

**STATEMENT PRINT**

Surname: YEOMAN

Forenames: GREGORY

Age: Date of Birth:

Address:

Postcode:

Occupation: FIRE FIGHTER

Telephone No:

Statement Date: 13/11/2017

Appearance Code:  
Height (From):

Build:  
Height (To):

Hair Details:	<u>Position</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Colour</u>
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Left Eye Colour:

Right Eye Colour:

Complexion1:

Complexion2:

Glasses Worn:

Glasses Use::

Accent Details:	<u>General</u>	<u>Specific</u>	<u>Qualifier</u>
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This statement is my version of events in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire on Wednesday 14th June 2017.

After the incident on Wednesday 14th June 2017, I made contemporaneous notes at Paddington Fire Station, which is my **exhibit GPY/1**.

I have been a part of the London Fire Brigade for 22 years. I began my service as an operational Firefighter. I have been in my current rank as a Crew Manager for 18 years. I have been operationally based West Hampstead Fire Station for approximately 18 years, as part of Red Watch A41. Around ten years ago I did a short 4 month attachment with the Fire Safety Department, but this was not a long term

role. During my service I have attended numerous major fires and dealt with a variety of incidents.

We have continuing training in high rise buildings on a station level which is done on a regular basis. Everyone knows what they are doing and are also confident in what they are meant to do. In my 22 years' service, I have previous experience with high rise buildings and fires, but not like the night of Grenfell Tower.

As part of our duties we conduct familiarisation visits to buildings. These are inspections of buildings where we take note of various important features to assist with our responses in the future. The important features we look for include the access for appliances to the area; ensuring that any fire lift has an override system and how many staircases there are for access to higher floors. Once inside, other features we look for include locating the nearest hydrant; and finding a dry riser where we can plug a hose in on a floor. Any information obtained will be added to our Mobile Data Terminals (MDT), which appliances have access to when en-route to an incident so they are more familiarised with the building.

With regards to Grenfell Tower, I have not worked on North Kensington's ground on a regular basis and there are no calls of note there that I recall during my service. On Tuesday 13th June 2017 I was on a night shift starting duty at 8pm. I was based from West Hampstead Fire Station and that night I was in charge of the Watch. At around lam on the Wednesday morning we received a call to a 20 pump fire on North Kensington ground with Fire Survival Guidance. I was at West Hampstead Fire Station when we received the order. With regards to Fire survival guidance, it is when our control room staff are speaking to persons trapped in a building who require rescue.

I was in charge of pump ladder A411, alongside Firefighters NELSON, FLANAGAN and COOK.

We immediately deployed to the scene. We were trying to navigate to Grenfell Tower using an A-Z map. We travelled from West Hampstead via Kilburn. From a considerable distance, you could see something major was happening. From one mile away you could see this tall building was substantially alight and on fire. It wasn't the glow in the sky, the building was clearly on fire.

We arrived on scene approximately 10 minutes after receiving the initial order. Access to the area was terrible as it was a tiny residential road with cars parked on the road with it being night time. It was all blocked up with appliances that were already on scene. We parked our appliance next to a Command Unit, CU8. This was opposite the gym that was very close to Grenfell Tower. I was thinking to myself 'where do we start' with the scale of the fire. The Tower was well alight with flames going upwards on one side of the building, and lots of smoke. I bumped into Watch Manager Alex CARDY who was in charge of Willesden and asked him what they needed. We were

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instructed to get our BA sets and go to the booking in point on the ground floor of the tower.

All four of us put on our BA sets, grabbed a 45mm hose and branches. We went into the base of the tower which was a big reception area. There was a big group of firefighters. It was clean air but we were all kitted up in our BA ready to go.

Above us was a balcony area which was the Entry Control Point and Bridgehead. There were around 30 firefighters there, all in the same place forming an orderly queue with kits waiting for orders to go up the tower. I stayed with firefighters NELSON, FLANAGAN and COOK.

At the Entry Control Point I was paired with Firefighter Nelson and two other firefighters from Soho. The four of us were instructed to go to Flat 65 on the 9th floor. I don't remember what details were given to us other than that it was Fire Survival Guidance. The Control Point was noisy and chaotic, so once we received the order, we made our way up the one staircase in the building. I didn't know if there were any lifts and just used the staircase as directed. It was a small staircase, not very wide with not much room to manoeuvre. We took hose a thermal image camera and breaking in gear with us and started ascending the stairs. At that point of the night the staircase was not too crowded or congested as everyone was going up in an orderly manner. Two or three floors up, the staircase itself became really smoked logged, and by the 4th floor it was so smoked logged that we couldn't see anything around us. Leading from the front I was thinking to myself how easy it could have been to get lost and miss the 9th floor. For a split second I lost my bearings but remembered that it was two staircases per floor so recalculated where we were.

