

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MARKS, PAUL

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

Occupation: FIRE FIGHTER

This statement (consisting of 15 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: PAUL MARKS

Date: 21/05/2018

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

This statement refers to my attendance at the Grenfell Tower fire on WEDNESDAY 14 June 2017 as part of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) response to this incident.

After leaving Grenfell Tower and returning to PADDINGTON FIRE STATION I completed some notes in relation to this incident. These notes were made contemporaneously on 14 JUNE 2017, which I exhibit as PMM/1.

The people that I will mention in my statement are: FF Russell HALL; FF Steve DUNCAN; FF Chris LANG; FF Alan HUDSON, Crew Manager GRAY; FF Daniel KNAPMAN; Watch manager Helen CHRISTMAS; and London Fire Brigade Commissioner Dany COTTON. I also had dealings with a large female casualty on the stairwell between the tenth (10th) and eleventh (11th) floors.

I have been in London Fire Brigade for five (5) years. I was initially based out at HEATHROW G56 and for the last three (3) years I have been based at HESTON FIRE STATION. I have not worked in the fire safety department during my tenure.

I am an experienced firefighter deemed competent. I have been to a number of high rise fires before when high rise procedures have been implemented.

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My experience of high rise training has been infrequent. That said, we did some back to basics training on high rise which the brigade set up and involves colleagues from multiple stations. From what I recall, the exercise we did on fire survival guidance calls and relaying the information between the different rooms was fairly realistic. The other part was rolling up, getting all the equipment needed to deal with the initial incident off the appliances, into position and set up. Only once those pieces of equipment and those parts of the jigsaw are in place were we allowed to inform (training) fire control that the high rise procedure has been implemented.

I think I did the back to basics training very broadly around a year to perhaps as much as eighteen months prior to Grenfell. We did that at ACTON FIRE STATION.

Training wise, we don't often tend to get the ability to charge a riser, make our way into a building and extinguish a fire because we don't have the facilities. The last time I did that would probably be our basics recruit course at the fire service college on Morton on the Marsh five approximately (5) years ago.

On TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017 I came on duty at 2000 hours, I am currently doing a stint of temporaryacting up to the role of Crew Manager. This enables me to act up within (7) miles of my base station from Firefighter to Crew Manager.

Sometimes I am tasked to act up prior to a shift and at other times I will be acted up on shift. I am in the position where I am a firefighter but can be acted up to crew manager when required. I do not recall if I was acted up prior to the shift on TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017 or at the start of it. However on my shift on TUESDAY 13 JUNE 2017 I was acted up to crew manager on G382 which is our pumping appliance. On my crew that evening I had firefighter Russell HALL driving, to the rear of me I would have had firefighter DUNCAN and firefighter KNAPMAN. That was my crew for the evening.

I don't recall anything occurring prior to the incident at Grenfell Tower. The first we knew about it was when we, pump appliance G382, were mobilised to standby at CHISWICK FIRE STATION. That was our initial call.

The crew made their way down to the watch room. We were greeted by the gentleman in the watch room

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that evening which was firefighter Alan HUDSON. He had already seen that we were mobilised to Chiswick due to a large fire. Make pumps twenty (20) I think it was, I don't know the exact figures at that time. Alan was on Boss, the system that enables us to have a vision of live incidents currently ongoing. On that he can see all the appliances that have attended, all the appliances that have been requested, and basically a rolling incident log of what is happening. Firefighter HUDSON was just basically saying there's something large going on up town which we now know is Grenfell.

So we left the station and proceeded to CHISWICK FIRE STATION. This was non blue light normal speed driving. The journey took perhaps ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes give or take.

One thing that was very apparent when we were being mobilised between HESTON FIRE STATION and CHISWICK FIRE STATION was there was a lot of radio traffic informing those at scene about the survival guidance calls (FSG calls). We were hearing transmissions that almost seemed back to back. That was pretty much all we were hearing on the way to Chiswick. There was not much ability for anyone else to be able to interject with any other information. We were on LFB Ops 4 (channel 4) at that time which covers radio traffic between fire engine and fire control north of the river. We knew before we had been mobilised to the incident that something big and abnormal was happening. The FSG calls were coming in from multiple floors.

An FSG call is when a member of the public calls fire control and informs them they have reason to believe that there is a fire, the conditions, they are stuck and they can't make their way out. An FSG is always a live call to the control and is a two-way conversation between the resident and fire control. If they hang up it is no longer an FSG call.

So the expectation for us when these calls are received, that it would be from people in the floors around the fire. However, the FSG calls we were hearing about were coming from all over the building from lower floors right through to those much further up. It just seemed to be all over the place, which was an indication to us, before we had even been mobilised that something was not right. It didn't seem to be ringing true with our previous experience.

The reason is mainly because of smoke travel and fire spread. The expectation and experience from

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previous incidents would be that the fire is generally contained within an apartment. There has been incidents in the past like Lakanal House where it has jumped but even then the jump was a floor up, a floor below, and on the same aspect. Not several floors on different aspects of the building. These calls at Grenfell Tower were coming from multiple floors. The information coming through was that there was flames at their windows, flames at the doors, that there was smoke. With the amount of different floors being called out it didn't sound like the fire spread could be physically possible. We couldn't picture what we were going to be presented with until we arrived. It was just not something that you would ever expect to turn up on and witness.

To put some further context around it My understanding of building construction within high rise buildings is that it is compartmentalised. Each flat is a compartment, a concrete block within a concrete block. There should be no physical way for fire to expand beyond the compartment. A run of the mill kitchen fire could spread through different areas but within the compartment it is supposed to be able to be able to be locked down. It will contain itself. It may burn itself out within the confines of the compartment but the expectation is for it not to spread.

The fact that it has gone to make pumps twenty (20), it is a large incident for London and something big is happening. It would certainly be the largest incident I have ever attended. The realm of my expectation would have been that it could not have possibly got to the extent that we then witnessed and were confronted with.

Anyhow, when we got to CHISWICK FIRE STATION, we couldn't get in as it was all locked up and we didn't have any of the access codes to the station. It is normal for it to be locked. As is routine, the watch room operator would normally lock the station down. The gates are locked and all the doors are locked. All the doors are generally self closing so as soon as the pumps pull out and the pumps have gone across the threshold the doors are then shut. The only way to gain access then is the access codes.

While we were there and trying to gain access the pager was activated. Each appliance has a pager and it was this pager that I am referring to. The message at that time was declaring a major incident. This was our mobilisation to Grenfell Tower.

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I don't know what the number of pumps requested were or what time the pager mobilisation message was. Unfortunately the mobile data terminal MDT in the front of the truck crashed/failed on us and wasn't working. It was blank. The MDT is a mobile version of the system that gives us the call slips with details of the incident, location and so forth. We were therefore unable to book mobile to Grenfell via the MDT which is how we would normally inform control that we'd received notification that we were to be mobilised. That was out. And because we had had no call slip we had no address details for our attendance. We had nothing.

When ordinarily attending a high rise we might get an electronic premises information plate (EPIP) or the MDT. This will give us an idea of the amount of floors that the high rise has, the amount of lifts, the amount of stairs, the amount of hose that may be required to get from the hydrant to the riser and the amount of hose that might be needed to get from the outlet to the furthest point within the block. It will also inform us if they are scissor flats or flat level flats. That would typically be the only information we would be able to glean for a high rise. A warehouse may have additional information because of additional risks. For example, a complex layout, contents of the warehouse or whatever. However, we did not get any information for Grenfell Tower as our MDT was blank and not working.

After the pager went off, I went on the radio traffic (RT) to speak to our control room to confirm that our specific appliance was being mobilised. I have never witnessed a major incident before. I was unsure whether the pager going off and declaring major incident was just a generic message to inform all officers that a major incident was occurring or whether it was part of a mobilisation for myself. I contacted control to confirm and were informed that we were to proceed to Grenfell. So on that call we then mobilised. We used our blue lights and sirens on route to Grenfell.

From recall, we heard over the radio that they had set up a rendezvous point (RVP) for all oncoming appliances to X road.

We were going up to North Kensington, I was not familiar with the station ground and I wasn't really ofay with the route or direction. I had no prior knowledge of Grenfell Tower and had not done a 7(2)d familiarisation visit there before. We were coming in from Chiswick. It wasn't easy to landmark locations as we were attending. We are aware it's at Grenfell Tower but we don't know it's postcode, we don't

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know the access roads to it, we don't know the area. We had to use the map function on our personal mobile phones to get there.

During our journey there as we got closer, houses and other buildings obstructed our view of the tower. We never had a clear view of it.

