

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: WILLIAMS, VINCENT

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 15 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: V WILLIAMS

Date: 16/01/2018

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

This statement refers to my attendance as a firefighter to the Grenfell Tower fire on WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017 as part of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) response to this incident.

After leaving Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 I completed some notes in relation to this incident. These notes were made contemporaneously on 14 June 2017, which I now exhibit as VWV/1. I have not referred to any of our LFB logs or records in preparing this statement, therefore I am unable to give accurate times to the matters I refer. I exhibit the map I refer to as VWV/2.

The people I will refer to by name in my statement are LFB personnel. These include: Crew Manager Alan of Chiswick's Red Watch ; firefighter Steve; firefighter Tristan ; firefighter Agnal FERNANDES who is from Willesden's Red Watch who was on standby with Chiswick like I was; firefighter John from Soho and Jim POWERS from Wembley. I will also refer to other fire fighters that I interacted with, the 4 people that I found in flat 175 and the blind Chinese guy who was rescued from the building in the morning.

I've been a fire fighter since 2007. I started my training that October. I've always been at Heston and I've always been Red Watch. I've had no reason to leave, it's a big station with a pump, pump ladder and a FRU. I'm FRU trained: water trained; line trained. I'm not urban search and rescue trained but everything else I am. It's a big station and I get on well with my watch. For me this station has everything I want and need from the Brigade.

In terms of training for high rise tower blocks we have done quite a bit in lectures and stuff and there is quite a bit involved. We try and cover everything as regular as possible. In terms of live firefighting

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training in a high rise block we did a training exercise a couple of years ago. We did it in a disused block of offices not far from our station. I have not been to any big high rise fires, a couple of kitchen fires but nothing major.

I was not aware of any pre-prepared firefighting plan for Grenfell Tower. Prior to the Grenfell fire, I was not aware of the risk of cladding materials or of any pre-prepared plan for firefighting or rescue when compartmentation failed in a high rise block of flats.

I am competent in terms of training and carrying out my role.

For the night shift of the 13th of June 2017 I wasn't at my home station. I was on direct standby at Chiswick fire station for the night. We had too many people on that night at Heston and Chiswick didn't have enough. They knew they were going to be short so they sent me there the shift before so I was turning up at the change of watch to be there for the start of the shift. I got notified at end of the shift before. I have done standbys at Chiswick before. I was posted on G371 which is their pump ladder. I was 5th man on the machine which means I sat in the middle of the machine and I was assigned with entry control. I was on this machine with Alan who was the officer in charge, fire fighter Tristan who was the driver, fire fighter Steve who was sat at the rear by the door and fire fighter Agnal FERNANDES who was also sat at the rear by the door.

I turned up at 8 o'clock at Chiswick for work. I done my set and general machine checks as normal like you do on a shift, I said hello to everyone there who was on shift that night and made sure that I knew who was who. Fire fighter FERNANDES was there on standby from Willesden. It was the 1st time we had met. The others I had worked with before.

I had gone down for a bit of rest but not for long as it was about 10 minutes later that we got the shout. According to my notes the shout was at 5 to 1. I went down to the machine as normal to get rigged (putting my PPE and leggings on) and see what we've got. The watch room guy was looking at what is was, where it was etc. If I remember correctly we were called to a 10 pump fire on a high rise. They were looking on the map and discussing how to get there as it wasn't on our ground. Then we got on the machine, got rigged as usual and made our way there. The officer in charge told us what we had and where we were going. They seemed to know where we were going. We got there fairly quickly.

When we got there I remember coming to a couple of road closures which threw a spanner in the works. Luckily Aggy FERNANDES is local to the area and he gave us directions to get round the road closures. I remember seeing road closed signs with barriers so these road closures must have already been there from previous. Aggy had very good knowledge of that area.

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We then got our 1st glimpses of the fire which I describe in my notes as a multiple scene fire in a block of flats which means it is a severe fire. So I had already established that I was going to something big. It is hard to see out of the middle of the truck but from between the trees and buildings you could see the glow but it wasn't until we got to Grenfell Road that I had a proper look at the building.

We made our way as close to the fire as possible. I think there were trucks in front of us but we just parked up on Grenfell Road junction with Bomore Road and waited for some instructions of what to do. We parked right where the hydrant was. On our way there it got made to pumps 20 or 25 I can't remember the exact figure. I don't remember the route we took. It can be a bit disorientating in the back when you are getting rigged.

