

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: GONZALEZ, RUSSELL

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 8 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 GONZALEZ

Date: 02/03/2018

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

This statement is about the night I attended a fire at Grenfell Tower in Kensington and Chelsea, London on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

In this statement I will be referring to the following people; Watch Manager Steve COLLINS, Crew Manager Phil WIGLEY, Firefighter Martin GILLAM, Firefighter Andy HARRIS, Firefighter Dean ROBERTS, Firefighter Steve MILLS and Firefighter Geoff CAMPBELL.

I will also mention Grenfell Tower which is located in North Kensington which is an area not covered by Paddington Fire Station. I made notes back at Paddington Fire Station after leaving the incident.

I am a serving Firefighter with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and I have been serving in this position for the past six (6) years. My training level is competent and I am stationed at Paddington fire station where I am currently on the Red Watch. I have been at Paddington since June 2016. Prior to this I was posted to Chelsea and had been stationed there back in 2011.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017 I was on a night duty shift which started at 2000 hours. Upon coming on duty Role call took place which is where the watch manager or crew manager call out the duties for that shift and on this particular night I was riding in the back of the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) and I was told this by Watch manager Steve COLLINS who was in charge of the whole of the Red watch. Also with me was Firefighter Dean ROBERTS who was driving, Crew manager Phil WIGLEY and riding in the back with

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me was Firefighter Martin GILLAM and Firefighter Andy HARRIS. The FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) is a separate fire engine. It doesn't occupy a pump or a ladder. It would only go out to an eight (8) pump fire and when this does happen the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) comes part of the predetermined attendance. This would be as a safety measure as with EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) it provides longer breathing capability than the standard Breathing Apparatus. Whilst there may be an eight (8) pump fire the officer in charge can make the decision that the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) is not needed and therefore it can be stood down from the incident however the incident is a Road Traffic Collision then the FRU would go by default. The FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) has specialist equipment for incidents like Road traffic collisions. It stores the EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing) apparatus sets as well as line rescue kits.

In order to ride the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) a separate course must be completed therefore I have completed the Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus course and a Fire Rescue Unit course which was four (4) weeks.

Whilst I was riding the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) there was also a Pump and a pump ladder in operation from Paddington on the night. Both are standard Fire engines but the only slight difference is that one carries a slightly bigger ladder. Our final machine is the turn table ladder which is another specialist machine. This occupies a 30-meter ladder.

The night duty shift would normally finish at 0930 hours. Upon coming on duty I checked and tested my BA (Breathing Apparatus) set which is something that is routinely done. I then had something to eat before going to bed at around midnight. I remember being woken up with the shout at around 0110 hours as the Pump and the Turn Table Ladders were mobilised first. Around five (5) minutes later the Pump Ladder and the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) were then also mobilised. The way that we are mobilised is that the lights come on and the call signs are called over the tannoy system. The FRU (fire Rescue Unit) call sign was A216. There is also a music tone that sounds. Prior to the shout I believe the shift was pretty quiet and there was not much going on. Information relating to the call is on the tele printer and this is obtained by going to the watch room. On the sheet would be all the details relating to the incident. So the address and what type of incident it is. This information would also be on the MDT (mobile data terminal) which is on the fire engine. Usually it would be the driver or the duty person who would go to the watch room to get this information. There is one duty person for each watch on a shift and they are responsible for going to the watch room and ripping off the sheet and liaising with the driver about the incident and how to get there. The duty person would usually ride in the back of the pump ladder. I

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cannot recall who provided the FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) with the details on the night. I simply came down the pole and got onto the Fire engine. Firefighter Dean ROBERTS would have been in the watch room as he was driving on the night so along with Firefighter Steve MILLS who was driving the pump ladder I believe they would have been working out the routes together.

