

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: DOUNIAS, STEPHEN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 9 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: S DOUNIAS

Date: 30/01/2018

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.

I am a serving Fire Fighter with London Fire Brigade (LFB) and I have been serving in this position since 2010. My training level is competent. I am assigned to West Hampstead fire station and the code for this station is A41 . I have been at West Hampstead fire station since 2011 . Prior to working here I was based at Ruislip fire station for eight (8) months and was posted there after I completed my training at Southwark in the training school. I am currently assigned to Red Watch and on the night of the fire I was posted as driver to fire engine A412 which is a Pump.

In this statement I will mention my colleagues on A412 who are Acting Crew Manager (CM) Martin HOARE who would have sat in the front passenger seat, Fire Fighter (FF) Matt TANNER and FF Carl CLARKE in the back. On Tuesday 13th June 2017, I was driving the engine. We all usually work together on Red Watch. Where people sit within the engine determines their role. The driver usually drives and is the pump operator. The two outside riders in the back will be the BA wearers. This is determined at the start of the shift during a role call so everyone knows what they are doing. On the night of this incident, I think that this was Carl's first (1st) ever night shift and I think that this was the first (1st) fire he had been to.

The number of people we had on our engine that night was the minimum number that you can use and ideally you would have additional resources to deploy within the engine. On the pump ladder were Acting

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Watch Manager (WM) Greg YEOMAN, FF Brian FLANAGAN (who I think was driving), New Recruit Anthony NELSON and FF Luke COOK who is a recruit that has been with us for about three (3) months. I will also mention Grenfell Tower which is located in North Kensington which is close to our station though not covered by West Hampstead. I have exhibited a map Grenfell Tower and the surrounding area of it. I have exhibited this as SJD/2 and will refer to this throughout my statement.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017, I started work early after relieving a colleague from Blue Watch at about half past six (1830 hours) who needed to leave early to look after his children. At the start of every shift, I complete a number of checks on the equipment I may need during the course of the shift. As driver of the engine, this meant that I had to complete checks on the pump as well which involves checking that there is enough water in the engine, enough fuel and that all of the equipment is present. I will also check that the equipment is working. For example the branch is able to release water from the hose. The branch is the nozzle that attaches to the end of a hose and allows fire fighters to jet water out of it. I then checked that my personal breathing apparatus (BA) set was working correctly. This started with a visual check, ensuring that the mask had not received any damage and the cylinder cover is not damaged etc. I will usually check that there is enough air in the cylinder and that it is functioning correctly. I took the tally and put my name on it. The tally is unique to this BA set and if you are required to enter a fire wearing your BA set, you hand your tally to an entry control officer who records fire fighters entering and exiting the fire. All of these checks take about five (5) minutes to complete.

My name should also be added to the nominal role board by the duty room controller who is like the secretary for the watch that shift. I usually check that this has been done as well. The nominal role board is like a register of who is riding on that appliance. This is handed to whoever is in charge at an incident so that they know who is on scene and what resources they have available to them to deploy.

Once all of the kit has been checked and we have confirmed it is working we are on standby and ready to respond to any calls that may come in to us. We are usually alerted to any calls by a sound that we call "the bells" though in reality they don't actually sound like bells. This is a system that will make a very distinct noise over the sound system that is situated throughout the station. A voice will then say which call sign is required to attend. On hearing "the bells", anyone on that appliance will make their way to the watch room. In the watch room, the driver of the appliance called meets with the duty fire fighter. The duty officer will provide you with a copy of the call which details where the call is, the details of what the call is, who has called 999 etc. It should contain all of the information you need to get to a call and know

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what you will have to deal with when you get there. The call will be printed on a tele-printer and a digital copy should also be sent to our mobile data terminal (MDT) which is the computer in the appliance.

The duty fire fighter will usually have looked on a map where the call is and give you a map reference of how to get there. During the course of the night I remember that we dealt with an automated fire alarm (AFA) which is where a fire alarm is triggered automatically by a sensor and a computer then generates a call to the LFB. I think that this was about ten o'clock (2200 hours). This was a false alarm however so we returned to the station. About midnight, we attended a call to the Royal Free hospital which is on the border of our ground and also Kentish Town's ground. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Only our appliance was requested to this call so we made our way there.