We got off and I could see the building quite clearly from where we were. It was a well- developed fire. The fire had already taken hold of the east side and it had started to wrap round the building and up towards the south side at around the 10th or 11th floor. To be honest I said to myself what we would be pushing it to get this fire out as this is something else, something I had not really seen to that extent before. There was a lot of fire on the outside of the building and there were a lot of floors involved. It moved quicker than any other fire I've seen move on a building like that before. I was just wondering how it had managed to do that. It looked like the windows and cladding were on fire and then you have to presume that it has taken the fire inside to the flats and it would get hold of anything it could. As high rises are made into compartments you like to think it would have compartmentalised but it hadn't done that it had gone up the side of the building which you don't really see that often. I'm quite surprised it was all flammable really. Because it was burning so well you could see some black smoke but there wasn't particularly loads and loads of smoke. On the outside smoke wasn't an issue at that point. I could see bits falling off the building, I couldn't tell you what they were, I presumed bits of window so you had to have your wits about you when you were close to the building.

I already had it in my head that we would be getting people out and firefighting if we had to. The priority would be getting people out. No one was talking to me directly but there was a lot of people screaming and shouting. There was a lot of panic in the area. To getting there on a 10 pumper that quickly after the fire started to seeing it developed that far up was quite a shock really.

Anyway, you put your work head on, this is what we are doing. We need to get in there put the fire out and do what we can for everybody who is there. There were a lot of people running around, members of the public running around. People were shouting about their families; I didn't blank them out but I didn't

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speak to any of them. I just jumped off the truck on the right hand side and really went into work mode: right we need to get some water down to it.

At the time they were setting the hydrant down to the 1st machine at the job. I don't know who it was but the guy setting up the hydrant was opening the hydrant but something had gone wrong with their key and he shouted "have you got a key on your machine?" so the 1st thing I did was run back to our machine and get the one off our machine so we could open the hydrant. Steve who was driving our machine took it out of my hands and said "it's alright, I will deal with that. You crack on and get your set." So I said "ok" and passed it over to him. I jumped on the back of the truck and someone was shouting that we needed people in sets, we needed 45s and jets, as many as you can get down to the building. I already had my set on my back so Aggy and I grabbed 45s and jets from our appliance and we made our way on foot to the building quite quickly.

By the time we get down to the building there seemed to be organisation of what we were doing and in a difficult situation the officers were doing the best they could as quickly as they could. The organisation of getting people working and going up the building was being done fairly rapidly and smoothly considering the circumstances. Everyone seemed to be working hard and doing what they could to get all the equipment and stuff we were going to need. There were officers outside the building telling us that we needed to get inside the building and make our way up to the Bridgehead. Already there was stuff coming off the building, falling down the building. So we got in the building as quickly as possible

Aggy and I entered the building together and at the bottom of the stairs we could see there was a pile of hoses and stuff so we put our stuff down there and at the top of the stairs there were also some hoses being put up there as well.

Already by then there were people starting to gather in BA teams. There were officers organising the Bridgehead to start sending people up to where they needed to be. As I understand it they were trying to get people to where they had fire survival guidance calls 1st as they knew that's where people were. That was their 1st priority really. Aggy and I stayed in the queue of people for a little bit. There were people in front of us and behind us waiting to go up. That's when I saw Steve and Tristan, they were waiting at the bottom of the stairs. People in front of us were getting their briefs. We made sure we had all our gear ready. I had a 45 and a jet ready to take up with me. I did hear people getting sent to the 21st and 23rd floors but I don't know if anyone made it up that high on standard duration BA sets. People were bumping into people on the stairs and having to make decisions whether to come back down or get to where they had to go.

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Before Aggy and I got briefed I had a look at the floor below because in high rises most floors are laid out the same. I wanted to see where the hydrant, dry risers, outlets and stuff like that were because we were not probably going to be able to see it up there so I wanted to know where it is before we went up. It's good to have a little nose so you know the lay out.

We got briefed by an officer, I couldn't tell you who and we got told that there was a call from the 20th floor, flat 175 and that was all the information we got. They had a fire survival guidance call there. We didn't get any other information other than the flat and floor numbers. As soon as they said floor 20 I thought we would be pushing it to get there on a standard duration BA set and I also had a 45 and a jet so pretty heavy equipment to carry up the stairs.

We went to the entry control point, we handed our tally into the control officer we told him where we were going. We then checked our pressure we told him our name and who we were and he put the tally into the board. I also did a radio check to make sure the ECO could hear me and it worked fine. Only I had the BARRY radio but we both had hand held radios. The radio on our set is on channel 6 so you can speak to the entry control officer and the hand held is normally on channel 1 as this is the fire ground one so we can hear what is going on elsewhere.

