

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: TURCSI, PHILLIP

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 13 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: P TURCSI

Date: 06/02/2018

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

I provide this statement in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire and the events that I was involved in.

On Friday 17th November, Police Constable Chris LOIZOU and Detective Constable Amin KOHZADBAYAT attended the Heston Fire Station, where I provided an account to them, which was audio recorded. From that recording the following account has been written.

I am a Crew Manager Star, usually based at Heston Fire Station. But on Tuesday 13th June, I was sent to be in charge of Park Royal Fire Station as Deputies Watch Manager with my call sign as G291. I have printed the details of this station and exhibit it as PST/1. I commenced my Night duty at 20:00 hours on 13th June, and should have ended my shift at 08:00 hours on 14th June. I was with a crew, FF Jim POWER, FF Simon GRANT, FF WEZ and the driver FF SPIKE. I do not know the full details of FF WEZ and FF SPIKE.

Under normal circumstances, the driver would do most of the work in relation to the pumping and the connection to the hydrant. The senior officer would usually sit in the middle with the two younger officers on either side, so that they could get out and attend the incident first.

FF SPIKE who has since retired, was very experienced and I knew he was more than capable. However, with such firefighters, they tend to be much better outside of the building, running operations, than to enter.

In the early hour of Wednesday 14th June, we returned to the station, from having had been called out. I do not remember the details of the call that we had just been to. After about fifteen or twenty minutes, of being back at the station, we received a call to a High Rise.

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2018

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As usual, to make us aware of the call, there was a click sound on the speakers of the Station, followed by the lights of the Station coming on and a female voice on the tannoy system saying 'mobilise, mobilise'. We were mobilised at 01:31am on 14th June as I recall tearing off the slip from the teleprinter in the Watch room. I exhibit this torn slip as PST/2. I remember going to the truck as we had been called on a twenty pump, but our Mobile Data Terminal was not working. Due to this, I had to go back to the Watch Room and contact Control via radio to confirm the address. I booked us as Status Two, which means that we were mobile to the incident.

The fact that the MDT was out of use, meant that we, as a crew, did not have access to a lot of important information, such as where the dry Riser was situated. However, because I was on a twenty pump, I knew others would have been there before me and they would have plugged to the Riser and established the Bridgehead, as per our policy. However, if I had been the first to attend, and as I did not have prior knowledge of the building, I would have only assumed where the Riser was. In this case, because of the height of the building, I would have guessed that it would have been a wet Riser, and would have been situated at the front of the building in a red box with Georgian glass and brass Yale lock.

The call was to attend a twenty pump fire. I knew from the number of pumps attending, the need for FFs was great and that this was going to be something. It could have been a big fire or a hazardous material incident. But until such time that I had got the location, I did not know what I was going to be facing. We left Park Royal with FF SPIKE driving our pump ladder. He knew how to get to the ground but did not know the exact location, hence he had to be directed. Neither my crew, nor I, knew how to get to the location, hence one of the crew members, FF GRANT, used the 'Waze' application on his personal mobile telephone to navigate us. Although it is against our policy to use our personal mobile telephones, we had no other choice as the MDT was not working at all and we had no other method of reaching the destination.

As we got onto the A40 Eastbound, into London, and although it was night time, I could see in the distance, a massive black cloud, so I knew we had something. For the purposes of easing the process of this statement, I have printed my own maps and diagrams, which I will use throughout my account.

Diagram PST/3 is one where the sides of the Tower are labelled. As we got closer, from the motorway, I could see a High Rise block with the North Side of the building on fire, burning all the way to the top. It was a hot summer night with winds. There was a huge smoke that was going directly up and in the direction of West. From what I saw, it was evident to me that there was not a smoke management system in place and it looked like a natural burning taking place.

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2018

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At that point, I knew we had something big, although I was not sure what exactly was burning. I thought that it may have been scaffolding. But then again, it could not have been, as whatever it was, it had caught light and was burning all the way to the top. I have been to many fires in High Rise buildings, including one that was two months prior to this incident. On that occasion, it was a High Rise in the Isle of Dogs, but the fire was only limited to compartments and the spread was nothing like what I saw on the night of the Grenfell Tower incident.

I had my radio on as the driver had his by the steering wheel. We cannot all have our radios on at the same time as there is feedback with screeching noises when one person tries to use their radio to transmit. On route, there was a lot of radio chatter and I could hear that my colleagues were working hard. Throughout the journey, although I do not recall what was being said amongst everybody, I remember a lot of swearing, where people were saying "fucking hell", in disbelief.

