

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: MILAM, NEALE

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

Occupation: NETWORK SUPERVISOR

This statement (consisting of 7 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: N MILAM

Date: 20/03/2018

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

I, Neale John MILAM make this statement in relation to the Grenfell Tower Fire which took place on 14 June 2017.

Background

- 1.I am an employee of Cadent Gas Ltd (Cadent) and I was one of the engineers who attended the incident at Grenfell Tower during the 14 and 15 June 2017.
- 2.I am a Level 6 Network Supervisor for Cadent. I have worked for Cadent, and previously National Grid, for 38 years. I have been in this role for the last 10 years. Previously I was a Repair team leader and before that, a Repair apprentice.
- 3.The Repair team for the West of London is managed by the Band C manager Tony DAY. For gas escapes and incidents involving the gas network, rather than an incident involving the internal pipework in a property, a Repair team will need to make safe and effect a repair. This usually involves excavating the ground to uncover the gas pipes and then employing a suitable repair technique.
- 4.I attended the incident as a Level 6 Network Supervisor.
- 5.My qualifications and training include: City & Guilds Gas Network Operations (GNO) qualification and all relevant on the job training.
- 6.Prior to June 2017, I had never worked in Grenfell Tower. However, I have worked in the area surrounding Grenfell Tower, on a medium pressure repair job on Bramley Road.

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The first call on the morning of 14 June 2017

7. I had been on standby as a Network Supervisor since 17:00 on the afternoon of 13 June 2017. At around 04:30, I woke up and saw that I had received a voicemail message and a text message from the team in the Dispatch Centre informing me of the incident at Grenfell Tower. I was informed that there was a fire at a large block of flats and that around 40 fire engines and 200 firefighters were on site. I saw the news alerts on my phone and could see that this was a serious incident.
8. I got out of bed and switched on my work laptop which shows the status of all active jobs. I could see that a Repair team had already been deployed and were on their way to site. The first Repair team to attend the site was Peter HYATT and his assistant Terry HARRIS. I could see Peter HYATT's location on the App on my laptop and was aware that he was close to the site. I sent a text message to Peter HYATT and he confirmed that he was on his way to site and that there was limited information available at that point.
9. The Dispatch Centre informed me that Cadent had been called to assist the fire services at the incident in West London. I have attended dozens of fire and explosion incidents during my career. When we are called to assist the fire services, it is not always possible to approach the building affected, particularly if it is still burning. The fire services' priority is not always for Cadent to disconnect the gas. It is not unusual for us to attend a fire/ explosion incident without having to take any action. However, I could see that the incident at Grenfell Tower was a serious incident and I suspected that we would be asked to disconnect the supply of gas to the building at some point.
10. I got ready to attend the site and left home at around 05:30. I drove to the site via the Fulham Depot where I stopped and printed some maps of the gas mains to take with me to the site. If work on the network was going to be necessary, it was important that all of the Repair teams had a copy of the gas mains maps and understood the work that would need to be carried out.
11. I am an experienced engineer and have attended numbers incidents during my career. I am comfortable in my approach in dealing with and managing incidents. I knew that we would be dealing with a major incident but I didn't panic. I realised that we would need to co-ordinate an effective response to the incident and I wanted to be surrounded by my best engineers. I therefore started calling Repair teams and asked them to start making their way to the site.
12. At around 06:15, I spoke with Dave EDWARDS, the Level 7 Emergency Manager who was already on site. He provided me with an update from the site and told me that the engineers on site

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could not get anywhere near the tower because of the blazing fire and that there was nothing that they could do at the time. Dave informed me that Jason ALLDAY, Level 7 Network Manager for Repair and Tony DAY, the Band C Manager for Repair were also on their way to site.

Arrival at site

13. I arrived at Grenfell Tower from the Bramley Road direction at around 07:45. There were hundreds of emergency officers and members of the public on site and I was stopped by a police officer who told me where I should park. I parked near to Bramley Road and from there I could see that the top half of the building was on fire with lots of black smoke billowing from it.
14. I was familiar with the area as I had been carrying out a medium pressure repair job in the local area on Bramley Road. Whilst this work was ongoing, the road was closed. I understand that there were reports that the emergency services had found it difficult to access Grenfell Tower because of the road closure. As far as I'm aware, the road closure did not impact on the efforts of the emergency services that day, nor did it hinder their access to the site. The repair work was completely unconnected to Grenfell Tower. We had notified the relevant Council/ Highways Authority that the road would be closed using an Opening Notice under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA), this is sent electronically to the relevant Council / Highways Authority. The fire services would have been aware of this in advance. There were electronic road signs on Holland Park Avenue at the junction of St. Anne's Road and also at Cambridge Gardens on the junction of Bramley Road, and alerts about the road closure. In any event, the road which was closed was not the preferred route into Grenfell Road.
15. The instruction from the London Fire Brigade ("LFB") was initially that we should standby. When I first arrived on site, I understood that Cadent was not an immediate priority for the LFB. They, understandably, had other concerns and priorities and were coordinating their own rescue effort. They were aware that we were present on site, but did not request any immediate action from us. Their instruction to us was clear; they wanted us to standby in the local area and await their instruction.
16. At around 08:45, Jason ALLDAY went to speak with the LFB officers at their command unit. When he returned he told us that he had been given permission to go ahead and implement the operational plan to isolate the supply of gas to the building.

Isolating the gas

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17. The aim was to isolate the gas quickly and safely. However, our options were limited to some extent by the fact that it was impossible to get anywhere near the tower due to the intensity of the fire which was still burning. When we are asked to disconnect the supply of gas to a building, the first option would usually be to operate the service isolation valve (SIV) which is usually located right outside the building. Operating the SIV at Grenfell Tower was not a viable option as the whole block was on fire from about the eighth floor up, there was debris surrounding the tower and falling to the ground and there were cordons restricting our access. We were therefore restricted from carrying out work near the building and from potentially isolating the SIV that served the building. There was around three to four feet of debris surrounding the base of the tower and the local LFB and senior fire fighters told us that that there were likely to be bodies and body parts within the debris. We were asked by the LFB where the SIVs were likely to be located and we explained that they would be underneath the debris, close to the tower. I understood that the LFB did not want us to disturb that debris and we were told that the area was out of bounds.
18. The safety and welfare of our engineers was, of course, an ongoing concern. We worked with the LFB throughout the day, they had the ultimate say as to where we could or could not work, They made it clear to us that we were working in a very difficult environment and that we needed to be alert and aware of the dangers and hazards at all times.
19. The Repair managers reviewed the maps of the gas networks to establish what would be the most efficient way of disconnecting the supply of gas. Many of us have worked on the London gas network for a number of years so we understand where the valves are located and how the network is integrated. We know what would be the most efficient way of disconnecting the gas.
20. Jason and Tony had agreed on a proposed operational plan to isolate the supply of gas. We had a group meeting to brief out the plan to isolate the supply to all present. The plan was to carry out excavations at three separate locations to locate the gas pipes and cut the supply of gas to the building.
21. The first potential isolation point was on a 12" main situated at the top of Station Walk to the rear of Blechynden Street, the second potential isolation point was on a 4" main situated near a walkway called Testerton Walk and the third potential isolation point was on a 180mm main situated at the top of Grenfell Road.
22. As soon as the isolation plan had been devised and confirmed with the LFB, Jason ALLDAY split the workforce into three teams. At around 12:30pm, Jason gathered all of the team at the Cadent

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muster point and gave everyone an operational briefing. He went through the operational plan and explained how the supply of gas would be disconnected. He assigned the Repair engineers to each isolation point and talked through how the cut offs would be achieved before everyone broke into their teams and started work. I supervised the team working off Testerton Walk. We were within close proximity to the tower while we were working. This is the closest I have ever worked to an ongoing fire. In this case it was unusual that we were being asked to work close to the tower when the fire was definitely not under control. The debris was floating down from the building close to where we were working. It was an unnerving situation and I was conscious that we were close to the fire so I was constantly keeping an eye on the situation and relied on the LFB's spotters to ensure that the area remained safe.

23. As a manager, I was conscious of the difficult conditions that we were asking people to work under. I recognised that some people may not have wanted to work under such difficult circumstances. I made it clear to all the engineers that their attendance on site was not compulsory. I spoke with each engineer individually. I acknowledged the fact that we were asking them to work under difficult conditions and that they would likely see things that nobody should ever have to see. I wanted to make sure that they were happy to stay on site. I did not get any resistance from any of the engineers and they all stayed on site and carried out the work.
24. Due to the ongoing rescue efforts and the crowded streets, it was difficult to deploy our teams and equipment to the isolation points. We had to liaise with the emergency services who helped us as much as possible to get the equipment to our men. They moved their vehicles whenever they could and facilitated our access through the cordons. However, the excavation site that my team was working on had to be hand-dug, as there were fire engines blocking access to the site and we could not bring in any excavating equipment. The supply was isolated at the Testerton Walk site at around 23:00. Once this supply had been isolated, I moved to the Station Walk isolation point of the 12" main.
25. We started the excavation in the early afternoon and we were then stood down a couple of times by the LFB due to safety concerns about the structural integrity of the building. The LFB were ultimately responsible for allowing the Repair teams to work at the excavation sites within such close proximity to the tower and it was clear to me that they were concerned about our safety and therefore were taking reasonable precautions to protect us. Whilst we were working, the LFB's rescue operation was still ongoing and we could see that bodies were being brought out of the

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2018

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tower. Every now and then the LFB would shout, everyone would stop what they were doing for a moment, and we would see a body bag being moved from the tower to the garage area where the temporary morgue was located.

26. The men were working in extremely difficult conditions on one of the one of the hottest days of the year, but we ensured that they had enough food and water and we pulled the teams back to the muster points to be de-briefed and for a break wherever possible.
27. I was present when the supply of gas was finally isolated on 15 June 2017 at the isolation point at Station Walk. I was aware that the team at this isolation point had experienced some difficulties in locating the main and that they had to complete a number of excavations before they were able to locate the main, and that this extra work extended the isolation time. Once the main had been located, it was discovered that it was in fact a 15" main rather than a 12" main as indicated on the map of the gas mains. Repair teams are equipped to isolate mains that vary in size from 3" to 12". A 12" main is usually isolated by inserting flow stopping bags into a hole in the main which are then inflated to stop the flow of gas. Once the flow of gas has been stopped, the engineers cut the mains before inserting caps to secure the isolation. Jason asked the team to see if the 12" flow stopping bags could be overinflated. I was aware from previous experience, that flow stopping bags can be slightly over inflated, although this is not standard practice. I measured the main using a calliper and then carried out a test to make sure that the 12" flow stopping bag could be inflated to the relevant diameter to fit the calliper. Following this check, we were reassured that the 12" flow stopping bag could be placed into the main then over inflated and it would stop the flow of gas. Once we had inserted the flow stopping bag into the main and inflated it, I could see the change in the nature of the fire almost immediately, it was almost like a candle being blown out.
28. I am aware that using the 12" equipment on a 15" main was not standard procedure. However, the alternative would have been to not do anything until our subcontractor's Pipeline Management Centre ("PMC"), who are equipped with larger diameter bags and usually carry out isolations on 15" mains, arrived at the site. We knew that it would have taken time for PMC to arrive at the site and that the priority was to disconnect the supply of gas to the tower.
29. I left the site at 02:00 when all tasks had been completed.

Working relationship with the LFB

30. We worked well with the emergency services. Jason ALLDAY was the main point of contact with the LFB and he developed a good working relationship with them.

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2018

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31. The LFB were obviously under serious pressure that day and as the day progressed, I did notice that we were receiving an increasing number of queries from officers about how long it would take to disconnect the supply of gas. At one point, as we were trying to isolate the supply of gas to the Station Walk isolation point, the fire officers were coming back to see us at 20 minute intervals to check on our progress. I think that that some of the LFB officers had not appreciated the complexity of the operation and had initially thought that it was possible to disconnect the supply of gas by switching off just one switch. By this point in the day, the fire had been burning for 15 hours and was still burning so the LFB were understandably anxious to extinguish the fire as quickly as possible. Once it had been explained that isolating the supply was more complex than simply switching off a switch, the LFB then appreciated how difficult a task it was and were grateful for our efforts. Overall, we had a very good working relationship with the officers.

Reflections

32. Despite the awful circumstances and difficult conditions, I felt that I had 100% dedication and commitment from my team that day I'm proud that everyone pulled together as a team and worked hard to complete the operation successfully.

I understand that the material I have provided to the Police may be shared with the Public Inquiry investigating the Grenfell Tower Fire. I am willing for any material handed to the criminal investigation to be shared with the Public Inquiry.

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