

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: SAUNDERS, NICHOLAS

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

Occupation: STATION MANAGER

This statement (consisting of 9 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: N SAUNDERS

Date: 28/03/2018

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

I am the above named person and my details are known to the Police. This statement is in relation to the Grenfell Tower Fire that occurred on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017. I made notes after the incident, which I referred to when giving this statement. These notes are marked as Exhibit NDS/1.

I have been a Firefighter since 1995. I was in the Royal Berkshire Brigade before moving to the London Fire Brigade (LFB). I have had several roles within the LFB. I have worked as Leading Firefighter and the Crew Commander in the LFB. In 1999, I moved to STANMORE. I worked there for a year as Crew Commander and Sub Officer before moving to Harrow for two (2) years. I have also worked at Command Support Centre in LAMBETH. At WEMBLEY, I worked on a Command Unit (CU), as Watch Manager (WM), then Station Manager (SM) for a couple of years. I then moved to North West Area SSO (Service Standard Support Officer) where I managed two (2) fire stations after first managing PARK ROYAL. I now cover EALING and ACTON. I have been Station Manager for nearly two (2) years, one (1) year prior as a temporary Station Manager. I am now stationed at EALING and have been since March 2017. I am classed Competent.

I had initial training as a Firefighter for three (3) months at EASTLEIGH in HAMPSHIRE, This included practical learning on hoses and pump ladders, using the ladders, foam, hydraulics and learning about the kit we wear and use. I have also had Physical Training, which has been mainly in the drill yard.

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I have received training on High Rises buildings throughout my career. We learn the core skills when we first join and then go through training that consists of lectures and practical drills throughout our careers. We do outside visits to look at High Rises and do some onsite training.

We also use drill towers in the EALING yard. High Rises mostly have Rising Mains, meaning a pipe goes through the building and a hose can be attached to bring water from bottom to top. We practice taking equipment up. I do further training as a Station Manager (SM) including policy and procedures. I completed further training for Command Control, including Sectorisation and working out hazard zones. Again, this can be a mixture of practical, lectures or using computers.

Training is as close as it can be, especially if it includes outside training. Station Managers normally do it quite often as we go High Rise fires a lot. We look at practical application each time. The training is Borough wide and stations close to each other do the training together. Back to basic training on High Rises is practical training, up to a certain point of entry. We set up the dry riser and go to the point of opening the door. We carry out tactical decision exercises and expand the training at Station Manager level. Firefighters from all levels and experience take part in the overall training. It covers situational awareness so everyone knows what is being done and what they need to do at such incidents. Training also covers the dry riser, which is the pipe that runs through a building, we would charge it, attach hose and use that for firefighting. The Dry Riser brings the water from bottom to top. There is often a Knowledge check before the practical training.

I have attended numerous high rise incidents as well as other major incidents however, none has been like Grenfell. 99% of high rise flat fires are contained to the flat of origin, where the fire actually started. You may get a fire that spreads through windows but not like Grenfell. If this type of Compartmentation fails, it is just treated as fire spread and the fire is fought in accordance with that. Firefighters called "Spotters" would usually stay outside the building and using a decent comms resource, would look for any external fire. We train for different types of cladding, also known as Sandwich panels. I was aware that fire could spread.

I had no knowledge of Grenfell before the incident. I had not completed a Section 7(2)(d) of the Grenfell

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

OFFICIAL

Tower. I have completed Familiarisation of other High Rises before, for example where the Dry Riser is, the location of the Fire Lift, the floor layout and any relevant information about the premises, access and water supply. We would complete these Familiarisations but local crews would also have their own prior knowledge. information gathered Would be entered onto the Operational Risk Database (ORD). This in turn would be shown on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT).

I am aware of the Stay Put policy. This states that if you are not affected by fire, then you should be safe in a sixty (60) minute box (flat). The resident would then stay put until it is safe to leave. During the Grenfell Incident, I did not hear anything about the policy.

On the night of the Grenfell Tower fire, I was on a twenty four (24) hour shift as Station Manager of EALING and SOUTHALL Fire Stations. I started on TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017, starting at 8AM. I was negative hours at home. At around 1AM on WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017 I was asleep and awoke to my LFB Pager going off. I was taken aback at the address as it was showing as further out from the areas I would normally cover. The pager read six (6) or eight (8) pump fire; I do not recall which, as well as a few specialist appliances. I was being sent as Station Manager. After I had read the message, I phoned Control and they said "Mobilise to eight (8) pump fire and go as Support". I asked Control who was in charge and who had already been mobilised.

