

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: FROST, TIMOTHY

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 16 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: TIMOTHY FROST

Date: 18/01/2018

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

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I am making this statement in relation to my involvement with the fire at Grenfell Tower on the 14th June 2017. I have been spoken to by way of digital media with DC Peta JAMES and DC Emma HARRIS. I understand this statement is a written version of what we discussed. I produced a sketch during the course of making my statement which I exhibit as TJF/1 and I referred to my contemporaneous notes during the interview which I exhibit these as TJF/2.

I joined London Fire Brigade in 1987 and will have 30 years' service this November. I have worked at three fire stations in various roles. Initially I joined Poplar as a firefighter, from Poplar I was promoted into the first of the lower ranks to Stoke Newington Fire Station and from there I was promoted to Station Officer at Homerton. That process was over 12- 15 years. From Homerton I went into the Establishment Performance Team which centrally manages fire stations, movements, transfers and promotions. I was there for four years and during that time was promoted two ranks to my current rank of Group Manager. I currently work in the Central Operations Team at Union Street where I have been for the last 18 months. Basically we hold an overview of the decisions made by the Commissioner's Directorate and are key to planning, implementing and managing organisational change that affects all our operational staff.

I have been asked to provide a little background in relation to Fire Brigade policy and our standard practice at a call out to a fire.

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2018

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Training with regards to Policy can be role specific but all policies can be viewed by all operational staff. Policy procedures have evolved over time. They are deemed as best practice as a result of operational learning. There is a certain amount of training at fire stations that is compulsory and the expectation would be for the crews to keep abreast of those procedures. This training is also quality assured at the required levels.

For example, we have a pre-determined attendance to high rise buildings. If you receive a 999 call to a fire in a high rise the initial response would be to send three appliances and an aerial. On arrival the officer in charge will make tactical decisions as to whether they need more resources or if the call can be down-graded. Whatever decisions made in relation to this are down to operational discretion but whatever decision the officer in charge makes will obviously need to be justified and the correct control measures put in place.

Upon arrival the officer in charge would carry out a Risk Assessment and assess the situation that was in front of them. They would send an initial crew to set up two floors below the reported seat of the fire and they would establish what is called the Bridgehead on this floor. The bridgehead should be established in a firefighting lobby and not in a corridor (unless the building design results in the corridor being part of the lobby function) They would be equipped with breathing apparatus (BA), full lengths of hose, branches and any other equipment deemed necessary. The initial charged branch should where possible be supplied from the rising main outlet one floor below the fire; if this was unavailable the nearest available outlet should be used. From there they would set up to mount the initial attack on the fire. Once the route up to the fire was established and the first hose dispatched the second jet and back up crew will be provided in order to protect and support personnel involved in rescue and firefighting operations. The second jet can be supplied from the rising main of the fire floor if appropriate.

Someone would be responsible for ensuring the fire lift was secured so that the Fire Brigade had full control over it and would be detailed to remain in the lift. This means it can be utilised at all times by the Fire Brigade for emergencies and/or to rescue people. The firefighting lift should remain at the bridgehead so that rescued persons can be quickly brought to ground level. These procedures are safe systems of work.

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The officer in charge may use operational discretion to achieve specific objectives and can adapt or move away from operational policy if it is justifiable in terms of risk and benefit, however those decisions would also be discussed with the next senior ranking officer in attendance or the monitoring officer as required. Dependant on the size of fire or resources that are in attendance a Senior Officer will take overall command. Alongside of policy procedures in relation to high rise buildings there are also what we call 7.2 (d) visits. These are in effect visits to specific premises where a risk is identified, so in addition to high rise this could also include factories, chemical plants, basements etc. Fire Stations are therefore aware of high rise building on their ground and would conduct visits maybe once or twice a year dependant on the scheduling and associated risk. These visits enable crews to look round the building from top to bottom and establish things such as whether the building is served by a wet riser or a dry riser, where the riser is located, where the outlets are on each floor, where the nearest hydrant is and therefore what length of hose is required to get the water from the hydrant to the fire, how many stair cases there are and their location and if there are any specific hazards to the building. This is not an exhaustive list, but it allows locals crews to familiarise themselves with the premises and plan operational tactics accordingly. This information is then uploaded onto the Operation Risk Database (ORD). This information can then be viewed via the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) that are fitted to all fire appliances, it is also filed at the relevant station. However, there may be changes of staff, standby cover and so on so not everyone can be necessarily familiar with the relevant building. In addition you may also have appliances responding to the call who are from a different station so again they would not be aware of the risks on that ground so they would use the MDT to pick up the identified hazards either en-route or on their arrival

All crews attending a call out would get an initial call slip or pager message which would detail the type of call they were attending eg: fire, persons trapped etc. It would also indicate the number of pumps already dispatched. This indicates to the crew what procedures should have been implemented so for example if it's a call to a high rise building and there were 20 pumps already in attendance the expectation would be that there would be jets two floors below, the correct weight of attack had been implemented, a safe zone at the base of the building and so on. They may then look at the MDT en route for additional information but if not first on scene the expectation is that those systems would already be in place. In addition they would be listening to their radio and would be aware of how the incident was progressing and whether or not there were Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) calls in place.