Upon getting on the fire engine I was wearing Fire boots, leggings, tunic, smoke hood, helmet and gloves. I was also in possession of a radio torch. The BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets are stored in a locker behind us on the fire engine so there is no way of getting them until we arrive at the incident. I was informed that we were going to a high rise fire. I could hear over the radio control requesting more and more resources. We proceeded out of Paddington Fire Station behind the Pump Ladder as this is the formation in which we drive. I know we initially took the route from the Harrow Road but I cannot remember the route after this. Whilst on route I believe there had been some confusion as we had been stood down from the incident which didn't seem right so we pulled over on the Harrow Road and Crew Manager Phil WIGLEY spoke with Watch Manager COLLINS who was in charge of our pump ladder via the hand held radio who said he didn't think we were needed. We had been deleted from the incident which meant we lost all information relating to the incident on our MDT (Mobile data terminal). The pump ladder continued to the incident whilst we waited about three (3) minutes before it was confirmed by the control that we were in fact needed so we proceeded to the incident which took around fifteen (15) minutes including the brief stop.

On approaching the incident and from around several hundred meters away the fire was extremely visible. The fire was to the exterior of Grenfell Tower and whilst I couldn't see the whole tower I was able to see a large chunk of it on one face. The fire was on multiple floors and it was not how I would expect a fire to typically behave. There were a lot of flames visible. I had never seen a fire like that before. The flames were going up in a diagonal line from left to right. I remember thinking to myself "Oh my god. Why is it burning like this"? It seemed weird how it had spread so high so quickly. Usually you would expect to see one (1) floor alight and maybe the floor above but not as many as it was here. I had never been to Grenfell Tower and I had no prior knowledge of it.

The radio channel was extremely busy and more and more resources were being requested. We went on the make pumps eight (8) but by the time we got there it had gone up to make pumps twenty-five (25).

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We drove along Bramley Road passing Latimer Road Tube Station before turning left into Whitchurch Road where Firefighter n ROBERTS had problems getting round due to the tight space further along. Some cars were double parked and as a result some cars were having to be pushed out of the way so that our Fire Engine could get around a corner. Firefighters GILLAM and HARRIS got out of the Fire Engine to assist with Firefighter ROBERTS who was doing a god job in fitting through such tight spaces. Once we managed to get through we turned left at the end of the road parking the fire engine further along the road past Treadgold Street and Bomore Road. I have marked the point in which we parked with a 1 on a map that I exhibit as RJG/1.

On arrival Crew Manager Phil WIGLEY instructed the rest of us to stay put whilst he went to find an officer in charge who would be able to provide us with further instructions. Usually the officer in charge of a high rise incident would be outside the incident monitoring whilst a Crew Manager would be inside monitoring. The incident commander who would be a Watch manager initially but when it gets to an eight (8) pump fire a station manager would take over however I was not aware if he or she was there yet. The station manager would get called to the incident via a pager or radio as the station managers work different shifts at various locations. They would also drive themselves to an incident in a car. A white tabard with Incident Commander written on the back should also be worn by the person in charge. Since the incident I have been told that Watch Manager DOWDEN from North Kensington Fire Station was the initial incident commander.

Whilst waiting to be detailed I noticed some Firefighters attempting to supply G272 with water from a hydrant. I went over to the hydrant that was unattended to find that someone had already inserted a double headed stand pipe and hydrant key. I attempted to flush the hydrant but it was not functioning correctly. There seemed to be only a slight trickle of water coming out and not even close to what would be required to supply us. I removed the hydrant key and looked into the hydrant pit where it became apparent that the spindle was broken. I went to the nearest fire appliance to get a full spindle and returned to the pit and inserted it however the key would not go into the full spindle so I checked the bottom of the key and the other half of the original spindle was stuck in it. I returned to the same appliance and got another hydrant key where with the new key and full spindle I was able to supply G272 which was pumping water to A213 which is Paddington's turntable ladder. I confirmed with the pump operator that he was ready to receive water before turning on the hydrant.

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Crew Manager Phil WIGLEY returned and by this point some of the crew had their kits on. I was slightly behind as I had been assisting with the broken hydrant. I remember asking Crew Manager Phil WIGLEY what our brief was. He informed us that our instruction was to put our EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing) sets on and take the line gear which consists of various different ropes, a Quadra which controls the ropes, carabineer clips and edge protection which reduces friction. We also had three (3) maybe four (4) lengths of hose. I personally was carrying one of the bags which contained the line equipment and it was extremely heavy. I would say that it weighed around fifteen (15) to twenty (20) kilograms. This was as well as our kit which weighs around twenty-two (22) kilograms. So in total I was carrying between forty (40) to fifty (50) kilograms. It was tough carrying it as it kept slipping off due to my EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing) set which also rests on my back. In the end I just dragged the bag. We were to then get to the roof of the tower via the stairs. We were to try and do this without using the air in the sets as we needed to save as much air as we can. It was believed at this stage that the stairwell was safe and hadn't been compromised. I had never been asked to do this before and I doubt I'll get asked again but the turn table ladder didn't reach high enough so a decision was made for us to do it.

