

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: ANDERSON, MELCHIZEDEK

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 7 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 ANDERSON

Date: 03/03/2018

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

My name is Melchizedek ANDERSON this statement is in relation to the fire at GRENFELL TOWER in West London in the early hours of the morning of 14th of June 2017.

This statement is made after a voluntary interview given to Detective Kath WATSON and PC Suzanne HARRIS on 14th February 2018.

The people I will mention in this statement are Group Manager Pat GOULDBOURNE and my crew that night Fire Fighter Dean ABBESS, Fire Fighter Paul HOWARD (The driver of the fire engine), and Fire Fighter Pavinder SINGH. Watch Mangers Tony PECKHAM and Pat DELAINY

The Locations I will mention are GRENFEL TOWER and the surrounding area, Islington Fire Station, Euston Road and the A40 approach to GRENFELL TOWER

I am a Crew Manager at ISLINGTON fire station and have been employed by the London Fire Brigade for the last fourteen years. I joined the Brigade in 2004 and have worked at SHADWELL Fire station in TOWER HAMLETS Fire Station on Blue Watch as a fire Fighter

In 2010 went CLERKENWELL Fire station on promotion as Crew Manager in development of Red Watch, and then competent Crew Manager

I then moved ISLINGTON Fire Station on Red Watch in 2014 as Crew Manager and then a Crew Manager Plus which means you are competent to ride in charge of your own station of any other which is my current posting and where I was on the night of the incident at GRENFELL TOWER.

I am a Competent Crew Manager Plus on the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) at ISLINGTON. A Fire Rescue unit (FRU) is different from a normal Pump ladder fire engine. The Fire engine carries extended duration

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breathing apparatus this is breathing apparatus with two tanks of air that the Fire fighter carries on his back and dependant on fitness age and exertion when using it, it has approximately forty minutes breathing time as opposed to the standard breathing apparatus which has thirty minutes breathing time and only has one cylinder. The rest of the apparatus is the same with a face mask connected to the cylinders by a pipe and has a gauge on it that tell you how much breathing time you have and also a personal distress alarm, the extended breathing apparatus is carried in the FRU fire engines and not on the normal pump ladder fire engines.

All fire Fighters are trained in Standard breathing apparatus and there is another course for the extended breathing apparatus. The FRU also carries tools and other specialist equipment that requires extra training my specialisms are line ops with are operations that may involve the use of ropes or abseiling when a person cannot be rescued by conventional means. I am also trained to use extended duration breathing apparatus. For nearly three years I have been riding in the FRU in charge of it. During my service I have been to a few major incidents, early in my service I attended the London terror attacks of 7/7 and would say the fire at GRENFELL TOWER was by far the worst incident I have ever been to.

There is lots of ongoing training in the fire service and is a continuous cycle of training to maintain professional operations and it is my responsibility to programme this in and also maintain it, fifty percent of our time is spent training which is a lot of our time as our shifts are very long, We train at the station in core skills which involve working with the pump ladder at the station which involved drills and then looking at the theory and policy notes and lectures, twenty hours a month is spent training in line ops with the FRU and all the equipment it carries. Our FRU specialises in Line ops which I explained earlier in the statement, other FRU's may specialise in other areas such as hazardous materials or operations such as animal rescue, not every fire station has an FRU. We also do community fire safety which is going out in to the community to educate the general public about what the fire brigade do and what we can do to help them. This is all dependant on calls to incidents as you can have training planned but if a job comes in that we are called to that has to be dealt with first and the training will have to be re scheduled,

We combine the drills with theory training from the policies and lectures

We all train together as crew and feedback is encouraged between ourselves on strengths and weaknesses, I speak specifically for our team when I say we all do the training together, I train with my team and we all talk about each other's strengths and weakness including me, so we can continue to improve working as a team and on our own personal strength and weakness'. We have quizzes on the policy notes as it important to empower fire fighters to know what to do as when you turn up to a fire everyone should

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know what to do, not just one person. We also complete external training with a company call Babcocks who are responsible for delivering first aid training, breathing apparatus training that is arranged and is mandatory and usually takes place at least once a year. Babcocks is also responsible for the specialist training externally such as the line ops course that is my specialism and what our fire rescues unit can be called upon as it is recognised as having equipment and fire fighters with knowledge and skills to complete more complex rescues should they be required.