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2018

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As a fire progresses and the need for more appliances increases so too does the chain of command. At every fire there is always an officer in charge at an incident with a higher ranking officer listening on a radio (Monitoring Officer). As the fire escalates then that Senior Officer would be mobilised and a next ranking officer gets informed.

The decision making model (DMM) we use in respect of any fire is in effect a briefing tool and is used all the way up the chain of command from Crew Managers to the Commissioner. It covers the following aspects of an incident:

- Information regarding the incident itself (Task)
- . Information in relation to identified hazards
- . Information in respect of resources
- . The objective
- . The plan
- . What control measures you have in place
- . Lines of communication
- . Then continual review of all of the above

This then allows the officer in charge to continually review their strategy and plan in relation to the incident with updates and progress reports being received regularly. These updates are not necessarily logged, they are provided so that the objectives and plan can be reviewed and changes implemented as required. However at a prolonged or protracted incident the updates and decisions may well be logged especially in respect of decisions made that are not standard

For example I may be dealing with an incident where I have asked British Transport Police (BTP) to close one of the train lines running out of Kings Cross because of smoke percolating across the lines. BTP may not agree with that recommendation. I would reiterate my recommendations but would ensure that their response and that discussion was logged and captured.

This type of thing would be recorded in a key decision log which is kept on the Command Units. A Command Unit (CU) is in effect a mobile unit from where a fire or incident can be managed. It is

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2018

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equipped with phones, computers wipe boards and a range of communications equipment which enable the Incident Commander to access information such as maps, download of images thus providing them with relevant information to assist in their decision making process. In addition Tactical Decision Group (TCG's) meetings can be held on a CU. These meetings can involve representatives from the Police, Ambulance Service, TFL, anyone that the Incident Commander deems necessary to assist with that incident. From there the updates are disseminated and additional resourcing requirements or changes in priority can be discussed.

Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) is a National Agreement. An FSG call is a call received into control where the caller believes that they are unable to leave their property due to the effects of fire and where the control officer remains on the line providing appropriate advice. It can be changed by the Officer of the Watch in Control or by the Incident Commander on the fire ground, but responsibility rests with control to determine that an FSG is taking place. The information that is then passed on to the caller is fire survival advice i.e. to shut the doors, place towels at the bottom of the door, go to the furthest room, put your lights on and try to get attention. However, if that person decides to phone someone else and the person they have phoned then calls control it is not seen as an FSG under the National Agreement. It has to come from the individual themselves who are on the line with the Control Officer. However, this type of call would attract the same level of urgency and in affect would be treated as an FSG call. The information received from the third party would be transferred immediately to the incident ground as a priority message.

The Stay Put policy is dependent upon the fire protection provided in the building and the walls and doors of each flat. It can be deemed safer to stay in your property because you have approximately an hours fire resistance due to the concrete floors and ceilings. Doors and walls can hold back flames and smoke for 30 - 60 minutes. Purpose built flats in residential blocks are built to give you some protection so generally you would be safer to stay in your flat until the Fire Brigade arrives. By "staying put" it will reduce the risk of you entering a smoky corridor unnecessarily and potentially being overcome with smoke. If there was smoke compromising the communal area you would let all the flats know you need to get out or you would have smoke alarms in your flat that would warn you. In addition, you have to factor in the danger posed by having 300 people trying to come down the stairs all together. This mass evacuation can be a hazard to all individuals leaving the property. You have more chance of getting fire fighters up to you

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2018

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without delay if the staircases are clear. Those are the reasons for the Stay Put policy as usually the fire only affects the flat on fire. However, that policy can be changed at any point with operational discretion by the Officer in Charge with approval of the Officer of the Watch in control.

I had never been to Grenfell Tower before the 14 June 2017 but have attended many fires in high rise buildings previously. None of my past experience reflects anything I encountered that night.

I was not on duty at the time the fire initially broke out at Grenfell Tower. I normally leave home at about 04:45 am to travel in to work from where I live in Bedfordshire. This particular morning I got up at about 03:45 am and decided to set off for work. I was just getting onto the motorway at the Woburn/Flitwick junction and I put the London news on. At my role within the London Fire brigade there are only 9 officers that cover London throughout the night and as I listened to the scale of the incident being reported I realised that they were probably all being used at this incident and that they may well require further assistance if not to this incident but to any other incident that may also be running in London.

As I got to the outskirts of London I phoned our main control and informed them that all though I was not on duty 08:00 hrs I could book on duty and provide assistance if required. They said they were indeed struggling with officer cover and I then spoke to my line manager DAC Adrian FENTON who was working in the Brigade Co-Ordination Centre (BCC). Despite the fact that I am sure he was under pressure and busy he still took the time to have a quick chat with me and said that a number of other officers had also offered their assistance. He informed me he would add my name to the list of volunteers to come on duty and get back to me. We left it at that and I continued to make my way in to Union Street to my office.