We made our way up the staircase and got to the 7th floor. I remember it was the 7th because there was a bright light on the wall that was shining through the thick dense smoke. The light did not help conditions and I could not see anything, but when I got close to the wall there was a sign saying it was the 7th floor. From here I got my bearings and knew that it was only four flights of stairs to the 9th floor. There was no real heat, just very thick smoke, which is not meant to happen. The staircases are meant to have clean air to assist fire crews with search and rescues. There was a lot of external noise with people shouting to one another and a lot of radio traffic, which made it very difficult to hear one another. I just wanted to keep everyone steady to conserve our energy and save air within our BA sets. Saving air meant our BA sets would last longer in these conditions.

We continued our way up another four flights of stairs and reached the 9th floor. We walked through the lobby doors and I got all four of us together to know where we were. It was still myself, Firefighter NELSON and the two firefighters from Soho. The lobby itself was fairly smoke logged, but not too bad. There was no fire in the lobby. We did not know where flat 65 was on the floor so we did a 'left hand search' and stuck to the left hand wall feeling our way around the floor from left to right until

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we found flat 65. Flat 65 was on the right side of the lobby. We did not knock on any flats or doors before getting to flat 65 because that is where our Fire Survival call was coming from. We got to Flat 65 and I knocked on the door, which was a solid door. It was closed. To my surprise, the door was opened by a Crew Manager from Paddington who told us that they were already answering to a Fire Survival Guidance call from that flat. They were rescuing a young girl and mother. This must have been a duplicate call, or second call from the same address which initiated the response to send my crew up to the flat. There was no smoke in this flat and the Paddington crew had taken their masks off to save air on their BA sets for when they went back down the staircase. We were not needed at this point and the Paddington crew were ready to take the people from the flat down the staircase with spare BA sets which had been brought up for this purpose.

At this point I called Entry Control via my radio to update them on the situation. We carried on looking around the 9th floor, knocking and banging on all the doors but there was no answer on any of them. We got to Flat 66 and I could see that there was lots of smoke coming from under the front door. I called Entry Control again via radio and asked if they wanted us to break in and firefight. I didn't want to break the door down without authority but there was clearly a fire coming from flat 66. Entry Control said we could break in and firefight. I do not know who we spoke to as all communications were via the radio. After getting authority we set in the hose in the dry riser outlet which was directly opposite the stairs in the lobby. We charged the hose up (which in simple terms means turning on the valve from the dry rising main). We put the door in with an enforcer that we had with us. It wasn't a struggle to break the door inwards.

We entered the flat. FF NELSON was in front of me with the branch of the hose and I was directly behind him with the Thermal Image Camera. The two Soho Firefighters stayed outside the flat. Visibility was fairly poor and initially it was quite hot. We moved to the end of a short hallway and turned to the right. It became clear that the main fire was in a room at the end of this corridor. The temperatures rapidly increased and the flames started coming over our heads.

We made attempts to search the rooms on either side of the corridor but it was getting increasingly hot. I had told FF NELSON to be sparing with the water that he was applying as too much would have reduced visibility and the steam would have had a negative effect upon any casualties within the flat. Eventually the conditions became too hot and I made the decision to withdraw. At this stage I don't believe that anyone who was inside the flat could have survived.

I will now refer to my **exhibit GPY/2**, which is an individual floor map. This will help me show where I went in and around the flat.

I must have been inside the flat for 5 minutes but didn't keep an eye on the times. After we had withdrawn the other two Firefighters from Soho went inside the flat for

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what must have been 1-2 minutes, but the fire was too overpowering. They came out of the flat and we closed the front door of flat 66 to prevent the fire from spreading even further.

I was conscious of our air, so we all did a gauge check on our BA sets. At that point our levels were ok to get down the staircase comfortably but I wanted a cushion to get us down safely. We knocked on all the flats on the 9th floor again, banging on the doors and shouting that it was the fire brigade to see if there was any response. Nobody made themselves known to us in person or in voice. After knocking on the doors again, I decided that all four of us would head back down the staircase, bearing in mind our air levels were decreasing. We left the branch and hose connected in the lobby area on the 9th floor ready for any other crews that may have come up to the floor.

We made our way back down the staircase. It was still smoke filled and very congested with fire crews now going up & down. I bumped into Firefighter FLANAGAN and COOK from my pump ladder A411 who were also on their way down the staircase. There was no real conversation but they must have been instructed to do another task on another floor.

There was a firefighter crew in front of us carrying two adults - a male and female. At one point the smoke cleared and could see that these people were unconscious and lifeless. There were four firefighters per casualty, each holding a limb. The staircase was really compact and congested with all these people. On the 4th or 5th floor, one firefighter looked exhausted so I took over from him and supported the lifeless female down. It was difficult to see the female but she may have been North African, not entirely sure. We got these people to the Entry Control Point when other people took the male & female from us.

We collected our B.A. tallies and booked out from the Entry control Point. I left the building via a sheltered area with FF NELSON. We grabbed some water to re-hydrate for a few minutes. Whilst re-hydrating I could see that the whole side of the tower was alight and on fire. It had spread upwards since I last saw it. We were only 60-70 yards from the tower at this point.

After 5 minutes we went back to the tower's main entrance. The side to our right was also on fire but I didn't see it fully. We were directed and pointed to go to a different side of the building, the left side where the children's play area is. There was a fair group of firefighters in this area, all with BA sets on waiting to be committed. They were using the side entrance as another entry points for firefighters. We went inside the entrance which was small and cramped. Debris was raining down like it was a hailstorm with all the crashing noises. There were various bits of debris both big and small, some of it still alight and other parts not.

When we were at this side entrance we had large police riot shields available to us, so we ditched our BA sets, got the shields and began to use them to shield people from

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the falling debris. We were ferrying the firefighters across the area, from one side to the entrance. I had never seen anything come down from a building like this.

I kept expecting to be re-deployed whilst waiting but we weren't called in to the Control Point. I then saw Watch Manager Matt GREGORY from Kentish Town. He directed myself, Firefighters NELSON, COOK and FLANAGAN to continue with our task of using the police shields to usher people across the area and into the building. It was a pretty hazardous task with a lot of people tumbling over. There was a lot of water on the floor from the hoses, and this water covered numerous potholes in the ground. As a result, people couldn't see the potholes and tumbled over them, risking injury. We were ferrying people in and out of the building, with the shields over our heads for protection. I saw several people, both lifeless and conscious being brought out of the building by firefighters, where they were passed onto other officers and taken to the Ambulance crews. I had very brief glimpses of these people but was concentrating on my task to protect people from falling debris which was still falling.

At times we went outside the police cordons to collect pieces of equipment from fire engines and came across crowds of local people. One guy approached me and said he had a relative on the phone. I did not know him but I asked where the relative was and the guy told me the flat number/floor which I cannot remember now being four months on. I immediately went to a BA staging area and told the Station Manager in charge of this area. He told me that he was aware of that flat already. I did not know the Station Manager.

Also during the task of shielding, I twisted my ankle from falling over. I think I was looking at Matt GREGORY and not the floor at the time I did it. It was hurting but I continued to ferry people in and out the building.

We did this task for around 3 hours and it was light when we were relieved. I can't remember the exact time but it must have been around 5.30am. I was pretty exhausted by this point. We were instructed to have a breather and get refreshments. We walked to the opposite side of the tower towards our machine by the gym and Salvation Army area. It felt like the urgency had gone by then and they only wanted Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) wearers to assist with search and rescue. Whilst having a break I looked at the tower and it was still alight. Not as severely as it was early in the morning but the fire was still going across numerous floors. I know a lot of effort had gone in by firefighters, but it was still alight.

We were at the Salvation Army area for a while, where at around 8am relief had arrived with fresh crews and apparatus. We were instructed by the Command Unit (CU8) to get ourselves away and go to Paddington Fire Station for a debrief. Myself and Firefighters NELSON, COOK and FLANAGAN then made our way back to our pump appliance. Our vehicle had not moved but by this point the streets were really congested with various vehicles blocking each other in. We were stuck in the area for another 1-2 hours trying to manoeuvre vehicles to get out of the area. We eventually

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left the incident at about 10am and went to Paddington Fire Station where we were instructed to complete notes from the incident. We never normally do notes.

I have never seen anything like this. It was an unprecedented fire. You don't get a fire going up the walls and fires are not meant to spread like that. One flat is supposed to hold and contain the fire.

A concern of mine would be the single staircase in the tower. It was smoke logged which is not meant to happen as it needs to be clean air to assist with rescues. Our communications were ok when I used my radio talking to the Control Point. When we were firefighting on the floors in the floor, there was a good water supply.

Signed: GREGORY YEOMAN      Signature Witnessed By:

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