We came down the West Way which was closed off by cones. I told the workmen there, to open the road up as there would be many other fire engines and emergency service vehicles coming through. We then went down to the Shepherd's Bush barometer roundabout which is by Holland Park, turned left into St Anns Road and down to the junction of Freston Road which was completely blocked off due to roadworks. Initially we thought if we go that way, we could get around and lift the barriers to create a path for the other fire trucks and Ambulances attending. But as this was not the case, our time was wasted by having to turn around. The roads were congested as there were lots of cars and taxis parked, as well as people driving around the area, making it difficult for us to have a clear route. As we were followed by an Ambulance, we drove back on St Anns Road, left into Stoneleigh Place, left into Sirdar Road, right into Treadgold Street and finally right into Bomore Road where we parked by the Leisure centre. Getting there was not easy as we had to double back onto ourselves a number of times. As there were also six other Fire engines parked in the vicinity, it was difficult to find a spot. There were Uber taxis, Police vehicles as well as Ambulances parked everywhere, which meant that they were in our way. I have printed maps which has assisted me in giving the above directions. I exhibit these maps as PST/4 and PST/5.

There was not a Rendezvous Point so we parked where we could and left the truck there until such time, when we left the scene. I do not recall transmitting status three, which means that we had arrived at the scene. This was partially due to our MDT not working and what we were faced with. However, I did not and still do not know the area, hence I have had to refer to maps. Prior to the fire, I had never been to Grenfell Tower nor the area. But all of our fire trucks have a GPS system where it can be deduced which route each engine had taken and where they had parked on the night of the incident.

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2018

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As mentioned already, about two months prior to this incident, I was called out to a High Rise in Canary Wharf where an air conditioning had overcooked itself and caught fire. On that occasion, there were four pumps there as well as a Table Ladder. But on this occasion, there were lots of fire trucks everywhere. The Command structure was set but as we were not the first ones on scene, I was not in charge. I was in charge of my crew and as I could see that it was a High Rise, I knew we needed equipment, hence once we got there, I instructed my crew of four Firefighters to get their Breathing Apparatus. I also told them to get as many hose and branches as they could physically carry. We then made our way to the Tower, approaching it from the direction of the Leisure centre and the grass verge, towards the East side of the building. The entire time, I was hoping that the people inside were being evacuated as this fire was not like any other and normal circumstances did not exist. I was thinking that the only way to save the people inside, was to get them out. If I had got there at the start, I would have simply got everybody out rather than keep to the 'stay put' policy.

Unfortunately, the people who have made up the 'stay put' policy, have done so, assuming that the fire is contained inside the building, within compartments, for thirty minutes to an hour in each section.

I have been to blocks where the fire had been contained within a flat, preventing the spread. In those cases, the 'stay policy' is logical, which I agree with. This is because the block of flats is filled with different types of residents, such as the elderly who are not very mobile, disabled people, children...etc. If all of the residents were to try and evacuate when there is no need, as the fire is contained, then the work of the Firefighters will become even more difficult. This is due to the people getting in the way of the Firefighters, especially if there is only one set of stairs.

However, this was not a compartmentalised fire inside of a building and the fire was burning from the outside inwards, and so the people should have been evacuated at the very beginning.

Unfortunately, the 'stay put' policy remained in place and was only withdrawn very late on. I do not know when exactly, nor by whom, but it would have had been the OIC.

In our profession, we put locations into sectors and although I do not have confirmation, I believe that the East side of the building was sector four. I came to this conclusion as most of the operations were running from the South side, which would have been Sector one, as it would have gone clockwise, the East side would have been Sector four. Usually, the overall OIC should be on the Command Unit, overseeing everything as he liaises with staff. Then each sector would have its own officer who will be in charge. Each section will be either offensive, or defensive, in that, either firefighting within, or outside of the

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

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building, or simply taking people out of the building. The OIC would also have other officers assisting, for example, in charge of logistics, RVP, Communications, running the BA...etc.