As I came off the M1 (junction of the North Circular) I could see from the flyover a vast amount of smoke on the horizon. It was a clear morning and the plume of smoke extended high above the City. It reminded me of images from that fateful New York day. I could see it was a serious, serious fire. Its hard to explain but I wanted to be part of what was happening, to get involved and assist, but at the same time I didn't. It was a strange feeling.

I arrived in my office and was on my computer when I got a phone call from a Station Manager (SM) at

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2018

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the BCC to say “Tim are you happy to attend Grenfell?” To be honest I didn’t expect that but I said “Yes, of course”. In hindsight I think it was more of a request because due to the scale of the incident there were so many other roles and duties to perform in other venues in the brigade. I had already put the address in to my Sat Nav in anticipation and knowing that it was a very dynamic situation, all I asked for was the rendezvous point (RVP) and who was in charge. At that point it was Assistant Commissioner (AC) Andy ROE. I had a brief conversation with the SM about what was happening and the conditions of the fire and as you can imagine we agreed it must be pretty awful down there, horrendous is what we stated.

I think it was about 06.45 am by now. I then left Union Street and went to my car and made my way to Grenfell Tower using my lights and sirens. When I arrived there was a lot of activity around the area, police cordons, blue lights and so on. I think I parked in Elgin Street or Lancaster Road, it was one of the side roads off the main high street. Sitting in front of a cafe near to where I parked were a number of firefighters. I knew a couple of faces and I asked how they were doing and had they been involved yet. They said “No, we have been told to come around here, we’ve not been round there yet” and they informed me that they were, in effect, at a holding station.

From there I could see the smoke but I couldn’t see the building. I asked the fire fighters where the Incident Command Unit was and they told me the best route in. I got back into my car so I could park up closer to the incident. There were a lot of cordons in place and the police let me through one of their manned barriers. When I was about 100/150 yards away I parked up and got changed into my fire-fighting gear. I had already booked in with control when I left my car to say that I was on scene. I then continued on foot to look for the CU.

As I got closer I was then able to see the building. By this time I was practically at the base. There was lots and lots of smoke from the 4th floor all the way up, thick black smoke. White smoke informs us that we are getting water on a fire, and there wasn’t lots of that visible on any of the higher floors. I could also see some visible flame on many of the floors. This also indicated that there were still combustibles in the premises that were still burning. The darkened smoke on the outside we now know was from the cladding, most of which had burned away. I had never seen anything like it before. The fire was from the bottom to the top and the whole side of the building that I faced. It was a scene of complete devastation and from the damage I could see I knew that we must have lost a lot of life and there would be fatalities in

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

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numbers.

On arrival I had seen a couple of bodies that had been covered up, people who had jumped, and I could only imagine how bad it must have been to make people to do that. The conditions in the building would have been very difficult, with the speed and spread of fire.

I have watched videos from other fires around the world and what happened at Grenfell Tower was a very unusual fire spread. With my fire safety knowledge, I am aware of different types of cladding and I believe that is what caused most of the fire spread. That coupled with the Coanda effect (when fire breaks out of one window to the window above) must have been one of the main contributors.

By the time I arrived I believe the order had already been made that we were not using the Stay Put Policy. It did not look to me like many people had probably survived above the 16th. I have been in the job for 30 years and have seen many things but I have never seen anything so fire damaged at such early stages before, certainly not in London.

I reported to the Command Unit and awaited instruction. There were a couple of other officers outside the unit, I can't recall who, and we stood and waited together for our orders. AC ROE came out of the unit. I have known him for a number of years now. He said 'Tim, great to see you, I need you' and with that I took my helmet off and went onto the CU. He briefed me around the DMM but I don't think we went through everything in detail on each point but obviously he provided me with enough information so I had a good understanding of the incident. I was listening to what was going on and looking at the boards, trying to get a feel for the incident myself. I knew he was busy and had a lot to deal with. I didn't want to have to go back to him with questions. So I tried to get an idea, take on board as much information as I needed for the task I was detailed for.

The detail of that briefing included:

Details of incident:-fire on all floors, unaccountable persons, fatalities on various floors, several jumpers, we haven't got control of fire but crews were progressing up the building.

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

Hazards:- Life , falling debris, debris piling up at the base of the building, people jumping from the higher floors, utilities still connected (gas and electricity), only one internal stair well and the fire conditions and fire spread.

Resources: Personnel, equipment, appliances and available water. Objectives: Life, Fire, Safety

Because I am a Fire Safety Officer I was initially detailed to that role. I think AC ROE wanted a little bit more information on the fire safety issues with the building and why it was reacting as it was, means of escape, the ventilation and so on. He attached me to GM Charlie PUGSLEY who was in charge of Fire Investigation, whom I think may have been Temporary DAC at the time, I'm not sure.

