

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: WELCH, TOM

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 11 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: TOM WELCH

Date: 20/12/2017

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

On Sunday 26th November 2017 I provided an account to Police Constable Christopher LOIZOU and Detective Constable Amin KOHZADBAYAT at Wembley Fire Station regarding the Grenfell Tower Fire, also present was my union representative Peter GOLDING.

On the 23rd November 2009 I joined the London fire Brigade and completed my 4 month basic training course before being posted to Willesden fire station on red watch where I have remained until this day. In addition I have also been trained as an appliance driver and trained in mass deacon which involves decontaminating firefighters and members of the public after a chemical incident.

Prior to the 13th June 2017 I did not have any prior knowledge on Grenfell Tower and had never attended an incident there in my service as a firefighter. I have been on a section 7(2)d familiarisation visits to buildings that are at risk in my assigned area. Each station will have a list of these buildings. I am familiar with the risk buildings in my area. When you attend a high rise fire if you are first on scene there is normally an information plate on the high rise building informing you of where the dry riser inlets are.

There is a policy in the Fire service called "stay put" for high-rise blocks. My understanding of this is that unless your flat is directly affected by fire or smoke you should stay in there unless directed to leave. During my training I have learnt that fire doors fitted in high-rise buildings are typically able to contain a fire and stop the spread for approximately 1 hour.

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I complete continuous computer based training modules on my shifts. High-rise fire modules is common amongst the training I undertake during the year. High-rise buildings and basements are the most dangerous situations to combat in regards to firefighting. I have in the past year completed high-rise practical drills and also station based practical drills with a mock up tower that is situated in Willesden fire stations yard complete with a dry riser inlet.

I have completed training modules concerning the spread of fire to the outside of buildings, but not for a spread of fire as ferocious as Grenfell Tower. I attended a high rise fire on the 27th floor of Trellick Tower North Kensington which was a month before the fire at Grenfell Tower.

In this statement I will speaking about the crew I was on duty with from red watch they are, the watch manager Alex CARDY, Firefighter Greg LAWSON Driver of Call sign G281. Crew manager Craig EDEN who was also duty firefighter, firefighter Kate FOSTER and firefighter Agnel FERNANDES who is usually on my watch at Willesden but was seconded to Chiswick fire station for that shift to cover as they were short of staff. I will also be speaking about a colleague called Chris SECRETT who used to work on my watch and is now a crew manager at North Kensington fire station. I will also be mentioning a person I attempted to evacuate from the 20th floor of Grenfell Tower.

On Wednesday 13th June 2017 I was on night duty call sign G281 on red watch which had begun at 8PM in Willesden Fire Station. My posting for the evening was duty firefighter which meant if a call was received I was one of the designated officers to firefight, and be an initial BA (Breathing apparatus) wearer along with Craig EDEN. I was also the designated officer to attend the watch room if a call was received to take the information of the call that prints from a telex machine on to paper. I would then find an appropriate route for the driver. After midnight on a nightshift unless the fire crew are deployed on an incident the fire crew will stand down and enter in to a rest period. This means that we are able to go to asleep at the station with beds provided by the Fire brigade in dormitories , and will be on standby if a call is received. At approximately 01.20hours whilst in bed on my rest period the call system was activated and the lights in the room came on with an announcement on a speaker that G281 was to mobilise. I got up and made my way down the pole and to the watch room.

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The call stated there was a 10 pump high-rise fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington. Greg LAWSON then came in to the watch room with me and assisted me in locating Grenfell Tower on the map which is provided in the watch room. This map is enlarged and placed on the wall so you can locate the road name. This map only covers Willesden and parts of north Kensington but not as far as Grenfell Tower. Together we worked out most of the route and I offered to navigate the rest of the route via an A to Z that we keep in the fire engine for these exact situations although it would not be required as Alex CARDY who would be sitting in the front passenger seat of the G281 had GPS located on the front of the fire engine through MDT (Mobile data terminal.)

We then prepared for mobilisation I put my tunic on and sat in back of the fire engine. Also in the back with me was Craig EDEN and sat between us was Kate FOSTER. We began to roll out of the fire doors to make our way to Grenfell Tower. As we began our journey a message came through from control on the Radio channel requesting "Make pumps twenty" (20) on hearing this message I was prepared for the fact that we were going to be attending a major incident as Usually an increase of pumps is done in stages but this call went from 10 to 20 pumps in the matter of minutes from being mobilised. This is the only update I remember hearing on route to the incident.

At 1:20 am we made our way to Grenfell Tower. We turned right out of the station on to Pound Lane, Right on to Robson Avenue which becomes Harlesden Road then turned left on to Wrotesley Road and travelled to the end on to a T junction. We then turned right on to Harrow Road, in to Scrubs Lane and then turned left on to North Pole Road. My knowledge of the route ended at this point as the area is not covered by our fire station. The route was clear of traffic as to be expected at that time in the morning. From North Pole Road Alex CARDY was able to navigate to Grenfell Tower from the GPS on the MDT (Mobile Data Terminal) in the front cabin.

At the top of Scrubs Lane which is at least 2 or 3 miles away from Grenfell Tower I could smell strong smoke and from my experience I identified this smoke as being from a building fire. We all spoke to each other on the engine and were all surprised at how strong the smell was from such a distance. Shortly after on Scrubs Lane, Grenfell Tower came in to view which appeared to be on fire from top to bottom. The flames were clearly visible as it was still dark outside. I have never seen a fire on this scale before. We then approached the incident and I switched on my Personal hand held radio.

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Due to other fire engines already deployed at the incident already, we had difficulty parking very close to the fire, the roads were so tight at the location that Greg found it difficult to navigate through the side streets. We found a parking space approximately 200 meters away, I do not remember the road name we parked up on. On arrival I rigged in my BA (Breathing Apparatus). G281 normally carries 5 BA sets but that evening the engine only had 4 as one was defective and a replacement could not be located. We all wore a BA set apart from Alex CARDY who was OIC and is typical in such circumstances as he would be the least likely to enter the fire due to his duties as an OIC. (Officer in charge)

I cannot remember which side of the tower we parked on but I briefly looked at it from where we parked. There were a few trees and surrounding buildings obstructing the view of the tower. The side of the tower in my view appeared to have flames snaking on the outside of the building.

The normal procedure for a major incident is for the OIC (officer in charge) to take a list of personnel from the fire engine, book in with the command unit and hand in the list of officers where you would then be assigned a task. I did not know where the command unit was parked or who was in charge of the incident. We waited by G281 for Alex cardy to return and brief us on our task when an urgent message was broadcast on my handheld radio stating that BA (Breathing Apparatus) crews were needed at the Bridgehead urgently along with hose and breaking in gear. (Equipment used to facilitate an entry through locked doors)

On hearing this we acted on the request, we finished rigging our BA equipment and I pressurised my set. I then pressed the button on my face mask to contain the oxygen in the cylinder until I reached the bridgehead. We then took a few lines of hose each, breaking in gear and a thermal imaging camera which is standard for a high rise fires. Craig and I took the halogen bar which is used to prize doors open and Greg LAWSON and Kate FOSTER took the enforcer which is a piece of equipment used to force doors open by hitting it on the door and using force to break the lock. We then began making our way to the bridgehead. As we headed towards the building I looked at Grenfell Tower and I could see the fire on every floor, the flames snaking up the building. I had never seen anything like this before.

We approached what I think is the main entrance of the tower. I cannot recall the route we took to approach or what side of the tower it was. As we got closer to the entrance I saw flaming debris coming

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from the tower which I would describe as flaming chunks of material, some as small as the size of little flaming embers and some chunks the size of desk tables falling down from the tower which could have caused injury. We carefully navigated our way round the debris and entered the tower via the Ground floor which was an open plan area. Ahead of us to the right hand side was a metal staircase which led to a mezzanine floor with a narrow walkway.