We started making our way up which was pretty slow going to start with as there was a lot of hose laid out in places and people going up in front of us. It was quite a narrow staircase so you could only go one way it's not like you could overtake people. You are going as fast as the person in front of you. Which weirdly may have helped us conserve air as we weren't trying to go as quick as we can, we could only go as fast as the people in front of us.

You noticed it was smoky straight away and then it got thicker and thicker and you were struggling to make out people. It was quite difficult to see. For what seemed to be a protected shaft it didn't seem that protected. Whether that is because people are coming in and out of the floors and so the doors were being opened and smoke was coming in from different floors and into the stairwell.

By the 4th floor it is getting really smoky and it's getting worse to the point where you couldn't really tell what floor you were on. As it was so hard going and with all people in front of us I remember saying to Aggy that I wasn't sure we would get to the 20th.

At the 13th and 14th floor the smoke got very thick and it was difficult to know where you were. We had to step into a corridor where we could hear people working and we shouted "what floor are you on?"

Someone said "the 14th" so we came back out. We had to do this so we had a rough idea where we were. When we came out of the 14th and went to the 15th it started to clear of people a bit as I'm guessing most

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people were getting sent to 12, 13 and so that is where it was crowded the most. From the 14th, 15th to the 20th we made good progress. From the 14th to the 20th on the way up it started to get a little lighter and it was from the 14th upwards is when I really started to notice the floor numbers. It looked like someone had written in chinography or pen on the wall of the stairwell. I don't recall seeing proper stencilled numbers only written ones. The smoke was mainly white, you see fire fighters, bits of hose but it was getting trickier. You could see a vague outline of your hand, you had to be fairly close to see stuff.

When we got to the 20th we opened the door to the foyer/lobby area and there was another crew behind the door which surprised me a bit. I didn't realise there was another crew ahead of us. We knew we were on the floor as there was a good chance I saw a number but I can't remember. Maybe we saw the 19th and then we knew it was the next floor up.

The crew asked us if we knew where the dry riser was because by then the visibility is now very low and you couldn't see. As I had researched I told them to stick to the left wall, the fire wall and it should be there. So we all made our way to the dry riser. We had been briefed to find our flat but we had firefighting media with us so if we could get water then that would be beneficial for us if we are going to be opening doors. I gave them the end of my hose, they plugged it in, I put my jet on and we bowled it out. Visibility was quite low so I couldn't tell you exactly what everyone was doing but I knew that Aggy was there shouting to me that they were looking for doors and that he had found the 1st flat which I think was 171. The smoke may have followed us when we opened the door to get into the lobby. The fact that the smoke was getting worse and all the flat doors were closed I'd be guessing where it had come from. Possibly some sort of vents or the lift areas or something like that or there were potentially breaks in the wall, I don't know. It wasn't great when we got in there and due to lack of visibility I couldn't see where the smoke was coming in from.

Now it was a case of let's work our way round and try and find the flat we wanted. At the same time, we were banging and kicking the doors to see if anyone would answer. We aren't going to put the door in because it is not the one we are looking for but if people are there then they are going to come to us. At the same time, I was doing the jet and I told him to turn it on which he said he had done so I opened it up and there was no water. So it was like "ok". I was half expecting it in a way. But because of the way the fire had been developing from the outside my priority was to find the people in flat 175. I kept the jet in my hand for the time being. I had a torch and as we are working our way round we had to get right down, near the letter box, to see where the numbers were. You had to get within 12 inches of the door with a torch to see the door number. It was thicker and darker smoke than it was in the stairwell. Floor to ceiling

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smoke. We could have done with some water. The letter boxes were centre of the door waist height and the numbers were on right hand side. The numbers were fairly big.

Every door we found we were banging and bashing and no one was coming to it. The doors to the flats were standard doors, non-expensive doors, whether they were fire doors or not I couldn't tell you.

Wooden door with a metal letter box. I don't think there were any windows on the doors, they were single panel. All the doors were closed.

By then we knew we were low on air and that we should be going back. Before we went, I saw the emergency lighting for the lift on the far wall and I said to Aggy "before we go, let me just check this wall quickly." I wanted to find flat 175 just to fulfil our brief. I know we should be heading back but I wanted to save these people if we can. So I just ran over quickly and Aggy came with me. We found another door, I looked down with my torch and it was 175.

I found the flat, I shouted to Aggy that I had found the flat so he came over as well, at the same time I was kicking and bashing the door. I know Aggy had a bit of breaking in gear in case we needed to break the door but as I was considering giving the door a bigger kick it opened.

The door opened and the smoke bellowed into the flat. there was a gentleman there in quite a high state of panic running backwards and forwards in the little corridor bit of the flat saying "I've got kids! I've got kids! I've got kids!" I said "yeah, ok" and I followed him in. I went to the end of their little walkway, got to the left and what appeared to be their lounge. The outside of the building wasn't visible to me much so I couldn't see if any windows were open or if there was fire coming in or anything. There stood him and his wife who were roughly the same sort of age and two girls in front of them, stood right in front of me basically. In my head they were roughly around 10, 11, 6, 8 years old. I could tell this by their heights.

██████████ That is what struck me straight away to be honest with you. It was like seeing ██████████ I know it sounds strange and silly to say but in that situation that's what I saw. For me this was the worse situation, ██████████ They all looked panicked, scared and not knowing what to do really. Didn't really say an awful lot to start with. The woman was saying "my babies! My babies! My babies!" repeatedly with her arms out. I said "do you have a baby?" as I was unsure if she was saying that she had a baby somewhere or whether she was calling her 2 girls her babies. I looked round and I couldn't actually physically see a baby anywhere. I'm sure if there is a baby they are going to make it obvious, they would be carrying them. Visibility was better than it was in the lobby, so I could see everybody but still wispy and it was getting worse as we had come in with the smoke from the

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lobby. There is also smoke coming from elsewhere, I couldn't tell you where and it is getting to the point now where we need to be getting out.

I said to them "we've got to go and we've got to go now. Get something to put over your face." Visibility was starting to get tough. I started to rationalise what to do because there are only so many of us there to help. We were low on air so we should be going now anyway and they needed to get out now if they were to have any chance of surviving. They froze, they didn't know what to do, they were scared stiff. I repeated it and there was still no movement from them.

Aggy was behind me by the door keeping our exit free and you couldn't see him. So that's a rough idea of what the visibility was starting to get like now. I shouted to them that I had other people here. Hopefully the other crew were still outside. I was a bit unsure where they were but I shouted and they came over. I couldn't see then but I knew they were there. 1 of the firefighters was from Willesden but I don't know who he was with. I'm pretty sure they were there but they weren't my 1st priority. I'm thinking to myself what do I need to do to get them to move, I'm trying to rationalise who to help and everything else. If there is a baby, it isn't my 1st priority as they would do well to even make it 1 floor or 2, knowing what we had to come through out there. I'm asking the family to go through a door that you couldn't even see because of the smoke so I can understand the hesitancy of not wanting to go through it. They have been told that the fire brigade are coming to help them and we turn up with nothing to give them to protect them i.e. fire hoods or something like that and I'm just asking them to go through the smoke out of the corridor and down the stairs. So I can understand why they are hesitant to move.

I also know I've got to go as well as I should be half way down the stairs with the air we had at the time. I then got the stage where I had to think about this logically. It is all happening very quickly and I've got to make some decisions on what to do. In my head knowing what the conditions are like out there if there is a baby then she is probably going to have them as most parents are going to grab the baby any way. I knew there were 4 of us and I wasn't sure of there was anyone else coming up behind us to help. They were all on their feet and we've got to get out, it's a long way to go, 20 floors and I know what they have got to go through so in my head I'm not sure if they are going to make it or not so I need to make decisions on what to do. This is all in a split second thinking process. In my head I was thinking that if I could get them down to a level where there were more fire fighters to help.

In my head I'm already thinking I'm not sure if they are going to make it or not. So I've got to make a decision on what to do. You need to understand that this is all in a split second decision making process.

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In my head I was thinking that I wanted to get everyone down to a level where more firefighters could help.

In regards to using my BARRY radio in the tower and it wasn't the greatest reception but it didn't matter as they knew where he was. I remember sending a message on the radio when we got to the floor and when we had found the people. I Radioed we had 4 or 5 casualties and we could do with more people to help. I said it twice and I thought I got something back but I can't be sure as I couldn't hear. I couldn't stay up there messing around on the radio as we had to get down and then I had my hands full. The priority was to save life. I'm not the 1st person to say that our radio systems aren't very good and it does need to be better. This is due to reception, the way it is placed on your set means it is easily knocked off although mine stayed on, the fixings for it aren't very good at all and generally it is hard to get good reception and a good clear message backwards and forwards. There was a lot of radio traffic and this wasn't the time to have too many conversations. I just said what we had and what we needed. We had to get moving.