This was the biggest job any of us had ever seen so not to waste time, I instructed FF GRANT and FF WEZ, who had BAs on, to go to the block. I instructed FF POWER and FF SPIKE to drop off the hoses that they were carrying and to come with me to book in. I saw at least three Command Unites so we gave the hoses to another crew, whose name I did not get. They took the hose so that they could do firefighting as there were debris on fire at the location. FF SPIKE, FF POWER and I made our way to the Command Unit where I handed our nominal board to a WM who was inside the Command Unit. He was on the telephone as I asked him what he wanted us to do. His response was to physically turn his back on me. There should have been more people on the Command Unit as I pretty much understood that he, like everybody else was very busy, hence I walked off and made the decision that I will go and find ourselves jobs to do. I have a yellow helmet with two black bars, which meant that I was looking for a Firefighter with a white helmet to give me a job to do.

We went back to the East side and a Watch Manager, whose name I do not know, said that we needed to get water on to the Ariel Ladder Platform. The ALP was parked on the East side of the Tower. The Firefighters there stated that the ALP had formulated problems as it was not working correctly. There was nobody on the platform as it was too far from the building to go inside and rescue people. This, coupled with the fact that a lot of debris was coming down, made it difficult, if not impossible to have somebody on the platform. I could see that there were 3x3 and 4x4 feet square sheets of aluminium, glass, five feet long with two centimetres thick materials, chunks of rock wall insulations and the façade of the building were falling down. At that time, I did not know that the cladding was insulated and that it was flammable. Some of the material falling was on fire as I could see some of the fallen debris still on fire, when on the ground. From time to time, I could hear heavy material falling down to the ground. The fallen debris had formed piles on the ground, not very close to the actual building.

Having said the above, the actual building itself was not falling down as I could see the concrete fencing at the top was still intact. However, the Tower was situated in a strange place as there were obstructions, such as trees, grass verge, playground area and a covered wash, which all prevented our access and placed us under great pressure from the very start. I thought the ALP was still too close, but in a good position. Despite the huge fire, I cannot recall the smell, as this incident took place many months ago and the fire with the smoke were travelling vertically. The other ALP which I believe was from Paddington, was

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

Signature witnessed by:

under the covered wash and had been hit by debris hence the hydraulics had failed. The aerials were too far away and could not get in.

Looking at the East Side, I think it was the gas pipes that had caught fire, raging and making life even more difficult. This is bewildering as I do not understand why gas had been put into a High Rise building. I knew that we had to get a pump to supply water to the ALP and so, when that was being arranged by others, I was looking for a hydrant to connect a hose to, so that it was ready for feeding when the pump arrived.

I do not recall whom, but somebody pointed out a hydrant, which was not far as it was between the Leisure centre and the Academy. As I connected the hose to it, a fire engine arrived. It was Soho's truck, A24 which is brand new. The driver, himself, left immediately, after having parked. This was a major issue as I had had only two hours of unofficial training on the new trucks and did not know how to operate the new engines. The only reason I had some sort of an idea about this new truck, was because two weeks prior to the Grenfell incident, I was sent to be in charge of Ealing, where they have one of those new machines. Whilst there, I asked somebody to show what it was like to work the new machines. We do not receive any official training on new equipment such as these machines. It is simply watching somebody else operate them and try to pick up what you can as you go along. There are no instructions. Having said this, the organisation had emailed a manual, but when I looked through it, it was a mechanic manual and not one where I was taught how to operate the machine. None of my crew knew how to work the machine and so the problem continued. I went around asking Firefighters who were in the vicinity, if anybody knew how to use the new pumps and if they could assist. We eventually managed to plug the ALP into the machine and the machine into the hydrant. Finally we were successful in getting water onto the building. At that point, I was looking and it was clear that the fire was on the outside of the building and that it was wrapping around, from the North side, to the East side where I was. The voids within the building were contributing to the spread of fire as I saw the windows had gone and the fire was being spread. It had left a triangle effect at the bottom where the fire was going up in a forty-five degree angle. The top floors were red, like an open torch.

Altogether, I could see three people inside of the building, by the windows higher up. They were in different flats. One was using their mobile phone torch, trying to get noticed. There was also another, waving a sheet, but I could only make out a black arm and a flag. It was like bedlam as they could see the Fire engine ladder, thinking they could be rescued, but this was not the case as the ladder would not have reached. This was not slow time as it all happened very quickly and I do not remember specific details,

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

Signature witnessed by:

apart from one person, whose outline I could make as he was waving. He was in a position where by looking at him, I could see that he could not get out. I knew that my colleagues knew his location, but his position was not a priority, compared to others who were higher up. He was there for a long time and when he was finally brought out, I was informed that he was the same person. He looked to be of Chinese origin, but again, I cannot recall much details.