On this walkway was a queue of firefighters in pairs in their BA sets waiting to enter the bridgehead and be briefed on their task. I paired up with Craig Eden and I joined the queue. We then turned right from the walkway in to a lobby area which was the bridgehead and the entry control point. The visibility in this area was completely clear. We were briefed by a watch manager with an Irish accent. I do not know his name. The briefing was to go to the 20th floor and see what we could find.

I found this briefing to be unusual and slightly vague. A normal briefing at an incident would contain details of a specific task. My adrenaline was pumping at this point as I knew this was a big fire, I wanted to get in as quickly as possible and assist in bringing the incident to an end. During the briefing I asked if we were using the fire lift or the stairs. I was told to use the stairs.

As I was preparing to carry out the task, I saw one of my colleagues Chris SECRETT. A person who I consider one of my best friends in the fire service. He passed me on the stairs as he was taking his breathing apparatus off. He looked flustered and he had sweat dripping from him. He then said to me "Go easy up there its fucking mental". At that moment I thought to myself, if this person who has 17 or 18 years' experience as a firefighter, a person who I looked up to in my first years as a firefighter and who I have full confidence in his abilities looks flustered, Then the conditions inside must be very serious.

I then took one (1) length of hose rolled up under one arm with a branch (nozzle) attached to it and a halogen bar in the other hand. Craig took one length of hose and a thermal imaging camera.

I then put the mask on for my BA which has to be done at the bridgehead while in clean air. A standard BA set gives you approximately 30 minutes of oxygen once committed with the mask on. We walked to the entry control point and gave our tallies to the officer who was collecting them. This involves telling the entry control officer your name who will check your name matches the tally on a board. The control officer will then check the cylinder gauge and check to see how much time you will have before the air

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runs out and then marks the time against the board with your tally. This can then be monitored by Entry control whilst you are committed under air.

We then committed under air to the stairway of the 3rd floor and began to ascend the stairs up to the 20th floor as per our briefing. I could not hear any fire alarms activated. The stairwell was narrow I would say if 2 firefighters were to pass each other on the stairwell at the same time then they would easily brush arms with each other. As we got to the 4th floor there was thick black smoke in the stairwell and the temperature was warm, visibility was near zero. I remember thinking this was not usual as the stairwells of a tower block are usually designed to be protected from fire, smoke and heat. I commented to my colleague Craig that if the condition in the stairwells are like this then the fire must be very serious. I was not aware that this was the only staircase at this stage.

We carried on ascending although this was a slow process as there was a big queue of firefighters going up at the same time from different crews and stations all with their individual briefs. The landings were small and narrow and as firefighters were stopping at the floors they were briefed to go in to everyone would have to stop while they got their equipment before committing in to the floor. This process takes time. Normally you are able to edge past the crew and carry on ascending but because the landings were so narrow the fire crews below would have to stop and wait. The stairwell was very Smokey at this point and it was difficult to know what floor I was on. The smoke obscured my visibility to the point that I had to feel for a doorway leading to the lobby to know I was on a different floor. At regular intervals you could hear fire fighters asking what floor they were on. This message would be echoed between us up the stairs then someone would shout the floor number which would be echoed back down.

Whilst ascending the stairs, although I could not see due to the smoke, I did not feel any obstructions under my feet and I do not recall any water being in the stairwells. I could not see any gas pipes or shut off points and I was not aware if the utilities had been isolated.

We made our way up at the lower floors the visibility still very bad the stairwell was completely smoke logged I had no idea which floor I was on. I then heard a firefighter shout the floor number on the 12th or 13th floor as they entered in to the lobby from the stairwell. Craig and I carried on ascending as we got to the 16th or 17th floor the smoke in the stairwell began to dissipate and the visibility improved. The

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stairwell was still hazy with smoke but we could see the floor numbers clearly. We then arrived at floor twenty (20) and I checked my pressure gauge to see if I had enough air in my BA to make it back down the stairs as did Craig.

