

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: GREGORY, MATTHEW

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 5 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 GREGORY

Date: 23/02/2018

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 Watch manager at Kentish Town Fire Station and have been for the past two years. I am classified as a competent Fire Fighter. I have been a fire fighter for 22 years and have never been posted to the Fire Safety Department. I have never been to or had cause to go to Grenfell Tower in the past. I have had training on how to tackle Fire in a High rise situation. We do high rise drills on a regular basis, maybe twice a month. This would also include discussions on what kit we would take and 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 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 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 Kentish Town Fire Station. At about 00:20hrs we received a call to standby at A21 Paddington for fire cover, this was A432 and not the appliance I was in charge of. I checked the MOBIS which then showed it as a 10 pump fire, to see why they were moving

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round. We were subsequently mobilised when it reached a 25 pump fire, something which I've never experienced before. I was responsible for Kentish Town ladder A431 and we were designated the role of FSG (Fire Survival Guidance) my colleague Sunil PATEL was driving, fire Fighter DEO was assisting in direction, I couldn't say which route we took but we did come across a couple of roads which were shut due to roadworks but that's not unusual in London. I think we came in from the back view, maybe Whitchurch Road so I could see the sector 2 sector 3 area.

On route I checked the FSG Pad and heard that the control officer was talking to G301 Wembley who were asking for a rendezvous point. Control never panic but you could hear that she was under a lot of pressure, she was saying we don't have one, all we have is this address. She then contacted control unit 2 with all the FSG and was stating there was someone trapped on a particular floor in a particular flat. There was a lot going on, maybe too much information being passed over too quickly, I couldn't keep up with what was being said. I've never experienced that much FSG, that much information, it was just too much so I thought the best thing I could do was to just get there and then work out what I needed to do. The numbers of people and the numbers for the flats and floor numbers were very confusing, I had the pad out as this would give me some idea of a way to cross reference with the CU on arrival. It's not something I would be expected to complete on route.

The front of the building is always sector 1 then it goes round clockwise. I saw yellow flames going up the side of the building at the corner of sectors 3 & 4 as we went round further past it to come to the front of the building where the command unit would be. During an incident like this the command unit will have its lights on so everyone knows where it is, all the others would switch theirs off on arrival. We got to a road and we were bit tight on the corner so I told them to wait there. I took our role board and booked in at the command unit. As I got to the command unit there was a lot of people moving around, it's not something I've experienced in my career, there was a lot going on. I didn't feel un-easy but from what I had seen I had a gut feeling something wasn't right, I actually thought the Cladding on the outside of the building was alight. I saw Station Manager COOK and Station Manager LOFT outside, I said "what do you want me to do?". Part of my job as Fire Survival Guidance is to help the station manager for FSG and do what they tell me to do. I was told to go and get our BA sets so I went back to the appliance and at that point I was met by Watch Manager BERRIE from Richmond, his truck was beside ours. He asked me

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what was going on and I told him I didn't know. He said Watch manager DOWD (from North Kensington) said they need two machines down the side, so I said lets go and do that then. We tried to reverse the machines out but it was a very tight corner, there were guys struggling to get the machines back out onto the road we'd just come in. I said "go to the top of the road, turn right and I'll meet you there". I went to go and look for a better place as to where we could get the trucks in, so I ran round the corner, lost my glasses as I did and went down by the ramp area where Latimer Road Tube Station is. I went down the bottom of that, where I was met by a few members of the public, a WPC I think she was a sergeant and a PC a ginger bearded guy, I didn't get their names or numbers. They were trying to keep the crowd back who were gathering round there, some of them were quite vocal and some were filming us. They were being moved on by the PC but kept coming back. It was heated but that's because they were emotional, they had family in there. I quickly worked out that the best way to get a truck in was to bring it down from the top and we could get some jets up and fight fire there. Watch manager BERRIE said they're trying to get an aerial in there so you need to get it in there now because when we start pumping you're not going to get it past the pump where the hydrant was. People were milling around, the fire was spreading higher up and was coming towards sector 2 where it was starting to creep over at the top. I was standing by the children's playground and saw a lot of people at a lot of windows. Unusually I'm thinking people are panicking, I have a concept that this is not normal, I looked up and saw there were people at the window and there was a lot of black smoke coming out I thought this is not good. I don't know how the windows are set into the Cladding but a lot were open and above the 5<sup>th</sup> floor where you've also got the wind factor which would be assisting with fire spread. I think it was on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> floor there was a woman waving at us, people on sector 3 were waving out the windows.

