrs had a couple of hours and reported back for duty at 20:00 which is when we done our statements/ notes, a copy of which has been handed to Police and I exhibit as MS/1.

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Form MG11(T)

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I don't know what else could have been done to tackle the fire. I didn't receive any injuries or witness any and didn't receive any medical attention on the night or after.

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