We both spoke to each other and we knew we did not have a huge amount of time left before we would have to get back down from the tower as ascending the stairs and the other obstructions on the stairs had caused a lot of consumption of oxygen from the cylinder. We both decided that in addition to our task we would find the dry riser outlet and attach the hose to it and charge it with water. This would be for the benefit of the next fire crew that came to the 20th to be able to use it to firefight.

No point during this task was I told that people were trapped or needed rescuing so I assumed the building had been evacuated. I was not aware if the stayput policy was implemented or who would have implemented it.

We then opened the door to the floor from the stairwell which was on the right hand side and entered. As we stepped in the air was filled with thick black smoke and the temperature was hot. It was so thick I could not have seen my hand if I had waived it right in front of my face. There did not appear to be an activation of a sprinkler system and I could not see one installed. Craig used the thermal imaging camera but it did not assist us. We navigated our way around the floor by keeping to the wall line and following the wall on the left hand side, I came across an instep which then led to the left and then to the right and passed 2 flat doors. The visibility was zero and it was all done by touch. After 2 or 3 minutes we could not locate the riser so I told Craig I would go back to the stairwell and attempt to communicate with another crew going up or down the stairs to see if they knew where it was.

I made my way back to the stairwell and very luckily there was a fire crew on the stairs, I have no idea what crew they were or where they were going but they informed me of the location of the riser outlet and said it could be located by following the wall from the left and keep going until passing two (2) flat doors. We then followed the same route and knowing this time the riser was located by the flat doors and found it on the second attempt.

As we approached the 2 flat doors Craig banged on them and announced that he was a firefighter just to

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double check if anyone was inside. We then found the riser outlet. The riser had a glass door which needed a key to open. I did not have a key so I broke the glass with the halogen bar and I plugged a hose in to the outlet. In preparation Craig and I flaked out the hoses. (Straightened the hoses and made sure there was not any folds or knots in them.) Craig then returned to the riser and turned the wheel round to charge the hose, I kept hold of the branch and felt a solid kick from the water and the hose felt solid which indicated to me it was fully charged.

We then began making our way back to the stairwell to head down to entry control. Whilst making our way along the wall I then heard a person's voice I recognised as a fire fighter from my watch called Agnel Fernandes who was working at Chiswick fire station for that shift due to it being short staffed. He asked me for assistance with some casualties that he had located on the 20th floor. I then made my way to where he was located by following his voice as the visibility was zero. I followed my way back along the wall line, past the door leading to the stairwell.

As I got approximately 6 foot past the door a casualty was either handed to me by another firefighter or they had tried to evacuate themselves and came across me. I assumed this was one of the casualties that Agnel was referring to. Normal procedure for a high rise block would be that if the occupiers flat is not on fire then you must return them to their flat until the fire is extinguished as it is technically the safest place for them however I trusted Agnel, s judgement, I believed that his crew must have extracted this person because it was not safe for them to remain in the tower. I was aware there were other casualties on the floor but I don't know the exact number. I was also aware now from the layout of the building that this was the only stairwell for entry and exit.

The air on this floor was full of thick black smoke and the casualty was coughing and spluttering and struggling to breathe. I knew that keeping this person in the building was not safe. So I made the decision to evacuate the casualty from the building. I then said to the casualty I had control of that we had to evacuate and led them to the stairwell. I had my arms around both shoulders and the casualty was face to face with me at this point. I then led the casualty to the stairwell, once there I turned the casualty around and kept them in front of me so they were facing the descent of the stairs. I placed a hand on each shoulder and began guiding the casualty down the stairs. I began evacuating like this so I could keep constant contact. Whilst on the stairwell Craig began to assist me. As we got on to the stairwell the whole

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area was now filled with thick grey smoke which you would not be able to survive breathing in without a BA set on.

I knew they would struggle to breathe in the stairwell however at this point I felt I had no other choice than to evacuate this casualty as soon as possible from the building. I stated again that we needed to move as quickly as we could. At the same time Craig's low pressure warning signal activated which is an emergency device on the BA to tell you that you are low on air. I knew that mine would activate soon as we had the same amount of air when we committed. Once this activates under a routine procedure you have 12 minutes to exit a building before the air runs out however this was not routine and due to amount of exertion and with a casualty who would need to be assisted out of the building we would have less than 12 minutes to exit.

As soon as we began descending the casualty began to make a gurgling noise and then dropped unconscious, their legs began to buckle and fell to the floor. Craig and I then had to take the complete body weight of the casualty and carry them down the stairs. This was extremely difficult as the person was very heavy and the stairwell was full of smoke so navigating also became very difficult, it was like being blind.

Craig and I then attempted to carry the casualty down the stairs. I took control of the arms and Craig the legs. The casualty was extremely heavy and we kept having to stop every so often to get a better grip. I was initially walking forwards down the stairs and Craig backwards but the position would switch on occasions due to turning on the stairs. At the early stages whilst evacuating the casualty I lost my footing and fell down the stairs on to the landing. I do not remember which floor or how many steps. I got up straight away and went back to carrying the casualty. I hurt my knee slightly when I fell.

Shortly after, my low pressure warning signal activated. I then sent a priority message on my personal radio to the entry control point stating that it was a message from Willesden crew and that we have just left floor twenty (20) and had an unconscious casualty and requested another crew to come up to assist us evacuating the casualty as we were running out of air. Up until this point there was a mega amount of radio traffic, it became like background noise in the end and I could not keep track of it all. After transmitting this message I began focussing in on the radio traffic for a response to my message, however

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I did not receive a reply.

We continued evacuating the casualty and as we got between the 19th and the 18th floor Craig shouted to me "Tom we have to go we are running out of air" his voice was panicked, I told him that I was going to stay and continue attempting to evacuate the casualty. I did not want to compel Craig to stay as the last thing I wanted was to put another crew member in danger. He said he was going to make his way down and send the first crew he came across to attend my location and assist me.

It is policy that when committed in to a fire as a pair that you should leave as a pair, however I believed it was justified in this case due to the exceptional circumstances. Even though my air was running out and the chance of this casualty surviving from smoke inhalation was not very good, I could not bring myself to leave this casualty. I totally committed myself to the rescue effort at this point and made the decision I was going to stay.

Craig then made his way down the stairs and I continued to evacuate the casualty by taking control of the arms and pulling the body backwards whilst I walked backwards down the stairs. I was struggling to pull them along and I would have to stop every so often, readjust my grip and continue. I was exerting myself more and more and I was exhausted, I kept losing my grip which was depleting my emergency air from the cylinder faster. Another crew then joined me quite quickly after Craig left. This was either by chance or a crew Craig sent directly to me. I explained I needed assistance evacuating a casualty, the smoke in the stairwell was thick and black and the visibility was zero. We then as a 3 person crew carried on evacuating the casualty but even with 2 more people assisting we were all struggling to take this person down the stairs quickly. I kept saying to the new crew assisting me that I needed to leave as I was running out of air, but I could not bring myself to leave the crew as I knew this casualty was heavy and needed an extra person to assist. I then made a decision that I would stay and assist until the air in my cylinder had completely emptied as I was absolutely committed to this rescue effort by this point.

Then the air in my cylinder had completely emptied. I knew this because the face mask attached to my BA set had stuck to my face and in order for me to take a breath in I would have to remove my fire hood and mask which mean there was no air left in the cylinder. I then panicked, I needed to breathe as I was the most out of breath I had ever been in my life. I had been exerting myself nonstop attempting to

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evacuate the casualty. I then removed the fire hood and then the mask. The first thing I noticed is that it was extremely hot in the stairwell and I felt a burning sensation on my face. I shouted to the other crew members assisting me that I had to leave as I had run out of air. I then took a few breaths in, I thought to myself that I was going to die attempting to evacuate from the stairwell. The smoke was thick and it burned my throat when inhaling it and stung my eyes, I did not know which floor I was on and I believed I would be overcome by smoke before reaching the bottom of the stairwell and collapse.

