

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: OGDEN, RICK

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 6 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: RICHARD HOWES OGDEN

Date: 05/07/2017

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

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This statement is in relation to the fire at Grenfell Tower in the borough of Westminster, London that started on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I work for the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and have been employed by them for 17 years. My current position is the Borough Commander for the borough of Westminster in London. I have been in the position for the last six years. For the last three months however, I have been acting as the deputy Assistant Commissioner which came to an end on 4th July 2017.

For the purpose of the fire at Grenfell Tower my role was Operational Commander for the incident. I am responsible to answer to the Assistant Commissioner. In my role as Operational Commander I am responsible for the running of the whole operations on the ground of the incident, including all personnel on the fire ground, all tactics that the fire fighters deploy and their actions. The overall responsibility is for the resolution of the incident we are faced. The incident Commander for the fire was Andy ROE.

Prior to the incident at Grenfell Tower, I have never been to this location previously or do I have any knowledge of any incidents at this location before the fire on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I have drawn a sketch of the flats and I exhibit this as RHO/1 This shows the tower in the centre of the picture. To the left hand side bottom of the flip chart drawing is the leisure centre. In between the leisure centre and the flats is an aerial fire engine. This is the location of

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where it was situated due to the only access point to the flats. To the right of the drawing were other residential flats. The left of the flats is a bridge and then a tube station above it. At the top of the picture shows the A40 main road that passes close by.

On Wednesday 14th June 2017 I was at home when received a pager message to request fire commanders to re call to duty. This was approximately 0430 hours. I responded that I was available to attend the incident. the message was that there was a 'forty pump fire'. I was then at 0540 hours told to stand down then some 4 minutes later was requested again to attend. I checked Sky news at this point to see if there was anything that was being reported already. I then saw the scenes on-line relating to the Grenfell Tower fire. [REDACTED] and then made my way on blue lights straight to the scene from the Battersea area to North Kensington area.

It was daylight at this time. As I approached I could see the scene and that Grenfell Tower was still alight internally and was heavily smoke logged. I could see that the fire was still in progress. I got dressed into my appropriate uniform and made my way to the R V point on Ladbroke Grove. At the RV point I met with the fire Commissioner Dany COTTON. The atmosphere there was of a sombre mood.

I was briefed of the situation and what had taken place already. There was little information around the number of casualties at this stage. I was told that there were approximately four person that had jumped from the flats and were outside on the ground of the scene.

A decision to make a press release was being organised and I assisted Commissioner Dany COTTON with this. Initially it was thought to make a joint statement with the police and London Ambulance Service however there were not the appropriate ranking officers present. The first press release was delivered by Commissioner Dany COTTON.

The command unit for London Fire Brigade was set up close by to the scene. The overnight command was led by Commander Andy ROE. I was appointed as the Operation Commander for the incident. I took over this responsibility around 0700-0730 hours the same day from Commander Andy O-LOUGHLIN. The functions lead at this time was Deputy Commander Lee DRAWBRIDGE. The group commander was Greg ASHMAN who advised on fire survival guidance. There were many other officers present covering other roles and these will be listed on the LFB incident log.

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I then commenced a walk of the grounds and footprint of the building with Andy O-LOUGHLIN before he left who fully appraised me of the current situation. I was told that the fire had started in a flat on the fourth floor and was due to a fridge catching on fire. When Andy stepped down and the responsibility was handed to me this was added to the LFB incident log. As I approached the building I could see lots of debris on the ground around the flats. At the time I was not sure exactly what this was but later knew most of it was the cladding that had been placed on the outside of the flats. I entered the building and went up to the fourth or fifth floor where the bridge head was being held. The bridge head is where the holding point is for the fire fighters to go to as this is away from the fire and they feed in from here towards the fire. The fire had spread from the fourth floor and gone up to the sixth then the eighth floor. There were approximately fifty fire fighters all rigged and with breath apparatus to enter the building and be able to move around the building. The bridge head did move up to the seventh floor but became too dangerous and so was moved back down to the fourth floor for fire fighter safety.

Frustration from the fire fighters was shown as they were struggling to progress further up the buildings. This was due to several reasons including that each floor had so many individual fires on that these were taking time to out and causing heavy smoke making it difficult to see. The gas mains were still on and were alight. There were issues with having the gas supply to the cut off in the area. This prolonged the situation and kept the fire alight in the building. There was gas supply to each flat in the building that I am aware of. There were five water hoses on each floor. It became apparent the stairs were becoming difficult to use due to the 'spaghetti' of the hoses on the stairs and the sheer amount of water going down the stairs. The water was like a rapid. Two of branch link hoses had burst.

There was an aerial engine present that was situated closest to the leisure centre side of Grenfell Tower. This was able to service water up towards the 12th or 13th floor. This engine was from Surrey. The aerial was placed there as there was no other access for it or another engine to go any other sides of the flats.

Searches of the building had begun and rechecking of each flat to be sure of causalities and identifying any fatalities that were visually possible. I requested the rechecking of the flats as I was not satisfied that

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each flat had been thoroughly checked due to the difficult conditions that the fire-fighters had been exposed to working in. There were issues from the sixth floor up as there still fires to put out. The bridgehead moved up to the seventh floor at one point. I was present and also checked every flat myself. Due to the damage of the doors or in most case they had completed burnt off, I was unable to say which flats I went in and saw bodies in.

The water dry risers were not working, so I made the decision to use the portable light weight pumps and used these to pump water to the higher floors. As I was walking through the building I came across fatalities on the stairs. I recall seeing a person melted on the 10th floor. I also recall seeing a big lady in a flat I believe this is the same female that had been identified and has been shown in the media lots. On scene were also the Disaster Victim Identification manager who was dealing with the process of body recovery from the building.

Around 1600 hours the same day, I made the decision to switch the water off in order to re map the hoses into the building for a more efficient way to fight the fires that were still in progress. All of the hoses were pulled out and the relayed inside along the stair wells. This process took approximately an hour to complete. Having completed this this allowed the fire fighter to progress forward up the building. It was at this point it was accepted that there was no savable life left in the building due to the huge scale and spread of the fire. With the hoses now back inside the building and the water switched back on, good progress was being made.

From walking through the building it was not clear to me that I could see any signs of emergency lighting present. I don't not believe that the building was fitted with a sprinkler system and did not have a central alarm system. Where there should have been fire doors these were completely burnt off in places. This could be due to various reasons i.e. other resident leaving them open for other thinking they were being helpful to others. It could also be down to the type of material or the intensity of the fire. There was approximately 2 foot of plaster, rubble and debris in each flat.

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There was a changeover of fire fighters around 1700 hours. I was called around this time by the Bridgehead Commander Neil CHISOLM as he was concerned about the building as there were noises, bangs and the building was shaking. I entered the building myself and experienced this too. I heard around 10-15 loud bangs. There were concerns around the integrity of the building and a structural engineer was called. At this point I made an assessment that the fires were not able to all be put out, the building had all been searched to the twenty third floor with multiple fatalities found and there was no sign of savable life. Based on this I ordered a tactical withdrawal and evacuated the building. I informed the Assistant Commissioner - Dom ELLIS of this decision. There was a further half an hour wait until 1800 hours when myself, Assistant Commissioner Dom ELLIS, his staff officer and Darren MUNROE entered the building and then made a detailed top to toe search of every flat. The lifts to the flats were also checked and they were found to be empty.

On the twentieth floor I came across a family I believe mum with a baby in her arms, dad and a teenager. Their bodies intact and I believe they must have been over come by fumes. One person was still holding onto the stairs hand rail. I was told later that the loud bangs were refurbs where the building expands and the contracts and the ceiling joists were breaking.

Around 7pm that same day a further assessment was made that the teams could go back in only for specific tasks. There was also at this time a team debrief to all personal present. Some crews were dismissed and new fresh crews were called on duty. The numbers of crews were reduced from the numbers that had already been on duty.

At 2030 hours I briefed the Deputy Assistant Commissioner Wayne BROWN of the current situation. I stood down and Wayne took over command at this point. At 2130 hours I left the scene and went home. I did not have any direct contact with any members of the public during this incident. Any injuries I had I have reported to the health and safety team within LFB.

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Statement of: OGDEN, RICK

Form MG11(T)

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I made notes on the day and I exhibit them as my original notes as RHO/2. I have not been in the possession of my original notes with me at the time of making this statement. I made the notes the evening of 14th June 2017 when I returned home after booking off duty.

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