I reported to Charlie but he said he already had a team in place. He had a couple of extra fire investigation team members coming down to support him and that they'd also detailed Station Manager Jim FLYNN who had been ordered back from Moreton- in - Marsh and is a fire engineer so he would be the subject matter expert in building behaviours.

I have known Charlie a long time and he knows my experience and capabilities and so he said "Tim, you need to be at the scene of operations and help put that fire out". I said Ok and went back to AC ROE, explained the situation and he then fully briefed me to take over as Sector Commander Fire from GM Pat GOULDBOURNE and GM Richard WELCH.

We then discussed the plan for my taking over that role. One of the tactics we discussed was the possibility of moving the Bridgehead higher up the building, the rationale for which is that the higher up the building you are before you commit your crews under air the closer you will be to the fire and will be able to maximise your BA wearers to their full extent.

In addition we also spoke in terms of phasing in my relief of Richard WELCH. Richard had worked extremely hard and in these circumstances you take ownership and invest yourself in the incident. It would not have been acceptable for me to just turn up and takeover. It is not a good way to manage things so I had to bear that in mind in my approach and handover.

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

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Due to the size and complexity of this incident individual sectors set up at the fire ground would report back through an Operations Commander. At the time the Operations Commander was DAC Andy O'LOUGHLIN. I did try to find him as I made my way over to the front of the building but was unable to locate him. There was a lot going on and a lot of people about so I never actually saw him until later.

I approached the building via the underpass opposite the main entrance and made my way inside. Upon entering the lobby I encountered a lot of water. I would say it was about 12 cm deep. It was gushing down the stairs like a river and into the lobby. I subsequently found out this was due to a burst hose and a defective outlet on an upper floor. The lighting in the lobby area was poor.

There were quite a few BA crews in the lobby area and in a room opposite we were holding more BA crews. I believe they were EDBA crews (Extended Duration BA wearers). To the left of that was another lobby area which I think held the SDBA (standard duration) crews so I would say there was about 10 EDBA crews and about the same number of SDBA.

To my right I could see GM Pat GOULDBOURNE and GM Richard WELCH at the bottom of the stairs and they were speaking to GM John GRAHAM, who I believe came on to the incident at about the same time as me. It was very noisy from crews talking and there was lots of noise and lots of bangs from outside that was either debris or persons falling, I am unsure. I spoke to the station manager in charge of the lobby, whose name I can't recall. I introduced myself and just had a quick chat with him to establish where we were and get a feel for what was going on. By looking at him I could see he was exhausted.

He looked emotionally drained. I tried to glean a little more information from him and he said he was looking to get himself released. He said "I've been here for 7 hours, I've seen too much, I need to go".

I explained that I was there to take over as the officer in charge of this sector and that once I had had the handover I would get him released. I couldn't release him before that because as I had no immediate replacement for him and he was an integral part of the lobby function.

GM John GRAHAM and I then received a handover briefing from Pat GOULDBOURNE. John's brief was similar to mine. He was going to be dealing with the building from the perspective of life, fire,

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

hazards and the safety of our crews throughout the building (the whole parameters of the front lobby of the building, all internal parts of the building). It made sense for us to both work together in a Sector Commanders role and Search role due to what we were faced with. A full de-brief was carried out.

There was a lot of pain and concern in the firefighters faces everywhere I looked. There was an awful lot going on that they still didn't have the answers to. They were based on the ground floor and they were saying that they were trying to progress, but they were obviously having lots of difficulties progressing to the upper floors. I think they had got up to the 7th floor at that time. They were trying to set up a staging area at the ground floor and move the Bridgehead up to the 4th floor.

Then Richard WELCH took John GRAHAM and I up to the 4th floor. It was very dark, and so we used our torches. You could smell smoke but it wasn't smoky, we were able to walk through it. We did not wear BA. There were torrents of water coming down the stairs. By the time I got to the 4th floor I might as well have been in the shower, I was absolutely drenched. We needed to press on to find out where the issue was and what had been damaged in terms of hose or a defective outlet. I asked Richard where all this water was coming from and he said that we had a couple of damaged or burst branch lengths higher up or it could have been one of the outlets not connected properly or it had burst. Our priority was finding life and fighting fire, so we needed to push up, chase that life and obviously on route try to rectify some of these issues with the hose.

In trying to move the Bridgehead higher up the building we had to take a number of things into consideration. We don't normally put firefighters above a fire floor as that carries huge risk to their safety. Fire can alter the structural stability of a building. If anything collapses or goes wrong then you face the potential loss of firefighters. Also, conditions are worse higher up than lower down. If you are in a flat above a fire, conditions would be really hot, because heat rises.

In addition you also have what is called the Coanda effect. This means that if a window is compromised, fire can leap out of that window and up to window above and will compromise the next floor above.

I knew the outside of Grenfell Tower had been severely damaged so there were also issues with that. But we had to go above the fire in this situation. It was a case of using operational discretion, to keep pushing

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

forward, whilst ensuring that safety measures were in place.

I had good communication on the radio with GM Greg ASHMAN who was running the FSG's from the Command Unit. He was collating information about persons trapped that was coming in not only from control but also from members of the public, the LAS and the Police. He would then check this information against his information board and see if that person had been found or the relevant flat searched. For example he was given information that a father (I think from the 14th floor) was out of the building but his child was still missing. I believe the father had lost his grip of him with his hand and stated he was still in the flat. That information was then relayed to me and I detailed a crew straight away with as much information as to their whereabouts as I could- for example they came out of the lift and went left and so on. They are then committed to the building to go and try and find this child. I recall that we had already checked that flat and it was crossed off as being searched but when we received information that a child was missing and apparently still in there I sent another crew in to double check. They reported back that they had again searched the flat and there was no obvious signs of any persons on that floor. I then fed that information back to Greg ASHMAN to ensure our plans were marked up and mirrored accordingly.

I think I received about five or six different bits of information from Greg that I had to deal with. It could be that the information received was anecdotal but I still had to assign crews to go and check.

Crews were detailed to go on to each floor carry out a systematic search and get any fire on that floor under control. Once that was achieved the next crew would move on up to the floor above whilst the crew below were maintaining cover, in effective leap-frogging over one another. It was challenging for me so I can only imagine how it must have been for the crews. We got to the 7th floor. We had good control and searched the areas fully- the stair wells, then the lobbies, then we had to get into the flats. All of this takes a while to achieve with each floor you reach.

So basically we were trying to progress and set up the Bridgehead on the 4th floor. We went into the first flat on the left, as you come into the lobby. I now know this flat would have been opposite the flat of origin. There was fire damage and there was a bit of a flame in one of the living rooms and spreading but as it could be extinguished we decided that we could control this room and use it as the Bridgehead.

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:



Smoke conditions were good, you could smell smoke but conditions were clear.

It was around that point and it must have been a good half hour, forty minutes after I had arrived that I felt I had gained enough information to take over from GM Richard WELCH. So I said to him "Thanks very much Richard, you've done a wonderful job". I gave him a big pat on the shoulder and said "I'm going to take over now, you've had your time here, it would be good for you to take a breather". He was fine with that and between me and John Graham we relieved Richard and Pat of their duties.

We then decided to take crews up to the 4th and start our objectives and plan again- albeit the plans hadn't changed much and so we copied the drawings or graphs on to the wall upstairs and took the forward information board up. This is just like a big white board really (but can be rolled). It captures information such as the type of incident, the amount of floors and rooms we had to cover and so on. Some people were taking pictures of it and someone else was trying to copy it. We then put this information on 4th floor wall opposite the lifts. Later when we moved the Bridgehead up to the 7th we repeated these actions.

I believe that at that time we had approximately 30 BA crews committed to the building per hour. When I had 30 committed I would ask for another 30 to be moved to the holding area and so it went on. We took over two flats and in one I had SDBA crews and in the other EDBA crews. I also set up a briefing room behind the lifts so crews could be briefed on entry and debriefed on egress. I would estimate that we had about 50 to 60 firefighters in the building at any one time.

Prior to moving up to the 7th John and I went to assess the area and again we were not wearing BA. The conditions in the stairwell itself had improved. Moving to the 7th improved our chances of getting higher up the building. Crews were getting battered by the heat and the sheer physical exertion of getting up the stairs and clearing the floors. If we could have a staging area higher up the building crews could therefore travel further up the building under air and we could progress up to the higher floors. On our initial assessment of the 7th there was fire in one of the flats but we had been able to suppress it.

I think the Bridgehead remained on the 4th floor for about an hour and then we moved it up to the 7th floor. However, we were only on the 7th floor for about 15 minutes when fire broke out again and really

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

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took hold which compromised our position so we moved back down to the 4th where I knew it to be safe. We continued operations from there once again. I believe we remained there for probably another forty minutes to an hour then moved back again up to the 7<sup>th</sup>.

In terms of conditions within the block the stairwell was smoke damaged and there was a lot of clothing, shoes and mobile phones and so on littering the floor. I recall the lobby on the 5th or 6th was really damaged. The 7th wasn't too bad, the lobby by the lifts itself was smoke stained and we had a little bit of fire by one of the flats to the right hand side but the flats themselves were clear/clean. We did break the doors down on the flats to utilise those but the conditions were good in that lobby area.

On the 7th floor it was warm but it wasn't any more so than like the heating being on high really. There were a few hot spots in some of the flooring and the ceiling, and the gas supply to the oven was alight but we extinguished the ceiling and the floors so really conditions were good to work from. We allowed the gas supply to flame but it was controlled. Obviously this was after our initial retreat from the 7th. A lot of the windows were open or may have been smashed, I don't know, but it was quite well ventilated.

From the 7th upwards the stairwell was badly smoke damaged and it was difficult to see the floor numbers. In addition if you opened the lobby doors to the communal areas and flats these too had been badly damaged and it was difficult finding out which floor you were actually on. Crews were asked to try and mark the walls with tape or a pen if they were able to confirm what floor they were on. It was important to try and accurately establish what floors crews were on, so all crews could be accounted for. Once returning to the bridgehead crews were fully de-briefed and they would ensure their information was captured and be able to confirm on the drawings which flats were clear and so on.

We set up a briefing/debriefing system. Crews would receive their initial briefing from the Watch Manager in terms of what was expected of them when they were committed to the building, which floors they were to go to and what they were expected to do when they got there. In addition I warned them that they may well come across bodies but it was important that they continued to keep trying to progress up the building. I also ensured they were able to hear information from the outgoing crews in terms of information such as if there were steps missing, holes, people on the stairwell or in the lobby, whether they needed to turn left or right and so on, generally safety information that would assist them as they

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2018

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committed and progressed to the upper floors.

Crews would come down following the duration of their BA. You could see they had been punished by the conditions- where they were being sent to search, what they had seen, they were hot, sweating, they were in mild heat distress which you would expect in such conditions. After taking a quick initial debrief at the Entry Control Point, crews were then taken to a designated flat on the same floor where they were fully debriefed by SM Dan ALIE. We had set up a de-briefing room, with a big plan of the floors and flats and the crews could update which floors they had searched and which flats were still alight. They could also update the board with any casualties found. That information would then be noted on the plan to enable us to get a better picture of proceedings. It was also used to brief fresh and new crews.

We adopted this process because when you first exit a building and you remove your BA mask your adrenaline is still extremely high so often the information came out rushed. Once the crews were able to take on water and take a breather it was possible to glean more information from them. This process seemed to work well and so we continued to use it for all incoming and outgoing crews.

As part of the debrief process I wanted to know what percentage of the area had been searched and what percentage of the fire had been extinguished. Rather than ask crews to provide these updates over the radio while they were committed in the building I decided to collect this information when they closed down at egress. I wanted them to be able to get on with their job, not keep stopping to report back to me. They would only report this information to the Entry Control Officer.

As long as I was able to track them via the Entry Control Board I was satisfied so I kept the radio traffic down to a minimum.

Using the method I described of having crews committed to the building, clearing a floor, providing cover on that floor and then pushing the next crew above them we eventually managed to get to the 16th floor. I cannot provide accurate timings in relation to our actions that day. If you had asked me how long I had been there I would probably have said 45 minutes to an hour even though in total I was there for 10 hours.

There were a number of people who had lost their life and their bodies were in the stairwell. I made the

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

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decision to move them into the lobby area of the floors they were on and place them near to the lifts. The rationale behind this was to improve access in the stairwell for the firefighters. For example there was a female on the 11th floor which made it difficult for crews to pass. We made a decision to move that individual and I set aside a crew of four EDDBA wearers with the assistance of some SDBA wearers to put her into one of the lobby areas of the 10th or 11th floor I believe. I think there was also a child found on the 11th floor and other adults on other floors.

I was conscious from about midday that maybe I shouldn't be chasing the life any more as the chances of survival at this stage of the incident were very slim but I never gave up, although in my head I realised I was probably just chasing the fire now. I continued to chase the life. I just thought that if life was extinct they would still want us to get to them. If there is a soul, or for their family, I wanted to get to them. I knew their bodies would further deteriorate from the conditions. I always wanted to get to them, to anybody where I could.

I mentioned when I arrived there had been water cascading down the stairs. Hose had become knotted and tangled and there were various burst lengths. I had sent crews up to try secure the hose management. I think I tasked SM Sam KAZMANLI with this duty. It wasn't working so I had to make a decision to close the water supply, turn the water off, layout the hose and start again. I was aware this would take some time and it would delay our progress but it was necessary. I ensured that I had all the necessary resources in place, hose, crews and so on before we shut the water supply off and then basically we conducted a staged process on each floor to ensure that we had clear lines. That took a little while to put in place but if we hadn't we would have been unable to progress any further.

Even after this had been rectified we had further problems with water. The higher you progress up the building the more you reduce your water capacity and flow. Pressure drops by I think 0.2 bar per floor so I asked for a lightweight portable pump which is a portable generator that you can plug in the hose and improve your water supply.

Obviously being inside the tower I was unable to see what was happening on the outside of the building. Station Manager Chris PAYTON was in charge of the aerial outside and I was able to communicate with him. As you can imagine this was a very dynamic situation. We had crews fighting fires internally on

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

each floor and I was really concerned for them in terms of the aerial punching in their jets from the outside. If they were directed towards my crews it can make conditions really dangerous for them. I was able to keep Chris informed as to where my crews were located so he could fight the fire externally but in doing so not compromise my crews. In addition I asked him a couple of times to send me pictures from his phone so I could see what the fire looked like from the outside, I wanted to see if conditions were improving or getting worse. I recall from some of the photographs I saw that conditions seemed to be much the same as was they were when I had first arrived.

In addition crews were committed to the building with Thermal Image Cameras (TIC's) so we were doing TIC readings all the time. Certainly every other crew would have a TIC and it would also be part of the Bridgehead equipment. So for example if a fire flared up on the 13th floor and I'm getting information from Chris PAYTON outside saying "Tim it looks like its flaring up on the 10th on the western side", I would relate that to the crews and if they were on that floor they would investigate and do a TIC reading of it to see if it's getting anywhere near ambient temperature. It would also identify if there was fire in a void behind one of the walls or the cladding has caught alight again.

One of our biggest issues and challenges was that we couldn't isolate the gas and never isolated the gas whilst I was there. This needed to be isolated in the road by the gas authority and there were failings in that action being carried out. We had to control the gas fires in the kitchens and other gas appliances which were still alight. The worst thing you can do is extinguish the flame because you are just going to get a build-up of gas. This gas cloud could ignite at any time so you have to control the flame, almost treat it like you would a Bunsen burner, keeping it alight but making sure it does not ignite anything else.

Once the hose management issues were rectified, then it was just about progression, getting up the floors and up to the top floor which is what I really wanted to do. Whilst I was the Sector Commander Fire, the highest floor that we progressed to was the 18th floor.

I remember at one point, and I think it may have been about 15:00 hrs at that time, someone telling me I had to get rid of all the Red Watch crews as they were the night crews and were required to leave. It caused a little bit of an issue as some of the crews were waiting to be committed. They had all been briefed and wanted to get involved and wanted to help, so to say thank you after 8 hours you're not

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

required anymore was a bit hard to take so I over-ruled that decision, obviously taking into account their welfare and the fact they hadn't been deployed on any other duties previously. I told them I would get them in next and told them my plan, what floor I wanted them to get to and so on. I could see from their faces the drive and determination and I knew that they would do a good job for me and that is why I made that decision.

As conditions improved I carried out my own assessment of the building a couple of times. I felt it was important to go and see the conditions myself, go on to the floors, see the layout and look at the situation first hand. In addition I thought my experience as a Fire Safety Officer was another tool to bring to the incident, the more skills and experience you have the more you can bring to the table. I think also I went up there so that I could experience what the crews were experiencing and brief and debrief them knowing that I could say I had been up there and therefore knew what they were up against.

Obviously the higher I got up the floors the more smoky it became but I was able to see what I had in front of me. As I looked through the lobby doors on some of the floors I did see bodies. I can't recall exactly what I saw on each floor but I can confirm it was devastation. I remember opening a door on either the 16th or 17th you couldn't see a lot of flame, it was smoky. I was able to see how we had progressed, the size of the stairwell and get a good feeling of how we were getting on.

Because I was in charge of those crews and there was a concern in relation to safety within the building I felt I needed to examine the stairwell myself to see if I could see any signs of structural damage or cracks. I know I get paid for what I do and they are my responsibilities but for me seeing the concern on some of their faces I felt it was important for all our safety if I had first-hand knowledge the conditions within the stairwell and the upper floors. I had safety officers in place on the Bridgehead and within the lobby areas and the crews were also briefed to look for signs of any structural damage. However I still felt it was important that I had seen conditions for myself. This enabled me to make informed decisions in relation to continuing to push on to the upper floors.

I wanted to see the stairwell, see if it had been compromised. It was so blackened from the smoke it was so difficult to see any obvious cracks, however I did think it had, in fact, done its job in protecting the stairwell. I had so many BA wearers committed and I was worried about losing someone or getting

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

injured. I did lose a crew for about 10 minutes which was a bit of a panic. I was just about to send a Firefighter Emergency and get everything in place to go and search for them when they appeared at the bridgehead.

On occasion there were a couple of loud bangs from the upper floors which was probably the ceilings/walls collapsing but as I hadn't had any feedback from anyone in terms of there being any major structural damage I felt that we still needed to progress and not evacuate the building, also taking public perception into consideration as well which would have been a major factor.

You could see the eyes of crews saying tell me what to do Guv, eyes challenging asking why are we doing this and eyes that were frightened. I will never forget those faces. I was fully aware of the safety and integrity of the building and I felt with the information I had that the stairwell was strong and was doing its job.

Once conditions in the stairwell had improved I made the decision to commit the crews from the 7th but not under air. Crews were coming down and I could see it had been very challenging for them. They were being committed from the 7th to go up to the 16th/17th/18th floors and were using up a lot of their air to get there. I told them to carry out their own risk assessment and if it was clear I would be quite happy for them not to use their oxygen until they felt conditions dictated or to use it or turn it on and off as they felt necessary. This meant that they could preserve a little bit of air which then enabled them to get higher as I wanted them to progress up the building, my ultimate goal and outcome was being to reach the top floor.

The highest point committed crews were able to achieve whilst I was running that Sector was the 18th floor. I believe by then it was about 16:30 hrs. They were still searching that floor when I was relieved of my duties. We had had issues from 15:00 hrs in terms of possible collapse from above and vibration within the building. There had been some quite loud bangs which was quite eerie and there was obvious vibration within. I could feel this myself on the 7th floor.

I did come out of policy on a few occasions and I can justify that for example:

The use of air - I put control measures in where I could give crews a full briefing, telling them for

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

example that I knew up to the 13th floor it was clear from smoke, so let's get to the 13th then go under air. If that is compromised in any way then fall back to a lower floor etc and let me know so that I can brief the next crew.

I had fire fighters above a fire and again made a decision on that ensuring the correct control measures were in place.

I had jets being directed externally but again put safety measures in place to reduce risk.

I was aware that I had gas fires going and there was a potential of a gas build up. I know there were a lot of hazards and potential for early re-ignition because I had cleared a room on the 3rd floor and asked crews to keep an eye on it and I don't know if there was a gas build up but it broke through another ceiling. This also happened on other floors. I knew I had risk but we had to be seen to do as much as we could and crews worked exceptionally hard.

There was a lot of concern, the Commissioner had carried out a site visit with the Director of Safety Steve APTER. They came into the building and I gave them a briefing. During this time I think there had been a loud bang from one of the upper floors and the building vibrated. This happened about 4/5 times whilst I was in the building. I explained to them that with the feedback from the crews and what information I was getting from the officers outside I thought it was the partial collapse of flooring and the dividing walls. I remember saying that one of the biggest issues to deal with during the 10 hours I was there, was isolating the gas supply. Most of the floors continued to have gas appliances burning and I was constantly asking for the gas to be turned off.

I think the gas authority dug the road up 3 times and they were unable to locate and isolate the mains supply it was an ongoing problem whilst I was in command. I am sure they have plans as to where these supplies are in any particular block. I kept getting informed they were isolated but I still had live gas escaping with flame on every floor. I think that was one of the biggest challenges for me as I could not put the fires out.

I handed over to GM Neil CHISHOLM and someone else that I can't remember. This was carried out on

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

Signature witnessed by:



the Bridgehead on the 7th floor. I told them where we were and we discussed moving the Bridgehead further up the building. I said you can progress the Bridgehead further up but the more fires you have beneath you the more risk you are taking. At the 7th I had had fires on the 4th that had been dealt with quickly, I had had a couple of fires on the 5th and 6th but the higher you go you are going to have potentially 20 rooms on fire beneath you and this would be a risk. I told him how I had dealt with the water issues and explained some of the tactics we were using to allow crews to get further before going under air, thus enabling them to get higher up the building before using their air supply. I told him my objective had been to get to the top floor, search the whole building for persons and to extinguish the fire.

I left the building at about 16:45 hrs and as I came out onto that first floor mezzanine lobby there was a huge bang and the glass juddered a bit in the atrium so there was something collapsing above. I waited for the Police to escort me out. They were escorting crews into and out of the tower, using their shields to protect us from falling debris or falling persons.

I came out and it was a different world really from when I had first gone in. Behind me was what appeared to be Armageddon but in front of me it was all set up with stalls full of refreshments. It was almost like a fete. It was really strange especially from where I had just come from. It was great to see, the public were using their gardens to serve drinks and food and it was really uplifting but felt very strange at the same time. There was all that madness around us and yet when I came out everything seemed to be so organised.

Shortly after, at about 17:00 hrs I think the decision was made by the Commissioner to withdraw for a period of time. It was a huge decision to make but it was the right decision to make at the time.

I went back to the Tower about five days later. I laid some flowers. I think I did it for closure, I don't really know. I just felt very sad. I have found it difficult at times. I get emotional at times but I am fine. I just wanted to do more. I wanted to get to the top floor. It hurt that we couldn't get there. I am fine with it now. I am very, very proud of the fire fighters that went past me and they really did give 100% and I really do believe now that we really tried.

I went to a wedding the Saturday after the fire. I didn't really want to go but it was a close friend so I

Signature: Timothy FROST  
2018

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knew I had to. I knew people would come up to speak to me, tell me how proud they were and so on. I didn't really want that but was prepared for it. What I wasn't prepared for though was someone I didn't know came up to me and asked me about what floor I got to. I told him I said I cleared the 16th and got to the 18th and asked him why? He said his niece and nephew were last seen on the 16th and were still missing so that hurt because we had got to the 16th but didn't save them. I left then and went home and I suppose after that you see the news and hear about the family of the 7, you relate to each floor and see pictures of each person and then it feels like I got to know them and that was not a good . I didn't watch the news after that and it seemed like I got to know them too much, their friends, their life, their families.

I have been on a couple of incidents and this remains in the back of your mind a little bit. I have had some support and I have come quite a long way. I don't go to bed with it anymore and I don't wake up with it. I've stopped shouting in the night so I'll take that. However, making this statement brings it all back. It's just for me that as a firefighter, you normally go in to a fire and people come out. This time they didn't and it's hard to accept.

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2018

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