So my train of thought was if I take their daughter then the rest will follow. The family were frozen, scared stiff and not wanting to go anywhere which I can understand. So I thought she is going to need the most help to get down, the others were all on their feet and I've got the other crew behind me potentially for the other daughter and stuff and they can get down enough to get some help and at the end of the day I can't carry them all. So I grabbed the youngest girl to make them move. When I picked her up I said "we've got to go" and I just started making my way out of the door. By doing so the other daughter come and they all started to come. I thought "great we are moving now" I told Aggy we were going and I've got the younger girl. I shouted to the other crew members that the family were behind me, they need help, I've got the youngest girl and I made my way to the stairwell.

We made our way to the stairs we couldn't see exactly where they were. As soon as we walked into the stairwell there was heavy smoke, the stairwells had become a lot worse, visibility was zero and it was getting very hot. I thought "Christ, I'm taking her into this environment" but there was nowhere else to go and I know she hasn't got anything to protect her. It was just a matter of getting her down and out as quickly as possible as 20 floors is a long way to go in this smoke with nothing protecting you and the heat. We started flying down the stairs, Aggy was with us as well. I just hugged the inside of the stairwell and just kept going and going and going.

As I'm left handed I picked the girl up with my left arm. She was screaming and obviously very panicked and scared. In my head I thought whilst she is screaming she is ok as she is making a noise. She wrapped

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her legs around the top of my leg and squeezed like you wouldn't believe. That is something I will never forget to be honest. Her head was in my chest.

Going down the stairwell she was screaming and really really really hugging the top of my legs, she squeezed really tight, she was scared. She was holding on for dear life. I went down the stairwell as fast as I could. I think I was in front of Aggy but I'm not entirely sure. Visibility then was zero. The reason I knew I was in the stairwell was because my right hand was on the bannister. I could hear Aggy, we were talking to each other and just making sure we were there all the time. I think Aggy felt that I needed help with the girl so we were going down as a team. In my head I had it that he or the other crew would have picked up the older one but I don't really know what happened to her. Once we went into zero visibility it's very difficult to know what the other crew were doing.

The other 3 members of the family were right behind me but I could only carry one. I pretty sure I heard the crew behind me because I said that we needed help behind me and that was the last I spoke to them. I left the other crew to deal with the adults as they needed help. Once I've taken her into the smoke she is already taking in smoke that is potentially going to kill her so I was very conscious that we just had to move as quick as we could. I felt quite bad for leaving everybody behind but I could only really deal with who I had and if I didn't move fast then she wasn't going to make it, knowing that I've got 20 floors to go down with smoke coming. Once I hit the 20th floor, it was completely smoke logged and I couldn't see anything and it was getting hot.

That's when I started to feel radiating heat everywhere and I started to think "shit we are in a bit of trouble here." It was about getting down as fast as possible. I was stressed to say the least. I was conscious of the fact I knew I was getting low on air and I knew we had 20 floors to get someone down in an atmosphere that you can't really breathe in. So time was of the essence to get someone out from that high up. I'm thinking "shit there is a long way to go." 20 floors is a long way to go with a set on your back and carrying somebody. If asked someone without a set on to go up 20 floors and run back down again I think they would struggle so with everything we had been through so far it was tough. Carrying the little girl was hard because I've got the same sort of weight on my back and I'm carrying her on my side whilst hugging the stairwell. It's the adrenaline that keeps you going.

I got to about 17 or 18 and I leant against the stairwell really really struggling, my legs are started to go and the heat is getting to me. That is probably the one point where I thought that if conditions get any worse then I wasn't sure I was going to make it down but the adrenaline pumps round you and you keep on going. I just kept going in the hope that I would go into better conditions and I did, it just started to

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ease a little bit but they were still hot but I just had to keep going. I don't think too many people went above the 14th floor after we got down as the heat layer was just too much. I felt myself overheating and suffering a bit of heat exhaustion. There is only 1 way out so I had to keep moving. I wanted to stop but that really wasn't an option so I kept pushing on and going down the stairs.

I think I had covered 9 or 10 floors and I was really starting to struggle so I shouted to Aggy "can you take her for a bit." I passed her over to Aggy for around 2 to 3 floors. Not having to carry her for a little bit did give me a second wind. I was still struggling, but moving without having to carry someone was a help. Aggy was a big help. If he had of taken one of the other people then I don't know if anyone would have made it because it would have been slow going. So in a way im glad he didn't and that he was there to help because 20 floors does really take 2 of you to carry someone down, even a child. We have sets on, we have worked hard already and the heat so it did take 2 of us to do this. We ran into people, im guessing firefighters, hose on the floor and I started to panic that I was going to lose her because I couldn't see him because visibility was down to zero and so by then as I had got the second wind I took her back.

The rest of the way down Aggy and I were shouting at each other making sure we were ok. At one point she did what felt like a convulsion but I guess it was her struggling to breath and in the end she went limp so I guess that was the point when she went unconscious. So then I'm panicking, I've definitely got to her out quickly now. So I tried to speed up a little bit but it was hard with all the hose, people in the way and other fire fighters coming up from the lower floors. I got down to a floor where there were other fire fighters, I think they were dragging some guys down the stairs the best they could as they couldn't carry him. They were in my way so I just had to barge them out of the way really and jump round them with the girl knowing that ive got to get her out.

I carried her down a bit further and at around floor 7 there were firefighters trying to drag a large and unresponsive guy down the stairs but it was holding us up. I needed to get her out of there as soon as possible, it was at this point that she passed out. They were at the bottom of a set of stairs along the flat bit. He was on the stairs but they had lifted him slightly in order to drag him down the stairs the best they could.

I had to push a firefighter out of the way and the person they were dragging was on the floor but I jumped over them a little bit and round them. All the way down she was struggling to breathe but she was still moving, but in the end she went limp. Visibility had started to come back a little bit, the plain of the smoke was a bit higher so I could see the person on the floor and the hands of the firefighters but it was

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difficult to know how many fire fighters were there. It was a middle aged gentlemen with darker skin and not much hair. I don't think he was black but he might have been. I only really saw his head and shoulders. He was on his back, head 1st. They couldn't life him or else they would have lifted him, hence why they were dragging him.

Just before we got to the bottom I passed her over to who I thought was Aggy again but we come to some other people in the way and I was scared of losing her again so I took her back, so he only done a flight or two. I took her back and went round these people and we were a couple of flights from the bridgehead and it started to get light. That was when I saw her properly and the 1st time I had a clearer look at her face. She was over my arm and bubbling at my mouth and unconscious. She was struggling to breathe and non-responsive. I knew we had to get down as quick as possible so I was moving fast. I passed her over to a couple of firefighters at the bridgehead who were doing casualty care who then took her outside to the ambulance crew and that was the last I saw of her.

I just about had enough air. The last floor or 2 as we were coming down I started to taste a bit of smoke. When you get sweaty with the BA mask it starts to move about on your face a little bit so I think the seal had broke as I was tasting smoke. I think Aggy was the same as well. We used up every little bit of air we had getting up and back down again, it was using our reserve I know but we had to get to the people we had to get to. When I was in the flat I was very conscious of the fact that we should be getting out so I was doing things as quickly as possible but doing the best we can for the family who are there. I don't know what happened to the people behind me because I just got the girl out as quickly as possible.

I took off my mask and that as there was no need to wear it anymore and I didn't have any air anyway. I then looked back so that I could re-join with Aggy so we could get our tallies back and stuff but the person I thought was Aggy was a firefighter named John from Soho. He carried the girl down the last couple of flights, I thought it was Aggy but it wasn't. Aggy was behind him. Aggy and I went to get our tallys at the entry control point. On our way there I spoke with a female officer and I just told her who I had brought down, from where and who else was left. I wanted to give her the best brief I could. She said "great, fine. Go and get some water and stuff." I couldn't tell you what she did with that information. I was in that area for a little while, a couple of minutes, but I didn't see the other girl or her parents come down. It was a concerning as I thought they would be right behind me. We were moving as fast as we could and if they were getting jam logged on the stairwell it would be difficult to know how far behind they were. I know the older girl made it out, I know she made it to hospital but I know she died two days later in hospital.

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I know who the little girl was as her face is quite recognisable to me. I was actually sat in the pub two days later, reading a newspaper article whilst waiting for a friend of mine and her picture was in the paper and it said she was the sole survivor of a family of 5. So it was at that point that it suddenly dawned on me that there was definitely a baby as well. Aggy sent me a message with a photo of her from a paper so he recognised her as well.

She was asked a little while ago if she wanted to meet us, which came from the Grenfell enquiry, for her birthday. Out borough manager contacted me and Aggy I think to see if we would be willing to do that as she had lost her family and everything else. I said yes, if the request was coming from her. The medical team and everyone looking after her had said that it was probably not the best thing to do at the moment. Her name is [REDACTED] I got her name from the media.

From the minute I went into the building I knew it was going to be difficult.

It was tough going. I don't know what I would have done without Aggy, it took two of us to get her out. I wish we could have carried them all but you can't and generally the quickest way for adults to move is if they are on their feet and help them when they need to be helped or else you are jeopardising everybody. It might sound a bit callus that we left others there but time was of the essence. It was all about getting down and I knew we had a long way to go so we had to get down quick.

It was fairly hard going. Our fire kit in itself weighs a considerable amount, then you put a set on your back which is like carrying a small child and then you carry a hose which is quite heavy. You are pushing that weight up 20 floors which is hard going and then you put in the mix being under air which is slightly claustrophobic and then you get hot and sweaty. It is hard to correlate if it is the outside heat or just you getting hot. It is tough even in a clear situation with your sets on but being in an enclosed situation with smoke it makes it hard going.

The last time I checked my air it was on 150 and I started on around 300 when I started up the set. I checked that before we even entered the lobby on the 20th floor. I knew I would be using reserve air on the way down which is around 72.

When I found the family I knew I should have been down the stairs and things should have been done quickly but I'm not going to risk anyone's life by not doing what I can for them. I knew I would be using that reserve. The reason I did that was to save their lives. I knew if I didn't they would stay there and they wouldn't survive and to me that is worth taking the risk for. I knew I was risking running out of air but I knew I had that reserve which I shouldn't rely on but I knew potentially that I was going to be. I was in that situation so I had to. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't. I knew I had that air, its air that can be

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used but shouldn't be but I had that air and I was going to use it. It was critical to get that little girl out in time but it was critical to get me out in time before I ran out of air. The justification of me doing that far outweighs me not doing that and personally I can live with myself better for doing so especially when I know she survived.

I presumed Aggy was in the same situation as me. Ordinarily I would have checked my air more times but we were carrying stuff and the situation at the time didn't allow me to always keep on top of it. I wanted to carry out what we were doing.

It was now or this may not happen for this family as I wasn't sure if anyone was coming up behind us to help us with this family hence why I made the decisions I made. Knowing what we had gone through and where we got to with the air we had in the sets I think we were pushing the boundaries a little bit. It's also about personal air use. I'm a runner so I know my lung capacity, I'm fairly good at preserving air.

Everyone uses air at different rates and when you are carrying things in that heat you will be using a lot more air so you need to be mindful of that especially when you are carrying someone down.

If I done it all again I would do exactly the same thing. You do your damndest to stick to policy and procedure where you can but sometimes you have to go outside and as long as you can justify why you do then I think its fine. I was thinking clearly and happy that the decisions I was making were the right ones. We left the building. We went to the BA holding area, where we could go change our sets, get a drink of water and stuff. People were trying to cool down, get their breath back and take on some fluids. I got my set and jacket off as quickly as possible because I was really hot, overheating and I was suffering from heat exhaustion. I was putting water on my wrists and taking water on board in order to cool down and I went and sat down just to get my breath back in order to get myself back to a normal state. We were sat along the wall. We got our sets ready to potentially go in again. By this time the fire had taken hold of a lot more of the building, wrapping round a lot more of the building and it was pretty evident that we weren't going to be putting the fire out any time soon. A lot of the outside of the building was pretty burnt but you could see it had worked its way inward. You could start seeing the fire inside the flats and things burning. All the smoke was getting a lot blacker and thicker where it is not burning so well anymore. There were a lot of unclean burns going on. It was running out of material on the outside to burn but was finding stuff in the middle. All the outside cladding and windows had just gone. I was surprised at how well the fire had got hold and spread.

There were a lot of officers running around working out what was from where and who was doing what. I think they were trying to gather new BA wearers, people who hadn't worn. They said there was a chance

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we might have to wear again. They were trying to get EDBA wearers but they said they still might need SDBAs as well.

By then there were other crews who had turned up in EDBA. I bumped into my lot from Heston and I went and spoke to my governor. They were waiting with their EDBA sets on. I tried to give them some information about the building, what was in there and what they were having to go into to try and help them out but speaking to them since they said that I didn't make a lot of sense. I think I was suffering from heat exhaustion and that I was just rambling. I think they picked up some useful bits but not a lot. They told me to take some more fluids on board and have a break. I was keen to get back in again to do what I could but I was also aware that there were other people there who hadn't been in yet. It took a while to cool down and get into a reasonable state.

We were sat down, cooled down and Jim POWER from Wembley had come over to set up the BA refresh area. Aggy and I got new cylinders and we did a fire ground A test on the sets.

We eventually got asked to get sets on as they were running low on people to wear sets but by then they were trying to send in EDBA if they could but they still needed SDBA. We had our sets on and we were queuing up in the different holding areas waiting to go. We moved from the rest area to another bit of holding area near the building. At which point they have stopped where I recently entered the building as it was unsafe then as there was so much debris coming down so we had to go down under the cover / wash area and round the side to get in. We were queuing up outside and they were letting us go into the building a few at a time. Whilst queueing up and waiting to go in again I spoke to the initial crew that went into flat 16. They were quite surprised that the fire escaped on the outside like it did. From where they were inside the building they were pretty convinced that they had got it all. When they heard it on the radio go to 10 they were quite surprised. They thought they had put the fire out. It started to become evident that they needed some more equipment: they needed some more hose; some more boards and in the end one of the officers told me to drop my set and go and get some more gear. So I started doing other stuff around the fire ground and collecting more boards, more stands and a bit more hose. I was getting this from different machines and there were a couple of areas where people had dumped stuff.

In the end I was walking around the side of the building and getting the stuff to the guys inside. There were a lot of people queuing up at the bottom of the stairs inside by then with their sets waiting to be briefed. I told a couple of people where we had just be in and they were very reluctant to send us in unless needed, they were trying to use fresh people. I started ferrying things around and it got to the point where we were going in through the side entrance by a little playground and people were going into the building under

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riot shields held by the police. People and equipment was going backwards and forwards under the riot shields. I spent a lot of time doing that and getting the officers in and out. Anyone who needed carrying out we were carrying out underneath the shields just to stop people being hit with debris as they come out from the building. Even though that entry point wasn't the greatest, it was quite precarious, but it was the safest way for us to do it really. I was there for quite a long time doing that, a couple of hours. This area was quite water logged by now and full of debris. I was trying to clear the area so people could get in and out as it was quite traitorous under foot. We were moving bits of window or whatever fell down to clear a way. We kept an eye on the burst hose to keep that under control. I was there when the little Chinese guy from the floor got carried out.

Later on I made my way back and I was doing other roles around the fire ground: getting diesel for the machines and filling the machines with diesel so they could carry on pumping and stuff like that. Our pump, G37, was actually being used as the pump appliance for the water supply and because of that we were tied up. So we congregated there a little bit and took it in turns to look after the pump just to make sure the pumping was being supplied to the machine further along which I think was Kensington's either ladder or pump. Blue Watch started coming on so even when people were getting relieved, we were the last ones to be relieved and we had to leave our machine there. It was quite late on in the afternoon when we got away in the end. We were taking on food and fluids and others were doing more of the firefighter role and we were keeping an eye on our machine. Danny COTTON came over to us spoke to us, asked us what we had done and where we were from and she was quite surprised that Red Watch were still there and she was trying to organise for the police to give us a lift back to Paddington because we couldn't take the machine back. I ended up looking for the police myself in the end so that we could get a lift to Paddington. Luckily I found a couple of policemen who were helpful and there was a van parked up so they took us to Paddington. We got to Paddington in a police riot van where we did our statements. Then we were stuck at Paddington so we got lifts back. We got a lift to Chiswick with one of our deputy assistant commissioners in her car as the van that was supposed to be picking us up wasn't forthcoming. I got back to my station, Heston, bang on 8 o'clock when I was supposed to start my next shift. So it was pretty much a 24-hour shift.

I will now describe to the best of my memory the people inside flat 175. It was difficult to tell exactly where the father was from but he had darker skin but not dark dark. I do know where they were from now: they are originally from Morocco. He was a little bit unshaven, medium to skinny build, 5 foot 10 /

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11, short, dark hair that's all I can remember. He had trousers on like jeans and a shirt and jumper but I couldn't tell you what colours. There was nothing distinctive.

The female was roughly the same sort of age. She had a head scarf on and a wraparound which was dark in colour. It didn't look like she was holding anything. She was scared and panicked.

The older of the 2 girls had on grey leggings and a grey top. She had dark shoulder length hair, dark skin and was of average build. I thought she was 10 or 11. [REDACTED] She was quiet and scared. She didn't say anything she was just looking at me.

The younger girl was of an average height for a [REDACTED]-year-old. She had dark shoulder length hair and she was a bit skinnier than the older sister maybe due to her age. She was of average build and was wearing grey leggings and a top.

The 1st couple of days afterwards were quite hard to be fair especially when I found out about the rest of the family. I felt sad that we couldn't do any more to help everyone but also pleased that we got the little girl out and that she survived. We did save someone's life but then you do think what more could have been done to help the others. Looking back on it I don't think I would have done anything different than what I done on that night which to me is unusual because when we do our drills there is normally something and so you think next time I would have something different. On this occasion everything I did I think I would do exactly the same again. Getting the little girl out is a positive outcome, we have to look at it like that. I'm proud of what me and Aggy achieved.

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