Fire Fighting in high rise tower blocks training has always been a hot topic for as long as I can remember because there are lots of complexities around Firefighting in high rise buildings. You may have maisonettes, getting water from the ground to which ever floor the fire is on is not simple. The policy for firefighting in high rise blocks has been changed at least three or four time to my knowledge to reflect changed in the law and different equipment. Other problems can be if there isn't a dry riser or wet riser or if it is not working, as a watch manager we have to look at the more in depth tactical side of it and know how to deal with what we have in front of us when turning up to a call. Some problems can be to do with the age of a block and how well it is maintained. Newer blocks have better firefighting systems and in terms of construction quite safe. In older blocks they may not have fire lifts or the older style fire man's lift, we can simulate high rise firefighting or elements of it in our drill tower and if we can have access to an unoccupied tower block we will always take the opportunity to use it for training and drilling.

Basement are another hot topic that we train in and they are easier to do as there are companies that will let us use their basements however tower blocks are normally occupied but if an opportunity presents itself where we can train in an actual tower block we will always take that opportunity.

During my service I have been to a few tower block fires as the locality of the stations I have worked at there as not so many high rise tower blocks of the same nature of GRENFELL TOWER.

72(d) visits are visits to premises in our borough that may be of particular risk to fire and we have a list on the operational database of the buildings we need to familiarise ourselves with and this involves collecting and updating information about certain buildings in the area with information that would be useful to fire fighters attending the premises to fight a fire, This is the ultimate responsibility of the Watch Manager but he may delegate it to crew managers or a particular watch and then contact is made with the premises so we can arrange a visit. before the night of the GRENFELL TOWER FIRE I had never been there before and had no previous knowledge of it.

My understanding of the stay put policy is that it's used but the London Fire Brigade as in high rise blocks its unusual for fire to spread beyond the flat it starts in and its safer to stay put than it is to leave as

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the fire brigade can get in quickly and efficiently to deal with the fire that is unlikely to spread and there is no point in getting all occupants out and could hinder the fire service getting into the building, I have no knowledge of what decisions were made round the stay put policy at GRENFELL TOWER and I do not know who put them in place or withdrew them

On 13th of June 2017 I started my shift at approximately 1930 as a crew manager I get in a little earlier as the night shift starts at 2000hrs. I usually like to get in early to get organised and whilst I don't remember the exact time I arrived at the station this is what I normally do.

It was our first night shift as a crew on red watch and the fire engine call sign was A306 which is a fire rescue unit.

At ISLINGTON Fire Station we have a normal Pump ladder fire engine which has a ladder, a pump and the crew wear standard duration breathing apparatus breathing normally unless they are trained in the extended and this is the type of fire engine that is at all fire stations ISLINGTON also has a Command Unit Fire Engine this appliance attended fire that require four or more Fire Engines and will manage operations such as resourcing and asking for more appliances (Fire engines) it will take the nominal role call boards which are metal boards carried by all fire engines and with the names, numbers of the fire fighters on that engine and call sign of the fire engine and it's a way of knowing who is in attendance at the fire and should a roll call be needed means they will use the information from the boards to make sure everybody is accounted for. It is also responsible for managing Fire Survival Guidance calls. These are calls made from people in the premises on fire that cannot leave the building or do not feel safe doing so for any number of reasons, they made have disabilities or the fire may be blocking the route out the building, the fire service control officer will keep the person on the phone until fire fighters get to them and communicate the location of that person to the command unit who will then know where to send fire fighters if a rescue is needed.

This works as mobile office for the staff working on the command unit and the incident commander. As well as the pump ladder and the command unit there is the FRU which is the fire engine I am in charge of. Whichever engine you are posted to for that shift you stay with and don't change between engines.

I started night shift on 13th of June 2017, it was our first night shift and the whilst the shifts starts at 2000hrs. I normally get in half hour early to get organised and whilst can remember exactly what time I started work that night this is what I normally do.

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It started like any other normal shift in fact more normal than most. There was a roll call and detailing the riders (Fire fighters) with routine checks, then on night shifts we normally have lectures again I cannot remember if we did or what it was about, Then the fire fighters will have some down time and the officers will perhaps be downstairs having discussions about any number of operational subjects, I know I talked with the station manager that night but do not recall what we talked about.

I vaguely remember there was a shout (call to an incident) earlier in the evening for the Pump ladder and the Command unit went out I cannot recall what time it was but I had finished talking with the station manager so it must have been quite late in the evening of the 13th of June. We stayed behind as we were not required.

The call for GRENFELL TOWER came at approximately 0120hrs, I remember hearing the bells go off and then reading the call slip from tele printer in the watch room it said forty pump fire. I knew this must be a big fire as that's half the London Fire brigade resources, I got in the front seat of the fire engine alongside the driver Fire Fighter Paul HOWARD and riding in the back where Fire Fighters Dean ABBESS and Pavinder SINGH. Paul and Parvinder were standby fire fighters from other stations I got everyone together and made sure Paul, who was driving knew where he was going, I cannot remember the route to GRENFELL TOWER as Paul is from East Ham and knew the way but I am aware we went through central London along EUSTON ROAD and approached GRENFELL TOWER on the A40 from the left hand side.

Most of the journey my attention was focused on the Mobile data terminal a computer in the fire engine which provides maps of the route to an incident and other information and I wanted to get a much information about the job we were going to, however once we reached the A40 I could see GRENFELL TOWER and I could see the whole block was on fire and from the direction we approached from I could see two faces of the block were fully alight, I can't remember which two faces I could see where burning as I could see the fire and at that time the face of the block where alight from about half way up. I could see it was on fire and I could see it was a tower block but was not taking in too much detail at this point apart from the fact I could see the smoke and flame traveling north. I am not easily shaken but when I saw the tower for the first time I did feel scared and even more so when we entered the tower and even worse coming out to think the building could have collapsed at any time. We train for high rise fire but this was something different it looked like a disaster, I advised the guys in the back and said "WHEN WE GET THERE GRAB YOUR SETS AND THE TIC AND WE WILL FIND SOMEONE AND GET A BREIFING" by this I mean the breathing apparatus and the TIC is a thermal imaging camera. We drove

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to the scene on Blue lights and sirens and got to the area quite quickly, finding the RVP point was quite difficult as a lot of the roads were narrow and some of them were closed. We followed another fire engine and eventually parked up.

When we parked up there where a lot of fire engines and the roads were full of people everywhere. We grabbed our equipment and headed in the direction of the tower on foot as we are not the kind of fire engine that can pump water onto a fire, so it was not a necessity for us to park close to the fire and we take what equipment we think we need and can return should we require more. I was wearing my full fire kit which consists of leggings, boots tunic, flash hood gloves and helmet as where the rest of the crew and we all collected our breathing apparatus and someone picked up the thermal imaging camera although I don't remember who it was.

I am not familiar with the area but traveling on foot we went passed a railway and a playground and passed the pump ladder fire engine from KENTISH TOWN, I knew it was from that station as I knew the Firefighter on the Fire engine, it was pumping water as we passed by he told me where the command unit was, members of the public tried to direct us to the tower and a lot of people were milling around, I could see some work being done on the entrance to the tower as I believe there was an issue to the entrance and exit being too narrow, there were casualties walking about and a lot of hose and a lot of water. I could see police with riot shields providing shelter to Firefighters going into the tower. There was an Ariel ladder platform known as an ALP which is a fire engine with a very long ladder with a cage on the end of the ladder for fire fighters to stand in and can be used for firefighting or rescues was putting water on the fire on the south side, I don't think it was a London fire engine and whilst it was good to have it there the fire was away above the reach of the ladder and the water jets they were using on the fire.

We checked in the command unit to let them know we were there and hand in our nominal role board which is a mental board carried on the fire engine with the names of the fire fighters on the board and the call sign of the vehicle kept on the command unit so they know what resources are at the fire and also if an evacuation is required we can be accounted for using the nominal role board. The command unit we checked in with was our command unit from ISLINGTON call sign A306 it was our command unit on the command unit where Watch Manager Tony PECKHAM and Watch Manager Pat DELAINEY, I said hi and gave my nominal role board to one of them although I don't remember who as there was not time to chat.