I went back up the ramp which runs parallel to the train line and was met by Richmond's truck, I told them to go down the bottom and we'll base pump, ill pump to you and we'll get some jets down that side. He went down first and at that point I was met by Station Manager WOLFENDEN who asked what I was doing. I explained what we were doing and we agreed that we needed to get the Aerial in, however I told him I was Aerial qualified and we weren't going to get it in, there's nowhere here to jack and on top of that it's not going to have any effect 15 floors and above! I then got our truck in to be used as base pump and started pumping down to Richmond's. I could see that the dry riser was charged. Whilst that was going on we bowled out some hose, by the walkway at Sector 2 and 3 and put a ladder up and tried to get a jet up there to stop the fire spreading. At this point I didn't know what was going on at sector 1, eerily to

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me I thought there wasn't much radio traffic, and the handheld wasn't buzzing with noise. However later on Radio communications were difficult. To get hold of people was difficult due to the sheer amount of traffic. I know they were taking in equipment to boost communication signals. I remember seeing another crew arrive and they were putting the 135 ladder up onto the walkway to give it a higher reach. At this point there were about another 10 or 15 firefighters around, my driver was base pump operator, the rest of my crew were about. SM WOLFENDEN had gone, this was about 20 minutes to half an hour into it from our arrival.

I then noticed at sector 1 sector 2 they were smashing out a doorway or at least that's what it looked like to me, they were using cutting equipment. I then went back up the ramp to where the PC was standing, he was getting swamped with people so I started asking people to "get back please we need some space, there are more trucks coming". Someone was saying to me that they had family in there, I did write it down but to this day I don't know what I did with that, I think I passed it onto someone. It became quite heated but I was trying to say I have people in there too, I need you to move back and they gradually started to move. At this time there was only the female sergeant and the PC, we didn't have a lot of personnel with us at this time, more were being sent round. It wasn't evident to us what was going on round the front, from my own experience I could see that this was something unique but didn't understand what was going on fully. I then went back down the ramp to speak to my crew at which point a casualty was brought out where the doorway had been removed. The female casualty was walked back up the ramp, more firefighters were coming out and I was met by FF Chris DOGHUE, he had a table turned upside down with a woman on it. You could see Chris was in shock, his eyes were gone, so I took the lady off him, walked down by the playground with her, I carried her to the corner where I was met by more firefighters and said we need more people down there it looks like we're going to be bringing them out this way. I carried her to the top of the ramp and handed her over. I made my way back down the ramp and spoke to Watch manager BERRIE. I said we need to set up some sort of triage, we haven't got the people here to ferry anyone around. We agreed between the two of us that we'd put a sheet down at the back of Richmond's truck, then someone said we've got no oxygen left so I walked under the walkway which is at the corner of sector 1 & 2 and it was carnage. I was met by Watch Manager Alan MOORE who I've known for a long time and I could tell straight away he wasn't there he looked

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shocked, something had knocked him off his stride and that wasn't Alan. There was probably about 30 firefighters, some in EDBA (extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) some in SDBA (Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus) it was carnage there was hose, debris, a blue sheet with blood on the floor I don't know where that was from and I was shouting out like a demented man I need some IEC packs I need the oxygen. FF HITCH broke rank and fetched me a bag and I was then met by SM LOFT and had a quick conversation with him.

The thing for me was that I didn't know what we were meant to be doing, in the structural sense. I understood the severity of the incident and I had everyone on my side looking to me for guidance. By this time there seemed to be a steady stream of people coming out, An LAS (London Ambulance Service) paramedic came down and said we need to set the triage up at the top but I said we haven't got the people to carry them over, you're going to have to bring it down here. The female sergeant said she could ferry the people up to the triage unit so I gave her the girl who had come out. I was met by a guy saying "I've lost my daughter where's my wife!" He was only a small bloke his face was covered in soot. We had already taken a young girl past us who I'd handed to the female sergeant so I directed him up the ramp to where she had been taken.

The whole thing was escalating, there were more people coming round to our side. I believe at that time I spoke to SM Andy WALTON and told him to bring them out this way, we've got LAS this side. At this time the fire was still going up Sector 3 to the top, I must have been on scene for 45 minutes at this point, I think. A guy was brought out who was deceased, he was in a bad way they were running with him, and there was four of them with him. The whole situation was like a movie, I just didn't know if I was doing the right thing or not and never will., I think I'm quite a competent firefighter but I just didn't know where we were, I knew where the fire was and I understand what's on fire but I can't get my head around what's happening with these people, if the fire's on the outside why are all these people coming out, why am I looking up and every window I see there's someone hanging out there with a lot of black smoke, this is not right, the building's built out of concrete and rebar it was built in the 60's, that thing isn't coming down but it's alight it shouldn't be alight, it like that thing's been wrapped in plastic, you've taken everything I know in building and construction and turned it on it's head, this should not be happening. I could see the fire was in the cladding, why were all these people coming out with that much smoke on them? The stay put policy gives you an hour safety, this is a national policy which the Incident

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commander can change, however if it had changed I was never aware of it. At that point I didn't get it! I came back from the walkway, I'm not too sure how it happened really, I sort of had a click in my head and knew I had to do the best that I can. There's a couple of hours I'm not too sure about and how it set up that I was by the park, I seemed to be the most senior there.