Once we get to the roof we were to set up a safe system of work with a line system using ropes to secure ourselves. This system would be employed to make it impossible for someone within it to fall from the edge of the buildings roof. It would be controlled by another Firefighter who would be able to prevent them going beyond a safe point of work. We were then to apply water to the exterior of the tower to try and Fire Fight and stop the fire spreading. This was not a normal task in fire high-rise fires but this was someone thinking outside the box.

I put my breathing apparatus on and amongst the Firefighters in the crew we carried about four (4) bags full of line equipment. Hoses and branches were also amongst the equipment. We carried this from the truck to the tower. We entered the Tower through the main entrance which had large glass panels and the fire was around the other side at this point. Access to the tower didn't appear to be difficult. I was walking briskly due to the falling debris. Upon entering the tower, we walked up a flight of stairs to a men zine level and the main staircase could be accessed from here. This is also where a number of officers were. We confirmed with the officers what our brief was and as we weren't going under air at this point we didn't have to book in. The officers knew that we were coming up and allowed us access to the staircase.

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We proceeded up the staircase which was small and tight. I would say that it just about wide enough for two (2) people to stand side by side. There were lifts in the building but they were out of use. The first few floors were fine, there were no issues with breathing however upon getting up to maybe 5th floor it became smoke logged. This was the same with Visibility. It started Ok but as we proceeded up it started to get worse. There was no way without air we would be able to proceed and we just weren't going to breath the smoke in. At this point someone in the crew who I cannot remember made the decision to leave all equipment there whilst we went back downstairs to book in under correct procedure. This meant putting our BA (Breathing Apparatus) masks on and going under air before going back up the stairs and picking the equipment up from where we left it and continue our route up to the roof. We would not be able to put our EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing) sets on where we were as entry control wouldn't have known where we were and we would not be safe. This would have been too far against procedure. We were earlier advised to try and get to the roof without the use of air but we quickly realised that this wasn't possible. I would say that the time at this point was around 0200 hours.

The entry control point was in the lobby area on the third floor and there appeared to be around ten (10) Firefighters present. There were two (2) officers who were trying to get some sort of control of the situation. It seemed like the two (2) officers there were being overloaded with information and needed help. It is the entry control officers job to book in the Firefighters who have gone in under air using their relevant Breathing Apparatus sets. Initially the Fire fighter would approach the entry control officer without their face mask on and tell them the brief that they have been given. Once it has been confirmed that they understand the brief and their call sign is established then the time is also established which will show the time of entry. The person in a crew with the lowest amount of time left on their BA (Breathing Apparatus) will determine when that crew come out. The amount of time will be worked out for everyone in the crew but it is the person with the least amount of air that the crew will work from. This is done by a 'Tallie' which is put into the entry control board and makes a wireless connection with the BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets. The entry control board would also state the call sign and the brief so it is clear which fire fighters are conducting which jobs. This makes things safe and allows the Firefighters to be accounted for. If for whatever reason there are issues, then there are various ways in which entry control can alert each Firefighter. One is by calling up on the radio and another would be by using the entry control boards withdraw button which would activate an alarm on the BA (Breathing Apparatus) wearers set.

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Upon making our way up the staircase we as a crew of five (5) still and we picked up the kit that we had left earlier. The visibility was poor as we continued up and the temperature was hot. This was between the 4th and the 7th floors. Visibility did get better as we moved further up so it was clear that the floors we had just passed were the fire floors. We passed another crew from Paddington Fire Station who were rescuing casualties. They had put breathing apparatus on the casualties and were walking down the stairs. I believe that the casualties were a woman and a child however I didn't really register at the time. All Fire fighters had their BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets on. After the incident I was made aware that the sets were brought from the entry control point up to the flat where the woman and child were. This isn't something that is usually done or taught but in the circumstances someone who I don't know made the decision to allow the woman and child to use the masks so that they wouldn't breath in the smoke. It was assessed in the same way that we also did not want to be on the staircase without the masks.

The staircase was extremely small which meant the area was congested. Once we had passed the crews we continued up the stairs where the temperature seemed hot. We then came across Firefighter CAMPBELL and Firefighter MILLS who are also based at Paddington. They informed us they had both been running low on air after being instructed to go and rescue a female from either the 20th or 21st floor. Due to the lack of air they were not able to complete the task so had make their way back down. Had they carried on then they would have compromised themselves. Keeping in mind the conditions that both Firefighter Geoff CAMPBELL and Firefighter Steve MILLS had faced we continued up. It was extremely tough going. Exhausting work. The BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets weighed around 22kg and we were also carrying various bits of equipment. We reached approximately the 16th floor where a decision was made to leave the equipment in situ due to the conditions being extremely tough. I was tired and felt like we weren't going to get anywhere by carrying the heavy equipment. We made a decision as a crew of five (5) to search for the casualty Firefighter MILLS and Firefighter CAMPBELL had told us about. The first I saw of the woman she was slumped against the wall between the 21st and 22nd floors. I believe she had made herself known to my colleagues ahead of me Firefighter ROBERTS and Firefighter GILLAM by exiting a communal area on the way up.

At the same time, we shouted "Fire Brigade. Fire Brigade" trying to alert any other potential residents but nobody made themselves known to us. The woman who we had located was very small in size and was wearing a hijab. I didn't get a great look at her but would say she was maybe late thirties. She was conscious and breathing. Firefighter Martin GILLAM was talking with her a lot. She stated to him that

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she was too scared to walk so he initially put her on his shoulders but after a while Firefighter Dean ROBERTS assisted as after carrying all the equipment it would have been too much hard work for Firefighter Martin GILLAM to carry her alone. I then assisted by carry her legs and we all escorted her down the stairs. To protect her from any smoke inhalation someone took her hijab off and put it around her face. We decided to carry her out and upon making our way down the conditions further down seemed to have deteriorated a lot. Really thick black smoke and the temperature seemed to get hotter and hotter. The woman went unconscious and was also vomiting just before we got to the real hot floors and I remember thinking to myself that these conditions are hot for me and I'm wearing the protective clothing so what must they be like for her but the only way to help her was for us to keep going and get her out. It was so hot that I could feel the heat on the back of my neck through my smoke hood.

We got past the hot floors and the conditions seemed to get better and lighter from the stairwell lighting. I did not hear any fire alarms or notice any sprinklers. We managed to get to the Mezzanine level where Firefighter Martin GILLAM and Firefighter Dean ROBERTS carried her out where they began working on her. I said to Firefighter Andy HARRIS that we needed to get our BA (Breathing Apparatus) Tallies so that entry control know that we had come out of the tower and didn't think that we were still making our way up to the roof. Within this time, I am aware that the female did regain consciousness.

From here we reconvened as a crew in an undercover area near to the dustbins. We were all pretty exhausted by this point. I remember trying to gather my thoughts and process what had just gone on. I also saw a lot of people being carted out of the building and relayed to the LAS. (London Ambulance Service). Firefighter Martin GILLAM and Firefighter Dean ROBERTS also joined us after handing over the female casualty to the LAS (London Ambulance Service). We gave them their Tallies at this point also. I remember looking around at everyone and seeing how exhausted everyone looked. We had all worked extremely hard and as a Firefighter it was the hardest I have worked. The time at this point was around 0230 hours. Whilst resting I was able to get a clear look at the tower and I would describe the change as drastic. It had got worse and worse.

We then picked up our equipment and kits and made our way to the area near the leisure centre which became a holding area to see if there were any jobs other than BA (Breathing Apparatus) that could be done and whilst we were here there was also a discussion about getting new cylinders for our BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets. I knew deep down that I was too tired but I was keen to just get back inside and help as from seeing the conditions inside I knew that there would be people inside who needed

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rescuing. The FRU (Fire Rescue Unit) doesn't carry spare cylinders as you would only wear EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) once usually but because of what was going on and the limited amount of EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) crews it seemed like we may have needed more but we were told that more EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) crews were on their way so we were told to rest and recover.