We then went to a grassy area where a lot of fire fighters were assembled with breathing apparatus we waited there as resources were being organised. We waited in this area which seemed to be a

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marshalling point and there was a Station manager in charge, I don't know him but I think his name was Dan, I believe we waited for quite some time because fire fighters wearing Extended duration breathing apparatus have to be used in a very targeted way as you are only supposed to wear this apparatus once in a fire as the physical demands on the wear are more than that of a standard duration breathing apparatus set as you have two tanks instead of one and they are a lot heavier to carry. There are only a limited number of Fire Fighters trained to use this breathing apparatus so I think it was being decided on where we would be best used. I was calm at this point thinking who to partner up with who and thinking about where we might be tasked and what we would be doing, I knew it would be to rescue but I was thinking about what the conditions in the tower would be like and what floors we would be going to and if there would be water and hose on whatever floor we went to. Looking at The station manager in charge of what I will refer to as the marshalling point asked for EDBA wearer's and I said we were a crew of four EDBA wearers and he said "RIGHT GET YOURSELVES READY".

I checked with my crew that everyone was ready and ok, they are a very experienced crew that I know well and knew when they said they were ok they were and if there had been any issues they would have said.

The station Manager told us to go to the second Marshalling point which was back the way we had come, passed the play park and railway lines, he said from there we would go to the entry control point. Whilst waiting under the covered area in front of the building before going in I could still see debris falling from the building and people at the windows and shining touches, I could see flames behind them so I also knew the building was on fire both inside and out.

We then went into the building under a Police riot shield to the entry control point, where we would be briefed and would be going into the building. Whilst standing at the marshalling point I could see debris falling off the building, describing what it was would be an impossible task but it had a very specific smell to it and I can only describe it as a synthetic smell sticking in the back of your nose and throat, the debris falling that I saw was not that big but big enough to do damage if it hit you and it was falling constantly, I did not see it fall or hit the ground on fire but it was smouldering, That's really what I remember as I was mentally preparing myself to go into the building at the time, debris falling from a building if it's a high rise on fire is something we are taught to expect, so I didn't make that much of a mental note of it and its description at the time.

I could see people at the windows of the flats with flash lights and banging on the windows. We made our way to the next marshalling point and I was thinking this is the worst kind of job to go into as we were

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being exposed to so many hazards before getting to the fire as there was water everywhere and debris was falling constantly. I was very calm at this point whilst still in awe of what was in front of me I was thinking who I should partner up together and as crew manager I felt it my responsibility to stay calm and make sure the crew I turned up with all get to go home at the end of the shift.

When we got into the building there were other fire fighters trying to make another entrance and an existing entrance they were trying to make bigger. The water in the lobby area of the ground floor was like a swimming pool and there was water cascading down the stairs in a constant flow. There was a lot of hose everywhere and fire fighter coming in waiting to go in to the fire and going out of the building some carrying casualties out. Everybody was there doing a job like hose management and keeping the area clear.

The atmosphere was slightly smoky but visibility was ok and all the fire fighter had their breathing apparatus on ready to go but no one was using them. The crew and myself made our way the entry control point which every fire fighter going into the fire has to go passed irrespective of which kind of the two sets they are wearing. The entry control point is the last safe controlled place before going into a fire and there is an entry control board where you hand in the key from your breathing apparatus which has long piece of plastic on it called a tally on the tally is your name and the board communicates with your breathing apparatus via telemetry, you hand your tally to the entry control officer and he will put into the board and manually calculate how much air time you have in your tanks and then put your tally in to the board so it is known you are in a fire and if anything unexpected happens you will be accounted for. Passed the entry control point you will be wearing your breathing apparatus and have a task to do both the fire fighter and the entry control officer can see how much air you have in your tanks and when you need to start thinking about coming out of the fire.