It turned out that the RVP was difficult to reach because our access to it was blocked by road closures for gas works. As we drove down the road towards the RVP, which was our next right turn, the road was shut by gas works. If that wasn't there, literally only about ten (10) further yards forward there was another right turn and that's where they were requesting all oncoming appliances to attend. We managed to turn left which took us down a parallel road and effectively went all the way around to come in from the other direction. We ended up in a convoy of appliances by this stage with two (2) or three (3) ahead of us and maybe one (1) or two (2) behind us.

We couldn't get to the RVP because there are now a lot of appliances parked up. We followed our Fire Rescue Unit (FRU), G386, in. I think G386 were mobilised at a very similar time to us. We pulled in to the rear of them. We parked in BRAMLEY ROAD. I have marked this on a map that I exhibit as PMM/2. Our appliance didn't move during the incident that I'm aware of. I don't know what time we arrived.

I jumped out with crew manager GRAY who's in charge of G386 and we proceeded to the command unit at the time. We made our way and located the command unit to hand in our nominal roll boards and find out what was requested of us. Locating the command unit was a case of bumping into people and asking/being directed in to where we needed to go. I think that the command unit was near the junction of GRENFELL ROAD and BOMORE ROAD. We left our crew in situ. We told them hang fire and wait for us to come and get them.

We have located the command unit, told them G382 and G386 were in attendance and handed in our nominal rolls. I passed on that the RVP was compromised because of the gas works, 'you have got a bit of a rat run there and appliances are having to turn around'. I think his response was 'oh shit, bugger' but by that stage there wasn't anything they were going to be able to do about it. With so many appliances attending access was just going to be a matter of get as close as you can and then walk.

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We were told to go back to our machines and decant all of our Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets and cylinders and take them up to the holding area, what we called BA main control. This was to the front aspect of the sports /leisure centre. That's where they wanted us to muster. Crew Manager GRAY and I tried to make our way back towards the appliance. There was some confusion with the layout and locating our appliances. We ended up walking around the square a couple of times before we found our road and appliances. We got there, got the crews together, got the BA sets and spare cylinders, and made our way up towards the muster area. We carried five (5) extra cylinders. I think we took one (1) per firefighter.

It was around this time that I got a clean view from ground to roof level. It would have been on the south east/east aspect of the building. There was a lot of debris. Flames were coming out pretty much every window on the east aspect from maybe the sixth (6th) floor up to the top. It was pretty much every room with flames licking out. It was beyond anything I have experienced before.

So we've got to the muster area. I have marked this on a map, which I exhibit as PMM/3. At that point we have got SDBA which is standard duration breathing apparatus. That is the main breathing apparatus sets that most crews would have in London. We were just basically told to hang tight where we were and we would be detailed as and when.

We had a few senior officers come over at various points while we were waiting there just to give us a bit of an update about what was happening. They thought at some point we should expect a large evacuation of casualties to make their way out. They were indicating that if that does occur, it will be all hands on deck to help them out of harms way. Unfortunately that never happened.

We had another further brief from another senior officer who, I suppose gave us a little bit of an update, what was happening, really how bad it had become and what their expectations were. I think his opening gambit was pretty much along the lines, there's pumps thirty (30), pumps forty (40), and we don't really have much command and control on this as currently it's just too large. It was an overview, basically saying that this is an unprecedented incident, we have declared it a major emergency, we have got issues with comms, we have got issues with (firefighting) media (water) and our ability to extinguish. We are going to expect you to do things that are above and beyond but we are just asking you to do what you can.

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My first impression with that was I wanted to shake him by the hand, thank goodness someone is being big enough and brave enough to admit something like that. I suppose to an extent it sent a shiver up your spine, but at the same time it makes you go at least they are being honest enough and big enough to admit that at this point and they are aware of it. I would much rather someone be aware they have not got much command and control rather than think they have when they haven't. It just felt like he was speaking from his heart rather than his rank or his head. He wasn't trying to give us some big pow wow I'm the chief telling you what's happening. You've got an inkling towards the scale of it and the expectations. I think he alluded to we are going to put you in positions here that are going to be uncomfortable. There is going to be scenes up there that I don't think any of you want to see and we are going to ask you to do things that probably isn't written down in policy and procedure. The expectation will be to be going beyond it. I think that it was probably after that chat, when Watch manager Helen CHRISTMAS (who was on the ladder, G381) has brought us together. it wasn't a briefing as incident related, it was just along the lines of keep an eye on each other and look after ourselves. Whatever happens, make sure you all get out.

