

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: LANCASTER, SHARON

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

Occupation: FIRE FIGHTER

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This statement (consisting of 3 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: S LANCASTER

Date: 29/05/2018

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

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This statement refers to my account of the Grenfell Tower fire on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

I joined Essex Fire & Rescue Service in 2006. I worked in Communications, which works alongside Control Room and deals with mobile phones / pagers / lines. The Communications Department worked on a 24/7 basis in a supporting role for the Control Room. In 2012, I moved into the Control Room at Essex Fire & Rescue Service, working as a Control Room Operator. On moving, I initially attended training school for 6 weeks learning the stations, station numbers, and the overall background of the Service and the core functions of the control room. After those 6 weeks, I joined a Watch in the control room where I spent another 6 weeks learning on the job in the control room environment. As a new recruit I had a development task book where you have 18 months to complete various tasks to prove competency. These tasks are around policies, procedures and different scenarios. I completed this book and was competent in the role of Control Room Operator.

In August 2017, I left Essex Fire & Rescue Service, moving to another job with another company.

With regards to Fire Survival Guidance, every console had prompt cards that we could use when we received a fire survival call. We would use these cards to give us operators guidance. The prompt cards were not just for fire survival guidance, but for other areas of calls to help us with a variety of calls.

Signature: S LANCASTER  
2018

Signature witnessed by:

With regards to the stay put policy, we will tell the caller that if it is safe to do so, start to make their way out. If it isn't safe to leave, then we would take information from the caller to help our crews locate them when they arrive on scene. This information included things such as where the caller was, how many people there are.

I have had not had any previous dealings with Grenfell Tower in the past, prior to the night of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

On Tuesday June 2017, I was working with White Watch within the Essex Fire & Rescue Service Control Room. We began our shift at 7pm. I was working alongside:

Russ WHITE - Supervisor

Katrina CLARKE

Vanessa OSBORNE

Jayde PALMER

We also had a new recruit called Claire BANNISTER who was shadowing for the night. I was a Control Room Operator on the night.

Leading up to the Grenfell Tower fire, everything within our control room was pretty quiet.

I cannot remember if I took the first call, or if it was Katrina. It was just myself and Katrina in the control room at the time, with the others being on a break.

My first call was from a woman, who was on the 22nd floor. The lady said it was getting smoky and there was lots of smoke on her floor. I took her address as Flat 193, Grenfell Tower in London. I advised her that I would pass her call onto London Fire Brigade, as we would with any call we take on behalf of London. I recall Katrina contacting London to pass on the details of this call, whilst I remained available to take any other calls. But we could not get through to London at all. They were not answering the phones. We have two direct lines through to London (admin line and emergency line) to contact, and we tried both but there was no answer.

We paged our duty NILO (National Inter Liaison Officer) Nigel DILLEY, to see if he could make contact with anyone from the London Fire Brigade and pass on the details of this call.

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I checked the internet for any information on Grenfell Tower, googling Grenfell Tower itself. I found a paragraph on a website stating that there is a fire arrangement and there policy was to 'stay put' unless otherwise advised. Grenfell was designed to rigorous fire safety standards and each front door for the flats can withstand fire for up to 30 minutes. On reading this paragraph, I relayed the information to the rest of our control room and we decided to follow this policy until we spoke to the London Fire Brigade who could advise us otherwise.

After this, myself and Katrina went on our break and were replaced by Russ, Vanessa and Jayde.

I only took the one call from the lady on the 22rd floor before going on a break.

When I returned from my break, we did not receive any more calls regarding the Grenfell Tower fire. We finished our tour at 7am, being replaced by Red Watch.

There is a handover period where each desk will hand over to the person that was coming on duty. The staff coming on duty knew what was going on, with the fire being reported on the news. In my handover I said that I had taken a call from a lady, and explained what I had found on the Internet regarding the stay put policy.

I had no other dealings with the fire or Grenfell Tower itself.

Post incident, the day after the fire I was contacted by my two Officers of the Watch, Helen & Kath. They asked how I was and if I needed anything. However I did not receive any contact from more Senior Management to ask how I was or if I needed anything. I felt a little bit let down that I was not phoned to ask how I was. A phone call would have been nice. My Watch works very closely together and ensured we were all ok between ourselves.

This statement has been read through and signed electronically.

Signature: S LANCASTER  
2018

Signature witnessed by: