

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: BENAICHA, RICHARD

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 12 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: R BENAICHA

Date: 02/03/2018

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

This statement refers to my attendance as a firefighter to 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 on 14 June 2017 I completed some notes in relation to this incident. These notes were made contemporaneously on 14 June 2017, which I now exhibit as RIB/1. I have not referred to any of our LFB logs or records in preparing this statement, therefore I am unable to give accurate times to the matters I refer. I exhibit the maps I refer to as RIB/2 and RIB/3.

The people I will refer to by name in my statement are LFB personnel. These include: Watch Manager Paul GODBER; Crew Manager Damian MCGEE; Firefighter; Alan 'Al' HANLON; Firefighter John ALDRIDGE; Firefighter John WHARNSBY from the Red Watch at Shoreditch; Firefighter Terry LOWE and Borough Commander Pat GOLDBOURNE. I will also refer to members of the public. They are the male who was at a window with his mobile phone light on; a woman who was at a window waving a towel; a large naked Mediterranean looking male who I helped carry to the LAS point and the blind Chinese male who was rescued from the building in the morning.

I've been a firefighter for 11 years now. I joined in October 2006. My station from training school was Shoreditch, I got there in April 2007. I was on the Green Watch there for about 10 years and then we lost an appliance from Shoreditch so I got transferred over to the Red Watch at Whitechapel as there was a space. I've been at Whitechapel for about 18 months now. I am competent in terms of training and carrying out my role.

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I was not aware of any pre-prepared firefighting plan for Grenfell Tower. Prior to the Grenfell fire, I was not aware of the risk of cladding materials or of any pre-prepared plan for firefighting or rescue when compartmentation failed in a high rise block of flats. Prior to the 14th of JUNE 2017, I had no previous knowledge of Grenfell Tower.

For that shift, I was the MD for our appliance, F33. I started my shift, I did my set and I did all the checks what we normally do.

At around 10 (10)' clock in the morning, I was up in my room on the top floor at Whitechapel Station sleeping when the bells went down. I came down stairs and our officer in charge was down there with the slip. He informed us there was a X amount pump fire, I don't remember what he said at the time but I knew it was a lot so I knew it was going to be a big job. I looked at the slip because as the driver it is my job to get my crew there. I looked at the address and it said Grenfell Tower. I used Google maps, I typed in Grenfell Tower and it showed that it was just off Bramley Road. I was studying the knowledge, I've finished it now, so I was just doing the knowledge lines to work out. I didn't ask anyone the route, I looked at it myself and I determined that the quickest way was to go up Commercial Street, Great Eastern, past Shoreditch Fire Station, get to Euston, Marylebone, get onto the Westway and come back down onto West Cross Route, hit Holland Park Avenue and then come back onto Royal Crescent and go up. That looked like the quickest way especially with the time and I knew it would be a fast path to get there because of the big roads. I didn't tell anyone the way I was going. My crew have trust in me getting there as fast as possible so we all jumped on. We made our way there. I was concentrating on the roads; I knew there was a big turn out as it was a big fire but I had no more information than that. It took us maybe two minutes to leave the station, knowing there is a lot there we know it's going to be something so we've got to get there quick.

I was focused, I think there was talking going on, I think our officer was passing on information but I wasn't listening, I was concentrating on the roads and trying to get there. The 1st time I saw the Tower was when we were on the Westway. I looked over and the building was alight. You could see it was a big job going on. My 1st thought was that it looked like something out of Lord of the Rings: a big, high structure with a lot of fire. Even though I was making sure to get that slip and not to miss the turning, it was plain to see that it was a domestic, people lived in there. That's when I thought to myself that there is a good chance that we could potentially die because the fire was going all the way up and you could see that there was people and a lot of activity going on even from as far as we were. You know you are going to have to go in there to help out. That's what you have to do. I said to myself inside my head "there is a

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chance we could die here.” This made me feel a bit numb; it was just an acknowledgement of potentially what could happen. You know you are going to have to get in and help out. It was just a thought but the strongest thought I had was making sure I got that slip and making sure you get that roundabout because it would be so embarrassing to miss that and carry on along especially with that fire going. So I couldn’t miss it. Making sure I hit that slip took over the thought I could die. I’ve never thought about that before; it’s never crossed my mind. The only time I saw something similar was 9/11 on the news. From the Westway looking at the face of the building the fire was right up, nearly consuming right to the top of the tower. If people are there you have to go in and help, you want to go in and help. You had the risk of the building collapsing like 9/11.

I’m focused on getting there, I am on the Westway so I know I can’t miss the turning. I need to get the White City turning to get to the roundabout. I’ve taken the slip, roundabout, West Cross Route, come up Royal Crescent.

Watch manager GODBER was listening to the radio and passing more information from the radio to the guys at the back because they can’t hear as clear.

I didn’t need to worry about maps or layouts. My Watch Manager didn’t need to focus on me getting there because he has got confidence in me. He was more focused on what was coming out from the radio, what was happening. He did ask me a few times along the way if I know where I was going. I said I did and I told him each road I was going to take so he was confident with that. It was all white noise because I was focused on getting there.

We headed all the way up St Ann’s Road and then there was a road closure. There were no other appliances ahead of us so we went forwards up until the road closure. I said to myself “we can get closer than that.” So Al got onto his phone quickly and he was like “Ok let’s reverse the machine and take the 1st left” which I do believe was Stoneleigh Place. I didn’t need to say anything, its instinct, when I’m going back my crew just naturally jump off to see me back. We got as far as we could on Stoneleigh Place, which wasn’t very far. There was a truck parked there so we got as close to that truck as possible and parked in the middle of the road. We arrived on scene at around half past one. It took us about 25 minutes to get there.

The crew were getting off rigging, everyone else was getting their sets on. I’m the driver so all my stuff is in the locker. My officer told me “get your stuff, get rigged, get your set on and head over with us.” So I’ve had to rush now because I’ve had to turn off the engine, get out and make sure everything is safe. The guys sat at the back of our truck have got a head start on me. I’ve got to go to the locker, open the

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locker, put on my leggings, get my helmet, get the jacket, put it on and then go to the back and put on the set. The set is a standard duration breathing apparatus. Single cylinder on it with oxygen, it's got a face mask and you use it to go into smoky environments. It's quite heavy. So I knew the guys, especially with the fire, they were going to be going forwards. So I knew I had to get my stuff and be quick. They are not going to wait for me. My focus, you could call it tunnel vision, it was getting there and now it's get my set, get my gear and get to where they are so that we can all go as a crew. There was so much going on that I didn't want to be in a position where I was left on my own or I couldn't see where the crew was. It's happened before where I have gone to another call, got something like my tool box and then been left on my own. They were fast walking but once I caught up with them we started running along Grenfell Road. As it is a residential street there were people stood outside their houses in dressing gowns and what not and it was dark. I could hear people saying things like "oh my god" and just general confusion with people wanting to know more information.

As we approached the tower I saw lots of debris, lots of noise from the debris falling down, the strong smell of smoke that you get from big fires. I could see from the corner of my eye lots of people and crowds. There was a queue of firefighters to the left from our approach. There were loud bangs, bits of debris falling off and hitting the tower. I didn't see anything on fire that was coming down. The debris was all different sizes. Small like small rocks to bigger pieces that looked like burnt wood but it was all grey and smouldering. There was no flame. The falling debris made gaining access difficult as it was falling everywhere in the area of the tower. I can remember seeing at least 1 fire engine in the area where I was but I can't remember what it was or where it was positioned.

We have gone round the corner and we were on the grass verge on the east side. Our officer left to get some more information and to see what they needed us to do. We could see some firefighters queuing to get in to the entrance under a covered walkway area. So although we were waiting for the officer we were edging there because we knew that's what we had to do. We had to get in there. There were people coming out and we could see people being carried out. So we knew we needed to get inside as soon as possible. Our officer came back; I don't remember too much about what happened then apart from then queuing up. We joined the queue to wait to go in. Debris was falling. At that time there were two officers with white helmets, I don't know what rank, there were no police officers there at that time. There was a lot of shouting and everything whilst we was in the queue but the instructions we got was two at a time. Fire fighters are looking and when it is clear, run in. The queue was getting shorter and shorter and we was getting more to the front. At this point our officer left to go and fulfil his role, he knew we was in the

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queue. All the fire was coming up from the east side, there was all fire from the top of the south side. I couldn't see the other 2 sides of the tower.

