

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: VYDELINGUM, STEVEN

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 17 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 VYDELINGUM

Date: 02/03/2018

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

On Sunday 14th January 2018 I provided an account to Detective Constable Paul SLAYMAKER and Detective Constable Roxanne DAWE at BROMLEY Fire Station regarding the GRENFELL TOWER Fire. Also present was John LAMB from the Fire Brigade Union. This statement has been drafted from the audio recording.

This statement will detail my actions as a Watch Manager (B) (WM) at GRENFELL TOWER FIRE from 13th June-14th June 2017. In this statement I will mention my role and duties as a Watch Manager(WM) during 13th-14th June, I will also mention other colleagues who I was with during this time and any residents I had interaction with. After the incident I made contemporaneous notes which I have referred to for this statement and I have exhibited as SV/01.

I joined the London Fire Brigade (LFB) in 2003. I completed my initial sixteen (16) week training at SOUTHWARK. The training started with general fitness to ensure you were at the level required, then they teach you first aid, pumps and pumping, ladders, the breathing apparatus (BA), dealing with road traffic collisions (RTC's) etc. You are tested at the end of each module which you have to pass. Once you have finished the training and pass you have a passing out parade and are then sent to a fire station as a temporary/training firefighter on a twelve (12) month probationary period. Firefighters are deemed as on 'development' until they are passed as 'competent' by their Borough Commanders. The whole process takes around four (4) years to be deemed as a 'competent' firefighter. This has changed slightly now. I had a good management team and it was very busy on my first (1st)Borough so I learnt my trade very quickly.

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

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After completing my training I joined White Watch at BOW fire station in TOWER HAMLETS. About three (3) or four (4) years later I was then posted to White Watch in BROMLEY. I had already passed my Crew Manager's (CM) exam. There is a process of a written application then there is a written exam, a theoretical incident command exercise and then a practical exercise which tests giving and receiving instructions and staying safe whilst doing it. If you pass this process then you complete a presentation and interview. Whilst at BROMLEY a Crew Manager (CM) transferred to another station, so I became a temporary Crew Manager (CM). I was then promoted to the permanent rank of Crew Manager (CM) on White Watch at CLERKENWELL, FARRINGDON. I completed my skills as Fire and Rescue Crew Manager (CM). There was only two (2) in Central LONDON at this time so you learnt your skills and it was varied work.

During my time as a Crew Manager (CM) I had various postings which included Red Watch at MILLWALL. Whilst at MILLWALL I attempted to go on promotion as a Watch Manager (WM) however I had to wait [REDACTED] I waited eighteen (18) months before starting the promotion process again during which time I went to staff at STRATFORD as a temporary Watch Manager (WM). The role here included managing resources such as organising the shortfall in personnel around LONDON. This may be due to annual leave, sickness etc. It also included working out logistics for an incident, making sure each incident had the resources it needed from across LONDON. We have dedicated trucks which would make sure an incident has enough resources. I would also monitor the incidents going on in LONDON, injuries to firefighters at an incident, a fatality at an incident, etc. I would have to make a report of this incident and send it up to senior management and include local Government and inform the relevant people and agencies. It was quite an involved role which I had. I was also working at STRATFORD during the Olympics in 2012 and the LONDON Riots assisting the senior management to arrange the logistics of both. This role gave me good experience and showed me another side to the Brigade so I now have a better understanding of the Brigade.

I then went to White Watch as Crew Manager (CM) at ERITH where I was eventually able to go for promotion. There was a closure of a fire station during this period so I was temporarily posted to as a Watch Manager (A) (WM) position at HORNCHURCH until my permanent position was available at WENNINGTON in HAVERING where I was in charge for a period of time. I then transferred to the White Watch at GREENWICH. I then joined the White Watch at ILFORD and became a Watch Manager (B) (WM). Watch Manager (A) (WM) means that you are in charge of one (1) fire engine whereas a

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2018

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Watch Manager (B) (WM) means that you are in charge of two (2) fire engines. Finally I transferred to BROMLEY on the Red Watch in December 2016 where I am currently stationed.

To become a Watch Manager (WM) further training and exercises are required. You are tested and it is a bit of a jump from Crew Manager (CM) to Watch Manager (WM). Once you have passed this then you are sent out to a fire station. At BROMLEY as a Watch Manager (WM) I would be in charge of the station and the two (2) crews for that shift. One (1) of the Crew Managers (CM) I would usually have on one (1) of the trucks with me, the pump ladder. The other Crew Manager (CM) would be in charge of the pump. The main difference between the pump and the pump ladder is the size of the ladder on the truck. The pump has a nine (9) meter ladder and the pump ladder has a 13.5 meter ladder. The pump goes out to everything, the day to day shouts such as bin fires, caught in a lift etc. However the pump ladder will go out to anything more serious such as fire and rescue shouts. Both pumps carry pretty much the same equipment now. The pumps are called out on a geographical system which work on a GPS mapping system. The Crew Managers (CM) would do the day to day things such as looking in the diary to check what visits we have planned, calling them up to arrange, they prepare the visits and I would be there to oversee everything.

On Tuesday 13th June 2017 my watch, Red Watch came on duty at 20:00hrs. I cannot recall exactly what I did before the incident however at the start of a shift we would do a roll call to make sure everyone had their PPE, the equipment was all serviced and we were ready to go should a call come in. We have a pump and pump ladder inventory to check which one (1) firefighter for each truck would be in charge of making sure it's ticked off and we have the correct equipment in the correct place. Equipment is stored differently depending on the type of truck. They would also ensure we have sufficient fuel for the generators and batteries are fully charged for equipment such as Thermal Image Cameras (TIC) etc. We would line up by the fire engines, everyone in their full fire gear and then check through all their kit to make sure they are not missing anything. It is in everyone's interest to know exactly what equipment we have and where it is stored.

There is a minimum of four (4) firefighters on each appliance. A one (1) pump appliance station would have a minimum strength of five (5) firefighters. I had two (2) crew managers (CM) on duty for that shift, Stuart CHESSUN and Ross DIXEY. The roll call, details the riders, who is doing what and what they are in charge of. I cannot recall who exactly was working on the shift, who was driving or where they were sitting. I would have been in charge and riding on the front of the pump ladder. The roll call figures are confirmed and then given to control.

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

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Once these figures are sent I would test my breathing apparatus (BA) and check my Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure it was in working order. I would then put my fire gear on the truck. My set is located behind my chair in the rear of the cab. The BA sets are always stored and on a charging point on the truck. There is a minimum requirement that the cylinders are at 270 however anything below 275 I would make sure my crews changed their cylinders. We all have written log books of what we do for example what time we come on duty, the checks we have done, BA set check, and detail everything we have done on that duty and then sign it off. I would make a record of it in the relevant books and then I would have logged onto the computer to look and see what was planned in the diary for the shift.

After a cup of tea, on a night shift we have training, which is always a lecture. I cannot recall what specific training lecture we had. After the training the night is then your own. Midnight is stand down time which is time to rest on your resting platform (bed).

I think I was studying for my own degree. I cannot recall if we had any shouts that evening. After completing this, around midnight I went to my room and whilst resting my pager went off. Anyone in charge of a pump or pump ladder would have a pager so as a Watch Manager (WM) I have a pager. We do have a mobile phone however this is on the truck and we cannot call out on it. We are alerted of incidents via the pager as well as an audible warning in the fire station.

When my pager goes off it is usually just a reminder to allocate the standby's for next shift, so when it went off I put it on the chair by my bed. Then it went off frantically, I looked at it and half saw 'twenty (20) pump fire relief', I then started to scroll through when the bells in the fire station went down. I thought this must be something big. I almost felt a bit nervous but also excitement in the anticipation. I got my phone out and googled the fire and saw the Sky News reports; that's when it then felt a bit surreal. I saw pictures of flames everywhere, it was pitch black at that time of the night. It was all the initial reports coming in. I had never seen a high rise fire like that other than in movies. When I looked at the block the only thing I could compare it to was the Twin Towers. It didn't seem real. It would have been around 4am when we got the call, I can't recall the exact time.

I ran out of my room shouting to everyone. As everyone got up I was asking them if they had seen the news. I told everyone to grab what they needed to as we would be there a long time. We ran downstairs to the watch room, I went to the printer and saw that both trucks were on it from our station — Echo 391 which is the pump ladder and Echo 392 which is the pump. It detailed that Echo 391 would be for Watch Manager (WM) cover and Echo 392 would be used as a supplementary pumping appliance.

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

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The print out was so long it looked like someone had rolled out a toilet roll along the floor. It was never ending. Everyone and anyone in LONDON seemed to be on the incident, It was already a twenty (20) pump fire with a twenty (20) pump relief. I looked at the location which was LADBROKE GROVE junction with ELGIN CRESCENT. I knew roughly where to go as I know LADBROKE GROVE. There were two (2) locations the rendezvous point (RVP) and a marshalling area location.

I told my Crew Managers (CM) to brief their crews. Whenever we go to a large incident I always remind the crews to remember your basics, stay in pairs, don't get split up, try and stay as a crew together, remember your BA set and also if I am going in then someone is coming with me! Operationally, I have not worn a BA set in around six (6) years so I would want someone there that I knew would look out for me.

It was around 04:30hrs that we put our fire gear on and got onto the trucks and headed towards LADBROKE GROVE via the SOUTH CIRCULAR. We booked on as 'status two (2)' which means on route to the incident. Driving through LONDON it was like a ghost town at that time in the morning. We drove through VAUXHALL and across a bridge over the THAMES, I cannot recall which bridge it was, but it was then I started to notice the plumes of smoke. As we drew closer and closer the smoke and the flames were getting bigger. The smoke was dark and acrid, it wasn't your normal wispy white smoke. I was surprised at the flames and smoke and how quickly it had got a hold of the building. At that stage you would usually expect it to still be contained in the flat and smouldering. I have been to a few tyre fires which just burn off black smoke which is carbon and that is what it looked like. From experience I know that the further away from an incident that you are and the more that you can see then the worse the fire will be. I was talking to my crew and giving them the brief about what we could expect here at such a large fire, making sure the crew was engaged and ready. Telling them things like remember your search procedures, your high rise procedures and look after yourself and each other.

As we got even closer the GRENFELL TOWER it then became hidden by the surrounding buildings. We got there between 05:00hrs - 6:00hrs I cannot remember, it would have taken around forty-five (45) minutes to an hour to get there. There were some road closures in place as we got closer with tape up. They had to let us through the tape, it was on a junction I think on LADBROKE GROVE. We parked the trucks up outside a row of buildings and I recall a bar which had some outdoor seating. We didn't have any problems getting there or with parking, no obstructions or anything. There was quite a lot of fire appliances parked up where we were. I have marked the number one (1) on a google map which is roughly where we parked. I have exhibited this map as SV/02.

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

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We got off the truck and went to the RVP/Marshalling area. Once at the incident we were shown as 'status three (3)' donates at the incident. We looked down one (1) of the roads and could see the smoke and flames. It was about a ten (10) minute walk from where we had parked to the Tower itself. I recall famous people walking past us whilst waiting.