Such was the scale of what we faced, I couldn't see how we were going to achieve much without losing a member of LFB. With all the will in the world, with all the skill sets, knowledge and everything else, we weren't going to be able put that out and be able to do much. Despite this, we wanted to go in. In fact, there was an element of people being held back and asked to stick to their assigned tasks. Each of us wanted to be able to get to the next stage and be able to do and achieve something. We knew there were people in there and we wanted to go in and assist.

If you have ever heard of the firefighter maxim. We will risk our lives in a calculated manner to save life. We will risk it a little bit to save savable property. We are not going to risk our life for lives that have been lost or property that has been lost. So looking at that maxim and the dynamic risk assessment of that scale of incident, a building that is fully engulfed in flame, we are going to commit crews because there is saveable life. That decision is essentially made, even though there are other issues at play. For example, issues with water, issues with communications etc. If you were to stick to everything that we ever laid out you are not going to commit anyone. Well actually we have got to commit people because there are lives. We are probably using operational discretion to step outside of policy and procedure to try and save life and achieve something. However, the thought process has got to be that as soon as that has occurred we are trying to get back into our rules of policy and procedure, how we deal with things, as soon as possible.

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I think the senior officer was acutely aware that the decision to commit crews was very difficult. This is because there was savable life but to achieve this they were going to put us through very arduous and hazardous situations, hampered by issues with water, communications and so forth, making our task even more difficult.

In the muster area, for a long time, we as a crew and I think the ladders crew as well, were all held in situ in the holding area. It seemed like a substantial amount of time.

There was a lot of requests coming through for extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA) which are held on the FRU units. As an FRU station we have got the qualification and the understanding of the set. There was a callout for guys who were EDBA qualified to get sets if that was available and then to make themselves known.

G386 was the only EDBA sets we had. They had already been utilised by their crew. So we had no further EDBA sets. I think originally it was a case of go and try and find some, I think was pretty much the words.

At that point Paddington had already worn. They were coming out. Steve DUNCAN. Chris LANG, Daniel KNAPMAN and I saw Paddington's sets. Our understanding in the early juncture was the firefighters that had worn EDBA once were not expected to. Or they were not going to be asked to, wear EDBA again within the incident. We informed Paddington of this and removed their sets from them. There was only (4) of those and we took their sets. That was when we lost firefighter HALL and picked up firefighter LANG. I think that was when firefighter HALL went to find an EDBA set and then joined Wembley as a firefighting crew. We serviced the sets in situ in the muster area. We then presented ourselves to the officer who was in charge of that sector to say we've got crew ready and we are ready to go in. I cannot remember the officer's name. He used to be watch manager at Heathrow but I do not recall his name.

From there we were then moved to another muster area on the other side of the tower. We have gone past the Arial Ladder Platform (ALP) appliance, made our way underneath Grenfell Walk, the raised

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walkway, and past the main entrance to the tower. That was on our right hand side. Where we were walking through was probably three (3) or four (4) inches under water. We have continued under Grenfell Walk and then gone to the rear of the premises to the next holding area. We were held there for a short time. We were then brought forward and into the ground floor of Grenfell Tower. We were escorted by police officers under their riot shields. It was probably fifteen (15) to twenty (20) metres under the riot shields. There was falling debris that was fairly frequent. I think they had someone acting like a spotter who was keeping an eye out from a bit further back. He was basically giving people the o k to go for it in between the falling debris as best he could. There was a holding area in there. As we went in, that was like a room which went through into a small corridor to the lobby to the main entrance. We were in the bottom of the building for a short period of time as we waited to get to the front of the queue. The entry control was on the ground floor. That would be the stage where you would don BA and be committed.

Myself and firefighter KNAPMAN were brought forward. We were initially tasked to ascend to the tenth (10th) floor to check a large bariatric casualty that was believed to be on that floor. It was fairly common knowledge by that stage that there was someone there. If there were any signs of life we were then to remove the casualty. To help us do this we were handed a riot shield from one of the police officers. The thinking being that if we could get the casualty onto the riot shield it may make it easier to try and get them down the stairs. That was our original task and that is what we were gearing ourselves up ready to do.

At that point, there was a bit of a kerfuffle with our entry control officers. They have informed myself and firefighter KNAPMAN that they had no radio traffic contact with Bethnal Green. I think they were coming up close to their time of whistle, so the time when they should have made their way out and report back to the entry control officer. They knew they should have been somewhere between us now and the eleventh (11th) floor. So entry control brought forward the two (2) other members of my initial crew which was firefighter DUNCAN and firefighter LANG to make a crew of four (4). They asked us to ascend, try and locate Bethnal Green and ensure that they were in a fit state. If need be, assist them in making their way out. There was enough of a concern that they wanted us to start up and get under air to go and look for them but it had not reached the stage of being officially committed as an emergency team.