I booked in as Status two (2) over the radio in my car and headed to the incident using the Sirens and Blue Lights. I have an essential user car with sirens and lights. I entered the address into the Satnav. I was coming from just outside STANMORE. I did not have an MDT in my car. I do not recall the journey as I was focused on the driving. I had the LFB radio on in car; I heard some officers' book on. SM Andy WALTON was one of them. I also heard over the radio "Make pumps twenty-five (25)". I recall thinking that twenty-five (25) was a weird number, as we do not usually use twenty-five (25). It was also stranger as it came from a Watch Manager (WM). I do not remember who this WM was. I have attended fires of between four (4) and forty (40) before. I do not know how long it took to get there.

As I made my way, I thought that it was an on going incident but I did not know it was High Rise until I saw it. My Satnav took me through SCRUBS LANE and smaller roads. When I first saw the Tower I could see that it was a big fire, there were only a couple of floors alight. I initially thought it was

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

scaffolding netting that was on fire, as the fire I could see seemed to come out from the building in a way that was unusual. As it was dark, could see the Tower from some way off. This was from the East.

I drove towards the incident, coming in from BRAMLEY ROAD; I did not know where to go. I could not get any closer as other LFB appliances blocked access. There were people walking around. I parked on Whitchurch; this was near a Church and marked as CAR on Exhibit NDS/2. I took my fire gear from the car and started to put it on. The kit includes boots, leggings, tunic, radio and helmet. Over the main radio, I gave my status as status three (3), in attendance. I did this by pressing seven (7) on my radio and waiting for control to respond. I walked to try to find a Command Unit. I headed down GRENFELL ROAD. I could see the fire; there was a commotion within the area outside Tower. I do not remember anyone specific. I walked further down GRENFELL ROAD. There were other people going that way so I followed. I did not find a Command Unit there.

There was a general commotion. There was a Turntable Ladder parked up. This is marked as TL on Exhibit NDS/2. As I walked around the fire ground, I saw another Appliance underneath the concrete overhang on the South Side of the Tower. I cannot remember if the TL was pushing water, or if anyone there. There was an Appliance pumping water but do not know where that was parked. I did see that an Appliance from NORTH KENSINGTON were there.

I could see that on the East side of the Tower, there was lots of debris falling. A few Firefighters and residents were coming out. This is marked as a cube on the North side of the Tower on Exhibit NDS/2. I had my first view up close of the Tower. I was able to look up and see that there was fire coming out of fourth (4th) floor and it was going up two (2) or three (3) floors. The fire looked like it was going up to the top but it had not reached the top at that point. As I watched, the fire was moving up the building. I could not make sense of it. It looked like the actual outside was on fire but I was not sure how that could be. Flames were in the North East corner of the Tower. It looked to be spreading up in a diagonal way, the fire was moving up and out. I had not seen fire move like that before. There were two (2) red stripes up the middle of the building. They were glowing bright red. I do not know what those lines were; it could have been the decorative cladding sticking out in a triangular from the building. It looked like tram tracks glowing red and alight. There was debris falling; it looked like flat aluminium panels and a fibre type substance. It was not normal to see that material coming down, I recall thinking, "What is going on?"

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

There was a lot of work going on inside; I had not seen much outside. I could see that this fire was still going on the outside and I needed to tell a Command Unit and concentrate on giving support. I could see inside the lobby area when I was near the appliance under the concrete ramp. There was a glass entrance and I could see people inside. There were Firefighters and activity in there. I wanted to go and book in with a Command Unit. I do not recall hearing any alarms. It was evident fire was spreading externally. An Aerial Ladder Platform came from SUSSEX, at some point. This is marked as ALP on Exhibit NDS/2. It was being used on the front face and being fed water.

