

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: HANSON, PHILIP

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

Occupation:

This statement (consisting of 2 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: P HANSON

Date: 23/03/2018

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

This statement relates to the resources and assistance that the Maritime Coastguard Agency can provide in responding to an emergency. I will also consider what assistance, if any, could have been provided in context of Grenfell Tower.

I have worked for the Maritime Coastguard Agency for 2 Years and currently work as Aviation Technical Assurance Manager. I have worked within this role for 2 years.

I have worked in the aviation industry since age 16 and completed a 4 year apprenticeship with the MOD.

I have held a number of posts with the MOD and MCA since.

The Maritime Coastguard Agency currently work with BRISTOW HELICOPTERS LTD who provide the helicopters used by the agency and crews. Currently, the helicopters used are the AgustaWestland AW139. The AW139, in SAR configuration, weighs 8.3 tonnes can carry 4 casualties, 2 of which can be stretchered and has a Radius of Action of approx. 200 NM. The helicopter has specialist rescue equipment including; twin winch, stretchers and medical equipment.

The helicopter will be crewed by 4 people, comprising 1 captain, 1 co-pilot. 1 winch operator and 1 winchman paramedic. The paramedic can provide oxygen, administer intravenous drugs and use a defibrillator. The primary user of the winch is the winch operator in order to recover casualties from inaccessible situations, however, all of the crew are trained to use the winch and can operate the winch under the direction of the winch operator

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The crew are provided with specialist personal protective equipment such as immersion suits for when they are flying over the sea and flight suits for when they are flying over land. They have lifejackets equipped with underwater escape oxygen designed to last for approximately 5 minutes should they need to escape the helicopter in water. They do not have any equipment that is designed to be used near fire or in smoky environments, the flight suits are fire retardant but do not offer any protection from heat. The helicopter cabin is open and has no partitions between the rear cabin and the cockpit, so if smoke was to enter the cabin it would fill it in its entirety — hampering visibility and the crews air.

The helicopters are designed to be flown safely within a temperature window. This range would be the temperatures typically seen in the North Sea area to the temperatures recorded in the desert. If the ambient temperature were to exceed FORTY (40) degrees centigrade, flying would become challenging. The stability of the aircraft would decrease, and in still conditions it would be extremely difficult to maintain hover performance. To maintain flight stability the helicopter would be best to keep moving. If there were any variation of the temperature, this would also make it hard to maintain a hover.

The MCA's service provider follows the regulations set by the Civil Aviation Authority when flying and assessing whether to fly or not. Whilst undertaking a rescue, under the regulations laid out in CAP999, the crew have alleviations to fly outside the normal regulations. The aircraft captain still has a responsibility to ensure the safety of the aircraft, its occupants, members of the public and property. However, in order to operate within built up areas the helicopter should be capable of operating with single engine flyaway capabilities, which AW 139 is capable of in all but extreme conditions. The conditions at Grenfell Tower on the night of the fire would have been beyond extreme, due to the heat and smoke. As such, the single flyaway capabilities of the AW139 helicopter would be compromised and it would be too risky to fly close to the tower.

DC MORGAN showed me EIGHTEEN (18) images of Grenfell Tower taken on the 14th June 2017 between 01:41 and 06:06 hours - labelled exhibit RGM/230. These images show the fire, smoke and debris coming from the tower. The images are a mixture of standard camera images and infrared images showing the contrast in temperatures. Having seen the photos I would say from my experience, that if the helicopter was flying near Grenfell Tower that it would be best to go no lower than 5000 feet and keep a distance of 5 nautical miles. This would be close enough for the sensors to provide a suitable image of what was happening without having a negative impact on the fire due to the AW139 downwash or placing the helicopter in danger.

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It would not have been possible to land on the roof during the fire as the stability of the roof and the tower would be unknown and from the images provided, the roof is cluttered with furniture. The other option to facilitate a rescue would have been to use the winch but this would require the helicopter being less than 300 feet above the tower, as the cable winch length is 300 feet. Again, I believe it would have been too dangerous to fly this close to the tower during the fire. The heat and smoke would pose an unacceptable risk to the person on the winch as well as the remainder of the crew and the helicopter. Also, flying in such close proximity of the fire would cause the downwash to effect the fire, potentially causing it to spread or increase.

I do not think that any rescue could have been facilitated using the helicopter at Grenfell Tower when the fire was burning.

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