At this point three (3) of us went off to find some jobs and help so I went with Firefighter Dean ROBERTS and Firefighter Martin GILLAM and we were relaying FSG (Fire Survival Guidance) calls to the Bridgehead. FSG (Fire Survival Guidance) is when control is talking to people in the building on the phone and they are relaying the information to the fire grounds. There was a Watch Manager and Firefighter present and near to them were bins with sheets and sheets of paper on top. We were given the pieces of paper with the floor and flat numbers as well as the amount of people in the flats and were taking the pieces of paper to the Bridgehead where they could be given to Firefighters to go and try and get those residents out. I was back and forth acting as a runner for a while. I have never been involved in that sort of work before but at the time I felt that whilst it was a small job I was assisting with the flow of communication. I felt that the Watch manager and Firefighter were doing phenomenal work as they were receiving a large volume of information. I cannot remember how long I was doing this for but after a while I went back to the crew where I was told that more EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) crews had arrived as well as more sets and cylinders which was good because the one that I had been assigned for the night had gone. Someone had obviously needed one and decided to take mine.

The new cylinders arrived in a large container which is something I have never seen before. They did not work initially. The digital gauge on them wasn't working which meant you couldn't tell how much air you had in them. The person who was in charge of this had to go and get batteries from SDBA (Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus) sets and put them in the new sets giving them power. EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) and SDBA (Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus) use the same batteries. Once this issue was sorted and the new sets were built we waited for ages and by this time it was around three (3) or four (4) hours since we first went in so all five (5) of us were ready to go back in. A Station manager in charge of BA (Breathing Apparatus) and who I have never met before stated to us that Fresh wearers were requested and were to go in as a priority over Firefighters who have already been in. It was a fair and logical decision but I was still adamant to get back inside. We were instructed to get more rest.

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After about an hour we decided that we had rested enough so we went around to the other side of the building near to the park where the BA (Breathing Apparatus) wearers were waiting. We waited for a further half an hour and by this point it was daylight. At this point SDBA (Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus) crews were being used on the lower floors and the EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) crews were being used for the upper floors from around the 10th floor up. We sat on the salvage sheet for a while before being called. We went into the building under the shields being used by the riot police to protect us from any falling debris. Upon getting inside the building we waited by an internal waiting area which was by the lifts. Someone had got chairs so I sat down. There were a few crews from Paddington, Wimbledon and Battersea. We waited for about half an hour before going to the Bridgehead which was now by the main entrance. Firefighters Dean ROBERTS, Martin GILLAM and Crew Manager Phil WIGLEY went off. I am not sure if they were together but Fire Fighter Andy HARRIS and I stayed together. We were deployed after the others and we were deployed with two (2) Firefighters from Wimbledon who I didn't know.

Once at the Bridgehead we noticed a green wall which had a lot of writing all over it. We received a brief which was to go and assist with rescuing an Asian male from the 11th floor. Myself, Andy and two Firefighters from Wimbledon went to assist a crew of four (4) who we saw on either the 7th or 8th floor. They were bringing the male down at this point so I said to them "Do you need any help?" to which they replied "No". The male was walking down unaided and the smoke didn't seem to be too bad. There was a lot of water everywhere and I believe that this was due to a hose bursting as it was gushing out to the point that it was enough to knock you to the side. The hose was running vertically up the centre of the staircase and the water was projecting out horizontally across the stairs causing a lot of problems. It was adding to the difficulties in this area caused by congestion. I couldn't say definitively where that hose was coming from, It would have been a dry riser outlet on one of the floors or may have been from a fire engine outside which would have run in and up. It doesn't happen regularly but it is not uncommon for hose to burst. This wasn't the only hose on the stairwell either. There seemed to be hose all over the place. I couldn't say where it was going or where it had been coming from. There was a huge difference in the amount of hose and equipment that was on the stairs now compared to the first time I went in the tower however. The temperature wasn't as hot as the first time I went in to the tower and the visibility had improved. There was a lot less smoke and this part of the stairs did not seem as affected as much now possibly because the fire had ventilated itself.

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We carried on up to a floor I cannot remember but Firefighter Andy HARRIS's DSU (Distress Signal Unit) was going off on his BA (Breathing apparatus) however due to the noise from the water in the tower along with other crews going passed he couldn't actually hear the warning beeps until the full alarm began to sound. This was due to him standing still for too long. Once the full alarm sounds the set cannot be reset manually so we left the two (2) from Wimbledon and made our way back down to the entry control point. The two (2) fire fighters insisted on proceeding up the tower. Upon getting back down to the entry control point a key was put into Andy's BA (Breathing Apparatus) set in order to reset it. The key is attached to the Tallie which was in the entry control board. We were then able to be redeployed back into the tower as we still had quite a lot of air. Prior to going back up we did also let the entry control officer know that we were now two (2) crews of two (2) as opposed to one (1) crew of four (4). Whilst at entry control we were told of a large male casualty on the tenth floor which was actually a female. She was unfortunately dead but due to it being impossible to move her she became a landmark on the stairs.

We proceeded back up until we came across a 'bottle neck' situation on the tenth floor due to the large amount of hose and large female casualty on the stairwell. The female appeared to be tangled within the hose. Some Firefighters were attempting to move her whilst other crews were trying to get passed her to achieve their briefs. As a team Firefighter Andy Harris and I felt that we were just getting in the way especially as we didn't have a specific brief at this point. We weren't any use and there wasn't much we could do. At this point our air was beginning to run low so we decided to turn around and go back down.

When we got back down to entry control we booked out and took our Tallies out of the entry control board. Having gone in for a second time I would say that the entry control was lot more organised. There was a Watch Manager operating the entry control board. There was also a Group Manager or a Deputy Assistant Commissioner Committing Firefighters. The area in which they were set up was a lot bigger and with the extra officers they were able to get hold of what was going on.

Upon coming out of the tower we went back over by the Leisure Centre where re-joined our crew from Paddington and it must have been around 0800-0900 hours. I noticed that there were still pockets of fire in flats. It wasn't as bad as it had been in the earlier hours of the morning. It did seem like the bulk and worst of the fire was over. We were able to go and grab a cup of tea and a bite to eat. I was not involved in anything else Fire fighting wise after this. After roughly an hour or so there seemed to be a discussion about us being released from the incident. We were finally released from the incident by the

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Commissioner Dany COTTON but due a fire engine breaking down and so many fire engines being at the incident it caused a lot of obstruction and our fire engine was so far penned in that we had to give the keys to one of the command units before the police escorted us back to Paddington where we completed our notes. We arrived back at Paddington Fire Station at around 1130 to 1200 hours. Amongst the large amount of Fire Fighters that were here there was also councillors offering support. I personally didn't speak to a councillor but did complete my notes.

In terms of my training for High Rise Incidents I am involved in a number of drills conducted at Paddington Fire Station and this was the case when I was based at Chelsea. We have a dry riser built into the training tower at Paddington which replicates a High Rise incident and we do the drills at least once maybe twice a month. I also received training on high rise incidents at training school at Morton in the Marsh when I was a recruit. I have also been involved in training where covers are put over our masks to replicate working in darkness. Those drills are not so regular as they are held at an external venue. The last time was probably over a year ago. Prior to Grenfell Tower I had been to a few high rise fires so when the information came through on the sheet I was confident in going. In this part of London there are a lot of high rise buildings so it wasn't uncommon. I wasn't however expecting to use EDBA (Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus) as this doesn't happen very often.

On the night there was difficulty with the use of the radios as there was a lot of traffic. Due to the dynamics of the building we weren't getting much signal higher up.

I am aware that the stay put policy is a huge topic from the night of the fire and my understanding of it is that if someone is not directly affected by a fire or the smoke then they would be told to stay where they are whilst we as fight the fire. If there was a whole building empty in a normal high rise building it would impede our firefighting. That is the logic behind it. I do remember on the night in the period between I went in for the first time and prior to going in for the second time that someone over the radio did make the decision for all residents to self-evacuate. I am not sure however who made that decision.

The command unit will attend the scene of a significant fire where there a people involved and where we are receiving a high volume of calls. The command units are also there to support the officers in charge. On the night I had one (1) maybe two (2) interactions with the command units and this was when I was acting as a runner in relation to the FSG (Fire Survival Guidance) calls.

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The Fire on the night was so huge that I don't believe there could have been anything more or better that we could have done. I also believe that in terms of equipment there wasn't anything that could have stopped that fire. A larger Turn Table ladder may have assisted but I doubt that would have even made much of a difference.

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