As I was driving, once we were at the hospital I remained in the engine whilst the rest of the crew went in. It is often the driver's job to stay in the engine and check the MDT, keep control up to date with our status and assist the crew dealing if they need any equipment etc.

Whilst the rest of the crew were inside I monitored the radios. I had my own personal handheld radio that allowed me to communicate with the crew inside and I also had the main scheme radio that is in the engine which links directly to our control. This radio monitors numerous areas and by listening to this radio you are aware of any other incidents that may be nearby. The driver will also update control with any status updates or requests for additional units as well. Control is based in Merton in South London. They communicate with London on two (2) different radio channels. There is one (1) for the North of the Thames and another for South of the Thames.

Whilst at the hospital, the pump had status three (3) with control. The status is a way of letting control know what your crew is doing and whether they are ready for deployment. Status one (1) is when you are ready at the station. Status two (2) is when you are on route to an incident. Status three (3) is where you are on attendance at an incident. Once you have dealt with an incident, you go to status six (6) which means that you are ready for mobilising. These statuses can be notified through our radio or the mobile data terminals (MDT) in the fire engine.

When you are status three (3) you cannot be re-deployed until you have finished with that incident. The guys had been inside for about five (5) to ten (10) minutes when at about one o'clock in the morning (0100 hours) I remember that a call came out on the radio detailing a kitchen fire, make pumps four (4) which means four (4) fire engines were required to attend. I didn't hear the call signs of those required to attend. Although I wasn't sure where the fire was, I contacted Martin and let him know that there was a

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kitchen fire in progress. As he was the CM it was good practice to let him know about fires being communicated on the radio. Within one minute of me contacting Martin another announcement was made on the radio regarding the kitchen fire of make pumps six (6). I then heard that it was on North Kensington's ground so I realised that the potential for us to get called there was very high. I have then made Martin aware that the numbers of pumps going had gone up. Literally as I told Martin it went to make pumps eight (8) with two additional (2) Fire Rescue Units (FRU) requested as well. FRUs have more specialist fire fighting equipment like extended duration BA (EDBA) and different cutting gear for traffic accidents. They also have water rescue equipment as well.

I said "I don't know what is going on but it is escalating quick". Martin said ok, we're coming out now". As he said that, the call was upgraded again to make pumps fifteen (15). We were still status three (3) at this time. I then relayed the make pumps fifteen (15) message to Martin and he said that they were all on their way back to the engine now and could I send a stop code seven (7) to control and update our status to code six (6). Stop code seven (7) was a code to resolve the removal of the ring call as complete.

I was pushing status six (6) on the MDT as Martin arrived back at the engine after running out of the [REDACTED]. Martin then told me that he had just received a page requesting us to attend Grenfell Tower. I had not received a call via the MDT to attend though this could be that control were too busy to send this to us.

We then made our way on blue lights to Grenfell through Paddington. I can't remember the exact route that I took but I think it took us about seven (7) minutes to get there. There was a lot of talk on the radio as we made our way though I can't remember exactly what was said. As we got closer to the tower the chatter increased on our personal hand held radios. There was clearly a lot happening at the scene.

The route we took was through quite a built up area so I didn't see the tower or the fire until we were quite close. I remember that we turned a corner and the view in front of us opened up. Suddenly Grenfell was in front of us and everyone in the engine was shocked and someone said "oh shit, what the fuck is that". It looked surreal and like something out of a film and something that doesn't happen in real life. It completely surprised everyone and there was a feeling of disbelief. I will never forget seeing that sight. The front of this high rise building was just on fire between what looked like the fourth (4th) and twelfth (12th) floors.