We were standing on LADBROKE GROVE in a holding area waiting to be called for probably more than an hour. I had tried to hand in our nominal roll board, it got taken away but then they had so many they had nowhere to put it and gave it back to me. The nominal roll board contains the details of the call sign of the pump and who is on the pump. If anything happened to the crew like a building collapse, the nominal roll board becomes a register so they know who they are looking for.

We were told to wait and then eventually I was directed to take my crews over to a meeting point. We grabbed all of the equipment that we could possibly need and started to walk down. There were so many of us I got broken up from the rest of my crews. I had already told my crews to meet by the BA control point if we were separated. As we got closer we had to walk through an alleyway. I walked up the road towards the GRENFELL TOWER and could see everyone was running away past me, it was quite surreal. As we got closer I could see a sea of bodies, of firefighters resting in an area and wait to be committed.

I went over to the Command Unit which I believe was on GRENFELL ROAD. A Command Unit looks like a truck with a big box on the back and they are located across fire stations in LONDON. They are normally used for any incident six (6) pumps and above. It is where the officer in charge of the incident will stand and do the command and control. At an ordinary house fire I would be in charge, a Watch Manager (WM). At a massive incident like GRENFELL TOWER, there would be all different agencies working together, lots of information coming in which would need to be mapped. The information would be written on the white boards inside the Command Unit. They also have computers in there which they would have access to maps, location of hydrants etc. This is to help them facilitate the incident. The Command Units can also be used for meetings rooms for Silver meetings etc. Their primary role would be to collate the nominal roll boards so they know exactly what resources they have. I took our nominal roll board with our details on and handed it in to book us on. I stood outside and handed it through the window.

I then walked back to where my crews were which was on a grassed area outside a glass building which was the leisure centre. I have marked this on a map of the area as the number two (2) and have exhibited this map as SV/03. Here we were waiting right at the front by one (1) side, queuing up waiting to be

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

Signature witnessed by:

committed. I looked at the Tower and saw the building from the SOUTH EAST side. There was a corner from the fourth (4th) or seventh (7th) floor which was not burnt, there was no flame damage. The rest of the building was completely engulfed in flames. It was fully evolved in fire, like the Tower inferno. Almost every window had flames coming out of it. It was blackened by the fire damage but still alight, there was still fire to be put out. There was so much fire, bright yellow and orange flames. It didn't look real at all. Just before we got there a chap was brought out, we all were saying 'how has he survived in that extreme heat?' I was told that he was waving a hanky out the window and managed to get rescued and brought out which was a miracle really considering the damage that had been sustained to the building.

When I first saw the fire properly it was a lot of shock and awe, but then when I was looking I was thinking you would not expect the fire to grow so quickly in such a short space of time. I have been to flat fires before when it has been two (2) or three (3) flats and that has taken a while to spread. Most blocks of flats are concrete built, apart from the plastic façade and plastic windows. The spread of the fire would usually take as long as it would take for the plastic to melt. Looking at GRENFELL TOWER, it looked like that there may have been something which was pushing the flame around like a spiral, taking hold of the building much quicker than you would expect. It looked like the fire was burning outside rather than inside. At a house fire a fire would burn through the floor boards and spread upstairs rather than burning the outside and spreading that way. It looked like it had spread so quickly because the wind had spiralled it around the outside of the building. It made me feel a bit upset personally, looking at the fire I knew that not everyone would make it out. I knew if they hadn't got out already then they weren't coming out.

When I looked around I could see crews and crews of firefighters that were spent, worn out and exhausted waiting to be relieved. I saw a lot of people at this area, people I had not seen in years. They were explaining the things that they had been asked to do and the things that they had seen. It was horrendous. I recall speaking to a guy who had two (2) tours left before retiring and he was just exhausted.

There were also a triage area and little tents put up around this area. I think they had been triaging people earlier as they were coming out. There was a DVI team setting up the other side of the leisure centre. I have marked the LAS triage and DVI areas on the map exhibit SV/03.

We were waiting to be committed and someone asked if there was anyone with extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA), they also asked if there was anyone who was fire and rescue trained or had ever ridden it and still had the qualification. My qualification was rescinded when I was promoted, I explained this and said I could wear if needed. They said no and told us to hold fire. Once they had

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

Signature witnessed by:

rounded up the EDBA firefighters they then told us to get all our breathing apparatus (BA) and spare cylinders we had from the truck and wait on the corner of a road which we done.

At this point I think it was around 08:30hrs, we had been waiting in this area for about twenty (20) minutes in total, I was starting to get frustrated and I felt an urge to just get in and get on with it and make a difference. I also felt slight worry standing there because I knew my crews were going into the fire. Usually I am in control of my crews at the scene of a fire but I have not been to something so big before and I knew I could only advise them and hope that everything I had done with the crews in the past would be enough for them to put into place and help them in there.

Outside the Tower I could see the Ariel Ladder Platforms (ALP'S) had been set up on the EAST side. I have marked this up on the map, exhibit SV/03. ALP's are big trucks with long arms which can get hoses up to high distances. It was firing water but to be honest it wasn't hitting anything other than the lower floors. It was working fine that I could see it just couldn't get the height it needed for the size of the fire. The pumping appliance for the ALP was close to the Tower but it had burst some branch lengths. This was the length of hose from the fire engine to the ALP which was pumping the water up the ALP. That kept bursting lengths and kept having to be changed. I saw this happen, one (1) of my crew was acting as pump operator at some point whilst I was waiting to go inside the Tower.

I think we had an ALP there from SURREY coming in as we were going into the tower. Theirs has a larger platform that they can get higher. I think in the end they had to move them away because they were getting covered in debris. I recall that the ALP did not have anyone manning the box, they just had a monitor jet firing water at the building as it was too dangerous for a person due to the falling debris.

Whilst we were waiting a Station Manager (SM), whose name I cannot recall said line up and be ready and waiting to be committed. I recall that there was like a sea of yellow helmets and only two (2) of us in white helmets. The station Manager (SM) said to me and the other white helmet, I need two (2) Watch Managers (WM) and two (2) Crew Managers (CM). He said he already had one (1) Crew Manager so just took three (3) of us. I saw a Crew Manager (CM) I know from SIDCUP called Simon VINCENT there.

The senior officer said to me 'you're in charge of the ECO/bridge head'. I asked to go in in wearing BA as I knew I was unlikely to have another opportunity to wear BA and go in but he said told me no and that that ship had sailed. I then left my BA set by my crew and was led down to the base of the building.

The base of the Tower was carnage, there was debris from the building everywhere, piles and piles of it. It looked like it was cladding or some sort of metal sheeting and burnt plastic. They were big sheets. As the fire was taking hold it was weakening the structure outside and everything was just dropping down.

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

Signature witnessed by:

The plastic and foam materials were falling from the building whilst still alight. In order to get inside the Tower without being injured by the falling debris we had to wait for the MET police TSG officers to come out with riot shields. It wasn't constantly falling but it was sporadic. As the fire was getting more intense, as it was spreading up more bits were falling off. Some officers were holding the shields up above us and some of us had to hold them ourselves. We were then told 'go' and had to run into the building. We went into the Tower through the main entrance, I have marked this with the number three (3) on the map — exhibit SV/03. The main entrance was all glass with a big opening where we went into the base of the Tower.

Inside the Tower there was a holding area with a load of firefighters and some TSG officers. There was a back door which is the way we later exited. I think it was a fire exit door. It was around 09:00hrs when we went into the Tower. There was a mezzanine area which we went up, which led to the main stairwell. There was no smoke on the mezzanine level. In the main stairwell it was like Niagara Falls, the water was cascading everywhere. The water was coming out via the stairs as it had nowhere else to go. You could smell the smoke of the fire in the main stairwell, it made me cough a bit but it was breathable. There were firefighters going in and out, they looked knackered, some looked quite distraught. We went straight up to the fourth (4th) floor and it was pandemonium. Again you could smell the smoke here, but it was not visible. The smoke did not concern me at this level and there were others there working without breathing apparatus (BA) sets.

They had the entry control boards, which are plastic boards where firefighter's tallies go into. This then logs everything about your breathing apparatus (BA). We then write on it the time the firefighter goes in, how much air they had, the estimated time of whistle. That is the estimated time you need to be out before you're basically sucking plastic with no more air left. You would also record where they are going and what their brief was. At that time there were two (2) boards there but the system was not really working. We introduced ourselves to the senior officers who were in overall control, Group Manager (GM) Tim FROST, Station Manager (SM) Sam KAZMANLI and Station Manager (SM) Jason FRISBY. These officers formed the BA main control, which was the overall Command and Control for inside the building. They were controlling the search and rescue and were marking up on the wall by the lift which flats had been searched, ticking off the flats of each floor as they were searched. At that time I think AC Andy ROWE was in charge of everything. We were briefed by one (1) of the Station Managers (SM). They told us there was SDBA and EDBA control which is called stage two (2) entry control. That means there are two (2) boards working at the same time. You need a level of incident command at that stage so

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

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I was put in charge of the Entry Control and the Bridgehead. The other crew manager (CM) with me was Stuart CHESSUNT. Stuart and another Crew Manager (CM) took over the SDBA duration entry control and I took over the EDBA with Simon VINCENT. We were the ones committing the crews. They also briefed us on what level the firefighters had managed to get to, what had been searched and what had not been searched. It seemed that firefighters were being given briefs but then the brief were going out of the window because they were coming across casualties or had to do something else.

We were not given any brief about whether or not there were still saveable life inside the Tower at that stage. As firefighters until all the fires are put out we still deem people as saveable. We were still in the mind set to keep going. The heat was knocking firefighters back but we were still trying to knock the fires back so that we could get the searches done. It was a concrete building and there was that potential that there were people in there that were saveable. We were searching rooms to try and find people alive the entire time I was working there inside the building. You know yourself looking at it that there is a slim chance however there is still that slim chance.

The Bridgehead is a safe area of operation that won't be encroached on the incident where we can step up breathing apparatus (BA), crews to standby, first aid, store kit and personnel needed. For a large building or high rise it would be somewhere inside the building, outside would be too far to travel. It is normally set up two (2) floors below the fire so that if the fire was to move up and down you have enough room to be able to move the Bridgehead up or down. We don't tend to move it unless the fire is becoming under control. Entry Control is usually at the Bridgehead. There are different stages that you have at the Entry Control and who is in charge depending on what stage. Stage one (1) is when only SDBA firefighters are entering. You can have the rank of firefighter in control of the Entry Control Boards at stage one (1), unless a high rise then it would be a Crew Manager (CM). Stage two (2) is when you have SDBA and EDBA firefighters entering the building. A Watch Manager (WM) would be in charge of the Bridgehead and a Crew Manager (CM) in charge of the Entry Control board.

In GRENFELL TOWER, on the fourth (4th) floor at the Bridgehead it was a tiny space, straight in front to the right were two (2) lifts, on the left hand side there were three (3) flats and on the right hand side there were three (3) more flats. I later found out that we were on the floor where the fire had originally started. We were stationed in an area between the lifts and stairwell on the fourth (4th) floor, it was only a couple of meters wide. There were lots of people milling around waiting to be committed. I spoke to the officer in charge of Entry Control and said can we commandeer some of these flats? We needed space to commit the vast amounts of crews needed so in the end we accessed the flats. We had eight (8) to ten (10) crews

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

Signature witnessed by:

coming up at one (1) time and nowhere to put them. Therefore we put the SDBA firefighters in one (1) flat and EDBA firefighters in the other. A third (3rd) flat was also being used for briefing and debriefing the firefighters. Any one (1) crew were only in the flats for around five (5) to ten (10) minutes. During the de-briefs they were telling us what they had done. This was so that we could give that information to the crews going back up. I have labelled a floor plan of the fourth (4th) floor which I exhibit as SV/04.

The radio traffic was pretty bad so in order to get the crews to come up to the bridgehead I was sending Crew Manager (CM) Simon VINCENT; he became my runner. Every time we needed more firefighters I was asking for eight (8) at a time, Simon would go get them downstairs and come back up. I was briefing the crews and a Station Manager (SM) would debrief them.

As we were doing this we began to realise the communication was poor and we were losing the telemetry. This is the radio transmission between the breathing apparatus (BA) and the entry control board. It was going and our procedure is normally that if it was to go completely we would have to start withdrawing crews. So we have something called 'leaky feeders' which are signal boosters. A couple of guys from a fire and rescue unit brought them up to us and we put those out. We were resorting to using our handheld radios because you were able to communicate better with some of them. We had to make do with what we had so we were giving tighter briefs to the crews. We were saying that at some point you might lose your telemetry or your radio but if you feel you can't go any further you have to come back down and let us know and to keep an eye on your air levels.

There was a mixture of briefs being given to the crews throughout the incident. The earlier crews had been given briefs to go to certain floors, but had not been able to get to their brief and search the given floors as they were coming across people and rescuing them. By the time we got into the building it was engulfed in flames and the crews weren't getting past the fourteenth (14th) floor.

The boards and tallies are all computerised now. As soon as the tally is taken out of the BA set and put into the board they then read each other. There is an Automatic Distress Signal Unit (ADSU) on your set so if you stand still for long enough it starts bleeping. It basically means move about. It also indicates how much air you have left in your set so you can see and the board can see. We use to write down what time the firefighters were going in and work out roughly what time we would expect them to come out. Now this is all done by telemetry and radio signals, sometimes it does not work due to the signal so we would always record it manually too as a backup. It can tell you how much time you have left whilst at the incident. As a firefighter you would check your gauge and work out how long it took to get there and how

Signature: S VYDELINGUM
2018

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much air you would need to get back out. It's another way that each firefighter can risk asses for themselves.

The staircase in GRENFELL TOWER was probably only one (1) meter twenty (20) wide, you could only fit one (1) person up or down it. It was very tight for me with all my fire gear on. I did think when I first came into the building "wow this is a bit tight". If two (2) firefighters were crossing they would have to go side by side. This would have impacted getting crews in or out quicker. In most fires you cannot see and it is a blackout; protocol is when you hear a noise you would shout out 'crew coming in' or 'crew coming out'. The procedure is that in coming crews would crouch down going up as they have more air and outgoing crews would walk out and as you pass you tell each other what has gone on.

It was then we decided we needed to ensure there was a systematic search of each floor due to the previous crews being unable to complete their briefs. I decided to get pieces of road chalk as I had some in my pocket, and get the BA crews to mark up on the wall when the floor had been searched completely and communicate it back to us. It was our only way on knowing that every floor had been searched. My system was that the SDBA crews were to go as far up as the eleventh (11th) floor and then EDBA crews were to go up as high as the fourteenth (14th) floor due to air. As the crews were going up and searching they were finding that the fire was becoming more intense. What we realised was that there must have been gas mains in the four (4) corners of the building. I cannot be entirely sure it was all four (4) corners but we knew that the gas mains needed to be switched off. Where the fire had ripped through the flats it had disrupted the flow of the gas. There was literally natural gas pouring out the pipes alight. It was just intense fireballs of flame. Some crews had Thermal Imaging Cameras (TIC) and they were giving 'intense hot readings'. Based on the information the crews were giving it was an educated guess that it must have been the gas mains causing this issue. We radioed down and gave instructions to those in charge that the gas needed to be turned off. The command unit staff told us that they thought the gas had been switched off. The gas was static mains, from my understanding when we came out of the building the gas authority were digging up the roads around the building to cap the mains off. It was just a pipe of gas that ran up through the building and we were not sure where the shut off was as it fed each flat separately. That's what hindered quite a lot of the operations. When I spoke to the gas guys digging the road up they were having to cap it. I recall conversations from crews that when they were going up, I think it was the fourteenth (14th) floor, that the fire was that intense they couldn't put the fire out in the flat and it was like a bluey/green coloured flame which sounded like gas. That was reported back to the OIC I believe.

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We were sending crews in to search each flat and were then marking it up so that we knew exactly how far they had got and we were not doubling up our workload. We were running out of crews to commit and some were going in twice, sometimes more. We didn't get past floor fourteen (14) due to the intense heat, hose in the stairwell, and deceased in the stairwell. The water pressures weren't great. We were trying to get crews past floor fourteen (14) and had briefed some crews to go higher but the intense heat and ruptured gas meant they were being knocked back by the heat and flames. Some flats were not searched at all until the gas had been turned off.

The heat through the stairwell and being in such a close environment firefighters were getting tired just going up the stairs. I think in the earlier stages of the fire they had made it all the way up to the top.

Policy generally is that if you come across a fire on a lower floor than you have been briefed to go to, then you would stop and fight that fire. You don't go past because if the fire was to envelop your egress then you're going to be in trouble. However there are occasions when you can pass them if you're in a protected staircase and an alternative crew is dealing with that fire. The procedures put in place that allowed crews to progress in GRENFELL TOWER, were that you would have a back-up crew with another jet who can protect your exit whilst you search the floor.

At one (1) point, maybe an hour before we came out, just before the decision was made to take all the hose out we were directed to move the Bridgehead higher. Senior officers thought that we had got the fire and it was decided to try and move the bridgehead from the fourth (4th) floor to the seventh (7th) floor. When we went up to the seventh (7th) floor and started to open the doors to the flats where we were going to hold the crews in, we realised that there were still fires in some of the flats. I opened one of the flat doors and realised that there was a fire in the kitchen. That fire was then put out by crews. I went around to another flat and it was on the side where the ALP was firing water so you could see the water spray coming in. There were two (2) other flats engulfed in flames and the gas was firing flames at us. I radioed through to the ALP to let them know what exact floor they were firing water onto so they were mindful of the crews going up there. We then went down to the sixth (6th) floor and I saw another flat which had fire in it so we moved back down to the fourth (4th) floor. I recall that the lobby areas of the fifth (5th) and sixth (6th) floors, the lobbies seemed clear of smoke or fire damage. The flats that I went in that were affected by fire the interior flat itself was completely gone. You would not be able to tell what was inside the building, the windows had gone and they were completely burnt out. I don't think anyone realised at that time just how bad the gas problem was.

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At 13:30hrs -14:00hrs we were looking at withdrawing the crews and getting the hose out. Having a load of hose on the stairwell meant that it was not productive. In conjunction with the BA main control we decide to withdraw all of the crews down disconnect all of the hose. Put it all down onto a level which had already been searched and then start again. By doing this it meant we then had a better working platform. This would also help with the water supply.

It was about 15:00hrs to 15:30hrs on 14/06/2017 that we were relieved by the Blue watch. At that time there were no Watch Managers (WM) to relieve us so they got Crew Managers+ (CM) who were able to deputise as Watch Managers (WM) to relieve us. They came up and we briefed them what we had been doing and then handed it over to them. I didn't leave the building for any breaks from the time I entered initially to being relieved.

I didn't see anyone being rescued or casualties brought out whilst I was inside the building. Just before we turned up to the main site I heard that a gentleman was brought out, but I did not witness this.

I don't recall many details of the deceased on the stairwell as the crews were telling the Station Managers (SM). I recall that SM Julian SPOONER and a guy from the DVI team came in at one (1) point and wanted to go up the stairwell to check on a particular fatality who was larger than average on a prominent place on the stairwell. They were hindering operations so they were looking at moving that casualty. I don't know what happened after that.

I don't think we had any FSG calls at the time we were inside the TOWER, we had no FSG calls coming to us to look for specific people it was literally just search and rescue firefighting.

We left GRENFELL TOWER, we came down the main stairwell, into the main foyer and to where the firefighters were being held. There were lots of TSG officers waiting to escort people out of the building. We went out the back door, there was still a tonne of stuff still coming down from the building. I have marked this exit on the exhibit SV/03 as the number four (4).

As we came out of the building Simon VINCENT tripped over a length of hose and I had to pick him up and dust him off. We made our way around to the street where there was a pub where they were doing food for the emergency services. I recall seeing George CLARKE from the TV show 'Amazing spaces' who wanted to talk to us. He was telling us he only lived around the corner and he had heard loud bangs and pops and he thought it was fireworks. I have marked the map, exhibit SV/03 with the number five (5) to indicate where the pub was. There was quite a few emergency services in this area. I remember looking back at the GRENFELL TOWER and it was still on fire on the top parts of the building. The building just looked black.

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I went and got our nominal roll board from the Command Unit, I checked for my BA set but that had gone missing. I then headed back to our truck. I couldn't find my crew at that time we got a little lost. We passed lots of members of public and I recall one (1) male asking why we had not used explosives at the top of the building and then let the water stored at the top of the building run down, he told me that's what they would do in his country. I told him that in LONDON we would not be allowed to keep explosives at the top of a building even if we did have water stored in a tank at the top. We carried on walking, everyone was cheering us. We eventually found our crews and left the incident and headed to PADDINGTON fire station to be debriefed, have counselling and make our statements. Quite a lot of my crews hadn't actually been committed into the building. They told us that we could do our statements at a later stage. I think I done mine the following shift. We got back to BROMLEY fire station at around 18:00hrs and then returned to duty at 20:00hrs.

I have already detailed some issues which hindered us when working inside GRENFELL TOWER. There were several others including the issues with the water management, firefighters were taking hosing ups and plugging into the dry riser. The dry riser is a dry system, it is a big tube which goes from the bottom of the building up to the top of the building. We would hook into the bottom of the dry riser and pump water all the way up to the top, up to sixty (60) meters. Each floor has an outlet therefore it allows you access to water on each floor. In a normal fire you could go up to each floor and switch off the floors where the dry riser was not required to allow for better pressure on the floors which needed to use the dry riser.

Unfortunately at GRENFELL TOWER the pressure wasn't that good when the firefighters were plugging in so we were losing pressure everywhere. This may have been because we couldn't get to all the outlets to check they were closed, secondly we couldn't check the integrity of the dry riser was intact. In GRENFELL TOWER I don't know if the pipe ran up the wall externally or internally. The pressure could have been affected by many things for example there could have been hoses plugged in not being used but the branch had been kicked open by mistake so water was running out and flooding. This would then mean the next hose to plug in to the dry riser on the next floor would have had less pressure.

Each time the firefighters were taking a new hose up to the next floor and plugging in it was creating a massive spaghetti junction of hoses on the stairwells. It got to the point where it wasn't working and we had to withdraw the hoses and crews and start a fresh. All I know is that the crews were using the dry riser the best that they could. From listening to the radio it seemed that no matter how much water we had it just wasn't affecting the fire, the fires were that bad.

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There were problems with the gas not being switched off and creating the intense fireballs. When we came out they were digging up each main and cutting it off from there. It took a long time to get the gas switched off and I think that is why the fire was still going for a longer period of time.

The doors to the stairwells seemed like normal fire doors, the front doors wouldn't have been fire doors. I recall thinking that for a fire of that magnitude the communal areas didn't seem to be affected as much as the outside seemed to be. It would appear that the fire accelerated outside up the building rather than inside.

The only time the lifts were used for anything was when the Fire Investigation team came in to examine the flat believed to be the origin of the fire. There was quite a lot of water in it so we had to get rid of it. I recall being handed a pink broom and sweeping the water down the lift shaft. Fire lift procedure is that you would only use the lift up to the Bridgehead. It is normally in a protected lobby.

To explain what some of the appliances we have do, a pump ladder can get roughly the height of four (4) floors up a building. We can get a hose up a ladder and working from the height of around four (4) floors. We deem anything over eighteen (18) meters as high rise. Therefore in order to fight a fire from the outside, use a ladder as a viewing or rescue platform we would need to use an ALP — Ariel Ladder Platform or a HP — Hydrolytic Platform. We also have something called a TL — Turntable Ladder. These will be used depending on how much access there is to a building. Each one (1) of these have a metal tube down the length of the arm of the crane, this would be hooked up to a hose which is then hooked up to a fire engine. The fire engine will set into the hydrant in the road to get the water. This can then be used as a firefighting platform to shoot water at a higher level. This is what was being used at GRENFELL TOWER. These appliances will only go up ten (10) floors, being in LONDON there are access problems with having one (1) which extends higher. I think this is being reviewed.

The Fire and Rescue Unit (FRU) does not carry water, they are dedicated rescue specialists. When I first trained to use one (1) each one (1) had a dedicated role. The one (1) I was on at CLARKENWELL was dedicated to line operations and rope access rescues and HazMat incidents. This is any chemical based incidents. We also carried more specialist equipment for example specialist cutting equipment for dealing with RTC's, we had more shoring up equipment too. The Fire and Rescue Units (FRU) could get called out anywhere in LONDON, they are dotted around LONDON and not based at every fire station. The FRU have extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA). Once trained on an FRU you would have constant training and refresher courses on the various equipment which the FRU carries.

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We have ongoing training within the Brigade which I will detail. At my station I have two (2) Crew Managers (CM) and myself. We are considered the office staff and are in charge of the training for the crews. There is a periodical training schedule called 'DAMOP'. I cannot recall what it stands for. We have a certain number of policies and procedures we adhere to which forms part of the training. We also have physical training which includes things such as ladder training, water training, breathing apparatus (BA), cutting equipment training, search and rescue, core skill catch up etc. Each piece of equipment we use is looked at periodically and trained with. We have a station diary on our computer which we record every piece of training we complete. We also have a Borough training plan which shows the specific risks on our Borough. This is created by our Borough Commander and Station Manager (SM).

Training each week consists of two (2) hours physical/practical training on core skills during the day shifts and a single hour on a night shift for policies and procedures which are lectures. If we are busy with shouts on a particular shift and unable to complete the training then we would always catch up with the training on the next shift. We also have strategic resource days which are days where the Brigade will give us a whole day to catch up on training and we will not attend shouts. On these days we are shown as status seven (7).

The Borough specific training will range depending on what the risks are for that Borough. For instance some of our risks at BROMLEY would be train stations and shopping centres. We also have a few high rises on our Borough so would practice specific procedures for these buildings such as search and rescue. It is anything with a massive risk.

If you have a high rise block on your Borough the training around that may include going to the building and carrying out a dry layout. This would mean you would run the hose out and practice procedure.

The practical training for example ladder training would include practicing using our ladders, getting them out, putting them up, and practicing the pitches. We practice three (3) different pitches, one (1) which is up against the wall, one (1) in confined spaces and one (1) which you would use props with to physically get it into the building. At BROMLEY we have a three (3) piece extension ladder, a nine (9) meter ladder and a 13.5 meter ladder.

At BROMLEY we do have a tower however it is a bit old and the yard is quite small so we have the use of the disused town hall over the road. They have given us the keys so we can go over there and use our ladders for training. Failing that we can always use another station to train at on our strategic resource days.

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There is a training package called 'Big Learning' which we use for our training lectures on the night shifts. It is a computer based training system and they have set modules for us to complete. Generally each module contains a power point presentation, if it doesn't then we would print of the particular policy for that module and go through that, for example the policy on disciplines. Modules may also contain case studies. The training modules are usually Brigade wide however depending on what Borough risks you have on your Borough you would have specific training relating to that. It is all recorded on a diary system on the computer. Myself and the Crew Managers (CM) tend to get the firefighters to prepare and deliver the presentations to the crew.

The last time I physically trained in high rise procedures was at MORTON for real fire training. That would involve facilitating a fire in a high rise which has a dry riser. You would have to set in to the dry riser, set up a bridgehead etc. As an incident commander you would be the command and control for the exercise and make sure that everyone was doing everything correctly. We don't do that a lot now as we now use a computer simulation training package provided by Babcock's for our Ops refresher yearly. This is all done by virtual reality. You tell your instructions to a computer and you see these little people on the screen running around and following your instructions. If you provide the correct instructions then the fire get smaller however if you do the wrong thing or not quick enough then the smoke and fire from the building get worse.

The brigade now have specialist training facilities in LONDON, BECKTON, PARK ROYAL and a new one (1) being built in CROYDON. At this you can do 'hot training' but they do not have high rises there at the moment.

I have fought fires in high rises but in recent years I have been in charge at incidents so would not go inside a building as such. Nothing compares to GRENFELL TOWER fire. All procedures are the same for any high rise building.

Most buildings around pre-1990's were made out of concrete so compartmentation will work. Concrete will spall at something like six hundred (600) or nine hundred (900) degrees when it may then give way. For a fire to get as big as it did at GRENFELL TOWER it has to be going for some time with all the components present, lots of air heat and fuel. If crews arrive in the six (6) to ten (10) minutes that is enough time to be able to arrive and within around twelve (12) minutes of the initial call get some water on the fire. This should mean that compartmentation would work and the fire would not burn for as long as it did. Now they have newer building constructions with timber frames etc. so they have to have certain regulations. As a Brigade our job is the same job regardless how it is built. If it gives way the only

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procedure we have is to withdraw crews to a place of safety and rethink in terms of the incident command. We adapt our procedures if compartmentation fails.

We have some basic training on building construction. We learnt about some types of insulation which has some PIR board behind it, called sandwich panelling. We look at new builds in our Borough and would conduct a visit and find out what is it build from in order to assess potential risk. We weren't aware of specific cladding risks before GRENFELL TOWER. After the fire I conducted a drive around on our Borough for the Borough Commander looking for any high rises with panelling on, including the plastic on the window panels. I marked it all down for him and included this data in an audit.

Prior to the introduction of the regulations in 2005 we had an obligation to conduct what we called then as 'Fire Safety G visits'. Each fire station would have risks on their Boroughs, from pubs to sheltered accommodation, anything where a lot of people may be. One (1) of the 'G visits' would be to high rises. On these visits we would check the fire lifts to make sure they were operational, check the fire doors, dry risers, etc. I believe it was after 2005 we stopped doing the 'G visits' under the RRO 2005. Now each station will have a station diary and an 'operation risks database'. Any building which has a risk or perceived will be on this database. A high rise block would be a perceived risk. We would check where the local hydrants are near to the high rise block, how many lengths of hose it would need to get to the building, how many fire lifts, if it had dry or wet risers, fire doors and layouts of the building including fire protection. We would then formulate something called an 'E PIP' which is a diagram of the building. They can be found on the side of a building and also recorded on the database which can be accessed via the MDT's in the vehicle. If you are on a fire call from another station then you can look up on the MDT and get a rough idea of what is on that system about the building you are going to. These types of buildings would also be put on to a Risk Matrix which would then tell you how many times you need to visit that building depending on the risk. We would also have information stored about the content of the building so for example residents on medical oxygen, these kind of things would increase the risk to that building again.

At whatever level there is a fire, from an ordinary house fire to a high rise fire we are trained as firefighters to observe fires. So at an incident I would task one (1) firefighter to specifically observe I would tell them to conduct a 360 degree walk around of the building and tell me if there is anything going on which is not normal. For instance, any signs of fire, what these signs are, how the smoke is acting, are there any smashed windows, and are there any opened gates etc. We are all trained in the same thing and know roughly what to look for, but the OIC will brief that crew member just in case they are not versed in

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the exact signs to look for. On the scale of GRENFELL TOWER with that amount of firefighters on the outside you would have a good grasp of what was going on. The whole building was enveloped so everyone had a good idea of what was happening. It's not official training but it's just something you learn, communicating with members of the public to find out who lives in the building or who would be expected to be there at any point in time, attending the next door to check their layout if a terraced house or for fire spread in the loft etc. Communication is key.

The stay put policy is that if you are not in any immediate risk of danger of the fire, in order to stop congestion in the stairwells and allow firefighters to get to the fire, you are to stay put. If you can see, hear or smell smoke or fire and you are in imminent danger they tell you to make your way to get out if it is safe to do so. The application of the stay put policy is normally via the control staff talking to the callers. They would implement and follow the guideline. I think it is a national policy. Even though the control staff have a mandatory guideline the officer in charge can make a decision to change that policy. I don't know who it was at GRENFELL TOWER.

There are changes I believe, which can be made to improve the Brigade. Firstly I believe that everyone should be trained in EDBA especially in LONDON for the distances we have to travel under air. They did start training everyone however it stopped because I believe the courses were too expensive and they did not have the budgets.

Secondly, I believe bigger ALP's would have helped, I think we are getting them now. In any building like GRENFELL TOWER the transmissions between the BA sets and the boards weren't working so we need something to help that. Also the radios were not great, we need better radio equipment the skull sets we have aren't great. Lastly more personnel would also assist at incidents like GRENFELL TOWER.

From the GRENFELL TOWER fire what has stuck with me is the amount of firefighters that were lining up to go inside the building. They are the most conscientious, go getters in the world and then when I saw them coming out they looked the most beaten up people in the world. They were saying what they had seen in there and they just wanted to wear again and go back in.

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Page 21 of 21

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