At one point, I believe that a decision had been made that there were not going to be any rescue attempts of people who were higher up, as it was not possible. I saw the water gage dropping and we ran out of water. The autofill was not working and so we were left without any water. I was trying to bypass the autofill but it was not working correctly. The water coming in, from the hydrant was not filling up the pump fast enough to be fed into the ALP. We tried a second time but were unsuccessful hence I went to the Officer In Charge of that sector again and told him that we did not have water. The sorting out of the water pressure sits with the Command Unit and the logistics officer.

In order to get the water onto the fire, we had to change tactics and went to a ground monitor, which is a very large branch. But we faced the same problem, in that it just drained the tank. The problem was that the autofill was activating at around the time when the quarter of the tank was full and we were not getting water from the hydrant. Whilst in the middle of this, I noticed two Thames Water personnel close by. I asked them if they could assist in providing water. They responded by saying that they will call and speak to their bosses. I told them not to just try, but to get it done. They stated that they could not just put the pressure up at once, as this would have implications, such as blowing up the pipes. I knew if I managed to get them to put the pressure up, everybody in the area would be able to use this benefit as the pressure for the area goes up altogether. Because of this, I was not worried if the Command Unit personnel were trying to get this matter sorted or not, as I knew the two Thames Water staff were then on the case.

Since the incident, I have come to learn that the water pressure from the providers, has to be built up gradually and not released at once. This is because Firefighters inside were using water to fight the fire, coupled with residents opening up taps at the same time, leading to the decrease in pressure. If the pressure was released at once, the pipes would have burst, leading to us having lost water, altogether. Whilst the above problems continued, I was looking for another hydrant to see if I could get more water. The two Thames Water personnel came back and said that they had spoken to their bosses in Reading, who had woke up and upon watching the news, had realised what was going on, hence they had said they will assist in any way they can. I said, we simply needed the pressure to be turned up.

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

Signature witnessed by:

Due to so many other trucks having arrived and parked, the area was congested and the possibility of getting another pump or another ALP to our location was none. Where we were, had so many obstacles, such as trees and barriers.

One of the two hoses was taken to do some covering fire at the front. This was because of the fallen debris that were went and spoke to the OIC and said that we were going to shut everything down and use the one hose on the new machines, which is a super branch with high pressure. The plan was to tie the hose that we had to the ALP so that a Firefighter would not have to stand on the platform. The OIC confirmed that if that is all we could do, then be it.

As this tactic was implemented, we managed to get water onto the building, where it left a triangle effect, which can be seen today. The water was not much but the end results were that the spread of fire was held back. This in itself, was great, because I recall a resident at a window by where we were putting water onto. I believe that the water assisted in him surviving.

Once the water issue was managed and the machine as well as the ALP had water, I sent FF SPIKE and FF POWER to the main control to get jobs. I did not wish for FF SPIKE to go inside of the building as he is of a large stature and may have been more of a hinder if he was to go inside. I also did not want FF POWER to go inside of the building as he is in his mid to late fifties and his body may not have been able to perform the tasks required. I believe the outcome was that FF SPIKE carried out an important role, BA main control, and FF POWER did logistics with Protective Equipment Group. At that time, I did not know where my other two crew members were.

Whilst at the truck, which I could not leave, a black female with long hair that came down her back, with some braided, came up to me. She was distressed and on the telephone as she said to me that her father was inside of the building and what should he do. She said "MY FATHER IS IN THE BUILDING, MY FATHER IS IN THE BUILDING. WHAT SHOULD HE DO? WHAT SHOULD HE DO?" Immediately, I told her to tell her father to get out. I said "IF HE CAN GET OUT, TELL HIM TO GET OUT. JUST GET OUT". She replied by saying that her father had been told to stay inside by the operator that he had spoken with. But I stressed to her to tell her father to get out straight away. I do not remember any other details about her or anything else that was said. She turned and walked away as she spoke on the telephone. I heard her say "JUST GET OUT DAD. JUST GET OUT". Although I did not take the telephone from her, nor did I speak to the person that was on the other end of the line, I believe that it was her father that she was speaking to as she said to him to get out. It all happened very fast and I do not remember anything else from her.

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

Signature witnessed by:

I gave that advice to the female, to tell her father to get out, because I could see that this was not a normal High Rise fire, like the many that I have been to before. This fire was different, in that it was burning from the outside, inwards and that the fire was not being contained within compartments. A fire within a flat would burn for an hour before spreading, and even if a door had been opened to allow the fire to escape to the next flat, it would still be kept in compartments.