So the entry control point in GRENFELL TOWER was very busy and on the wall was a lot of information I could not tell you what it was but I remember thinking "WOW". It was being well managed as we did not have any trouble getting in to the tower from the entry control point or getting out from there, there was a lot of people in there and noisy but organised

At the entry control point was a watch manager and Group manager we were given out brief which was for search and rescue I don't recall which floor but I think it was the tenth there was information to suggest someone was trapped on the tenth floor, this had come to the entry control point from the command unit where it had been received as a fire survival guidance call from someone trapped in the fire, We put on our breathing apparatus and headed upstairs, There was a lot of hose on the stairs up to

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about the fifth floor, and fire fighters on the lower floor where doing the hose management which is moving to free up space for other fire fighters to have a clear path up the stairs and onto the floors of the building they had been tasked to go to.

I can't remember if it was defiantly the fifth floor but I do remember the higher up we went there was no longer hose or water as there had been on the lower floors. The smoke on the stairwell was slightly hazy until we got to I think about the eighth floor. From the eight floor visibility was really bad you can make out your hand in front of your face but the air was not clear, I could see that lights in the building here on but I did not see any sprinklers or hear any fire alarms, getting up the stairs was quite difficult in the dark but you get into a rhythm on putting one foot in front of the other and finding your way up in the dark.

*The adrenalin and the weight of the breathing apparatus set and the equipment made it exhausting and also knowing that once I went into the stairwell I was entering a building that was on fire, and remembering what I had seen from the outside it was hard to imagine from the stairwell I was in a building that was almost entirely on fire. This is when I felt in fear but managed to keep calm as I knew I had a job to do. The stairwell I would describe as a normal stairwell of the normal dimensions of the stairwell of any council block in London with nothing remarkable about them.

I struggled and my breathing apparatus partner Dean ABBUSS struggled, but it is what we are trained to do and you have to push on passed that point of feeling exhausted and carry on I remember thinking right I need to keep my shit together and keep going. As I recall we got to the tenth floor but could not enter as the heat was too intense, I can only describe it as melt your face kind of heat, as I opened the door I could feel my ear burning from the heat, I could not see any flames but the heat was just too intense to even get inside the first door from the lobby, I did try but had to bear in mind I only had breaking in gear and no water. Both Dean and I were laying right down on the floor and it which is supposed to be the coolest part of a fire and the heat was still intense and knowing if we went in with no water we could really find ourselves in trouble. I relayed the information back to control and Dean and myself carried on climbing the stairs.

We came across the bariatric casualty lying face down on the stairs all dressed in black, I could not tell if the casualty was male or female the casualty was lying wedged across a landing wedged in with their head on the downstairs and feet lying up the stairs. I was of the belief this person was deceased but am not qualified to say that, Dean and myself tried to move the victim but were not strong enough to lift them. Another crew of two joined and even the four of us could not move the person, Experience told me that this person was deceased and have probably been so for some time, I tried to communicate to

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communicate with entry control but could not get through, I reasoned that I need to make the ground aware of this person as I reasoned I could use all my air on getting someone down stairs who I was of the firm belief was already dead or I can press on and look for live casualties. I managed to communicate the information via my personal radio which is for use on the fire ground but I thought it would be better to say something to someone to make them aware than to say nothing, someone advised me this was the radio channel for the fire ground and I responded in an appropriate manner that I needed to let someone know about this casualty and could not make contact with entry control all the time conscious of the air time in my breathing apparatus that I was using. I thought it was better to send Fire fighters wearing standard breathing apparatus to move the casualty as they have more manoeuvrability than we did with two air tanks on our back as this casualty needed to be moved for their own dignity and to clear the path up the stair well for other fire fighters as I also knew with the visibility as it was someone may fall over the casualty and down the stairs be it a fire fighter or another casualty coming out of the fire, I had this conversation over the radio but it was short Sharpe and to the point that this casualty needed to be dealt with whilst we pressed on up the stairs. The crew of two that had come to try and help move the casualty stayed with them and Dean and I continued up the stairs to what I believe was the eleventh floor.

Which we managed to get into and started feeling our way along the right hand wall this is called a right hand wall search and stops you getting lost when visibility is bad, we are trained to use walls to feel our way in and feel our way out. Visibility on this floor was zero I could hear my breathing apparatus partner Dean but could not see him so I was thinking we are going to have to maintain contact and not loose each other opened one door thinking back I think it was a bin chute door as it was not locked and well lit, but at the time I thought I had found another staircase. We carried on moving using the right hand wall and came to a door facing us and a door at the end. We tried to make entry to the door facing us we could not make entry to this flat and then decided we would try the other door by which point another crew had come on to the eleventh floor who by chance where the other to rider on our machine that night which made communication easy as we are on first name terms they continued to try and make entry to that door whilst we tried the other door, The other crew managed to get the flat door we had tried open and then we managed to open the other door as I went in to the compartment with Dean using the right hand wall the light in the flat was very bright so I was of the belief that the windows had gone as I could the see the flames on the outside of the building. We went into what I think was a bedroom searched the bedroom and then followed the wall round to what I think was a sitting room, I sensed there was a fire in this room I could not see it but I could hear it and sense it, so we searched the room very carefully, Dean had the

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thermal imaging camera at this point but could not use it as it designed to differentiated between different temperatures but everywhere was so hot it wasn't much use.

Dean then made me aware his air was running quite low, I asked him how much time he had left and he said maybe a few minutes, I continued searching the room and we only managed to search those two rooms not the whole flat. Dean reminded me again we need to go so a clipped my personal line on to him its 1.25 metres long and if you clip yourself onto each other, its normally used in incident where there is a straight path to where you want to be and stops anyone getting lost if they follow the guide line. Whist this was not the case I felt the circumstance dictated that I used it coming out of the floor on to the stairwell felt very disorientating as we made our way down the stairs we came across the bariatric casualty in exactly the same place as they were when we went up, at this point my BA partner Dean was really struggling and it was my concern to get him downstairs as quickly as possible. I had my second wind by this point, I pulled Dean down the stairs and we made it back to entry control, On the journey back down the stairs there were other fire fighters coming up giving fire fighters coming priority as they are coming out for a reason and I think either just before we reached it or just after the low pressure warning whistle went on out breathing apparatus sets, meaning we were nearly out of air. Policy states you should be back long before the whistle goes but in this situation everyone was pushing themselves way beyond this, it was clear to other people around us we were exhausted when we got downstairs, we checked back with entry control on the ground floor and briefed them on where we had been and what we had searched and I advised them that if anyone else was being sent up that high in the building even if it was for search as rescue they would need hoses and water. Dean had some oxygen and I drank some water and we both got our breathing apparatus sets and kit off before gathering ourselves and going back to the marshalling point outside the building to see if there was another task for us although anyone that had been in the building you could see they had been in as I was exhausted and all the fire fighters that had been at the incident and in the building had been working really hard.

At the marshalling point we did a test on our breathing apparatus sets and although you are not supposed to wear The extended breathing apparatus more than once, I knew with the situation as it was that I may be called upon to go into the building again and I wanted to be ready if asked, most of the other Fire fighters I saw with extended duration breathing apparatus where servicing their sets getting prepared to go up into the tower again. We stayed in the marshalling area for quite a while I don't recall the exact time but it was daylight by this point and noticeably lighter then when we had gone into the tower, we serviced our sets ready to wear again and then another crew of Extended duration breathing apparatus wearers and

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asked if we had set and we showed them the serviced sets and they took them and went in the direction of the tower. We stayed together as a group of four which is myself, Firefighters Dean ABBESS, Paul HOWARD and Parvinder SINGH. Our brief for the time being was to wait as there were lots of Firefighters who had been in the tower waiting to be redeployed either back or tasked elsewhere. We all waited for a very long time during which we had some light refreshments, before being told we could leave the fire ground but were instructed to go to Paddington fire station before going back to our own fire station. We went back to a fire engine which was still parked where we had left it and drove to PADDINGTON fire station and wrote our notes regarding the incident and everyone was offered counselling and then we went back to ISLINGTON and there was some discussion about what to do about the next relief (the day shift crews), it was approximately 1800hrs by the time we got back to the station from PADDINGTON and our next shift was due to start at 2000hrs so we had some rest and then as the relief crew agreed to stay a bit later so we could get some rest before starting the next shift. In the interview I have referred to my contemporaneous notes made after the incident that I exhibit as :MLRA/01 I will also refer to a map of GRENFELL TOWER and the surrounding area which I have marked various locations on and I exhibit as: MLRA/02

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