We were there as a crew and then we got into the lobby bit at the bottom. The lobby felt big and open planned. As we went through the door there was 2 officers standing there by the door with white helmets. There was fire fighters in the middle. There was a stairwell which you could see go round and lead up to the balcony which was in front of you as you come in through the door. There was a queue of firefighters on the railings. You was anxious as you knew these people were going up so you wanted to get through and go to the Bridgehead. It was definitely a busy place. Lots of noise and lots of talking. We was in there and then we saw Shoreditch's crew.

I can't remember who but someone told us to go up the stairs and form another queue which was in the mezzanine / balcony bit. The balcony was the queue going to the Bridgehead. Everyone bar the Watch Manager entered the building. We all went as a 4 and then it was Crew Manager MCGEE with John ALDRIDGE and then myself with fire fighter HANLON. It was us 4 and we were with Shoreditch, that was our little group. So we went up the stairs joined the queue. We were waiting to be instructed to go up to the Bridgehead but I don't know where that was but I know it was through this door. There was an officer stationed at that door. So we were waiting in the queue and waiting to be told to go up. There were officers downstairs by the front door of the lobby shouting up flat numbers where people were. It was all open planned so you could see everything. At that time, we were still waiting, so we was taking in the flat numbers and trying to pass them on to the officer but there was a lot of shouting and a lot of voices.

When we was waiting on the balcony, as it was all glass you could see out. You could see the debris falling down. I remember wanting to go up as there were so many flats being shouted out it was like we need to get up there.

There was the two officers downstairs with white helmets. One of them was shouting out flat numbers. Casualties were coming down, we could see this from the balcony. These officers was talking to them briefly before they were going out and then these officers were shouting out flat numbers to us upstairs. We were relaying this to the guy at the door. The door lead up to the stairwell that went to the Bridgehead. We didn't know if he was relaying the information.

I was assuming the officers were asking the casualties "is there anyone in your flat? Is there anyone on your floor? Is there people still up there?" and they was obviously saying "yeah, whoever, is in the flat." They were getting the information from them direct and they was shouting it up to us to try and pass it on to this guy. This was the stage just before going to the Bridgehead. I supposed this makes sense because it

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stopped the whole stairwell being crowded with people. It was a stagger stage and he was like a security guard. You could only get through on his approval to them go up to the Bridgehead.

We wanted to go up, we wanted to get our flats to go up because we knew there was a lot of people in there but then the guy on the door he was saying there was a fire fighter unaccounted for and he couldn't get him on the radio. I forget what that firefighter's surname was but the guy in front was saying "look no one is going anywhere until we find out where this guy is." So we are anxious to go up there but we are waiting around now. People are still shouting out these door numbers and we are still trying to pass them on but he is saying "no one is going anywhere until we find out where this firefighter is." I remember that felt like a long time but I don't think it was. I think it was only about 5 minutes or something and then the confirmation came through that he was found, he was outside and he was accounted for. We are still in the queue and there are so many flats being shouted out we are passing it and they are not all being taken in so me and Alan HANLON we had chinographs we were writing the flat numbers on the wall. We were writing the numbers that were being shouted up to us. We were still telling him but we didn't think it was going anywhere, so just in case we were writing them down so we had a list of the numbers on the wall. The wall on the balcony next to this guy.

After writing the numbers on the wall and after the fire fighter had been found we was going up 2 by 2. So it was me and fire fighter HANLON and we was the next 2 to go up. There was a crew starting up. Don't know where they was going. This crew of two was putting their sets on, putting their facemasks on and then going up to wherever they had to go. So then it was just me and firefighter HANLON and the officer with BA board. An officer gave us a bit of paper with floor 14 and a flat number. So we went up the stairs to the Bridgehead where the fella was with the boards and we told him floor 14, flat whatever it was. He said to us "we will tell you where you need to go, don't tell us where you are going. It comes through the BA ECO and we tell you where you are going."

There was a bit of a waiting time then and we were ready to go up now. We had our sets on and we were ready to go under air. As far we knew, even though he said "we tell you" he didn't really have any information to tell us so we assumed we were going up to the 14th floor. He had that bit of paper, he was on the radio, I can't remember what he was saying. We were getting ready to go up, the adrenaline was pumping. You could see it from the outside, so you knew if you were going to the 14th floor there was going to be a lot of fire up there and it would be quite dangerous.

A short time passed, a few minutes maybe, we were still waiting and then someone came up and spoke to the guy on the board and then we were told we needed to go down to the lobby because the fire was

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beneath us. We were getting ready to go up but now we've been told we've got to go all the way back down. So everyone had to go back down. Including the BA boards and the officer. So we went down. We went into the lobby. There was a corridor bit with a toilet and then another bigger room. We stayed in that corridor for about 7 minutes.

Then we got told to move into that next room where you could see the doors to outside. We was in there for around 3 minutes. We was just waiting down there and all along fire fighters were coming down. FRU were coming down with their extended duration breathing apparatus, normal fire fighters were coming down with their single duration breathing apparatus and they was coming down with casualties and every time one would come down everyone would shout "casualty! casualty!" and you would be making room. We was just standing there waiting hoping to get called up as we knew that flat on the 14th floor still had people inside.

Then we were told everyone needed to vacate the building. So we all left and we went outside. I can't confirm if it was the back way but it wasn't the main entrance we used. My adrenaline is going because all of a sudden I was ready to go up to the 14th floor, now I'm outside of the building. I remember coming out, there was a long walk way and it lead to a big grass verge where the firefighters were sitting but I couldn't tell you what side it was I believe it would have been the west side of the tower. There was another entry and exit point by now. There must have been about 40 fire fighters. SDBA mixed with EDBA.

The building was still on fire. From where I was looking, if I remember correctly, there was no fire from the ground to the 6th floor but then there was fire from the 6th up.

There was one guy from a window we was watching as he had his phone light on and there was a woman waving a towel out of a window calling for help.

His window was open, he had his arm out of the window with the little light on his phone. There was smoke coming out of flats above him and as time passed smoke was coming out of the windows getting closer to his floor. Then the smoke was coming out of his one with him still hanging out and then you could see him less and less with the smoke and then the light just disappeared. The smoke was now coming out of his flat and that is when the light has stopped. So I thought he was dead, he took in smoke or whatever. It was dark there was no light on in his flat all you could see was that small beam of LED light from his phone and that's it. I saw no flames just smoke.

It was frustrating because you want firefighters to get there but you didn't know what was going on, maybe there was fire fighters going there? I was on channel one on my radio, with everyone talking and I

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was trying to listen maybe there was something going to the 8th floor, I didn't know what the floor was but I didn't hear nothing. I wanted someone to go up there, we were all going "look at this bloke hanging out of the window, where is anyone to go up there?" Then you are just hoping someone has been sent. We wasn't sure if someone was sent or not. When you see the light go out you think no one got to him on time. It's a mixture of frustration and anxiety. It was thick smoke. I'd like to think that he was rescued. We was watching him for around 7 to 10 minutes.

I knew it was a male as you could tell it was broader than a woman. You could see the silhouette of him, short hair, he looked like a bloke. I mean it might have been a woman but he looked like a bloke to me. I couldn't give you a description. It could have been anyone.

The woman was on a lower floor, around the same area on the west side. We was watching both of these together. The smoke came down the floors, through windows. I'm not sure if it was every floor but you could see on at least a couple of floors the smoke had moved down.

Then she moved away from the window and you could see the smoke coming out of her window. She went to another window which was smaller because I remember thinking "she has squeezed through that little window" and she still managed to get the towel out to wave it. You could see she was in trouble because the smoke was coming out of 1st window she was in and then she has gone into another room to a smaller window to wave that towel so you could tell she was in trouble then. She was waving for a long time, we were just watching her wave through that window, then the smoke came through that window, and then you didn't see her again. We had her under observation for around 20 minutes.