From early on, it could be seen that this was not a normal fire and that there were no containments. The fire was fully involved and the fuel was from the outside. The fire was using the voids within the building to have the chimney effect, which coupled with the wind was creating the spread and the fully involvement. To add to this, the water that we were putting onto the building was also pushing air onto the fire. We were on the hard standing in front of the Leisure centre which I think is about fifty metres, and despite the triangle part at the bottom of the building that was not on fire, we could feel the heat radiating. It was like a crematorium.

The radio chatter was high as it was very busy. I did not listen to very much of it, as it was so busy. Unless somebody had a priority message, the radio was not used. The BA use channel six and the other that is in use, is channel one.

At that point, I saw my boss, Helen CHRISTMAS. I was informed that there was a requirement for BAs and as I have Fire Rescue Unit, I wanted to go and get my sets on. But before doing that I managed to find a FF that was sitting amongst many others, on a wall by the Leisure centre. He was able to operate the machine so I handed it over to him as I went and found a truck that had BAs on board. I tried Soho's truck, but it was empty. I went further down, in front of the Leisure Centre, past the Ambulance crews who were set up by Bomore Road and past the Protective Equipment Group, who were not far away. The FFs were on the grass verge by that location, doing their sets and laying down.

I was disorientated and did not want to waste time looking for my truck as they all look the same. Also, I thought that every truck would have been pilfered so I entered one that was the nearest, but I cannot recall which station it belonged to. However, I managed to find a SDBA set on it. I did not even complete a five round A test. I came out of policy because I did not have time. I knew that it had been checked, hence a name was written on it and I was happy as I just checked and made sure that the cylinders had air in them, which they did, about 284-285. I do not recall whose name was written on the set, but I rubbed it off, and wrote mine with a Chinagraph pen. If I did have sufficient time, then of course I would have completed the correct tests needed, but as mentioned earlier, I did not have any time. Having said this, I would have

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

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completed an A test after using the BA set and having been inside of the building, and especially if I had to go back inside.

I went to Sector one, which was the South Side, where I met Alan MOOR, who is from Chiswick and was the Safety Officer on that sector. He was under the covered wash which was providing substantial protection. He, along with the assistance of the Police, were escorting people in and out of the building by using riot shields for protection from the falling debris that was coming from the burning building. Along with a few other firefighters, I waited there but I saw casualties being brought out so I helped by taking them to the ambulance crews. I do not remember any details of the people that I assisted to the Ambulance area. I went back to the South Side and eventually got inside of the building.

When I entered the building, it was bedlam. There was a struggle to get in as the entrance was narrow. I believe that the bridgehead had moved a couple of times and by that point, it was on the ground floor. There was water pouring down everywhere, causing deep flooding, but this kept the area cool. By the lift shaft, there were FFs sitting waiting to be called up. As there were FFs sitting and blocking the lifts, straight away I knew that there was not a fire lift in use. The stairwell was full of FFs, waiting to go up. To the left, was a toilet area that was open and lots of FFs were sitting down. There were FFs on the mezzanine area, pulling hose up. Overall, there must have been at least twenty people there.

I saw opened up green IEC packs which have defibrillator. The reason for the open IEC packs was that the FFs had taken the oxygen from the bags, to use. Fire Rescue Unit used to have a pack that assisted in breathing, but this was taken away from us a long time ago. It still amazes me that to this day, that our organisation, the LFB, do not have any devices that can assist people breath in burning buildings. A simple device, about the size of a palm, that can provide breathing for about fifteen minutes, can save lives in such conditions. We do not have anything like it, not even spare masks or an octopus rigs. This would allow FFs to get residence out without the people having to inhale smoke.

I was thinking what could I do to help, hence due to my rank, I jumped the queue and went straight to the entry control where the Officer In Charge was from Kensington. I do not recall his name. He had a worried look on his face and was telling the more experienced FFs to look after the ones younger in service. He was instructing the older FFs by saying "YOU TAKE CARE OF HIM", pointing to the newer FFs. He had almost come out of his role and wanted to make sure that anybody he put in, was coming back out.

I was told that at that point, all they wanted was for hose to be taken up. There were no operational fire lifts which made our lives very difficult. Had there been fire lifts, there would have been a FF within it,

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

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operating the movements, as the lift would have had its own protections and would have come down to the ground floor. At that point, a FF would have simply taken the lift to the bridgehead and transported items to different floors, where needed. The operation of a fire lift is very simple, in that one would press and hold the button of the floor that they want to go to, and then press and hold for the doors to open. This method prevents the doors opening to fire if on the incorrect floor or when the FF is not ready. But we did not have to think about this as there was no fire lift.

I received my task, which was to take up two lots of forty-five hoses, to the Eight floor. I was with another FF, and maybe a third behind him, whose names I do not know. The stairs were filled with heavy black and grey smoke and I was thinking 'fucking hell' as I am no longer young and knew that this was going to be challenging. Black smoke is usually associated with plastic and chemicals, whereas grey smoke is associated with wood, paper and cardboards. White smoke is steam usually going out. As we went up, by about fourth or fifth floor, a FF who was there already, took one length of hose from me. The visibility became worse after about fourth and fifth floor. This may be due to the fact that FFs were opening the lobby doors of each floor to go inside, causing the smoke to get into the stairs. I could only see less than six feet ahead, but I was looking down most of the time to look at where I was stepping, although I was bumping into people on the way. The only thing, apart from hose on the stairs, that I remember, was a glove. It was not a FF's glove, which made me wonder as to why somebody would wear a glove in such situation.

When I got to what I thought was the Eighth floor, a FF who was already there, took the second hoses from me, and I carried out some hose management as the concrete stairwell with a handrail, was a mess with hose. The stairs, which were the only way out, were wide enough for two people to go up, side by side, if it was clear. I asked the FF there, if I could be more of an assistance, but they said no and that they had everything in hand. I was thinking there is no way I could have made it to the Twentieth floor in that set as it would have been extremely difficult. As we were running low on air, we made our way back down. Although it felt like a lifetime, I think that it must have taken me about fifteen to twenty minutes to go up and down. Throughout the whole time I was inside, I assumed that there had been an evacuation and that there were no people left within. When we got back to the entry control point, we were given back our tally that I had handed in on the way up, was told to go out, take a break and get ourselves 'sorted'. As the ground floor was a mess, I picked up some of the IEC packs that were open and floating in water. I moved them to the toilet area that was just on the side.

Signature: P TURCSI
2018

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Thermal Imaging Cameras would have been used during this incident. It is worth noting, that the TIC record when they are switched on and hold five hours of recording, before overwriting. It was easier to exit, compared to the entry, as a window section of the Ground floor had been smashed, to facilitate people getting out. I recall when exiting, just like when we entered, the ground was full of pipes, wire and debris, causing trip hazards. The debris were scattered and were in piles of about a foot high. I waited until such time I was assisted with the Police as they used their riot shields to protect us from the falling debris.

I went out, walked under the covered wash and dropped off my set. On the grass verge there was a tarpaulin where FFs were carrying out their A tests on their sets. Also by the wall next to it, there were FFs sitting trying to recover with their tunics and helmets off, having had been inside of the building already. All looked tired, with some laying down, but most were just looking up at the building as they were drinking water from the plastic bottles that were provided.

Although I do not recall specific details, I remember seeing residents that were taken out of the building, were being attended to by the LAS. I think I saw two or maybe three people being put into gurneys. I was then informed that Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus wearers were needed, hence I went to the main control area and saw FF SPIKE who informed me that PEG had turned up. Not everybody in the LFB are EDBA trained. But those who are Fire Rescue Unit, with the badge on their helmets, like I, can wear EDBAs.

On a pump ladder, which I was riding on the night of the incident, there were SDBAs. On the Fire Rescue Unit trucks, which does not have ladders or water, there are five EDBA sets. However, a few years ago, the LFB made the mistake of dropping a rider on the FRU, making the number from five to four. Unless, on that evening there were five riders, a lot of FRUs could have turned up with four people.

The difference is that the EDBAs last a long longer than Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus, but are used in situations where there is a gas suite, protracted incident where the FF has to go further, ideally it is not for firefighting. SDBAs are lighter and designed to enter a building and 'snatch', rather than remain inside. However, on that occasion, as there was not a fire lift, it was realised that EDBAs were needed as the simple task of going up the stairs was difficult in its own. A FF should have had enough air to go through the heat barrier and the physical exertion, for them to go up, carry out a task that they needed to, and come back down, before running out of air.

I think that it was Kensington WM BRENDON, who used to be a FRU that had made the decision early on, to have EDBA wearers. However, this was not implemented until later. I have been a FF for twenty-

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2018

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six years and have never seen the Protective Equipment Group on a job. Seeing this, meant that this job was of a very large scale. The problem is that because they have not been utilised before, they did not seem to know what they were doing. Having said this, we usually do get a unit that brings down only sets, which means that we can change cylinders. But as I saw that the PEG were setting up, with civilian staff, I went and spoke with a FF, whose name I do not recall. I asked for an EDBA but was told that there was a problem, in that the batteries of the EDBAs had not been charged, leading to their telemetry not working correctly. This meant that a signal could not be established between the set and the tally board. This is important as this is the method of monitoring FFs when they are inside working. Their work rate can be seen and the usage of air can be monitored. Also, there is a bodyguard attached, which would notify the BA main control board if the FF stands still. Furthermore, there is an emergency button that the FF can press to signal that he is in trouble, or a different button to show that he is coming out. Although very basic, this communication allows the FF and the outside main control to keep in touch and monitor the vital occurrences as they unfold.

As the communications were down, FFs should not have entered the building as the circumstances did not fit the criteria, in that we did not have enough FFs to send in as runners or keep in line of sight, simply because of the type of building and the smoke which had impaired visibility. I went back and told FF SPIKE that I had not been successful as the EDBAs were not in working order. He told me to go and find what I could. I saw my crew who had worn EDBAs but were setting up to go back inside. I could not find an EDBA anywhere.

As I could not get an EDBA, I did not want to waste time walking around, hence I went to the South Side to see what jobs I could find to do. There, I saw a deceased topless black male with short hair, wearing only pants, in the bin area. I think that he was about thirty years old, but cannot be sure as he had lost a lot of blood hence the discolouration on his skin. He had been moved there from where he had landed, on the south side of the building, between the covered wash and the building. I then came to learn that the male was the 'jumper' who had lost his left leg in the process of falling down. There was a sheet on him before an Ambulance crew asked me how long the male had been there. I could only estimate the time as about two hours, as there was some radio transmission earlier, informing that there had been a person who had jumped from the building.

I saw the personnel from Thames Water again, and as the water had caused flooding and was about two feet high, I asked them if they could remove some of the drain covers. As the two Thames Water personnel were assisting with the removal of the drain covers, the Ambulance crew managed to place the

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2018

Signature witnessed by:

deceased male in a body bag and transported him out. I felt bad as the Thames Water personnel witnessed this taking place. I thought that the Ambulance crew would have placed the body in a bag earlier, but they had not as they were completing their paperwork.

There were mentions of another body around the corner. I went inside to confirm where the other body was, but discovered that it had in fact been the leg from the male. Somebody had assumed that leg was attached to somebody, hence saying that there was another body present. The leg of the male was also retrieved by the LAS, as they used a fallen aluminium sheet from the building to carry the leg. However, this proved to be impractical as the leg fell off the sheet, hence the LAS crew simply picked up the leg and carried it by hand.

Whilst the above was taking place, I went to the West Side of the building in the hope to find a job to do. There, a Watch Manager, asked another FF, whose names I do not remember, and I to relieve two FFs who were in the playground area, fighting the fire from the outside. I did this by taking cover under a children's slide, due to the falling debris. I latched the seventeen mil hose, which had ten bar pressure, to the slide, so that I could move it easier. It is near impossible to be able to hold that hose with that much pressure on your own and it would take at least two people. Having said that, this action cannot be sustained for a long period of time as it is too much and physically I was not able to do so. I squirted water onto the building for a number of hours before I was relieved.

I then went to the main control area and asked FF SPIKE where the rest of crew were. He confirmed that he had spoken to FF GRANT. I asked him to locate where everybody was. Shortly after, I went to the Salvation Army to get something to eat, when I received a call on the radio to attend the CU. Upon attending the CU, I was told to get my crew together and to head to Paddington to write notes about what I had been involved in. FF SPIKE was on Main Control so he knew roughly where FF GRANT and FF WEZ were. I also knew FF POWER was helping out with logistics, so it was easy to get my crew together as we left and completed our notes at Paddington, before going home. It took us a while to find our truck as we did not know the area and had to look around as there were a lot of fire engines around. As I do not wear a watch, I cannot say what time the events unfolded, but we attended the fire during the dark hours of the night and left the scene when it was daylight. If I had to guess, I would say that it must have been about 09:00 hours when we were dismissed to go to Paddington and the building was still burning. We reached Paddington at about midday, completed our notes, and when we were heading back to our own station, we went past the Tower and it was still on fire.

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2018

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Every building is looked at by the Fire Brigade and during the visits, we gather a 7(2) D which is a document that we look at. That information is used to plan approaches to an incident at the location, if one was to take place. For example, if a location has steel shutters, for attendance, a Rescue unit would be a recommendation. An ALP is a massive truck and access points would need to be looked at and so a compromise may need to be suggested, such as a TL as it is smaller and easier to get through. Also, points of where it could be utilised and where a RVP could be set up. But all of these information is placed on the MDT, which we did not have access to, on the night.

This year, 2017, as part of our 'back to basics', we received training on basements, whereas last year it was on High Rise buildings. Although we are meant to complete one training on High Rise buildings, I completed four as some people had Annual Leave, which gave me the opportunities to have multiple attendance and am competent in my training. Three of the four were not useful, but there was one training session where I did learn about the 'blow-torch' effect. This is where the windows in a High Rise building have gone and how the fire reacts, due to the wind, when a door is breached. I did learn that in those circumstances, we can firefight from the doorway or push through to get past that 'blow-torch' effect. But in such situations, whatever is in that room, would have been gone anyway, so there would be no point in entering.

I stress, the High Rise trainings that we have, teach us about the fire within a building. But the case of the Grenfell Tower was the fire burning from outside, inwards. This was something that the LFB did not even know about or foresaw.

I did not see any sprinklers within the building and only assume the reason for this is that if there were to be installed, some residence would have broken them or set them off on regular basis, which would have forced the attendance of the LFB, for no good reason. I only say this due to my experience where I have seen many unnecessary call outs of LFB to events, where children have thrown lit hexogen fuel blocks around, as a result of having seen it done in a bonfire. Also, because of the structure of the building, being concrete, there would have had to be surface mounted sprinklers and not internal ones. This would explain why the gas pipes were on the outside of the building.

With older buildings, the domestic appliances were mainly electrical, which meant that through time, as buildings were added, more and more people moved in, the pressure on the electrical supply was great. To balance this, the main utilities, such as the oven cookers and the showers, were replaced from electrics to gas. The gas pipes used were thick galvanised pipes before the switch to copper. The galvanised pipes last a lot longer but of course, the copper pipes go after a certain heat temperature. When I was at the

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2018

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West side of the building, I overheard a Watch Manager speaking and saying that they could not get into the plant room which was on the North side, to shut off the gas. From experience, I know that the gas can be shut off from the street. But this means that the gas workers would have to attend and dig the ground. However this was not possible as it was deemed too dangerous.

The other issues that I want touch on, is the radios and communications. We only have two working channels, one and six. Of course, when people are talking, the traffic is heavy and communications are difficult. There are some radio set connections fitted to the BAs, called Barry Set, which are very poor and are not fit for purpose. The earpiece comes off and if you have not got the microphone correctly on your helmet, you cannot hear much.

Although I did not witness any injuries nor near misses, I know at one point a firefighter emergency was declared due to a firefighter having come out of the building and not having collected his tally. They had called him up on the radio, but he had not responded. This could have been due to stress.

I do not know who the Incident Commander was, although I did see our chief FF walking around.

Usually, a Crew manager would be in charge of the incident, until such time a FF with a white helmet arrives. After that, when the fire is escalated to a four pump, a Station Manager would attend but not necessarily take over, unless they believe that the incident is not managed properly, after which they will take over. When the incident reaches six pumps, the Station Manager would take over. As it escalates, a Group Manager followed by higher ranks will take over. But on that evening, I do not know the exact chain of Command that was followed.

Although I have mentioned some of the issues already, I feel that I need to stress that things would have been very different if there was; a functioning MDT, more people on the Command Unit, a fire lift, access to the plant room to shut off supplies, an extra person on board of EDBA machine, better radios, better torches/wolf lights supplied with the correct batteries, a fifteen minute breathing apparatus to supply the casualties/residents, water pressure.

This fire, without a shadow of doubt, is the biggest fire I have ever seen. Things have taken place which went beyond my experience as a firefighter. Such as, I have heard that some of the Kensington crew had brought down some residents from higher up levels of the building, down to a lower location and placed them into a flat, in order for the crew to go back up and get more people. However, the flat that they had placed the residents in, had gone.

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Page 17 of 17

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2018

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