I was very conscious that there was a lot going on. Before I entered, I wanted to make sure that we were

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going to make best use of our time, consumption of air and radio traffic. We were acutely aware that we had one set on our back, which gives us about forty one (41) minutes in normal circumstances. We know we have to ascend multiple sets of stairs and we don't know what we are going to find. We had already been tasked with one job, and now this second one as well. I asked a question along the lines of: 'Can you confirm to me that if we locate Bethnal Green, they are o k and can continue their own way out, are you happy for us to continue on up to complete our initial task to ascend to the casualty on the tenth (10th) floor? rather than trying to make radio contact or having to come out and then go back up again. Entry control agreed.

We had taken on a bit of a double task there. We starting making our way up. It was maybe the fifth (5th) or sixth (6th) floor, perhaps even earlier than that, when we located the crew from Bethnal Green. They were fit and well, no issues, and were making their way out. I think the crews just had a very quick chat and I asked them to pass the message on to entry control that we would now continue on to our second task. We left them to exit and we continued ascending to locate the casualty on the tenth (10th) floor.

Each floor was reached by a set of stairs returning. So one set going up a small half landing and then another set returning back the other way. As far as I recall, there were lights on in the stairwell, certainly the first two (2) or three (3) floors anyhow. I think was fairly clear. We made steady progress, acutely aware we were wearing EDBA.

EDBA is particularly heavy. Your reason for wearing EDBA is for long distance travel and the idea is that you maintain as much air as you physically can so that you are able to complete the task at the end. It is not necessarily designed for firefighting and it is not designed for a quick attack. It is designed to enable us to get to large or deep seated fires, maybe if you are looking at the underground or something like that. It is more slow time travel so that you have enough air and enough energy to complete a task and then be able to retrace your steps all the way back out. We are mindful of that and therefore we are not necessarily lumping up the stairs. It was a little bit more constant steady pace to keep composure, keep our breaths and extend that wear as long as we could.

We ascended to the tenth (10th) floor. On the tenth (10th) floor we have taken our first turn to the left and that's where we located the casualty. So on the first set of stairs between the tenth (10th) and eleventh

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(11th) floors.

The casualty was face down, head down. Her arms were in front further down the stairs than her head. She was positioned close to the handrail rather than the wall and probably a third of the way up that set of steps. Her legs were at a single angle. They were uppermost and positioned closer to the wall than the handrail. I would estimate that she was obstructing the best part of three quarters of the stairwell. As far as I could tell, there were no other obstructions, debris or items around her. It was an open stairwell with nothing else around her.

There was smoke in the stairwell and we probably only had about six (6) foot visibility at most. The door to the tenth (10th) floor lobby was wedged open by an item. It looked like it was big enough to be like a sheet or some bedding. The doorway was open. We didn't enter there other than to move her. I don't know how compromised these flats were with fire and smoke but there was probably a lot of fire gases being pumped out of that tenth (10th) floor and into the stairwell. The thought process for us was that she has been overcome by smoke and has just gone straight down.

She had a pair of grey half cut jogging pants on and black skin colour/racial background. I don't know how old she would have been. I didn't notice any visible injuries and it did not look like she was burnt. None of her clothing was burnt or anything like that. I think that she was wearing a grey shirt, something similar in colour to her jogging pants/shorts. Grey and grey.

I have written initially in my notes that I believed it to be a gentleman. I think the main reason for that would be what the person was wearing, maybe their appearance and maybe a conversation afterwards. The person was very large, had dreadlocks, and was wearing shorts. It was a snap judgment/assumption at the time. I also think there was a lot of confusion with colleagues that located other people and it got mixed up. Upon later reflection I think that the person we found was the female artist. I couldn't tell you her name but I believe that was the person we located after seeing her picture in the media in the days following the fire. I have seen images of all the victims from Grenfell in the media and she was the only one that matches build, colour, and hair type.

We had a quick assessment to see if there was any signs of life. Chris LANG removed his gloves and tried to find a pulse on her neck with no success. We are looking for if she is breathing. For our first aid

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that would be getting down close to her head and her mouth listening for approximately ten (10) seconds and check if we could see a rise in their chest. Obviously she is chest down so at that point you are looking for a rise in the back coming up. At the same time listening or trying to check for a pulse. Then you would be looking for anything else, noise or movement. There was nothing.

I don't think necessarily we would have heard breathing, with our masks on and our own breathing. There was no safe way for us to remove our mask in those conditions, with the heat and smoke logging.

We have tried to give her a bit of a shake. Running through danger response. Checking if you are alert to voice, to pain, or not responsive. There was absolutely no signs of life.

Additionally, the fact that we had heard probably at least an hour ago that crews had known that she was on the stairwell there was no way in my mind that she could possibly be alive. There is no way that she could have survived that long in those conditions in that environment and in that position. It was decided that she was apparently dead, not alive.

There were no arguments and everyone was content with that decision. There is no signs of life for us.

Rather than leave her in position where it was, compromising crews, getting further up in the building or other crews coming out we decided to take her off the stairwell and get her into the corridor of the tenth (10th) floor.

When we have made the decision to move her we found that she was completely limp. There was no restrictions. Just a complete, the expression is dead weight. It was very difficult to move her just because we couldn't physically get her to move her. Every time you put your hands on a limb or body part it was very floppy. Not doing anything.

We decided that to remove this casualty out of the building wasn't going to do them any good because they were apparently dead. It certainly wasn't going to do us any good trying to remove this casualty all the way down to the ground floor. There was no sign of life and so we could either spend the next twenty minutes (20) /twenty five (25) minutes working tirelessly to try get her down, to realistically to what we believe of as no avail and then we would be no good to anybody. We would then be cooked, we wouldn't

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be able to try and save other saveable life. Instead, we tried to do something constructive for her. i.e., put her somewhere that it be a little bit more dignified and where it would enable better access and egress on the stairwell. This was the only way out of the building. Taking this approach would then also enable us to concentrate on trying to save other lives.

We have taken her down onto the tenth (10th) floor landing. I think there was myself and another on each arm/shoulder and she has been pulled almost in her current laying position so face down head down and she's brought down the stairs and dragged across, two on legs and two on the shoulders and arms. It took all four (4) of us to move her. It probably took us in the region of five (5) minutes to get her off the stairs and down a very small landing and then round the corner. It took all four (4) of us to do that with a lot of effort.

As you went up the stairs, the door to the tenth (10th) floor was on the right hand side. If you then went through that door and went on a left hand turn we have placed her there. In the little corridor that takes you to those flats. That is where we left her.

The conditions in the lobby area was very similar to the stairwell, because the door had been wedged open. I did not notice if the flat doors were open, closed, intact.

We then tried to get in contact with our entry control officer on the radio with no success. I was transmitting but I don't know whether they were receiving and there was no answer back. Although it been a bit of exertion, we were quite happy to continue with trying to achieve a bit more. However, we didn't want to self deploy. We didn't want to start ascending any further into the building without the entry control officer knowing our position in case they needed to commit to trying to find us. They would have only known we were ascending to the tenth (10th). So we made our way all the way down to the base. We spoke to the entry control officer and informed them of exactly what we had done and why and said we were all in a fit state to continue.

Our brief then was to ascend to the twelfth (12th) effectively just try to achieve what you can achieve. We had no extinguishing media. The focus was on rescue. Our ascent was probably a bit slower, a continuous left after right keep moving. We were fairly beaten up by that stage. It was a long ascent up, and we had

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to be mindful of our air consumption and turn around times. If we found someone on the twelfth (12th) floor then we needed to be able to rescue them and get back down to the entry control point in time. I did keep a check on my remaining air multiple times but I don't recall how much I had at that stage.

We made our way to the twelfth (12th) and went in to the lobby on a right hand search. The conditions in the lobby are dark, hot and I would say visibility is down to not much more than hand in front of face due to the smoke. It is now a case where we are holding on to each other rather than we could see each other. From the moment we came off the landing, which probably was around about six(6) footish maybe a little bit more of visibility, we have now got to a point where we are holding on to each other. We are not letting go. I am in full contact with the wall and I'm making sure that I have got one firefighter in front of me and one behind me at all times.

We got to our first door on the twelfth (12th) floor. As best we could tell that door was intact in the sense that we couldn't see into the flat so made the assumption that the door was closed. We had a sledgehammer with us and firefighter KNAPMAN has then made the decision to open that door. He has then breached the door and it has crumpled/disintegrated in front of us. He has given that a little tap and the door probably from about half way up just disintegrated in front of us. It was ash. It was probably being held up by its own weight rather than anything else. It was charred all the way through. We were beaten back by the flames. The flat was fully alight and the heat was intense. We had no firefighting media so we had no way of extinguishing that fire or protecting ourselves from the flames.

We have an issue now when we've got flame, we have got fire gasses in the hallway, we have also got the door behind us shut so we are effectively stood in the compartment full of fire gases that have not ignited. All we need now is for those to get to temperature and the whole corridor could ignite. We have got no water so we need to get out now.

At that point I was pulling everyone out as we have not a high chance that those gasses are now getting heated further. We are looking at a fire gas explosion and you don't want to be caught up in that. We need to make our way out. If we were going to stick on the right hand wall search we would have to go past that door to get another flat. So all we did was turn on our heels, we went back the way we come. Steve DUNCAN at that point was leading. I was behind him. He then bypassed the door to the hallway and then

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poked his head around I believe he had the thermal imaging camera (tic) and he swept the tic to the left and the floor around that way to ensure that there was no one in the corridor that we may have missed that we may have been able to assist. There was not. We didn't take any images on the tic. From what we were experiencing with intense heat and smoke, I don't believe that the lobby would have been survivable unprotected.

We weren't then going to start reaching for any further doors in those dangerous circumstances. Time was also a factor as we don't know what those gases are made up. We have got an idea of ambient temperature through the tic but we don't know what mixture these gasses are or what point they may ignite. We are basically in a volatile position where we need to be out. Ordinarily, we should be going through there with a charged jet and we should be gas cooling. We should be diluting and cooling all these gases before we even got to that door. So we shouldn't have ever be putting ourselves in the position where we are compromising a door bringing those gases further out to us without firefighting media to assist us.

But there was an issue with water. I think we were probably told fairly early on that we had no media, no water. In a high rise we would normally set in on the floor below and then on the fire floor. However, we have fire on basically every floor so we would have had to set in on every landing, on every floor. The amount of pressure that would then be released to us would probably be no better than a garden hose at best. The branches that we use are a minimum of six (6) bar pressure. You probably were not going to get that much on the higher floors with the lower ones already being used.

I also don't think we were being tasked to firefight as you wouldn't have been able to up there. It was one of rescue and doing our best to find people still inside and save saveable life.

However, given the intense heat, smoke, flames and gases, it was pretty much decided between ourselves that we weren't going to be able to achieve any more on the twelfth (12th) floor and we made our way out. I don't recall any noticeable change of conditions on our way back down.

We then descended to the ground floor. On our way down we were greeted by another crew who were moving the casualty that we had placed on the tenth (10th) floor. I think it was a crew of four (4). Most

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crews that were being entered at that point were crews of four (4). I don't know their names or where they were from. They were moving them out of the doorway as we were descending. As we were coming down that flight of stairs where we found her we have looked over to our right and there is a crew now man handling her and bringing her down a flight of stairs from the tenth (10th).

I was at the back of the crew at the time. There was a lot of voices and attempting to communicate with one another. We were certainly starting to feel the symptoms of some sort of heat disorder, whether it is heat stress or whatever. I was very very hot after coming out from the twelfth (12th) floor and down the stairwell. When I was on the stairwell the heat was just a chimney and it was really starting to effect me. I was starting to get quite agitated. I was trying to push people on and get them down and get us off this stairwell. I could certainly feel the heat barrelling up the stairwell. Whether or not that was because that tenth (10th) floor door was open and that was just being pumped out and straight up to where we were stood I'm not sure.

They were trying to remove her. I think they were maybe just on the stairwell with her, trying to remove her and start getting her down the stairs. To which we have informed them we put her in that position in the lobby and why. I don't know what they were going or why they had moved her. I don't know if they had been tasked to go onto the tenth (10th) floor, they'd found someone and thought they'd bring them out. I don't know but they were starting to do that. I informed them that we had already moved them and had placed them there and to leave them in situ. But at that point we were getting low on air ourselves and left them to it. I'm unsure what their further actions were.

We made our way down back to the entry control officer. No one's alarms were going off and we were all within our constraints of air consumption. We informed the entry control officer where we had managed to ascend to, what we had done and what we came across on the way back down.

We left the tower the same way we had come in. We went outside and were sent back over to the BA main control by the sports centre i.e. the initial holding area where we went when we arrived at scene. At that point we placed Paddington's sets down on the grass by which time I think the operational support unit (OSU) had arrived with a load of spare sets, spare cylinders. We had a little rest a sit down, a bit of a drink and chilled out. We probably rested for up to about three quarters of an hour I would think.

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We then made our way back to the servicing area to make up and service our sets. Again there was some waiting around, waiting to see what was going on. There was still a lot of talk about if you'd worn EDBA you weren't going to be re-committed.

Eventually we were brought forward to go back to another holding area. It was to the same aspect of the building where the play area was. We were held there for quite a time. Eventually we were brought forward into the building again. However, I didn't ascend again or have a further wear. We basically stayed in the bottom of the building for what felt like a substantial amount of time waiting to be moved forward or mobilised. The call then came out from the sector commander in the building marshalling us asking if there was any Heston crew. We informed him there was. He said right you guys, you are off, you are being relieved.

So we took our sets back to the marshalling area, dropped them off and all got back together. By that stage of the incident quite a few of us had split. Although Heston as an entity were still wearing within Heston, it was not necessarily the pump crew wearing with the pump crew any more. They were a little bit disjointed, but we got our crew together and then were freed from the incident to go to PADDINGTON FIRE STATION. We got back to Paddington in our appliance (G382). We had a debrief and then an opportunity to write our notes and speak to welfare. We left PADDINGTON FIRE STATION and made our way back to HESTON FIRE STATION. I believe we got back to Heston at around about seven o'clock that evening, so 1900 hours on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017. We took the best part of a couple of hours off and then we were back on duty for about nine o'clock (2100 hours) that evening.

I knew that the LFB chief, Dany COTTON, was on the fire ground, mainly because she spoke to us briefly after our initial wear and had a quick chat telling us get some water and take a break. Other than knowing she was on the fire ground I don't know if she was necessarily the commanding officer in control of the incident. I just knew that the highest ranking officer in London was present.

In terms of my own individual command structure I wasn't under any one officer in particular. It was literally from one holding area to the next being brought forward and receiving a brief/instructions from the entry control officer that I then carried out with my crew.

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My understanding of the stay put policy is that it is normally safer for residents to stay in their flat when there is a fire elsewhere in the building rather than make their way out. A decision to apply or change that policy during an incident would be down to the incident commander. On the night, I don't know when the policy changed or who changed it.

There was a fire lift but we didn't use it. We never use a fire lift beyond that bridgehead anyway. With the bridgehead on the ground floor, we were not using that.

I did not notice anything specific about the construction of the windows. I don't recall any sprinklers in the block or hearing any fire alarms.

Externally, they were using the ALP's to fight the fire and I think they also had a jet or monitor set up on the raised walkway, Grenfell Walk.

I did not focus on the external fire of the building during the incident. I probably looked up at that building only three (3) times while I was there. I looked at it once when we arrived. I looked at it once when we went on the undercover walkway and I looked at it when we were on the west and I was set in the holding area. I made a conscious decision then myself not to look at it again. I didn't want to keep looking at it. If I kept looking at it then it wasn't going to make my task any easier. It wasn't giving me any further information. It was a case of shut that down and shutting it out of my mind and dealing with what I had to deal with. I can't really provide any information about fire spread, which way it went. I don't know. I had heard people alluding to people jumping but I didn't witness anyone. I'm hearing that. I don't want to see it. I was shutting myself out.

The reason I did this was self preservation I suppose in a way I didn't want to get caught up with thinking with what I was about to be committed into. You knew it was a highly dangerous environment. This way I could keep my mind focussed on what I was about to do internally rather than worry about what's happening externally. I had no control over firefighting externally, it wasn't part of my remit and it wasn't part of my rank. It was self preservation to enable me to deal with my assigned tasks rather than concern myself with an image.

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The time of day changed while I was at the incident. It went from being dark in the middle of the night to when we were coming out at five (5) or six (6) in the morning and the sun was rising. There was a different look of the building. You saw the charred skeleton of the tower. The flames had receded a bit by that point and it wasn't quite as aggressive with fire pumping out the windows. The fire had not been extinguished by the time I left. There was still active firefighting going on when I was released from the scene.

I did not have any involvement with or any direct knowledge of the gas being switched off at the tower.

Other than pats on the back, offers of teas or coffees etc. I did not have contact with members of the public. No one came forward to me to ask questions, provide information or anything of that nature.

I did not suffer any injuries during the incident nor seek medical assistance at scene or later with my GP.

There were issues with radio communications during the incident. An improvement in communications would be positive and assist us.

We all did our best to help the residents of Grenfell Tower that night. I don't think there was much more we could have done.

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