The roads leading up to the tower were all blocked with other cars and fire engines that were parked and it was obvious that we wouldn't be able to get any closer. I got the fire engine as close as possible but we had to park in Dulford Street. I have marked this area with a small cross on SJD/2. For some reason I

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think we arrived at 0116 hours but I may be wrong about that. As we arrived there were a lot of people in the street, just hanging around. There seemed to be a very eerie silence in the air and I don't remember anyone talking.

We have all grabbed the equipment that we need from the engine. Martin took the nominal roll board to hand this to the officer in charge at the scene.

t be able to use it. We then made our way over to the tower. I have drawn a dotted line on SJD/2 which shows the route that we walked to reach the tower. We arrived on the green to the rear of the leisure centre after two (2) minutes. It didn't take us long to get there as we had jogged and not walked. I didn't sprint as we had all of our equipment on and I wanted to keep some energy as I knew I would more than likely be entering the tower.

As we arrived on the green by the leisure centre, we were greeted by possibly a Watch or Station Manager. I'm not sure of their rank but they were definitely wearing a white helmet. He directed us to a BA holding area that was located by an underpass by garages on Grenfell Road. I have marked this as BA on SJD/2.

In the holding area there were approximately fifteen (15) to twenty (20) other fire fighters all wearing their BA sets and waiting to go in to the tower. I remember the area being quiet and everyone being very focussed and preparing themselves for what they had to do. Often when there is a group of fire fighters together they will speak about the incident or maybe have some banter. There was none of this.

I think that we arrived in the BA holding area between 0120 and 0125 hours. I remember hearing people screaming from within the tower. I remember hearing things falling from the tower and hitting the floor. As I was stood in the BA area I looked at the East face of the tower and it was really ablaze. I could see the fire was actually moving around to the South side of the tower whilst I was looking at it. I couldn't see the other sides of the tower to know whether the fire had spread to these sides. It was crazy how quickly the fire was jumping from floor to floor. I could hear people screaming from within the tower. This was coming from the windows.

I could see that Paddington's turntable ladder (TL) was close to me and this was in use, putting water on to the building's East side. I have marked this on SJD/2 with a P. There was also another TL towards the North side of the tower which I think was from Soho but I can't be sure. I have marked this on SJD/2 as TL. Both of these looked fully extended and they looked like they were putting as much water in to the tower as they could. Unfortunately it didn't look like it was doing anything to the fire. I realised that burning bits of the building were now falling off of it and down to the ground. As I was looking out at the

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tower I think I saw someone jump from the East side and furthest away from me which was about one hundred and fifty metres (150M) from me. I only saw them out of the corner of my eye and I am fairly sure that they were falling feet first. I couldn't tell you what floor they came from and I didn't see where they landed or who went to treat them but there were other crews nearby. I remember thinking that it was just chaos there and all I could think was "what the fuck" as it was so awful.

Whilst we were there, there was a flow of people who I think were residents coming from the tower. I can't remember enough about the people coming out to describe them but I do remember how everyone coming out just looked shocked. Some were screaming and some weren't. Some were being carried out by fire fighters.

All of the fire fighters in the holding area were then asked to help move Paddington's TL further away from the building due to the amount of debris falling on it. This needed quite a bit of man power as there were a lot of charged hoses around it. A charged hose basically mean that water is flowing through it. Moving the TL took about ten (10) minutes.

Whilst I was waiting in the BA holding area, a guy came down from the top of the walkway above the garages and said that they needed help. He said that there was a woman holding a baby out of a window above the walkway. I couldn't leave Carl so a Crew Manager went with him, back up some stairs to the top of a walkway. When he came back down I could hear the CM radio through what he had seen to get fire fighters to help. I later heard that some fire fighters had been assigned to help her. I remember looking up around this time to see what the man was talking, about. I saw a woman at a window shouting out. I couldn't hear what she was shouting but she was not holding a baby. I am not sure what floor that she was on but she was at least a third of the way up the tower, maybe the eleventh (11th) floor. As she was shouting, loads of black smoke came out of the window from behind her and then it went orange with flames. I think that the room had flashed over. I could not see the woman well enough to describe her though I think she looked Mediterranean.