I then began to run down the stairs, at this stage my only hope was that another BA crew would find me if I collapsed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This gave me the determination to carry on running down the stairs faster and stayed with the focus [REDACTED] and had to survive. The faster I ran the more heavy my breathing became, the thick smoke was filling my lungs more with each breath, the visibility was very poor and I was completely blinded by the smoke. I used the left hand wall of the staircase to guide me down the stairs as there was zero visibility and I was also aware from other incidents I have attended that there would have been equipment left on the stairs by other crews, I was very lucky I did not trip on anything whilst running.

I made it to the bridgehead and I was very surprised I made it that far, on arriving at the bridgehead I should have reported the entry control point to let them know I was out of the building and collect my tally that I gave to them before I entered who would have then shown me as out of the building. On making it to the bridgehead my mind was scrambled and I was in such a panic I didn't even see the bridgehead. I just wanted to get out of the building as fast as possible as I had been inhaling smoke for so long whilst running down the stairs. My mind was so focused on getting out of the building that I didn't even see anyone at the bridgehead even though there would have been lots of firefighters there.

I ran from the bridgehead on the mezzanine floor and down the stairs to the ground floor. I then ran out of the tower from the same door I entered from. I remember looking up as I ran out of the tower and seeing a wall flaming debris falling down on me. I was still panicked at this stage and I wanted to get away from the building as fast as possible. I then ran approximately 20 meters away where the road curved around, I then collapsed on the pavement. I laid on the floor attempting to catch my breath but I felt like I could not. I began to notice my surroundings more and realised my crew was with me.

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Greg who is an experienced firefighter of 20 years and has undertaken external first aid qualifications in addition to the first aid training we receive In the LFB was concerned about me. He asked Kate to find a paramedic and stated to me that I needed an ambulance due to heat stress and smoke inhalation. My mind still felt scrambled at this point, I told Greg I did not want an ambulance and that I was going to lay on the pavement and catch my breath. I felt there were firefighters and members of the public who should be prioritised over me and the last thing I wanted to do was use up the resources. I did see a paramedic later on during the shift but they discharged me on scene, I do not know the name or the call sign of the paramedic.

I started to cast my mind back trying to piece together everything that had happened in the tower prior to my exit. I then realised I had not clocked out at entry control which made me concerned as entry control would still think I was in the building and send in an emergency crew to find me. I then asked Craig to relay a message on the radio telling entry control I was out of the building and safe and well. Despite his best efforts Craig could not get a message across on the radio due to the high volume of radio traffic. A senior officer then walked past at this point and Craig informed them that I was out of the tower safe and asked the senior officer to relay a message not to send a rescue crew in to find him. I do not know the name of the senior officer.

Greg removed my tunic as I was overheated. He then placed my hands in 2 buckets of water to cool my body down and the Kate and Craig poured water over my head. We all then rested in the same place for a period of approximately 30 minutes. I then attempted to stand up but my body was still exhausted and my legs would not support me, I collapsed on the floor and my colleagues assisted me my placing me against a wall.

We then all rested as a crew for a further 20 minutes and by this time I was able to stand and walk. We then walked over to a grass verge where it appeared there was a number of firefighters waiting to be assigned a task. We waited there to be assigned. The Tower appeared to have more flames on the outside of the building in comparison to when I first saw it from the entrance on arrival. After a short while a senior officer approached my crew and asked if one of us had run out of air whilst in the tower. I identified myself to him and he asked me to wait as he needed to speak to me.

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I waited for approximately 40 minutes. He then returned and initiated a procedure that is typical in such circumstances. He took my BA set for analysis and spoke to me about the incident. He asked me to write down a statement of what had occurred. I have not seen this statement since I wrote it and I do not know where it is kept. I do not know the name of the senior officer I spoke too.

At approximately 4:30 am he released me. It was now daylight I was still feeling slightly flustered but I was still eager to assist. Greg and I then took over a fire engine that was pumping water in to an aerial appliance directly on to the tower by the side with the leisure centre, this appliance also has a fire fighter on the ALP and an officer on the ground operating it. On taking this appliance over we noticed that water was being charged with a hose reel.

Normally it should have been fitted with a big jet hose. We asked the firefighter on the ground we took over from the reasons. He explained that due to low water pressure there was not enough water pressure to charge jet hose so they had to switch to a hose reel, when I charged the dry riser on the 20th floor the water pressure seemed fine. Thames water would have had responsibility for the water pressure and would normally request the water pressure to be boosted by them if it is low. Whilst operating the engine it began to run out of diesel and arrangements had to be made to fill up the tank. This was facilitated and shortly after a firefighter arrived and filled the tank of the engine up with more diesel.

I do not know the firefighters names of who I took over from on the engine, the firefighter on the ALP or who filled up the tank with diesel.

From this engine I had a full view of the side of the tower. Whilst looking I could not believe the scale of the fire. It looked as though every single part of the building from floor 9 or 10 upwards had been completely burnt out. The top floors of the building looked as if they had been hollowed out. There was debris approximately 4 or 5 foot deep which I could see on the floor around the building. I could clearly see the flaming debris was falling from the outside of the building and I presumed there was a cladding material on the outside that had something to do with the spread of the fire. I have attended high-rise fires before and I have never seen a fire spread like this on the outside. If the outside was just concrete material the fire would not have spread to the outside.

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Whilst looking at the tower I saw a male stood at the 6th or 7th floor window who was deemed safe due to the position he was at and a lot of the water from the aerial appliance was being directed to his location to keep the fire from spreading to him. He was stood there for hours. I saw him from approximately 30 to 40 meters away.

We was then released from the scene, I cannot remember the time. We then returned to our fire engine which had not moved since it was parked. We were however blocked in by other fire engines and had to wait a while for them to move before we returned to Paddington fire station to complete our notes. During my deployment at the incident I did not speak with any members of the public or residents from the tower. I then completed my notes a copy of which I exhibit as TWE/l. And returned to Willesden fire station. I have not visited a GP after this incident or sought medical attention.

This incident was not recorded on a body camera as I have not been issued with one and I am not aware of anyone in the fire serve that has been. All decisions that were made during that incident by a senior officer within policy or out of policy should have been recorded on a decision log. This includes the ordering of extra appliances. I am not aware if the chain of command changed during the incident. I am aware that the more appliances that are requested to an incident then higher the rank of officer is assigned as incident commander. The incident commander will then have a team of senior officers with them to delegate tasks to supervise as and when required and also to assist them in making decisions.

I cannot describe the person I attempted to rescue from the building due to low visibility, I can only describe that they were of large build. I would describe the person at the window as a male with short hair or a bald head.

I do not know directly as a result of attending the incident how the fire spread to the outside of the building, however post incident, whilst speaking to other firefighters in general conversations, I have heard that after the initial fire in Flat 16 of Grenfell Tower a message was transmitted informing control that the fire had been extinguished. This was followed by the incident commander requesting to make pumps six (6) as the fire was spreading to the outside of the building.

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I did complete Form 10 which is filled out when you are compromised during an incident, this is then sent to station manager. I have not been spoken to about the incident since the form 10 was completed.

To my knowledge and experience I do not believe we would have any other appliance other than an ALP (Aerial Ladder Appliance) to combat the fire on the external part of Grenfell Tower, However

There is an appliance called a Ground monitor which is a very large branch attached to a 70mm hose supplied by a fire engine which is weighed down on the ground, this has the capacity to deliver more water than a standard hose or a jet. This still would have been futile against such a ferocious fire. I believe that the external cladding was solely responsible for causing the fire to spread.

The faults in Grenfell tower which should be considered for future high-rise blocks fire safety should be a working fire lift. As walking up the stairs depleted my oxygen very quickly and a building designed with more stairwell exits that are protected efficiently so they do not fill up with smoke.

Signature: Tom WELCH
2018

Signature witnessed by: