

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: SKORZEWSKI, MICHAEL

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 10 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.SKORZEWSKI

Date: 23/02/2018

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

This statement refers to the time I attended Grenfell Tower fire.

Throughout this statement, I will refer to the following exhibits:

MIS/01 – Contemporaneous notes that I wrote when I was at Paddington fire Station

MIS/02 – This is a timeline that I typed up approximately 3 months after my attendance to Grenfell Tower Incident on 14/06/2017.

MIS/03 – A map of Grenfell Tower and surrounding area providing to me by police where I have marked on the direction where we parked our appliance

MIS/04 – This is a floor plan of Grenfell Tower where I have marked the location of the bridgehead on the 4 floor, The BA holding area on the 4th floor and position of the bridgehead on the 6th or 7th floor.

My name is Michael SKORZEWSKI and I am a Crew Manager for the London Fire Brigade (LFB). I have been with the LFB for nearly 8 years. In February 2010 I started on Red Watch at Tooting Fire station as a Fire Fighter. I was then promoted to Crew Manager and moved to White Watch at Richmond Fire Station in 2012. I then moved to Barking approximately 1 year ago where I have been based since.

In terms of training regarding High Rise blocks we have lectures on a regular basis as it is a key topic as we have a reasonable amount of High Rise blocks on our ground at Barking. We would cover policies

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regarding High Rise Blocks once every 1 or 2 months. We attend High Rise Blocks fairly regularly for Section 7 (2) D familiarisation visits which means it's quite fresh in my memory. We are expected to read policy notes to help us with our development, knowledge and awareness. We will go over the topics and discuss what it involves and the risks that we have on our ground. We will then go on exercises as part of our training. On Day shifts, we will train in our yard. I have been to High Rise block fires previously before attending Grenfell Tower Incident. I don't remember when exactly but it would have been within 12 months prior to Grenfell fire. Prior to attending Grenfell Tower Incident I was not aware of any pre prepared firefighting plans for Grenfell Tower neither was I aware of any pre prepared plans in regards to when compartmentation fails within a High Rise block of flats. I do not have any specialist skills although recently I have gained a Hose Layer qualification.

The makeup of appliances at Barking: at the time of the incident we had a Pump Ladder (PL), Pump, Hose Layer which is used for larger incidents which carries lots of big hose, Bulk Foam Unit which is also used for larger incidents where a large amounts of foam are needed and a command unit.

Prior to attending Grenfell Tower on Wednesday 14th June 2017 I have never attended Grenfell Tower, have any knowledge of Grenfell Tower or been posted to a Fire Safety Department. I have also not been on a Section 7 (2) d familiarisation visit to Grenfell Tower.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017, I started duty at 1900hours. We are due to start duty at 2000hours but at Barking Fire Station we normally start an hour early so other crews can get off an hour early.

We had a lot of people on duty that evening. We started the shift at 2000hours with roll call, which is where crews were detailed to specific appliances and given specific tasks. The persons I can remember present at roll call were Watch Manager (WM) Robert GREEN, Myself, Fire Fighter (FF) Sarah HARRIS, FF Stuart BIDEANT, FF Glen DAINY and FF Steve MCCLENAGHAN and we were detailed to ride the Pump Ladder (PL) call sign F431. My role was to ride on the back of the machine.

Also present were Crew Manager (CM) Karen JACKSON, FF Russell MACANASPIE, FF Julie WILSON, FF Chris FRANKLIN, and FF David BRYAN who were detailed to ride the Pump call sign F432. I can't remember at which point in the shift but I was moved to F432 as CM Karen JACKSON wasn't feeling well. My role now changed to being the Officer in Charge of F32 which was a Pumping Appliance.

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After Roll Call, We would have done standard checks on our Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets and check over the appliance to check that it had the right equipment on it. I did not have a BA set, as there were not any spares. The checks of the machine I would have done would have been to check the pager, mobile phone and my fire gear were on the appliance. Fire gear consists of Tunic, Leggings, Helmet, gloves, fire hood, radio, torch and other ancillary equipment. I do less of the checks now that I am a Crew Manager as this role is more office based. I would have checked who was on duty, managed the station diary to reflect what work we had done and organising visits.

We would have then had something to eat at 2100 or 2130 hours. We may have done some training, which would have been a brief lecture or reading policy notes which is something we do on most night shifts. We would have then gone upstairs and watched some TV at approximately 2200 hours. I would have then gone up to my room at approximately 0030hours to rest.

I can't remember what else we did that night up until the call to Grenfell Tower came through. I don't know if we picked up any other shouts.

Between 0200hours and 0400hours I got a notification on my phone through a Guardian news app reading the incident at Grenfell Tower stating Major Fire. I believe the Command Unit (CU) went on the incident earlier than we did, I believe they were mobilised before 0400hours. I went downstairs to the watch room where there is a printer to check what they had gone to, to see if the call was local and if we might be called to it later. When I got to the watch room FF MCCLENAGHAN was in there. FF MCCLEANAGHAN told me about the incident and at first, I thought it was a massive joke. The incidents are sent from our control room and once it has printed you tear off the slip. I remember the slip said 40-pump fire at Grenfell Tower; I was surprised by this as you don't see many of them. A 40-pump fire means that 40 pumping appliances are in attendance plus other specialist machines and senior officers. The slip would have also listed other appliances that were in attendance, where the incident was, Time of call and time of mobilisation.

Myself and FF MCCLENAGHAN were discussing the incident and that there was a good chance that we would be going to Grenfell. There were 1 or 2 others in the room but I can't remember who they were.

We then go ordered onto the incident at 0437hours as a relief, which would be to take over from crews that were already in attendance. We were ordered as part of a 20-pump relief; we took a few minutes to get some items such as bottles of water together as we knew we would be the incident for some time.

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We then got onto the Pump and made our way out of the fire station at approximately 0445 hours. The driver was FF BRYAN, I was sat in the front passenger seat, FF MACANASPIE, FF WILSON and FF FRANKLIN were in the back of the pump. We travelled at road speed to Grenfell. Each appliance has a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) at the front, which is a screen that has a map on it. When Section 7 (2) D familiarisation visits are conducted, the notes recorded from the visit are updated onto a system. This system can be accessed from the MDT, which will show hazards, access points, Layout of buildings and other relevant information. I used the MDT to direct us to the incident, used the system to see what information there was stored regarding Grenfell Tower but I don't recall anything of relevance and to find out where the Rendezvous Point was. I also used the map to have a look at the surrounding area of the incident to look for access roads.

On route to the incident, I could see a tall building from an elevated section of the A13 at Barking; I could see smoke from miles and miles away. Amongst my crew we started to talk about things we might needed to do. From what I had seen on the news, I knew that it was Grenfell Tower. As we were making our way to the incident, it was getting lighter outside. We parked up at what I believe was Ladbroke Grove which I believe was the Rendezvous Point. There were approximately 10 other appliances that were parked along Ladbroke Grove. I had marked on exhibit MS/02 approximately the direction Ladbroke Grove is.

I booked in with a Command Unit which there were a few of on Ladbroke Grove. There are 8 Command Units in the LFB and I can't remember which one I went to and whom I spoke to. I gave the Command Unit our Nominal Roll Board, which shows a list of who is riding on our fire engine. I was told to wait around our machine and that we will be detailed with what to do in due course. There were a lot of machines up and down the road, which were standing by.

From where we were parked, I would say we were half a mile to a mile away from the Tower. From this location, I could not see the Tower due to obstructions by surrounding buildings but a Male from Dagenhams machine told us that if we were to go 100 yards down Ladbroke Grove and look down one of the roads on our left then we would be able to get a good view of the Tower. 3 members of my crew went to find this position, when they returned myself and another member of my crew went to find this position. I believe the road where we could see the tower from may have been called Elgin Crescent. We had to go down a few roads to get to a position to see the Tower. From this location, the Tower was directly in front of me approximately half a mile to a mile away. I remember that there were members of the public around this area as this area had not been cordoned off. I could see the East face of the Tower,

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most of this face was billowing out smoke from the 5th or 6th floor; there was quite a bit of flame. I thought that this was unusual and not something that I see every day. It felt a lot more real now that I was a lot closer to the tower to when I saw smoke from the A13 at Barking. I was thinking that it was highly likely people were dead inside and that I was worrying for the safety of my colleagues.

We were waiting on Ladbroke Grove for 2 to 2 and a half hours. I remember it to be quite a nice day so we were perched up against a wall speaking to other fire fighters from other machines regarding what they had done and what they had seen. We were offered refreshments by members of public whilst we were waiting. There were even members of the public who were not aware of the fire asking us why their buses were running late so we had to inform them of what was going on. I then returning to our appliance at approximately 0730 hours I locked up the appliance and walked up to the incident. Nobody told us to do this but we were sat around doing nothing and thought we would be more use closer to the incident. The reason the appliance was locked was that I thought that we were going to be away from the appliance for quite a while, we won't be anywhere near the appliance for several hours, we had personal property such as phones on the appliance and I didn't want anything stolen from the appliance and I kept the key to the appliance with myself. We walked up with Fire Fighters from other machines towards the Tower. There were approximately 40 to 50 LFB personnel including my crew that made our way to the Tower. I agreed with this decision as we were waiting around for quite a long time.

I can't remember the route we took from Ladbroke Grove to the Tower apart from taking some cut through. We were all in full fire gear and crews had their BA sets on their backs. I could see the tower on and off as we walked past buildings. The scene still looked the same of the building almost completely on fire and a lot of smoke.

We got to a holding area near the tower at approximately 0745hours, which had a sort of underpass that had flats running along it, it led to a staging area; this area had big blue salvage sheets laid out where fire fighters were sitting on and waiting with BA sets on. There were at least 50 maybe up to 100 fire fighters already in this area before I got there. The atmosphere in this area was relatively calm with Fire fighters talking about the incident, what they had heard, what they knew of the incident, what they had witnessed and generally people wanting to get in and help out.

At approximately 0830hours there were a few of us lined up ready to go into the tower, we were waiting between 30 and 45 minutes. Once again, I was talking to other Fire Fighters who had already been inside

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the tower. I bumped into FF Adrian TAPPIN and FF David LEAN from Tooting Fire Station and FF Simon FAIRBROTHER from Richmond Fire Station all of whom I have worked with previously. FF TAPPIN has at this point given me a spare SDBA set, as I didn't have one. I conducted what is known as a Fire ground 'A' Test; I switched the cylinder on the set, turned it on, checked the contents, conducted a breath down test and made sure the equipment was working. This test lasted approximately 5 to 10 minutes.

I was approximately 30 to 40 meters from the Tower at this point. Groups of 20 were being called into the Tower from this area by whom I believe to be a Watch Manager. I believe the requirement was for a mixture of Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) and Extended Duration Breathing apparatus (EDBA) wearers. SDBA is worn by normal pumping appliance personnel, EDBA is designed for use in longer protracted incidents where BA can be worn for a longer period of time which is worn by Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) Personnel. EDBA is twin cylinders containing compressed air. SDBA can last up to 31 minutes and is a single cylinder of compressed air.

As I was queuing up, I was picked aside for role of Entry Control Officer (ECO). I believe this person was a Male Watch Manager. The Watch Manager told me to drop my BA set and to go with him. He told me that I would be ECO at the bridgehead which is located on the 4th floor. There was another male Crew Manager that was also told to do the same. This role required myself to operate an Entry Control Board (ECB), which helps to monitor crews that are inside the Tower. Any LFB personnel can normally act as an ECO but for incidents in High Rise Blocks the ECO will be of at least a rank of Crew Manager. There is no extra training provided for acting as an ECO at High Rise Incidents. I believe I was picked out by the Watch Manager as he would have seen the markings on my helmet which indicate that I am a Crew Manager.

We went through an entrance that had big glass windows and doors into the Tower with the assistance of Police holding Riot Shields above our heads, this was due to falling debris. The police walked us along a wall and then assist fire fighters exit the Tower under Riot Shields. We then went up to a mezzanine area. As I was going into the Tower, I noticed Richmonds appliance which was pumping. The appliance was on my left had side by a grass area when entering the Tower I believe the appliance was supplying the Dry Rising Main. The Rising Mains runs throughout a building. Hoses will be connected from a hydrant to a pumping appliance; the appliance will then connect to the rising main. Fire fighters can then connect hoses to different floors depending on where the fire is, then you would attack the fire. It is a means of

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getting water up a High Rise building. Once in the lobby area at the base of the Tower there were approximately 15 to 20 Fire Fighters waiting. I wasn't in the lobby area for very long, I'm not sure about the lighting but there was daylight coming into the building which made the visibility reasonable, this light went away as I went up to the first floor as there was no longer a big glass door. As I was going up the stairwell it was a meter or 2 wide and I wasn't tripping over objects as I went up. There was some water coming down from the incident. I have then got to the bridgehead on the 4th floor.

When I go to the bridgehead at approximately 0900hours I was tasked with working with the other Crew Manager that come into the tower with me and there was another Watch Manager working with us. There were 2 ECB setup in the bridgehead. The bridgehead on the 4th floor was tucked in a corner near to one of the flats, I believe it was on the left hand side as I entered the lobby area. I have marked on Exhibit MIS/04 where the bridgehead was located a '4', the 'O' symbolise the location of the 2 ECB. There were approximately 20 to 30 personnel in the bridgehead, which meant that it was quite warm. I have marked on Exhibit MIS/04 the 2 flats that were being used as BA holding areas as it was getting quite congested in the lobby area on the 4th floor. There was artificial lighting which might have been emergency lighting, which made the visibility okay. I thought it was surprisingly calm. The makeup of personnel at the bridgehead were at least 3 Station Managers (SM), there was at least 1 Group Manager (GM) and the rest were Fire fighters.

I was in charge of an ECB for EDBA wearers and the other Crew Manager was in charge of the ECB for SDBA wearers. The function of an ECB is to keep a log of BA crews that are committed into an area past the bridgehead. My role was to note down who was in the building past the Bridgehead, where they were from, what their task was, what their location was and where they were going.

There was a Station Manager keeping a log of the crews that were in the bridgehead. The Station Manager was recording this on a wall with a china graph pencil. Crews were being briefed by I believe a Station Manager. When crews were given their brief, they would come to me or the other Crew Manager depending on if they were SDBA or EDBA wearers. I would then take down what floor the crews were going to, what their task was, what their call sign was and I would then put their tally in the entry control board. The tally uses a telemetry function that keeps a link between ECB and BA set. If in range it will give the ECO information on how fast the wearer is breathing, how much air they have left, time to whistle which is a system that will sound when the wearer is low on air and that they need to come out. The ECO would then check how much air the crews had left. I would then check the radio

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communications and after this was completed, the crews would be committed to their task. I would also put in a manual calculation, which would tell me the maximum time the wearer would have depending on how much air they have in their cylinder. This would act as a fall back if there were issues with the telemetry. My job as ECO is to make sure no one gets low on air and that everyone is safe.

At one time there were 4 or 5 crews being committed past the bridgehead. Each crew usually consisted of 2 fire fighters which meant that at any one time I would be having to monitor 8 to 10 fire fighters whereabouts and air consumption. At times there were crews of 3 and 4 that were being committed. Each ECB is approximately 1 meter in length and 70cm wide. The ECB had 12 slots for tallies but you have to leave 4 slots vacant. Then reason 4 slots must be kept vacant is in case emergency crews have to go and assist other crews that have been committed. Ideally you would want 1 blank slot for every occupied slot on the ECB. The emergency crews where standing by on the bridgehead and would only be committed past the bridgehead in the case of an emergency, other than that they would be waiting.

When crews were coming back to the bridgehead they would report back to me, I would return their tally's, they would then close down their BA sets and place their tally's back onto the BA sets. The Fire fighters information would be wiped from the ECB and ready for the next crews to be committed. The crews would then speak to one of the senior officers in regards to what they had done and relay and relevant information. At a smaller incident the ECO would monitor the ECB and note down information from the crews that were returning but due to the size of this incident it wouldn't be possible to do all the tasks. Of note a couple of crews informed me that there was a body of the 9th floor on the stairs. I think this had obstructed fire fighters. I remember being told that the body was of a woman of large build. I believe the body was left in situ of a while But might have been moved later on. Also a few of the crews told me that it was hot, which was expected, a lot of water in some places, it was punishing and hard work.

I remember that communications weren't working very well. I was trying to communicate with crews whilst they were committed but the radios weren't working very well which surprised me. The channel I was using on the radio was Channel 6 which is dedicated to BA wearers. My need to communicate with fire fighters would be to find out their location, if they are safe and how much air they had. I thought that this was quite worrying. The telemetry wasn't working. I would know when it wasn't working as there would be a flashing light on the ECB when there was no range. There is a solid green light next to each BA wearer's tally which indicates that the wearer is in range. If the telemetry is out of range then the light

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will start to blink green which it did for a lot of the wearers. I am aware that the telemetry doesn't work as well vertically as it does horizontally. The ECB would still show the wearers air consumption but it wouldn't update. I raised my concerns to a Station Manager stating I was getting very little radio communications and the telemetry keeps going out of range. We just had to run with what he had. To a degree we had runners going up to check on crews. I believe the issues with the radio communications and BA Telemetry was due to the design and construction of the tower. We are told in training that the communication doesn't work as well when going up or down as it does spreading out, so buildings that have multiple floors are likely to prove more of a problem.

I believe at 1230 hours we ended up moving the bridgehead as senior officers believed we had been making progress. This movement is made when the fire is being tackled and put out. So we moved to the 6th or 7th floor. Part of this movement requires the ECB and lighting to be moved up. Ideally you don't want to move the bridgehead as the crews that have already been committed need to be informed. All personnel were moved up. The stairwell was dark on my way up. I could smell smoke and see some smoke in the stairwell. There was quite a bit of water running down the stairs. There was water going down the lift shaft. I think we may have stopped committing crews for 15 minutes while crews came out and then moved the bridgehead up to the 6th or 7th floor. It only took ten minutes to set up again. I have marked the location of the bridgehead on 6th or 7th floor on exhibit MIS/04. There were approximately a dozen personnel in the 6th or 7th floor ranging in ranks. We had set the bridgehead up in the central lobby area by the lift of the 6th or 7th floor.

I had a look into 1 or 2 of the flats on the 6th or 7th floor. I didn't go past the entrances. They were reasonably smoke damaged. I don't remember if any crews were committed. One of the flats on the 6th or 7th floor had a burst/damaged gas pipe. The pipe was in a cupboard. So we decided to bring the bridgehead back to the 4th floor. The location of this pipe was reasonably close to the inside of the door. I didn't pay much attention to the pipe; it was the flame that caught my attention. Somebody else had said that there was a gas main. The flame was orange and yellow in colour.

We had then moved the bridgehead back to the 4th floor approximately 15 to 20 minutes after moving it to the 6th or 7th floor. We set up the bridgehead in the same area as we did previously. We started to commit crews past the bridgehead again. I continued my role as ECO on the 4th floor for another 45 minutes to an hour before I was then relieved by a male Crew Manager who I briefed on what we had been doing in regards to crews being committed to various floors, communication issues, and details about the incident.

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that we were aware of. I left my role as ECO at approximately 1400hours. Generally speaking, crews were getting committed 5 or 10 minutes after a crew had come out. It was quite congested up there so moving about was a bit of an issue.

I can't remember opening any doors within the building as they were already open.

I have then left the building via the stairwell. The conditions were pretty much the same as when I went up to the 4th floor. I can say that the visibility got better lower down the staircase. There wasn't a great deal of smoke but when I got down to the main entrance it was clear again. There was still water coming down the stairs. There was water in the lobby area and still there was a lot of personnel waiting around in the lobby area. I would say that there were 15 or 20 personnel. When I was on my way out I remember that there were a few Station Managers that were discussing the incident in the lobby area. I can't recall any smoke in the lobby area.

I got escorted out again by police with riot shields. I believe I left the tower in the same way that I came in. were where walking quite near to a wall again. There was 1 police officer with a shield that had 1 fire fighter in front and 1 fire fighter behind them under the shield.

Over the next 30-45 minutes, I was trying to find my crew from Barking. I started to make my way back to where we had parked out appliance. I stopped to get something to eat by the staging area which was located near the area where we had turned up. I remember there was a pub with all stall outside of it which had food and drinks. On the way back to the appliance I may have passed the leisure centre which had a grass area outside it. As I was walking back I had a look back at the tower and I could now see that there was less fire and smoke but still quite a bit of smoke. I could see patches of fires on different floors. There was still debris falling from the tower but it wasn't as bad compared to when I was going into the tower. I didn't think it was worth clogging up the radio to locate my crew so I was just walking around to see if I could find them. I was looking around some of the hubs that people were gathering around. After speaking to a few people I made my way back to our appliance. I got back to our appliance and 3 of my crew were waiting there. I believe FF BRYAN was the only One that wasn't at the appliance when I returned. We waiting about 10 minutes until FF BRYAN returned to our appliance. I wasn't familiar with the area and turned up a few wrong roads.

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I went back to the Command Unit that I went to when I arrived on Ladbroke Grove. I spoke to someone in the Command Unit who informed me that my crew and I were to go to Paddington Fire Station. I collected our Nominal Roll Board and went back to the appliance.

From 1445 to 1500 we drove up to Paddington Fire Station where we were given a briefing, had to write a statement which I exhibit as MS/01 and received counselling. We left Paddington at 1630hours. We arrived back at Barking at approximately 1800hours.

From my experience I have been to flat fires in High Rises that are approximately 16 floors high. Normally these fires haven't spread further than 1 or 2 flats. In my view, Grenfell Tower incidents was a protracted incident and was out of the ordinary. I have been to a few 20-pump fires but normally these incidents are commercial buildings. I would say from my experience that residential fires I have previously been to have not required more than 10 pumps. I would say a serious house fire would be a 4-pump fire.

Looking back, I would say that Grenfell Tower incident was quite unique.

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