I was eventually moved along through the underpass opposite the tower so that we could be taken in to the lobby of the building which was on the South side of the tower. As we were walking along the underpass I remember seeing a body that I think was in two (2) pieces and covered with a plastic sheet. I'm assuming that the person had jumped from the tower but I don't know for certain what had happened to them. My mind actually turned to Carl as I remember feeling protective of him and thinking that I didn't want him to see the body so soon in to his career.

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We were asked to move forward from the underpass and in to the South lobby area by police officers that were using their riot shields to protect us from the falling debris. The lobby was a square shape and seemed to be quite open plan. There was a staircase in the middle of the room and I think that there was a door to enter it. This staircase only went up to the second (2nd) floor. Once inside there were a lot of BA wearers in the lobby. I could see people writing on the wall in Chinagraph pencil to my left as I walked in. At this point I wasn't sure what they were writing but when I later left the building I saw that it was fire survival information. This detailed flats where people were believed to be trapped inside.

I estimate that we got in to the lobby at about 0135 hours. In the lobby I think that there was a senior officer and a fire fighter. The senior officer was trying to organise the area as so many people were present. I remember him trying to get all fire fighters on one side and the LAS on another to help people move around in the area. I do not know who the senior officer was but he was wearing a white helmet. We then joined a queue that was on the far wall of the lobby. The queue was for BA wearers waiting to go in to the tower. We were dressed in our "make ready" kit and we were ready to go. We had our whole personal protective equipment (PPE) on, our fire hood on around our neck (this is like a balaclava), helmets on, gloves on and tunics on. I also had my BA set ready and charged (ready for use). Someone told us that there was a load of breaking in equipment and we should take some. This equipment is used to help us break in to closed doors where we need to get to fire or rescue people from within. I grabbed a Halli bar to take up with me. I remember Carl was very quiet while we were waiting. I think that he was in shock as this was his first (1st) ever fire so I told him to stay close to me. I didn't feel there was a lot more that I could do or say to him. I remember the lobby being clear of smoke but you could smell it. I couldn't say whether the smell came from the atmosphere within the tower or whether this was from crews or the residents that were coming out of the fire and transferring the smell to the lobby. The lobby didn't feel that hot and was a normal heat for the time of day. As you looked out of the windows in the lobby I could see bits of the tower falling to the floor. I said to Carl or someone that I was surprised that the window hadn't fallen in due to the debris hitting the floor.

We hadn't been in the queue for long when an ADO (Station Manager) told us to move up the stairs to the bridgehead. I think that we moved up to the third (3rd) floor which is where the bridgehead was. On a high rise procedure, the bridgehead is an area where the main control for committing crews to the job would be. It is normally a minimum of two (2) floors beneath the fire and where there is clear air and it is safe. Any brief that you get is usually at the bridgehead. The entry control for BA wearers is also located at the bridgehead. As you pass the entry point you hand your tally from your set to the entry control officer

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(ECO). You are then digitally linked with telemetry from the control board to your BA, I think through 4G and the telemetry can monitor how much air you have left and notify you to come out if required. They will write on the entry control board your name, call sign of the pair, what their role is and where they are assigned to go; for example the tenth (10th) floor. They basically put as much information as they can on that board about that crew. Once you have passed the entry control, you then turn the oxygen flow on to your set.

The ECO will also monitor your air so if you are getting low they will give you a ten (10) minute whistle so that you know you have used a lot of air and you have approximately ten (10) minutes left. When this whistle goes this means that you only have between twenty to thirty (20 - 30) bars left before you totally run out of air. We made our way up the flights of stairs in the lobby which was still in the open plan area with a walkway at the top. You then went through the walkway which was like a balcony to another door which opened up in to the main block and to the entry control. As we made our way up to the bridgehead there were a lot of people moving around. I think it was at this time there was a lot of shouting as a crew were coming down with a resident. I remember it being very hard to pass the other crew as we were both wearing cylinders on our backs so we couldn't turn easily and allow the other to pass due to the stairs being quite narrow.

On arrival at the bridgehead it wasn't smoky and it was as clear as the lobby and normal. There were a lot of people in there though. Before you could enter you had to wait in a line. There were at least two (2) people with entry control boards (ECB) set-up. There was a Watch Manager (WM) in charge of the area who was rushed off of her feet. I think that there was another WM and also a station manager up there as well. I have no idea what time I got to the bridgehead. Not long after we arrived at the bridgehead a fire fighter emergency was called. This means that a fire fighter is lost on a floor or they are in trouble. Martin and Matt were asked to assist with the emergency and try to find the missing fire fighter so they entered whilst Carl and I still queued. It later turned out that that fire fighter was fine and made his own way out. About five (5) minutes after the emergency had been called a fire fighter came out wearing an open breathing set and he was suffering from heat exhaustion. I don't know what happened to him after I saw him there. We had been in the bridgehead for about twenty five (25) minutes and Carl and I were close to the front of the queue to go in. The bridgehead then began to get smoke logged. This meant that it was no longer safe to operate from. A decision was made to move the bridgehead to the ground floor. Everyone grabbed hoses and other equipment and took this downstairs with us.

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Once we were back in the lobby area on the ground floor it was very busy. There were LAS in the area in case any casualties needed attention. There were Met police with their shields waiting to take people outside to other teams. There were also residents who were still being brought down. There were lots of people. Due to the bridgehead being moved from the third (3rd) floor back to the ground, we lost our place in the queue so we had to wait by the wall for our turn to enter the tower. It seemed really quiet in the lobby. There was one (1) station manager who kept shouting for people to mind their backs when other crews were coming out but other than that there wasn't a lot of noise. I think that everyone was really focussed on what they had to do. I'm not sure how long we had been waiting to go in but eventually an ADO called us forward and told me and Carl to get our sets on. I was paired with Carl. We were both briefed by a station manager who at that time was the Entry Control Officer (ECO) to go in with another crew - two fire fighters from Old Kent Road station. I don't remember their names. We were all tasked to pick up a branch from the tenth (10th) floor and take this and if necessary extend this up to the twelfth (12th) floor.

I handed my tally to the ECO and I think that my BA gauge read 290 bar which is a normal pressure to enter an incident. We went back up the same set of stairs. Once we reached where the old bridgehead had been, it seemed smoky, like a hazy morning. I don't remember it being very hot but you wouldn't have been able to be in the area without BA. As you went in to the main staircase above the bridgehead, straight away you could see that the walls were blackened and it was smoke logged with hoses everywhere and dark which made it harder to move up the stairs. The stairs were very narrow and it would have been hard for two fire fighters to stand next to each other on the stairs and if they did, the stairs would have been completely blocked. When you did see other fire fighters you had to barge past each other to get pass as there wasn't enough room for you both. As we were going up the stairs there were other crews trying to come down. Sometimes they were with casualties or just crews on their own. The higher we got the more you could feel the heat of the fire. We made our way up the stairs in single file. The Old Kent Road crew went first (1st), I was third (3rd) in the line and Carl was at the back. The comms on the radio began to deteriorate after about the fourth (4th) floor. I had my BA comms which we call BARRY radio (purpose designed BA radio) that is fitted in the BA set and also my personal hand held radio that I carry on my tunic. The signal was bad on both. By the time I got to the sixth (6th) floor I turned my BARRY off as someone had locked their radio open so whenever you did get a signal you could only hear that fire fighter completing their task. It sounded like they were carrying a person down as I could just hear a lot of heavy breathing down the radio.

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As we were passing the seventh (7th) floor there was a gentleman who was a very big guy and at least three (3) people would have been needed to move this person. He was unresponsive and he seemed dead. Numerous other crews would have been past this man and it seemed that he had been left there by those other crews. I think it was as we were passing the ninth (9th) floor we came across a casualty. This person was laying face down on the stairs but I couldn't see enough of them to identify whether they were male or female. The smoke was so thick that I couldn't see the body through the smoke. I then became worried that I would step on the body and I tried to tell Carl where they were so that he could try to avoid them as well. I'm not sure how much of this Carl actually heard as my voice would have been quite muffled through the BA set.

It was hard work climbing up the stairs in the BA. I remember around the seventh (7th) floor it started getting a lot hotter. It also became a lot smokier and harder to see. Eventually we made it to the tenth (10th) floor though I don't remember seeing any floor numbers written on the walls. I don't know if the floor numbers were missing because the smoke was so thick and the walls were so black, it may be that I just couldn't see the numbers. We collected two (2) branches from the 10th floor and checked that they were both charged. Although they had water in them, the hose was flaccid and floppy so it was obvious that there was no pressure to it. One of the crew from Old Kent Road radioed down to the ECO to tell them about the pressure. They then advised us that entry control were now aware but we were to make our way to the twelfth (12th) floor. We then made our way up to the twelfth (12th). As soon as we got to the twelfth (12th) the difference in heat on this floor obvious straight away as it was so much hotter. My personal radio was now just making a continuous high pitched noise and wouldn't work so I turned this off as well.

On the twelfth (12th) floor, as we arrived there was an Extended Duration BA (EDBA) crew already there. EDBA crews carry two (2) cylinders for their BA which means they carry twice the amount of air the standard BA (SDBA) crews can carry. I am not sure where this crew was from but they may have been from Paddington. This EDBA crew said that they were there to carry out an assessment of the twelfth (12th) floor. I checked the gauge on my BA set and I think it said I had a pressure of 120. It is good practice to check the gauge on your BA set before you enter any fire to ensure that you have enough air. When I am wearing BA I am quite good at conserving my air but even I was surprised by how much I'd used just getting to this point. The other lads from Old Kent Road were looking at their gauges too and by the way they responded and both pointed at their gauges they didn't have a lot of air left either.

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I was stood on the stairs with the two (2) Old Kent Road fire fighters ahead of me. The EDBA crew opened the door to the lobby area and went in. They both returned after no longer than a minute, shutting the door behind them. They said it looked like there was going to be a flashover so they had left the area for their own safety. I remember that as they opened the door to leave the floor, the amount of thick black smoke increased and took over the whole stairway. A flashover is where there is a little fire that heats the whole room. Once the room is hot enough this can cause the entire room to light with fire in an instant. This is very dangerous. The tell tale signs of this are doors really smoking and things start blistering. I remember that when I was on the stairs it was really quiet. There was a background noise from my BA set but I don't remember hearing anything else.

My radio wasn't working and it wasn't working for the other chaps. Realising that our radio link with the ground floor wasn't working, we couldn't get hold of entry control to give them the information about the flashover. We did not have any fire fighting equipment that we could use because the water pressure wasn't effective. I presume the water pressure was so low because so much was being used but I don't know for certain if this is the reason. As we could not communicate this information due to the radios not working, and the equipment we had wasn't working, we made our way back down to the ground floor. This time Carl went at the front. As we went down the stairs I remember it getting clearer and the visibility getting better the further down we went.

As it got clearer I noticed that there were lights on the walls that had melted. I'm guessing I first saw this around the seventh (7th) floor but I can't be sure. I think that they must have been made of plastic due to the way they had melted. When you burn plastic it drips and I could see these drips running down the wall from the lights. The lights were not working when I saw them. I also remember seeing that someone had written some floor numbers on the wall with a crayon that fire fighters usually use to mark roads. I don't know for sure who wrote these or even if they were right. The two bodies that I had seen on the way up were still there as we made our way down. I did not come across any other casualties on the stairs. I can't remember how long it took to get to the bottom of the tower but seemed like longer than it took us to get up, though I think it was probably quicker. I don't remember passing many fire fighters on the way down, certainly not as many as we had passed on the way up.

When we arrived back at the ground floor I remember that there were still loads of people in the lobby. There were twice as many people in the lobby compared to when we went up. It was organised chaos. As we entered the lobby people moved out of our way though.

The ECO whose rank was a fire fighter, gave us back our tallies but they had run out of space on the ECO

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board so they were writing on the walls which crews were going inside and coming out. They were probably writing on the walls due to the size of the incident and I presume that they had run out of space on the ECO boards. An ECO board cannot be rubbed out as this may later be required at a Coroner's Court. We passed on the details of what we had seen and done within the tower and an ADO then came over to us and asked if we were alright and we explained this to him as well. Our briefing was quite quick as all we had done was extend the branch. We hadn't searched any rooms or completed any rescues and this is what we explained to him. The ADO then wrote this on the wall and said that we could leave and go outside to the BA main control by the leisure centre and complete a fire ground A test.

We were helped out from the tower by the Met police with their riot shields. We then moved over to the underpass and we then made our way back to the grassy area by the leisure centre. Once we were at the BA main control there was a station manager in charge of the area. He was in charge of feeding personnel in to the entry control point. I do not know who this manager was. He advised us to take off our tunics and cool down. We then sat on the floor and rested for a little while. We were all dripping with sweat and I could have rung my T-shirt out it was so wet. It is very tiring wearing all of your kit which weighs between thirty to thirty five kilograms (30-35KG). The leisure centre had opened its doors and they let us use the toilets in there if we needed to. I started to complete a fire ground A test which means that you get your BA set ready to use again and complete another entry in to a fire. The process involves you changing the cylinder on your BA set and then completing a test to check that the pressure is adequate to go back in to a fire. Once I had done this we returned to the BA holding area again and waited to go back in to the tower.

A Borough Commander came round and started giving water out to everyone and asking if we were ok and told us to rest properly. I remember that at this point the sun was out but I don't know what the time was. I am not sure how long I had been waiting in this area but someone came over and said that they need more BA wearers to go over to the West side of the tower. We were taken back to the underground car park and made our way under this to the other side of the tower. We came out opposite what looked like an office and there were loads of other BA wearers in there. Using the underground car park kept us safe from any of the falling debris. I remember that LAS (London Ambulance Service) also had a triage area near to the BA holding area. I think it was a watch manager that escorted over to the BA holding area on the West side. I am not sure of his name but it was definitely a white hat. There was still a lot of debris constantly falling from the tower. It was only after we had moved to this BA holding area that I realised that the tower was on fire on the outside of the West side as well.

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When we first went in the tower was alight from the fourth (4th) floor up but it wasn't alight on the top quarter. At this point the whole tower was alight. Whilst we were waiting in the holding area we were on standby and ready to do whatever task was needed. I think I was there for quite a long time and it felt like a lot of waiting around.

Numerous people were being brought out of the doors on the West side by fire fighters with the help of the police. I was then made aware by somebody that we would probably not be used to go back in to the tower as I was only an SDBA wearer and they needed the EDBA crews to enter as they can get a lot higher in the tower. This is because it takes a lot of effort to climb the stairs, as it had done when I climbed to the twelfth (12th) floor. Fire fighters were running out of air before they could get to the higher floors. As I was not needed to go back in to the tower, I dropped my BA set and waited to help outside. I had now been wearing my BA set and kit for several hours. Wearing this weight of kit makes your back, shoulders and muscles ache. I hadn't noticed how heavy this was though due to how much was going on around me. You also have to be careful of dehydration after you have been wearing BA in a fire. The effects of this can still be felt for several days so it is important to drink lots of water. Someone came and asked me which appliance I was from. I explained where I was from but I hadn't seen Martin or Matt since we had been in the BA holding area in the lobby so were not all there together. I spent a lot of my time then helping others get in and out of the tower by using a riot shield in the same way the Met police had earlier helped me.

I was then asked to go back to the East side as one of the senior officers gave us a de-brief by the leisure centre. I can't remember who this was but it was one of the most senior officers from the fire brigade. He thanked everyone for all of their hard work and explained that they were working hard to get each crew some relief. I came across Matt and Martin again amongst the other fire fighters. Shortly after that we heard that West Hampstead's relief had arrived so we could now leave but we had to go to Paddington to write some notes about what we had done. We got our stuff together and made our way back to the machine. It was really surreal as there were so many people in the street and they were all coming up to us and saying "thank you" and patting us on the back. It was really nice but really odd as this has never happened to me before.

I think that we arrived at Grenfell at about quarter past one in the morning (0115 hours). Once we were eventually relieved, we had to go to Paddington fire station to write notes about what we had done. We did not arrive at Paddington fire station until eleven o'clock (1100 hours).

Once at Paddington where I made some notes. A copy of which I have handed to DC Rouse as SJD/1.

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After we had written our notes, there were a number of counsellors that we had to see as well. We then made our way back to West Hampstead fire station.

Since the incident I have received some support from the LFB. About two (2) days after the fire I received a call from a counsellor offering me help. I didn't want their help so they provided me with their numbers in case I changed my mind. We also saw a few counsellors a few weeks ago at Wembley fire station. The brigade are also arranging for us to see some counsellors around the six (6) month anniversary of the fire as well.

Prior to this fire I had never been to Grenfell Tower and I have not completed a Section 7(2)D visit to it. I have visited other tower blocks that are similar to Grenfell Tower though. A section 7(2)D is where you attend a site to familiarise yourself with where the hydrants are etc. These visits are usually only carried out on buildings in the area that your station covers.

On the night of the fire I did not see any sprinklers within Grenfell Tower.

I did not hear any fire alarms within the Tower. Most of the time within the tower there was an eerie silence. You could hear flames crackling and burning but it was mainly silence. Occasionally you could hear a scream but I don't know what floors these came from.

During the incident I did not know who was in charge of the overall incident but I did know who was in charge of each job I was given. For example when I was in the BA holding area I knew who was in charge and they would direct us. When we were in the lobby there was another person in charge who would command us and tell us where to go etc. I did not need to know the overall officer in charge as the officers in control of each area had enough information to direct me.

The stay put policy is where people are to stay where they are, in their flats. It still is the best way to treat a high rise fire. The way the fire spread at Grenfell is unprecedented. A few years ago we had a fire on West Hampstead's ground in a high rise block called Taplow. This tower has the same cladding as Grenfell Tower. However what happened at Taplow should in theory have happened at Grenfell. That is that the fire stayed in one (1) flat and didn't spread out of it. This meant that the residents in Taplow stayed put and were safe from the fire.

The fire at Grenfell was initially in the kitchen and it should have stayed in the kitchen. That means that the stay put policy should have worked for all of the other residents.

I don't know why the fire spread the way that it did but it meant that the stay put policy didn't work.

As the cladding was the same as that used in Taplow I don't know why the fire spread to the outside of the building. I still don't understand how the fire managed to spread down and not just up.

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People have blamed the cladding for the spread of the fire but by the time I arrived there, most of the tower was alight so it is hard for me to say for definite what caused the spread. The top of the building did have fire spread whilst I was there. I do remember seeing the fire spread down the building in places which is not common as heat rises. It was just burning the fuel around it. Because of the way it has spread I presume that it was either the cladding or what was underneath it but I can't be sure.

During the course of my career in the LFB, I have received a lot of training. The initial training you complete when you join the LFB is a sixteen (16) week course at Southwark. This training varies from first aid and slowly builds up to real fire exercises over at a residential unit in Moreton-in-Marsh in Worcestershire. Training continues for us whilst we are posted to our station as well. This usually involves us completing drills that are arranged for us. This will include drills where we are demonstrating we can rescue people whilst using the correct equipment in challenging scenarios and completing the task quickly and safely.

Looking back I don't think that you can train for a fire like Grenfell. You do train for high rise which means that everyone knows the process for how to deal with a fire in a high rise. When I went to the fire at Grenfell, I wasn't worried about how we were supposed to tackle it because the training has set us up for how to deal with high rise fires. I don't think that anyone else or any other brigade could have handled this differently. We used to have another fire station in Belsize Park but this was closed to save money. If this was still open they would have responded to the call at the [REDACTED] which means we may have been deployed to the fire quicker. Belsize would have also been deployed to the fire when they had finished at the hospital. I am not sure if this would have made any difference to putting the fire out or the rescue operation.

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