Casualties were still coming out and by this time at Sector 3 the fire was at the top of the corner at Sector 2, I could see it starting to creep round and I thought we've got nothing to stop it, it's right at the top. I even saw casualties being brought out wearing BA equipment which is against policy but these guys were doing their very best to save people. I looked up and could see somebody at the top of the ladder which was positioned at the top of the walkway, I could also see a firefighter under the walkway with a hose reel and he was just damping down all the falling bits, he was protected under that walkway and he was there for hours just damping down the bits falling down on sector 1. I walked back and could see sector 3 was a completely different from before, maybe an hour earlier. There was fire at the top with a red glow, half a dozen flats alight and I knew that that the building was gone and I knew we were going to lose a lot of people, public and us. I moved back and a firefighter said "there's someone up there at the window" I said "I know, lets concentrate on getting inside". We started to send a couple of BA wearers into the lobby area because we were clear, the children's playground area was clear I think it was A311 Holloway that turned up and I positioned them under the silver children's slide with a jet and gradually little bits of debris were coming down from sector 2 & 3 I directed Holloway crew to protect the people with water, it was no use putting it into the flats as we didn't know who was inside/ what we were doing firefighting wise which would only make matters worse.

For the first hour and a half it felt like were at a different incident, I couldn't see what was going on at sector 1 but gradually more and more people came round our side. We had a 135 ladder near the doorway which was giving us protection, so we started to feed people in. I think there was a station manager at the playground sorting out BA wearers. I saw West Hampstead's crew there and started talking to them when I saw some police riot shields come from sector 1. I said to a sergeant "can we have a couple of them?" he said "I'll get whatever you want". The debris was starting to pick up now and we were using firefighters to run people in using the shields. FF Greg YEOMAN was doing this when I saw him fall over and injure his ankle. He said we need some BA wearers, he was with Mat TANNER and some trainees, I said no to the trainees initially but then told them "this is not a game, whatever matt or Gregg tell you to do, you do

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it". They went and got their sets and went in. Then I was approached by a Police Inspector in riot gear, he said "I can't do what you're doing but my people can get you in and out if you want?" I said "yeah let's do it". At this point Debris was really starting to build up, DAC McCOUGHLIN came up to me and told me it was a 40 pump fire, we had a conversation about casualties where he said we had six probable's and 127 people still unaccounted for, he handed me a safety officers tabard which I wore for a while whilst I was directing people in and out of the building. He returned shortly after and said he would get someone of a more senior position, he asked if I was coping and he decided to leave me there. The debris was coming down quite thick and fast by now and getting very precarious where we were.

Whilst in the park we were joined by the watch manager from Old Kent Road and a few other senior officers including ma'am the commissioner and I gave them the same brief as everyone else. By this time we had changed from Fire Fighters to PC's ferrying people in and out. I think it was a police inspector who said to me that he could get his people to do the safely ferring people in and out as they couldn't do our job and would this help. I made the decision i think and agreed. We discussed the risks and he understood what i meant. Every now and then we'd bring a casualty out, the fire was coming quite a way round now and we were getting a lot of debris, it was probably the last time I looked back and could see lots of flats alight, not one or two but lots. We had a burst length of hose which we tried to repair a couple of times but we couldn't risk people with all the debris falling down, we just couldn't do it. Even with all the protection we had with the shields etc we couldn't do it, the debris was coming down a lot. It wasn't heavy but I did notice on their tunics and riot shields that they had molten aluminium on them, the insulation was floating down but the sheets were coming down too, you'd hear a pop and that would be another flat going up in flames and being showered with glass. Someone came round and said they'll get a station manager to come round. Firefighters seemed to be mustering by the playground but I have no idea who was in charge of that.

I was in contact with Station Manager WALTON in the lobby area. We had definitely moved to another radio station but what it was I don't know. I remember Pat GOLBOURNE coming out saying they're screwed, they can't get past the 11<sup>th</sup>, he'd come out for a better look to see if he could come up with a better plan. If a lift was being used I didn't know anything about i I noticed by now it started to get a bit of daylight coming through. I can't remember if it was the sergeant or the inspector i asked "do you know what our evacuation signal is" he said "no" I said "it's short blasts of the whistle, if you hear it you need to get your people down the end there, you won't miss it, all the firefighters will start repeating it". A

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couple of firefighters asked me “do you think it’s going to collapse” I said “no I don’t, the outside cladding might come off but that building isn’t going anywhere!” It’s an old building, the stuff that’s been put on it since the 80’s, that’s going to come off but the rest of its fine. By this time there was a real lull of people coming out of our way, casualties were becoming less and less. I went into the lobby area and spoke to Andy WALTON and said “we got to look after the welfare of the people coming in and out” by this time some people had gone past me twice with BA sets on and I know for a fact a couple of the EDBA had gone past me. I was met by a crew I know from Southall who asked me how long I’d been here. They didn’t tell me the time but they said they were on a 20 pump relief. Just minutes after that I bumped into Paddington’s Guvnor and he was looking for some of his crew because they had been relieved.

Earlier in the night I had seen Mike DOWDEN the guvnor in charge of North Kensington and he was shot, he was gone, he said “I’ve lost my gloves” mentally you could see he’d gone and he was all over the shop, he had done so much so so much good. I told him to stay here, he said “what else could I do” he wanted to do more, you could see he had gone and there was nothing that I could comfort him with, I said “you’re not going anywhere just stay here now” I gave him some water, he took a couple of bottles and off he went again. Around that time a call had come up about a missing firefighter, Dave HILL, but very quickly after this it became apparent that they’d found him. Again I spoke to Dave WALTON and said we have to look after people’s welfare. People were being picked out from the playground area and told they can’t go in again, they were physically beat. When a crew would come out Andy would radio me and say “welfare” and we’d check them over and make sure they were alright because some of them were cooked. I saw Paul GRAY going in twice, fittest fire fighter in London for five years and he was exhausted.

One thing I remember from the night was seeing people’s faces, these are not people who are new to this, these are people who understood and had been to horrible things and you’re looking at them and thinking how can I stand here and say well done to you when you’ve taken that kind of punishment, it’s not normal, but I’d had a discussion with the DAC and he said keep them motivated so that’s what I did. It wasn’t the motivation it was also the momentum, we had to push them harder than ever to keep them focused.

It was daylight now and the debris was still coming down heavy. As there was a lull we repaired the

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damaged hose, smashed it with an axe and changed the lengths which took about 5 seconds. The momentum went on, there was an odd call from Andy asking for salvage sheets, I don't know what time that was but it was before the Chinese guy came out and that was about 08:30. I'd heard from the crews coming out that the staircases were blocked with deceased so I think I know where they were going with the salvage sheets, I took that to mean they were to be used to bring some of the bodies out, out this point it was evident we'd lost a lot of people. I spoke to the inspector and said "I've been asked to get some salvage sheets and I believe they're to be used for body retrieval. Just so you're aware are your people alright with that" and he said "yeah let me deal with that". I also said we're going to need somewhere to put them" and he said "yep leave that with me I'll deal with that" but it never happened, they never took them in so that was an idea that was obviously changed. I stayed in this position until about 09:45AM when I was relieved. Group manager SPOONER asked how long I'd been here and I said "since about half one, two". He said "let's get someone in to give you a break, at least for half an hour". A watch manager standing there said he'd take over. This was a good time to handover as the debris had died down, I'd seen the worst of it and it was good to get a fresh set of eyes to re-evaluate the situation. I walked back up the ramp and found my crew, stayed with them for about an hour until I was told to collect my board, I was told they were going to bus us out because of where we'd parked.

The guys from Holloway took over the base pump for us and me and my crew were bussed over to Paddington where we arrived at about 13:00 to complete our statements. I can understand why we had to do it but we've never done this before. We then went to see a welfare officer. I'm aware that the Blue Watch crew from here collected our appliance during the day. By about 6 O'clock we were told we could stand down until midnight, we didn't. We scrapped together equipment on the appliance and got us available. At about 05:00AM on the 15<sup>th</sup> we returned to the tower. This time I was in charge of sector 3 and 4 helping Surrey Aerial appliance, the fire was smouldering in different parts of the building, no one was entering. Some dignitaries arrived to have a look. I arrived back at the station at about 14:30hrs. I was working with FF APP, FF HEIR, FF Jack DEO, FF SMITH the second time.

I exhibit the TIP sheet for the incident as MAG/1 which I handed to DC SIMPSON. I'd also like to add that we were due to have a training package about insulation panel issues, however this was never rolled out. Therefore I've brought in my own burner to demonstrate the fact they can hide the heat. There was no training that could have been given to help combat this fire we did everything we could, I hope this was a one off. We followed high rise procedure to the best of our ability. What it does need is building

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research! If you're going to change the design of a building on the outside you need to change the design of what we need to do on the inside. No one has thought of us or the occupiers. We're only equipped to do maybe 4 flats we're not equipped to do 100 flats, there's nothing else we can do until you work with us. The thing that I've got out of this was when I'm driving along and someone's giving me fire survival guidance which has been made too complicated. I know crews have problems finding floors because of the smoke and dirt, paint the number on the floor for example, keep it simple. Number flats like hotels Keep it simple! Get the right people into the building research establishment. I'd like to thank the MET police without the TSG I couldn't have done what we were doing without them.

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