It was like watching a computer game because the smoke was getting lower and lower and this woman is waving her towel, it's got lower and lower and then the smoke has come out of the window and you think "where are the people? Why aren't they coming up?" you could see it wasn't that high. Fire fighters are going up, so why isn't someone getting her out? Then she moved to the small window, I felt sorry for her, you could tell she was in trouble and then the smoke can through and disappeared and I thought "well you hope people survive" but you think "she has just not made it." It was nice to think that she had been rescued but in my mind she had not made it now as smoke is coming out of both of the windows and you can't see her anymore.

There was a small light on, so you could see just a little bit. What from I could see of the body, it looked female. She had long hair, she had a t-shirt on or something and she was waving a white towel as she had her arm out of the window.

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I was upset but I'm focused because we still have our sets on and we are ready to go inside. So it was like, let's try and get some more people out then so they can come out.

An officer said that they needed people to take off their sets to help with the casualties coming out. Two of our crew: our crew manager and the new guy, FF ALDRIDGE, took off their sets to do casualty handling. Fire fighter HANLON and I kept our sets on. An officer then said that they needed 20 blokes in sets just to stay here to be ready to go back in. so we kept our sets on and there was a little group of fire fighters with sets

There was big guy that came out where we came out on the west side and he was covered in, what looked like black oil. Big fella, naked and there was 2 police officers and a couple of fire fighters that was taking him out so I've gone over to help. I took one of his legs to help as I knew the LAS was round the corner. That was the only time I moved away from the grass bit. He was covered in oil and he wasn't moving. I didn't see him come out of the building, I saw him when he was on the alleyway by the ramp. He was with 2 police officers and 2 fire fighters and it wasn't enough as he was such a big guy and he was so slippery. They were trying to hold him up so that's when I came over to give them a hand. I grabbed a leg and we walked him over. It was awkward as he was very slippery. Someone had an arm, someone had underneath, it was all very awkward. He was face up and there was no movement that I could see. We took him to the LAS on Hurstway Road and they took care of him.

He was a large male, overweight, big belly, Mediterranean look, Algerian or something like that. He was covered head to toe in black oil. I didn't look at the face. I scooped my 2 arms underneath his right thigh. Some officer has come over from the front of the building, he had a white helmet on and he said "BA wearers follow me." A load of us went and we queued up by the ramp in the south west corner. There was lots of police with their riot shields now and they were taking people in 2 at a time. So we was all there, all ready. We queued up for what felt like 2 minutes.

Me and fire fighter HANLON went together. We went in, through the lobby part and we were back in the main bit by the stairs to the mezzanine. On the ground floor there is now lots of water log. It had come up a few inches at least. There was more fire fighters and officers congregating in this lobby bit. Lots of see through white smoke, so you could see everything but it was still very smoky. Pat GOLDBOURNE was in the centre with his BA board and a load of officers with him. There was at least one with a white helmet and then either a fire fighter or crew manager with a radio. We waited there for about 5 minutes. I remember us up against the wall and that is when we met this other fire fighter, I don't know who he was or where he was from, but he was on his own. We were talking to him and he was saying that he was

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waiting for another single person so that they can go up as a crew. I remember me and fire fighter HANLON saying “where are all his other crew members? Where are they?” so we just kept to the side on the wall waiting to be called.

Me and fire fighter HANLON was called over as the next crew. Someone, I can’t remember who, told us to go to BA ECO, who is the entry control officer, so we walked over and that is when we saw Pat GOLDBOURNE. The way it seemed from looking at it, he was the main bloke down there, he was the man in charge. He was controlling everything. He knew fire fighter HANLON from before. I’ve seen him but I’ve never really spoken to him before. He gave us a brief, He said “look I need you guys to go to the 5th floor and fire fight. You need to protect the route, get the fire back for all the fire fighters that are higher and bringing casualties down. Get up there, knock back the fire on the 5th and protect the egress for the other fire fighters coming down with casualties.” That was our brief, that’s what he told us to do. He said there was a branch up there, so go under air, go up there, up to the 5th floor, you will see a branch, go through, fight the fire. For me that was firefighting, that’s what we know what to do.

Then he said “I will call you when it’s time to go.” That was the 2nd point when I thought “ok we could die here” because the fire had been going on for a long time, I had no idea what the building structure was like, I had no idea. We knew we was going up to the 5th floor. You could see when we was standing outside, there was a lot of fire on the side we was going up, so I thought potentially that is another situation where we could die. I said to fire fighter HANLON “look there is a good chance we could die here.” He said “I know”. It was another minute or so and then Pat come and said “get yourself up to the 5th floor.”

Whilst we were waiting at the Bridgehead, we was told about the ‘H’ shape as there was a drawing of the flats.

We went under air. We put our face masks on, put our sets on, give our tallys to the board, we told the comms operator that we was going up to the 5th floor and then went up the stairs.

So we went up to the 5th floor under air. There was a bit of wispy smoke but you could see the stairwell fine. I was hot, but I get hot with all my fire gear on anyway, so walking up the stairs felt quite hot. The stairs had hose and there was hose going up in the middle bit of the stairs but it was easy to walk up the stairs. I can’t remember any water on the stairs. There was no issue with visibility on the stairs all the way up to the 5th floor. I don’t recall anything that I heard.

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Just off the stairwell you came off into a bigger square, there was no door or anything and it was slightly darker smoke. Still visible but slightly darker smoke and there was a branch with a 70 just next to the door that we had to go through to get to the flats.

Alan was ahead of me so he picked up the branch, I was behind him. I noticed it was a thicker hose than we normally use. We normally use a 45 which is slightly thinner, you have more movement and accessibility whereas the 70 is quite chunky. I helped him, it was fully charged so it was difficult to move. He gave it a test the water came out of it so we knew it was working. On the 5th floor, the fire door was shut.

We opened the fire door and the smoke was even thicker and you couldn't see anything. It was black smoke. Visibility is nothing. We have seen how dark it is so Alan has closed the door and we have gone down on our knees. Then we have done door procedure. Alan had the hose, I was the number two. The fire door was opening towards us so I've gone round and shouted "crews". I had my leg up, door is opened, he had the branch I said "door opening, door opening now" and then he has gone through. We have gone to the right. He is number one, you can't see anything so I've got his back and I'm holding the hose. We have worked our way round and as we knew it was a 'H' shape we knew there would be a door on the right. It's all smoke but no fire. The fire door did close on the hose but the hose kept coming through.

Alan has found the door. We have gone into the flat. There is no visibility whatsoever but then you could see this orange glow. We have had to go round the corner in the flat sticking to the right hand side and there was a full orange glow. So we knew the room was alight and you could feel the heat then. So we have stepped back and Alan has begun 'pulsing' which is quick spurts of water just ahead of you and above you to cool the gases. So he has done a few pulse sprays, we have gone forward a little bit more, he has done a few more pulse sprays, the ceiling has then come down. All the crap from the ceiling has then started to fall down but you could tell it was just rubble, it wasn't a structure fall. So we backed off, pulsed a bit more to see if the ceiling wouldn't come down anymore, it didn't so then we have gone forward. I'm holding the jet, propping it up. Alan is now doing long pulses. Every time he is doing a pulse the orange is getting less and less. It is going from orange to black. We got to the stage where there was a little bit of orange but it was mostly black. I had a little wipe of my face mask as it had all the crap on the front. I had a look at my gauge which shows how much air I've got. 80 on your gauge is when your whistle starts to go off. I told Al "look I'm approaching 80" and he said "lets knock it down a bit more." Alan had comms. He was trying to get through about the gauge but he was saying he couldn't hear

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anything from the comms. There was too much noise going on. I was about 86 bar, so we stayed there until there wasn't any more orange it was just black. We couldn't see anything. I said to Alan "right lets get out now, I can't see any more orange. Can you see any more fire?" It is difficult to talk as you are under air and it's difficult to breathe and the breathing is really heavy. He couldn't see any more fire so we made the joint decision to withdraw. As we withdraw we continue to pulse in case there was any fire. We left the flat and because we knew of the 'H' layout there was a flat just there I said I had about 86 so I've said to fire fighter HANLON "what about the other flats? Have they been checked? Is there anyone in there?" We didn't have much information. There could have been someone inside and I had enough air to do stuff. He agreed and we carried on, on the right hand wall and we found the door. It was a locked door so we tried to kick it but there wasn't much room. We were banging on the door, shouting through the letter box but there was no answer. So that is when we traced out steps back, got to the previous flat we was in, came back, got to the door and just made our way down.

We reported to the ECO and Pat GOLDBOURNE was there so we directly briefed him. He asked Alan what happened, what were the conditions? We explained the fire was there so we knocked the fire right back so there was no more fire, still smoke logged, the flat next door was locked, we tried kicking it open but we couldn't. That was the information I passed to him. So then he said to us "well done, take off your sets, go and get your tally and go and cool down in the lobby." I was really hot. I get quite hot, I sweat quite a lot as well especially with all the fire kit. So I took off the set, I took off my tunic, steam was coming out all over the place so there were a few fire fighters there that were a bit concerned but it happens. There was no affect for me but it must have looked quite good as even I could see it, there was loads of steam coming off me, I looked like a kettle.

So we sat down to cool down, people was throwing water at me, I was drinking water and cooling down. Then an officer came, he looked at me and said "he needs to go outside to cool down." I said I was fine, that I would drink some water and I would be Ok. I wanted to go back up there because whilst we was sitting there watching we saw Shoreditch's crew on the stairwell through the glass and they was coming up and down the stairs they didn't have BA on. So I was thinking we could get in there and help. An officer said "no, you have to go out and cool down." So they helped me up, I didn't need helping but they helped me up. I was waiting to go outside with the police with the riot shields. Fire fighter HANLON stayed in there. As I was going out I could see him going through to go up to the stairwell with Shoreditch. I tried to sneak back in but they told me I had to go out for health and safety.

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So I went outside, right back and I sat on the grass bit for about 15 minutes. It was day light by then as the sky was getting lighter. Again I'm not too sure about times but it was dark when we got in there and it was day light when we got out and I was sitting there. I saw John WHARNSBY from the Red Watch at Shoreditch he came over and we sat there for about 5 minutes, had some water and cooled down. I remember looking and seeing the 2 fire fighters in the playground seeking shelter under a slide with a jet getting up water as high as they could as there was fire there. There was still fire going all the way up the building and there was lots more debris falling all over the place and there was burning bits falling all over the place. The burning embers and debris was getting very close to those two firefighters. Then an officer came and said that they needed body bags. So me and him, knowing that's a good opportunity to get back inside the building, ran off to a load of trucks to find some body bags. There were a load of fire engines just off Hurstway Road and we opened up loads of lockers. Me and John grabbed all the body bags and we ran back. That was our ticket to get back inside. So we jumped the queue, got in under the police riot shields, got through the door and then we was told the body bags need to be upstairs, I can't remember what floor.

The ground floor lobby was still water logged and smoke logged but it was seeable and breathable. Pat GOLDBOURNE was still there. I was thinking to myself "he has been taking in this smoke the whole time."

We went up the stairs to the balcony bit. There were 2 officers there and we were asked to drop the body bags there. I saw crew manager MCGEE. He was standing there I don't know what he doing. We went past him, to the bit where we was queuing before to the stairs. There was talk of a new line of hose being made, they needed more hose. John went up the stairs and I was waiting around to give them assistance. It got to 5 minutes and there was no word of what was going on. I went and saw Crew Manager MCGEE and asked him what was going on. He said they were looking to get more hose because they wanted to put a new line up. I was there for another 5 minutes, still nothing going on, no one knew what was going on. That's when I thought I would go up and see John WHARNSBY so I could help out where I could. I saw John, the rest of Shoreditch and fire fighter HANLON and they was all doing hose management. They were trying to get the hose up so I just jumped in and started helping. There was so much hose that when the crews were going up, a lot of the time, I was just lifting up the hose and just standing there for 15 / 20 minutes, just letting the fire fighters go up and down. We done that for ages. I was thinking my arms hurt and I'm stood here like an idiot just holding the hose up so that people can go up and down. At one point there was no water coming up. I didn't know really what was going on but what we needed to do was sort

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out the hose because there was no water coming up. Most of the time I was holding up the hose to let the crew pass. There was no real smoke just essence of previous smoke. You could tell there was smoke in there before, that smoke had gone. All the stairwells were clear. You could work on them, you didn't need BA. All the other guys didn't have BA and it was workable conditions.

I was on the 5th floor and radio comms said "is there anyone on the 6th floor? Because there was a report of someone on the 6th floor inside one of the flats." I didn't have BA on but I radioed "I'm on the 5th they asked me to check. So I got to the 6th floor and there was fire fighter Terry LOWE. I've known Terry for a long time. We've got no hose, it's not procedure, you shouldn't do that but we didn't have anything else. We didn't even have to say anything, we just knew we had to get in to those flats. So we have opened up the fire door just to see. It's smoky, to the point where if you went in and took in the smoke you would cough and you wouldn't be able to see. Conditions weren't as bad as when I was on the 5th floor under air. It was a light grey, stagnant smoke. We closed the fire door. So all we knew was that there was a casualty on the 6th floor apparently. There was an enforcer just before you opened the fire door. I went in, held my breath, turned left, saw the door, closed my eyes as the smoke was stinging my eyes. The door was locked, I tried to kick it but it wasn't going. I had to start breathing as I was holding my breath for that long and I started coughing so I thought I had to come out. I came out and it felt like I was in clean air. I took some breathes but I was still coughing for a bit. I told Tel that the door was locked so I needed to use the enforcer. So I took the enforcer, held my breath, walked in eyes open, closed my eyes walked to the door and started smashing it near the handle. It took 4 goes. I went inside the flat and it was like clean air again compared to the corridor. So I was able to take some breaths. I went in to every room and shouted "hello" but there was no one in there. I came back through the corridor, back onto the stairwell and closed the door and I said to Tel "there is no one in that flat." So Terry went in and went to the right. I don't know what he did but I assume he went into a flat he came out and said there was no one there. Then another fire fighter came, he asked and we told him what we did. He has gone through the door and he has gone right to the end. He was gone for quite a while. We had stood outside and we are both coughing and our eyes are stinging from being in there earlier and we just waited to see if he was ok. I think he made it into a flat because you could hear him banging. He came out and that's when the message came through saying there was no one on the 6th floor. Then we just carried on with the hose. We got the jet with the branch from the 6th floor to the 9th floor. We was working a long time in there. Pat GOLDBOURNE was with us on the stairwell and he said "everyone out. You need to cool down you are all tired and you are all inhaling too much smoke. Please leave."

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We made it outside and that was it really, we was sat on a wall outside and cooled down. There was definitely fire on the higher floors coming down to maybe the 9th floor. I don't think there was any fire below that but I can't remember. I was exhausted and tired and we were just watching people coming out. People were still getting taken to the LAS. It was day light by then so that was strange. From going in when it was dark and then to come out — it was a bit surreal. We see the Chinese guy, who was on the news, we see him come out. He is quite recognisable from when I watched the news afterwards. Me, crew manager MCGEE and John ALDRIDGE stayed outside for about 45 minutes and then we walked over to the ramp and we stayed there. There were people queueing up. We had cooled down by now. We decided to queue up again to see if we could help in anyway. We went inside and we wasn't needed. So we went out. We walked round to the east side and we went in through the east side to see if they needed our help and they didn't so we picked up our sets and heading out from the east side. You could see the top of the tower and there was no fire at that point it was all black. There was an aerial and it wasn't being used.

We were told to change our cylinders and take some of the empty cylinders and then our officer turned up. I don't know if he was got by Crew Manager MCGEE or if he just turned up. we did out fire ground A tests and change our cylinders and then we headed over to the Sally Army van to get a drink and that was it.

There was a bit of time and we saw the chief so we were talking to her. Our officer came and said we could go. So we headed back down to our appliance which hadn't move. Our officer said we had to go to Paddington to do our notes. I have no idea that the time was but it was hot and sunny. Got back to Whitechapel at about half 3 in the afternoon. I slept at the station. Me, Al, John and the governor just went on duty at 8 o'clock.

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