I asked someone where the Command Unit was. I walked up to the Leisure Centre and found the Command Unit on BOMORE ROAD. At the Command Unit, I went to the back window, to book in. Group Manager (GM) WELSH said to come on to the Command Unit. He asked me to sort out a Rendezvous Point (RVP). A Command Unit is a mobile office with equipment where the Incident Commander is in control and gets support from other agencies. The function is to provide command, logistical support, comms and planning support. If there are multiple Command Units, the Incident Commander allocates their roles. The primary unit is normally the first one to arrive. Everyone books in, which is a safety measure. GM WELSH was Incident Commander and was wearing a tabard with Incident Commander on it. I looked at the Command Support System (CSS) Map in the Command Unit. I was able to identify a parallel road, I cannot recall the name. The road was large enough for appliances still coming to the incident. The road had access at both ends. It was a one (1) way system so all appliances would point in the same direction. The road was close to the incident, but it was hard to find anything very near. The access was from the South. I wrote down the name of the road and ran it by GM WELSH and then gave it to the Command Unit to put out on radio. There were a few faces on the Command Unit that I recognised but it was a different watch to me so I was not that familiar with names. They were Redwatch. I am flexi duty. At some point I heard Andy O'LOUGHLAN have a conversation when I was on Command Unit that he was taking over. Andy ROE took over later.

GM Matt COOK stuck his head in to the Command Unit and said, "Initiate a Major Incident". This kick starts a specific procedure. am not sure what happens but senior officers and LAS are informed, know GM Matt COOK from the Operational Review Team (ORT); they come out and review incidents, I have seen him at previous incidents.

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

Dan KIPLING and STANMORE Station Manager, Brett LOFT put their heads through the door and as I did not have a role, I was asked to start a Command Unit. I left and went to the GRENFELL ROAD Command Unit. I started it up as a Command Unit. Tom GOODALL got on and said we need this as Fire Survival Guidance (FSG). We left the Command Unit it to FSG and walked round towards the leisure centre. At some point, I became separated from Dan. I met him again later at the Leisure Centre. Outside the Leisure Centre, Dan KIPLING said to "We need to set up Breathing Apparatus Main Control". We realised we would not be able to get a Command Unit here due to access and we did not know what else was around. The area was crowded as initial appliances had blocked it and parking was awful. The ideal place we saw to set up the BA Main Control was in front of the Leisure Centre on the grass area. There was already a welfare area on the grass and Firefighters lining up on ramp. This is marked as BA Main Control on Exhibit NDS/2. There were lots of BA sets and cylinders there. We wanted to keep fresh wearers around the corner and separate from the rest. Phil BIRT a Firefighter from EALING got a BA Main box and cylinders and brought them to us. We set up the area. From my previous experience, I knew it would be hard work if it the area spreads out. Our aim was to pile the cylinders in sight so we could see what we had. Once it was all set up, we stayed there, BA Main Control area now included full and empty BA sets, The set up was quite quick; we were running it straight away.

GM WEST of ENFIELD, who I know from previous incidents, came when we were setting up in that area. He took me to Equipment Command Unit where DAC Lee DRAWBRIDGE was. I was briefed to make sure that the resources and sets were enough for the Firefighters and to inform them if the amounts were running low and how many were being used each hour.

I saw a Firefighter called Tom; I believe he was from WILLESDEN, marked as FF on Exhibit NDS/2. He had run out of air. He was sat with his hands in buckets of water trying to cool down. I asked him if he was Ok. He said that he was fine. I could hear that his Automatic Distress Unit was going off. He said that he had run out of air. I could see that he had no Tally in his set. If the Tally is in the alarm does not go off. He should have Connected the Tally in when he left the Tower. He said that his Tally was still in the board as he had come out of the Tower with a casualty and he had just ran out. He said that he had not told anyone. I went and told BRETT, as it is critical that Officers know where the Firefighters are and it is a risk if they are unaccounted for. I thought that I should impound the set; I took it and put it on the grass

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

placing a shopping trolley over it so that no one would use it. I informed SM FARR. SM FARR then took the set away.

I liaised with a Firefighter at the RVP asking for Extended Duration BA and Standard Duration BA cylinders to be brought down in tens (10). I do not know who this Firefighter was. We were using the Radio to communicate with RVP. The Comms were OK when contacting RVP however; it was difficult then to contact the Command Unit. The Protective Equipment Group (PEG) arrived. PEG is marked as PEG on Exhibit NDS/2. They service BA, clean, and fix them. PEG brought more cylinders to the Fireground. I do not recall what time PEG arrived, but it was like a conveyor belt with empty cylinders being filled up like a conveyor belt.

At points, I saw Firefighters come out of Tower. They were filled with adrenalin and wanted to go back in but we told no and to wait for twenty (20) minutes. There were casualties coming out, marked as CASUALTY Handling Area on Exhibit NDS/2. I do not know how many, but I heard shouting from the LAS trying to make way through with trolleys or they were walking. An area was also set up for as a Morgue. This is marked on Exhibit RDS/2 as MORGUE. I saw feet when walking passed this area back and forth between the Command Unit and the BA area. I do not remember any details about the casualties I saw.

I saw members of the public, many were on their phones. I could see that they were trying to get into the incident. When I walked passed they would shout things like "Why aren't you doing anything?" At one point, there was a bit of a rush of the public and I was pushed and carried through the rush. I was not injured. The public were shouting "They're out" and "I want to go and see them" but they were not being allowed any closer to the incident. Someone pushed a phone into my hand; I do not remember what was said, I did not hear anyone on the phone. I told the person to go to the FSG area.

We were trying to keep EDBA sets separate from other sets. The EALING crew were trying to help with making the EDBA sets. The batteries were so low; the pre alarm was going off. Richard BARKER told me that there was a problem with the EDBA sets, I thought, "What can we do?" I found that the batteries

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

in EDBA and SDBA are the same, so I suggested that the batteries be switched over. PEG helped with changing the batteries. I stayed there as an overview to make sure it was running OK. There was always ten (10) EDBA at the base of the Tower and ten (10) at Main Control.

People were walking back and forth in an area that looked like road but with a Concrete roof. I saw some molten aluminium. I saw police using shields trying to help people in and out.

I saw a body while I was walking from areas. I am not sure when this was. I may have been walking down to talk to Brett and saw the body. It was underneath the ramp on the South Side near the bin area. The body was inside the bin area. The body was covered in a clear salvage sheet. There was blood around it. I think the body was missing a leg. There was blood across the path. I carried on to see GM Charlie PUGSLEY, he was link between police and us and wanted to make him aware of the body there. I saw him up by Bomore Road by the Command Unit. I told him about the body. He said he would check with the police. I suggested that the body be moved as it was in line of site for Firefighters. The body is marked as * on Exhibit NDS/1. I do not know how this body ended up there.

There was a Firefighter laying down at the back of the tower. Near to the Firefighter was a body. This was wrapped in a white sheet. I asked the Firefighter if they were OK. I told him to move from that area, as it would probably be used for bodies. The LAS were nearby. I recall seeing shoes but I cannot remember any further details.

When I was stood by the Leisure Centre, I saw what I thought was flailing limbs coming down from the Tower above, I saw two (2) at different times. I do not recall when this was. It was dark on each occasion. It looked like limbs on fire; I assumed it was a person jumping from the Tower. I could not see what they looked like. It appeared to be that they were on the South Side of the Tower, did not see them land and I do not remember any further details.

I tasked Firefighter Phil BIRT from EALING to get empties to fill up with Diesel from the nearest petrol garage. There was an alarm going off from the Leisure Centre. I saw that a door was open. My colleague said that the police had opened it to check out the alarm, went inside the Leisure Centre to use the facilities. A big room looked to be being set up with squares of sheets. I assumed this was to be used as a morgue but do not know this as fact.

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by:

During the night, I looked at the Tower every now and again, it never got better. The fire was getting worse. I saw people inside at points, it looked like lights inside. There were people at windows on upper floors, on east side looking from Leisure Centre. The fire was on right hand side of east side. As it came across the building people looked like they were moving away from the fire towards the left hand side of the building. I did not see anyone well enough to be able to describe. When I left, the Tower was still burning and there were lots of smoke. It looked that the lower floors was not on fire, but it was above the fourth (4th) floor.

Around Midday on WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017, I was exhausted. I had been due to finish at 0800hrs I was told that I could leave. My role had become redundant. I did not have anyone to handover to. I was told to go to PADDINGTON. I made notes at PADDINGTON and was informed of counselling.

I feel it would have been beneficial to have Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV) to push smoke up through the staircase. The LFB did all we could. I have had some counselling since the incident and some time off. The whole incident has affected me, as it was the largest incident I have ever been to.

Signature: n saunders
2018

Signature witnessed by: