

Grenfell Tower Inquiry

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY: PHASE 1 REPORT

REPORT of the PUBLIC INQUIRY into the
FIRE at GRENFELL TOWER
on 14 JUNE 2017

Chairman: The Rt Hon Sir Martin Moore-Bick
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Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 26 of the Inquiries Act 2005
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Part II

The events of 14 June 2017

Chapter 9

Introductory Note

- 9.1 This section sets out what happened at Grenfell Tower on the morning of 14 June 2017 between 00.54, when Behailu Kebede made his 999 call from Flat 16, and 08.10, just after the last survivor, Elpidio Bonifacio, had left the tower at 08.07.20. It is designed to be read as a single narrative and to provide the factual findings and conclusions in the light of which all the Phase 1 issues fall to be determined. The Narrative does not purport to recount every event and every detail, nor does it set out to resolve every issue of fact or divergence of recollection; it forms the basis of my conclusions which are set out later in the report.
- 9.2 Many of those who have been affected by the fire, both former occupants of the tower and firefighters, gave evidence to the Inquiry, some in the form of written statements and others in the form of both written statements and oral testimony. For many, giving evidence in public was a daunting, and in some cases emotional, experience. They all gave evidence with courage and dignity, doing their best to provide as accurate an account as they could of what they had seen, heard and smelled and, particularly in the case of those living in the tower, of what they had done in response to a very frightening and challenging situation. The significance of the evidence given by the witnesses and the importance to them of telling their stories in their own words make it appropriate in this Narrative to record what they said. As was to be expected, their recollections differed in some respects and some people's memories were more reliable than others, but all those who gave evidence did their best to provide as much help as they could. Save in a few instances I do not think it necessary to resolve the inconsistencies between them and, unless I have indicated otherwise, it can be assumed that I accept the evidence recorded in the following paragraphs as reliable.
- 9.3 For ease of reading this Narrative section has been divided into 11 periods (Periods 1 to 11) following the stages in the spread of the fire as it developed through the night. Each Period has then been subdivided into five broad themes so that the reader can follow what was happening within each Period in the various different aspects of the incident from the viewpoint of those involved in each of them. Those themes are:
- a. the initial outbreak of the fire and the spread of fire across the exterior of the building;
 - b. events on the incident ground;
 - c. conditions in the tower and the movement of occupants;
 - d. events in the control room; and
 - e. the actions of the MPS, the LAS, RBKC and the TMO.
- 9.4 Although this approach has resulted in certain events being covered more than once, it has made it easier to reach conclusions about what was known and done, or should have been known and done, at the end of each period. It also enables the reader to understand the evidence about the same event from different but simultaneous viewpoints. For example, in any given period a 999 call may be covered in both sections (3) and (4), because it provides evidence both about the conditions in the tower at a particular time and place and the

movement of occupants and also about the advice that was given by CROs to callers, which forms the background to the subsequent actions of the CROs in response to the information gathered during the call.

- 9.5 Some of the events, such as some of the longer 999 calls, straddle more than one period. It is often difficult to be precise about which parts of those events fall into which period, but in each case a best estimate has been made on the available information.
- 9.6 Most of the times and events set out in this Narrative section have been derived from the following principal sources and records:
- the LFB’s short incident log (SIL);¹
 - the LFB’s Operational Response Report (ORR), v.7 (7 February 2019);²
 - the LFB’s Report “Actions by Control in Response to Grenfell Tower” (the Control Room Report);³
 - the MPS’s computer-aided dispatch record (CAD 482);⁴
 - the LAS’s computer-aided dispatch record (CAD 247);⁵
 - the LAS chronology set out at table 1 to the rule 9 witness statement of Paul Woodrow;⁶
 - the log created by AC Andrew Roe’s loggist (the Roe Log);⁷
 - the LFB telemetry schedule;⁸
 - the CCTV images from the tower;
 - transcripts of emergency calls; and
 - the various witness statements, firefighters’ contemporaneous notes and oral evidence of witnesses as identified;
 - the reports of Professor Luke Bisby, Dr Barbara Lane, Professor Niamh Nic Daéid and Professor Jose L. Torero.
- 9.7 Where possible, the times set out in this Narrative section have been taken from evidence that has been or is capable of being corroborated (for example, CCTV footage and mobile telephone footage, emergency calls and BA telemetry). There are, however, many instances where precise times cannot be reliably ascertained. The preeminent example concerns the times of firefighting activities within the tower during the period between firefighters tallying out from, and tallying back into, the bridgehead. In relation to activities of those kinds the Narrative can only provide approximate times or periods of time.
- 9.8 The times given are normally to the second, save where that degree of precision cannot be attained or is clearly immaterial.

¹ [MET00013830].

² [LFB00032988].

³ [LFB00004790].

⁴ [MET00023294].

⁵ [MET00019931].

⁶ [LAS00000009].

⁷ [MET00005404].

⁸ [LFB00023326].

9.9 Annex A to this Narrative section is a list of all those present inside the tower at 00:54 on 14 June 2017. The times, between 00:54 to 08:07, when survivors left the tower or when the deceased were carried out are taken from a schedule of CCTV exit times prepared by the MPS.⁹ The times recorded in that schedule are those shown on CCTV cameras located in the tower. They have not been adjusted to reflect the correct time. I am satisfied that the time recordings on the CCTV cameras on the ground floor of the tower were fast by 36 seconds. The exit times recorded in Annex A show the last time at which the person concerned was recorded on the cameras according to the MPS schedule, adjusted to take account of the 36-second discrepancy. Some people listed in Annex A were not in their own flats on the night but were visiting other flats in the tower. In those cases, the flats where they lived are shown in brackets. In some cases, survivors did not leave by the ground floor. Their exit times have been derived from other sources, as explained in the Narrative.

⁹ [MET00016072].

1 The initial fire, the development of the exterior fire and the LFB's initial response

Introduction

- 10.1 This section of the Narrative deals with the first stages of the fire and the firefighting response. These early stages included not only fighting the initial fire in Flat 16 but also:
- the mobilisation of the pre-determined attendance of three, then four, appliances;
 - the initial assessment of the fire and implementation of the tactical plan;
 - the setting up of the bridgehead;
 - the organisation and deployment of the first BA crews;
 - the implementation of the initial external firefighting measures and the rapid escalation in the call for additional resources; and
 - the increasing number of 999 calls from those within the tower, those in the neighbouring area and others.
- 10.2 To provide a clear narrative through the complexities of the evidence in these early minutes of the fire, this section is divided into four subsections:
- a. Subsection (1) describes Flat 16 and the evidence of its residents in relation to the night of 13/14 June 2017 before the fire started and, thereafter, the evidence regarding the early stages of the fire.
 - b. Subsection (2) sets out the evidence in relation to the attendance of the first four appliances and the initial command decisions.
 - c. Subsection (3) deals with firefighting in Flat 16 itself.
 - d. Subsection (4) summarises the relevant evidence relating to firefighting activities within the tower as well as external firefighting measures.

Flat 16 Grenfell Tower

Flat 16: a description

10.3 Flat 16 was in the north-east corner of floor 4 of the tower.

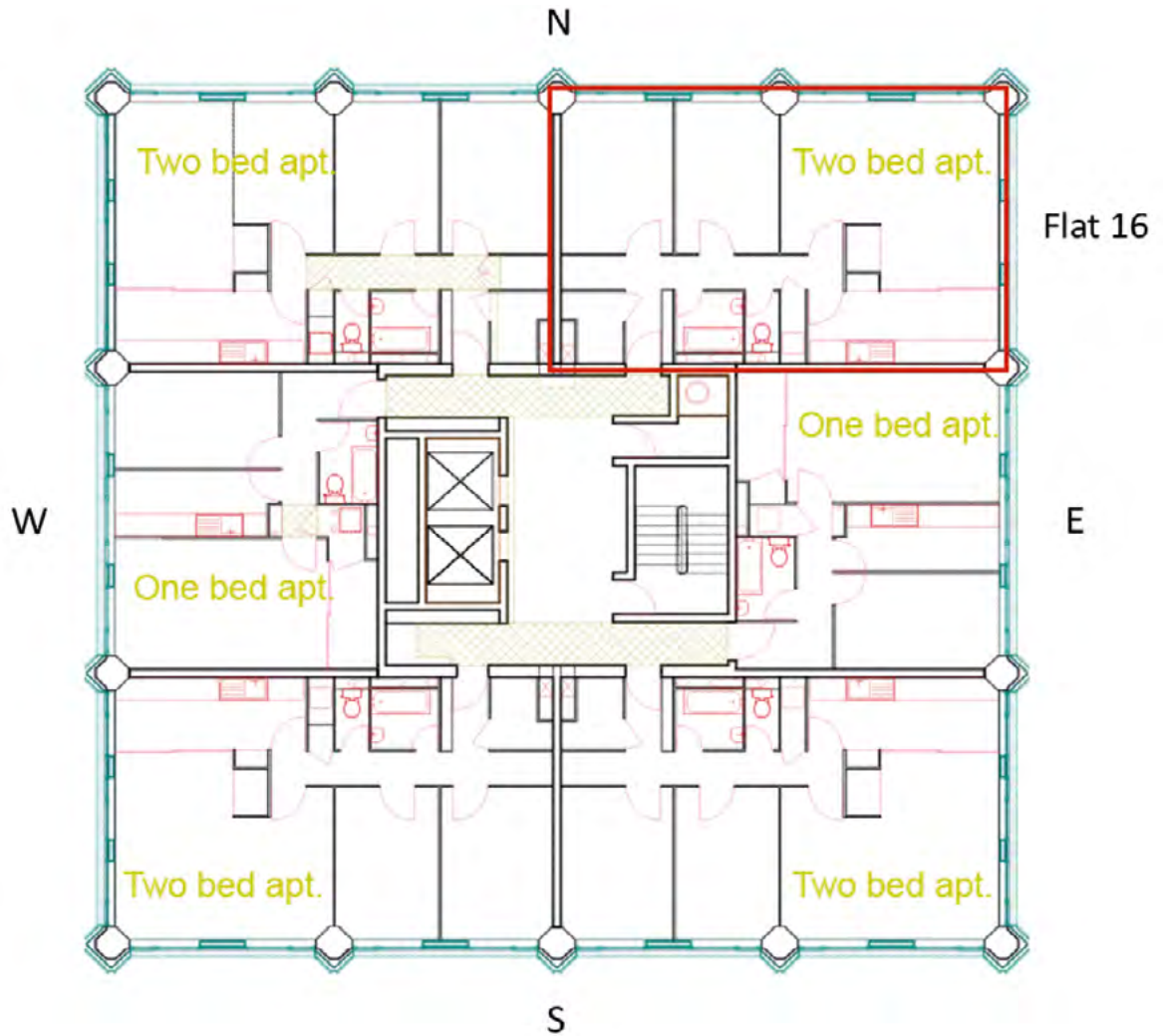


Figure 10.1

10.4 A floor plan is contained in figure 10.2 below.

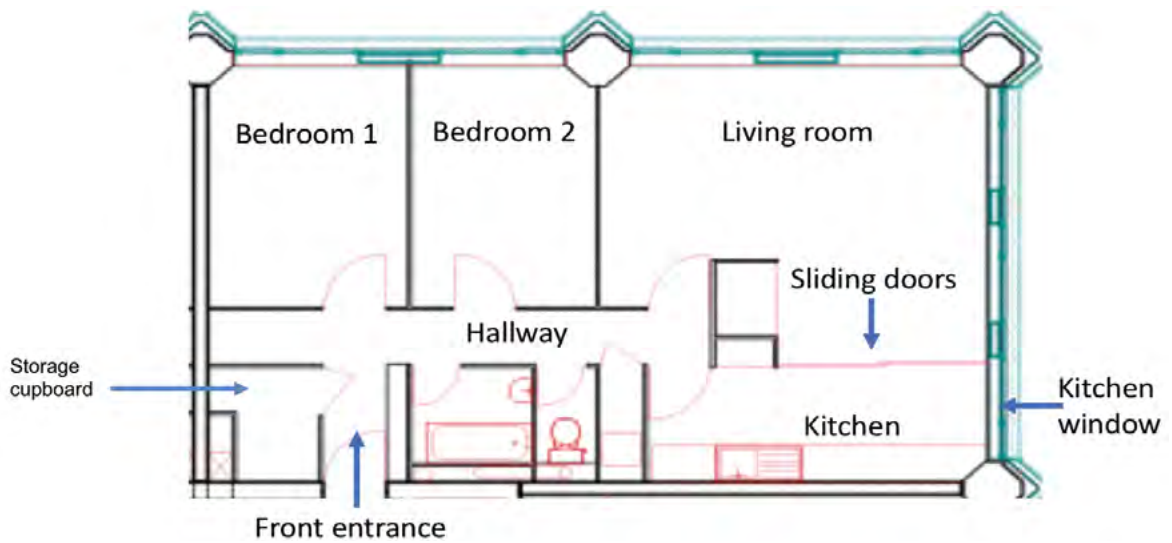


Figure 10.2

10.5 Behailu Kebede was the tenant of Flat 16, which at the time of the fire was also occupied by Almaz Kinfu and Elsa Afeworki. Almaz Kinfu slept in bedroom 1 and Elsa Afeworki slept in bedroom 2.¹ Behailu Kebede slept on a mattress in the sitting room.

10.6 The flat's galley-style kitchen was on the east side of the tower. It was approximately 4.8 metres long, 1.9 metres wide and 2.35 metres high.² Figure 10.3 contains a sketch plan of the kitchen based on evidence given by Behailu Kebede. It shows the internal layout of the kitchen before the fire, including the window which contained an extractor fan.

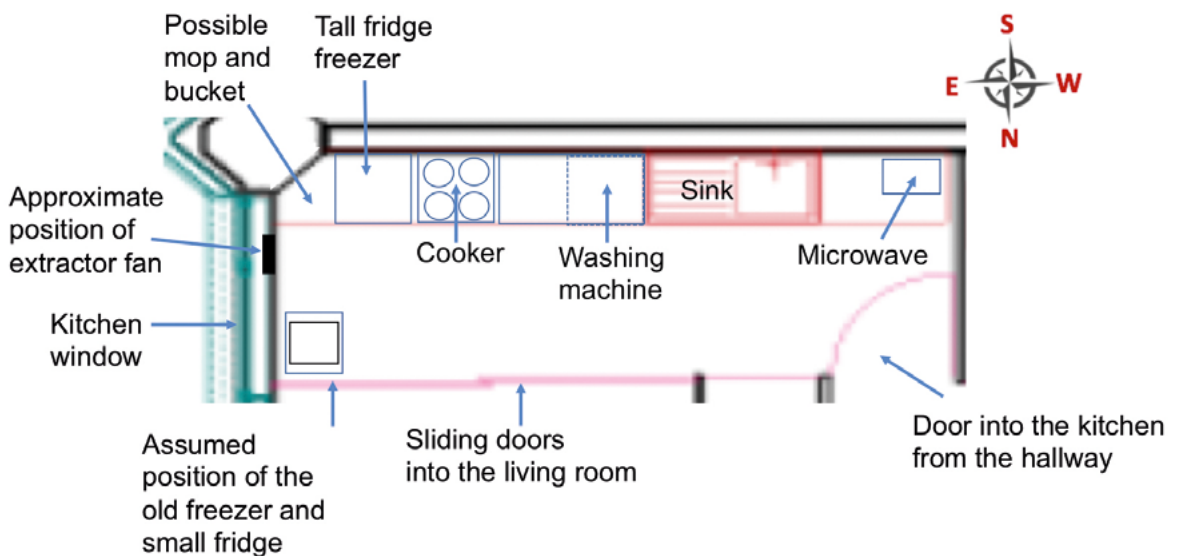


Figure 10.3

10.7 The following electrical appliances were located along the southern wall of the kitchen: a large fridge-freezer (also referred to as the "Hotpoint fridge-freezer"), which was close to the kitchen window, a cooker, a washing machine and a microwave oven. Based on the evidence of Behailu Kebede I am satisfied that there was a toaster and a kettle on the kitchen work

¹ Afeworki witness statement (dated 21/5/18), paragraph 4 [IWS00000280] p. 1.

² Torero report, paragraph 3.2 1011-2 p. 31.

surface between the washing machine and the microwave. There was also an old freezer, stacked on top of a small fridge, underneath the kitchen window next to the sliding door to the sitting room.

- 10.8 Both Behailu Kebede and Elsa Afeworki said that there was a small space between the large fridge-freezer and the window. Elsa Afeworki said that, at the time of the fire, a mop and a red plastic bucket were stored there, but nothing else.³ Behailu Kebede also recalled that a mop and bucket were kept in this space.⁴ There is also evidence that a mitad (a griddle for making injera bread) was in the kitchen. Behailu Kebede said that the mitad was usually kept by the microwave or on top of the cupboard by the sink,⁵ but that it had not been used since 2015. Elsa Afeworki said that the mitad was stored on top of the cupboard, above the sink, but that she had never used it.⁶ Although Almaz Kinfu was apparently unaware of the existence of the mitad,⁷ I think it more likely than not that Behailu Kebede's evidence is correct.

The night of 13/14 June 2017

- 10.9 Elsa Afeworki and Almaz Kinfu were both in the flat on the night of 13/14 June. They had gone to bed by the time Behailu Kebede arrived home at around 23.30.⁸ Neither Elsa Afeworki nor Almaz Kinfu recalled seeing or hearing anything unusual in the kitchen or elsewhere in the flat before they went to bed. Behailu Kebede's evidence was that, when he returned home, neither Elsa Afeworki nor Almaz Kinfu was awake. The kitchen door was closed, as were the sliding doors between the kitchen and the sitting room. Behailu Kebede did not see or smell anything unusual.⁹ He showered, changed for bed and went to sleep on the mattress in the sitting room.
- 10.10 Behailu Kebede was later woken by an "unusual beeping sound" that he did not initially recognise.¹⁰ The "beeping sound did not stop. It kept beeping". He realised that it must be the smoke alarm in the kitchen because the smoke alarm in the hallway was not sounding. Behailu Kebede left the sitting room and entered the kitchen from the hallway. He looked inside. His evidence was that he did not think he had gone into the kitchen but that, if he had, it was no more than a step. From that point he could see smoke. In his words:

"[i]t seemed to be coming from behind my Hotpoint fridge-freezer. The smoke was approximately two-thirds of the height of the fridge-freezer and had reached about where the cooker was."

- 10.11 In an exhibit to one of his witness statements, Behailu Kebede sketched the extent of the smoke he had seen when he looked into the kitchen. The area is shown hatched on the plan set out in figure 10.4 below and is at the south-east end of the kitchen next to the large fridge-freezer (marked "A" on the plan), the cooker ("B"), the small freezer ("H") and the small fridge ("I").

³ Afeworki witness statement (dated 21/5/18), paragraph 9 [IWS00000280] p. 1.

⁴ Kebede witness statement (1/6/18), paragraph 49(f) [IWS00000490].

⁵ Kebede (1/6/18), paragraph 49(g) and (h) [IWS00000490].

⁶ Afeworki witness statement (21/5/18), paragraph 11 [IWS00000280].

⁷ Kinfu (24/5/18), paragraph 8 [IWS00000457].

⁸ Kinfu, pp. 2-3 [MET00006350]; Afeworki witness statement (21/5/18), paragraph 13 [IWS00000280].

⁹ Kebede witness statement (1/6/18), paragraph 62 [IWS00000490] p. 11.

¹⁰ This paragraph is a summary of Kebede witness statement (1/6/18), paragraph 66 [IWS00000490].

to the fire.¹³ Almaz Kinfu remembered Behailu Kebede having said words to the effect of “Fire! Fire! Fridge! Fridge!”.¹⁴ Elsa Afeworki recalled Behailu Kebede as having shouted “Fire! Fire! Come out!”.

- 10.14 Elsa Afeworki said that she did not see any smoke or fire,¹⁵ but Almaz Kinfu recalled a distinctive smell when she opened her bedroom door. She described it as “like a burning smell and like a chemical smell and I could taste it”. Both Elsa Afeworki and Almaz Kinfu left the flat. Almaz Kinfu said that as she went into the hallway she had seen smoke near to the front door at the other end of the corridor from the kitchen.¹⁶ On that question, however, I prefer the evidence of Elsa Afeworki and Behailu Kebede, who both said that by the time he left the flat smoke had not spread beyond the kitchen.

Behailu Kebede’s 999 call (00.54.29)

- 10.15 The LFB’s records confirm that at 00.54.29 on 14 June 2017 Behailu Kebede made a 999 call to the fire brigade. The call was received by CRO Pam Jones in the Stratford control room. The transcript of the call included the following exchange:

“OPERATOR: Fire Brigade.

MR KEBEDE: Yeah, hello, hi. In the fire is flat 16, Grenfell Tower.

OPERATOR: Sorry, a fire where?

MR KEBEDE: Flat 16, Grenfell Tower. In the fridge.

OPERATOR: Right, hang on.

MR KEBEDE: Flat 16, Grenfell Tower.

...

OPERATOR: The fire brigade are on their way. Are you outside?

MR KEBEDE: Yes, yes, I’m outside.

OPERATOR: Yeah, well the fire engines are on their way, just tell me how many floors you’ve got there.

MR KEBEDE: It’s the fourth floor.

OPERATOR: Right, okay.

MR KEBEDE: Quick, quick, quick.

OPERATOR: They’re on their way already.

MR KEBEDE: It’s burning.

OPERATOR: Yes, I know it’s burning but they are on their way. You’ve only just called. As long as you’re okay, yeah?

MR KEBEDE: Okay.

OPERATOR: Yeah, as long as you’re –

MR KEBEDE: (inaudible) fridge side, yeah.

OPERATOR: Pardon?

MR KEBEDE: By the fridge side, okay, coming quick.”

¹³ Kebede witness statement (1/6/18), paragraph 70 [IWS00000490].

¹⁴ Kinfu witness statement (24/5/18), paragraph 10 [IWS00000457] and witness statement [MET00006350].

¹⁵ Afeworki witness statement (21/5/18), paragraph 17 [IWS00000280].

¹⁶ Kinfu witness statement (24/5/18), paragraph 10 [IWS00000457].

- 10.16 He confirmed that he was “outside”, that is, outside Flat 16 in the lobby on floor 4, as opposed to outside the tower itself. This call must have occurred after Behailu Kebede had woken up Almaz Kinfu and Elsa Afeworki.¹⁷
- 10.17 After calling the fire brigade, Behailu Kebede alerted his neighbours on floor 4 to the fire. He then returned to Flat 16 to put on some trousers. As he left his flat for the last time, Behailu Kebede switched off the main red electricity switch at the fuse box in the hallway of his flat, because he thought the problem might have been electrical.¹⁸

The initial firefighting response

Deployment of the pre-determined attendance

- 10.18 In accordance with PN412, the control room initially mobilised three appliances in response to Behailu Kebede’s 999 call, and a fourth appliance shortly afterwards once the control room realised that the fire was in a high-rise building. The LFB’s records indicate that two appliances (call signs G271 and G272) were mobilised from North Kensington Fire Station at 00.55.14, one appliance (G331) from Kensington, also at 00.55.14, and the fourth (G362) from Hammersmith at 00.59.12.
- 10.19 The four appliances carried the following crew members:
- a. G271: WM Michael Dowden, CM Charles Batterbee and FFs David Badillo, Daniel Bills and Daniel Brown.
 - b. G272: CM Christopher Secrett and FFs Thomas Abell, Alex De St Aubin, Christopher Dorgu and Justin O’Beirne.
 - c. G331: WM Brien O’Keeffe, CM Jamal Stern and FFs Benjamin Broderick, Charles Cornelius, Richard Hippel and Desmond Murphy.
 - d. G363: CM David Davies and FFs Wayne Archer, Nicholas Barton and John O’Hanlon.
- 10.20 The members of these four crews were all experienced firefighters. WM Dowden had joined the LFB in June 2003 and, at the time of the fire, had been a Watch Manager (either in a temporary or a substantive rank) for some seven years.¹⁹ WM O’Keeffe had joined the LFB in 1993 and had been a Watch Manager for about six years.²⁰ Similarly, CMs Batterbee, Davies, Secrett and Stern had a combined service of 52 years as firefighters.

Information available to appliances attending the fire

- 10.21 While the crews of G271 and G272 (including WM Dowden) knew something about the building as a result of information gathered during the course of their section 7(2)(d) visits to the tower and attending previous incidents, there were two other sources of information available to attending crews, namely the “tip sheet” and the MDT. However, in some important respects, the ORD contained minimal information regarding the tower itself, and there were inaccuracies in such information as existed. In relation to a tactical plan there was no information at all.²¹ In summary:

¹⁷ The recording of the calls opened a video montage prepared by Professor Luke Bisby. The montage was played during the opening statement of Counsel to the Inquiry (Day 1/68/25). It is available on the Inquiry’s website (<https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/evidence/professor-luke-bisbys-expert-report-video-annex>). It contains scenes and sounds which some will find distressing.

¹⁸ Kebede witness statement (1/6/18), paragraph 74 [IWS00000490].

¹⁹ Dowden Day 9/4-5.

²⁰ O’Keeffe Day 17/125-126.

²¹ [LFB00003116].

- a. There were no plans of the tower on the ORD.
- b. The only photograph of the tower was an aerial image which gave little, if any, meaningful information to an attending crew regarding the building or access to the building.
- c. The number of floors in the tower was incorrectly stated to be 20.
- d. Under the heading “tactical plan”, there was simply a blank box. As the Commissioner accepted in her oral evidence, no detail was provided of the objective or the basic elements of the tactical plan.²²
- e. There was no operational contingency plan.

First arrival of pumps at the tower

- 10.22 G271 and G272 arrived at 00.59.28 and 00.59.24 respectively. G362 arrived at 01.08.27 followed by G331 at 01.08.33. The four appliances arrived within the targets set by the 2017 London Safety Plan.²³
- 10.23 On arrival, G272 parked behind G271 under Grenfell Walk, beneath the covered walkway at the southern face of the building and directly outside the main entrance of the tower. They parked there in order to be close to the dry rising main, the inlet for which can be seen in the photograph below, to the left of the main entrance.²⁴

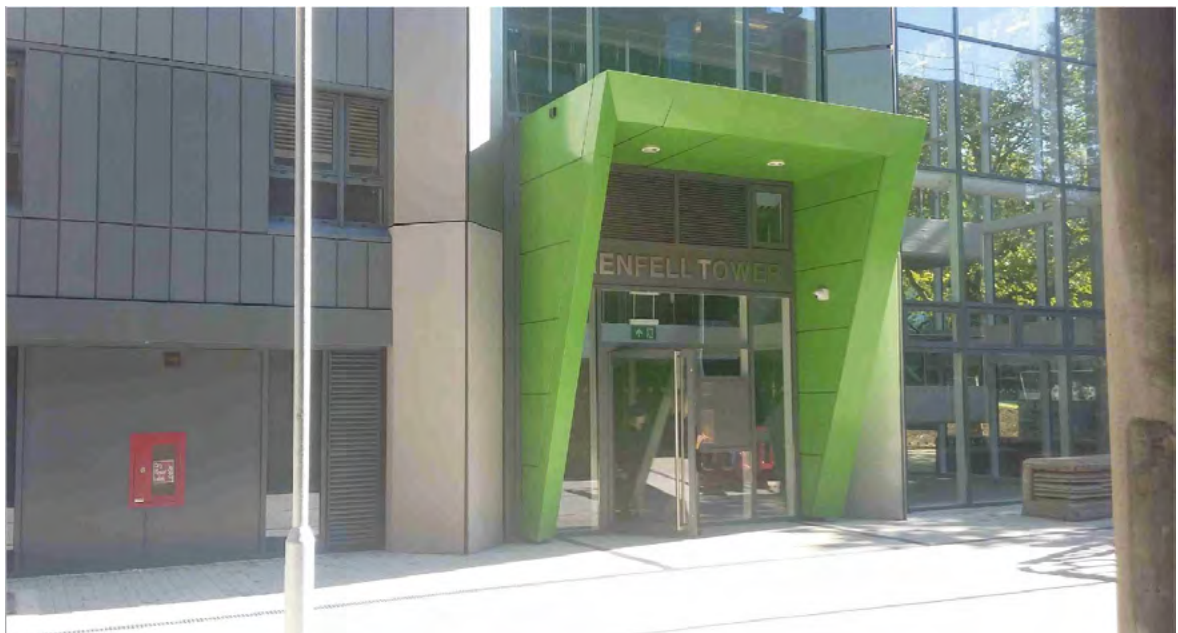


Figure 10.5

- 10.24 WM Dowden was the senior officer at the scene so he became the incident commander. As the appliances arrived, it was obvious that a flat on floor 4 was involved in a fire. From outside WM Dowden remembered having seen an orange glow in a room on floor 4.²⁵ CM Secrett saw a smoke-free fire with a bright orange flame covering the window.²⁶

²² Cotton Day 50/89.

²³ [LFB00000225] p. 36.

²⁴ Dowden Day 10/14/2-21.

²⁵ Dowden Day 10/15/1-4.

²⁶ Secrett Day 16/181 [MET00010105] p. 3.

- 10.25 In his evidence, WM Dowden described his three immediate actions on arrival: first, confirming water supplies and setting into the dry rising main so as to allow the crews to fight the fire in Flat 16; secondly, as incident commander, to gather information regarding the fire; and, thirdly, to gather together and deploy the necessary equipment.²⁷

Securing the initial water supply

- 10.26 On arrival, FF Abell located the nearest hydrant to secure the water supply.²⁸ The hydrant used by FF Abell was under Grenfell Walk. FF Abell set a hose from G271 into the hydrant and at about the same time FF Bills started to set a hose into the dry rising main inlet. Hoses were then set into the DRM within the tower itself. This task appears to have been completed by 01.06.²⁹ FF Bills remained in the vicinity of G271.

WM Dowden's plan to fight the initial fire

- 10.27 On arrival, WM Dowden carried out what he described as an initial dynamic risk assessment in order to plan how to fight the fire in Flat 16.³⁰ His first step was to find out from the residents of Flat 16 where the fire was, how long it had been burning and whether anyone was still inside. On the basis of that information, WM Dowden formulated his plan to fight the fire within Flat 16.³¹ At this stage, he considered that the best source of information regarding the fire was the residents as opposed to a representative of the responsible person.³²
- 10.28 Roughly a minute or so after the first appliances had arrived (at 01.01 or thereabouts), Behailu Kebede came up to WM Dowden and told him that the fire had started in his flat, Flat 16 on floor 4, that no one remained inside, that the fire was in his kitchen and it was "the fridge" that was on fire.³³ On the basis of Behailu Kebede's information, WM Dowden instructed CM Secrett³⁴ to set up a bridgehead two floors below the floor of the fire from which to direct operations and commit resources to fight the fire³⁵ "and let me know how you get on".³⁶
- 10.29 In order to ensure that he remained in control of the overall situation WM Dowden decided to stay outside the tower.³⁷ While he described himself as "quite mobile",³⁸ he confirmed that he had therefore remained for most of his time as incident commander on or near the grass verge below the tower's eastern elevation.³⁹

SM Walton, as Monitoring Officer, notified of the fire

- 10.30 At 01.00.28, in accordance with the LFB's standard procedures, SM Andrew Walton, as the nearest officer of his rank to the tower, was paged by the control room and notified of the fire.⁴⁰ At 01.02.43 he responded to the pager message and telephoned the control room, where he

²⁷ Dowden Day 10/7-8.

²⁸ Abell witness statement [MET00005700].

²⁹ ORR v 0.7 p. 16.

³⁰ Dowden Day 10/28-29.

³¹ Dowden Day 10/30.

³² Dowden Day 10/17.

³³ Dowden Day 10/30, and refer also to SAI [LFB00004392] pp. 18-19/151.

³⁴ LFB interview notes [LFB00004392] p. 19/151.

³⁵ Dowden Day 10/31-32; Dowden Day 10/40/5-10.

³⁶ LFB interview notes [LFB00004395] p. 12/127.

³⁷ Dowden Day 10/31/18-25.

³⁸ Dowden Day 10/97/11-17.

³⁹ Dowden Day 10/155/20-23, 10/54/8-12.

⁴⁰ SIL, p. 13; ORR v 0.7 p. 11.

spoke to CRO Yvonne Adams.⁴¹ During the course of the conversation she confirmed that four appliances had been mobilised and that three 999 calls had been received. SM Walton asked for the details, but, as CRO Adams had not taken the calls, she was unable to provide them. SM Walton confirmed that he would monitor the situation remotely and listen for the first informative message.

Gaining entry to the tower

- 10.31 The crews on G271 and G272 did not have an electric fob with which to open the main entrance to the tower or the lift lobby doors on the ground floor. Maria de Fatima (Fatima) Alves, a resident of Flat 105 on floor 13, was by the main entrance to the tower when the firefighters arrived. She spoke to CM Batterbee who advised her to stay on the ground floor and to tell her family to remain in their home. Fatima Alves used her fob to allow the firefighters access through three doors including the door to the lift lobby and a door upstairs next to the boxing club.⁴² She also used the tower's intercom system to call her family in Flat 105. The intercom panel was located at the main entrance. A person seeking entry would press the number of the relevant flat and then a button labelled "call", causing an intercom phone in the flat to ring. The occupant of the flat could speak to the caller and, if they so wish, press a release button to open the front door and the door leading to the ground floor lift lobby. Manuel Miguel Ferreira (Miguel) Alves confirmed that he had heard the intercom while in Flat 105 and had answered it, but that no one had been present at the other end. It appears that by that time Fatima Alves had moved away from the intercom.⁴³
- 10.32 The CCTV camera in the lobby records CM Batterbee and FFs Badillo, Brown, De St Aubin and Dorgu entering the tower at 01.01 and making their way to the ground floor lift lobby.⁴⁴ Both CM Batterbee and FF Brown were wearing BA and each was carrying a length of hose. The others were carrying various kinds of firefighting equipment.

Operation of the lift

- 10.33 The nature and mode of operation of the lift is considered elsewhere in this report. CM Secrett tried to secure control over the lifts using an express-type drop key. This attempt failed, but he was able to call the lift to the ground floor using the button on the lift control panel. He took the lift to floor 2 together with CM Batterbee and FFs Badillo, Brown, De St Aubin and Dorgu. He left the lift and entered the lobby on floor 2 at 01.02.59.⁴⁵

Setting up the bridgehead

- 10.34 The bridgehead was established on floor 2. FF De St Aubin set up and operated the entry control board until he was relieved later in the night. CM Secrett instructed FFs O'Beirne and Badillo to set a hose into the dry rising main on floor 3 and then take it up to floor 4.⁴⁶ In fact, they went directly to floor 4 and set in the hose there.⁴⁷ Once he had received confirmation that the dry riser was supplied with water, CM Secrett ordered CM Batterbee and FF Brown

⁴¹ [INQ00000207].

⁴² Alves Day 52/104/18-107/8, 52/110/18-117/5; Batterbee Day 12/36/4-22.

⁴³ Alves Day 52/104/25-106/10, 53/14/18-16/12.

⁴⁴ [INQ00000108].

⁴⁵ [INQ00000113]. Note: CM Secrett could not remember who was in the lift (Day 16/200-201) generally.

⁴⁶ Secrett witness statement [MET00010105] p. 4 (4th paragraph).

⁴⁷ Secrett witness statement [MET00010105] p. 4 (4th paragraph).

to gain entry to the flat on floor 4 where the fire had been reported. The LFB's telemetry records confirm that at 01.04 CM Batterbee and FF Brown tallied out at entry control and went to floor 4.⁴⁸

Discussions between WM Dowden and WM O'Keeffe

- 10.35 At around 01.05 WM O'Keeffe, who was in charge of the crew on G331, radioed WM Dowden to seek confirmation of the location of the fire and the resources that would be needed from G331. WM Dowden confirmed that the fire was on floor 4 and that two BA wearers would be required. He later explained in evidence that this request was a precautionary measure.⁴⁹

Fighting the fire in Flat 16

Mobile telephone footage of the fire in Flat 16

- 10.36 After he had alerted his neighbours, Behailu Kebede left the tower and stood outside its east face beneath his flat. From that position he filmed the development of the fire using his mobile telephone. The footage provides a shockingly vivid picture of the speed and extent of the external fire spread, but it also provides valuable evidence of the development of the fire in the kitchen of Flat 16 while the firefighters were preparing to enter the flat. These are stills taken at 01.05, 01.06, 01.08 and 01.09 from that footage.⁵⁰



Figure 10.6

⁴⁸ [LFB00023326].

⁴⁹ Dowden Day 10/51/5-52/9.

⁵⁰ Taken from Professor Nic Daéid's supplementary report, Figs. 23-26. The external fire spread has been addressed in more detail as a separate sub-topic below.



Figure 10.7



Figure 10.8



Figure 10.9

The first crew enters Flat 16

- 10.37 When the firefighters reached floor 4 they found the visibility “very good”.⁵¹ CM Batterbee carried a thermal imaging camera.⁵² Using it, he checked the front door of Flat 16, which was not shown to be hot. While they were waiting for the dry rising main to be charged with water, CM Batterbee and FF Brown laid out the hose. Once it had been charged with water, CM Batterbee used the thermal imaging camera once again to check the heat of the front door. Again, it was not hot. CM Batterbee then directed a brief jet of water at the door but no steam came off.

⁵¹ [MET00005674] p. 2 (2nd paragraph).

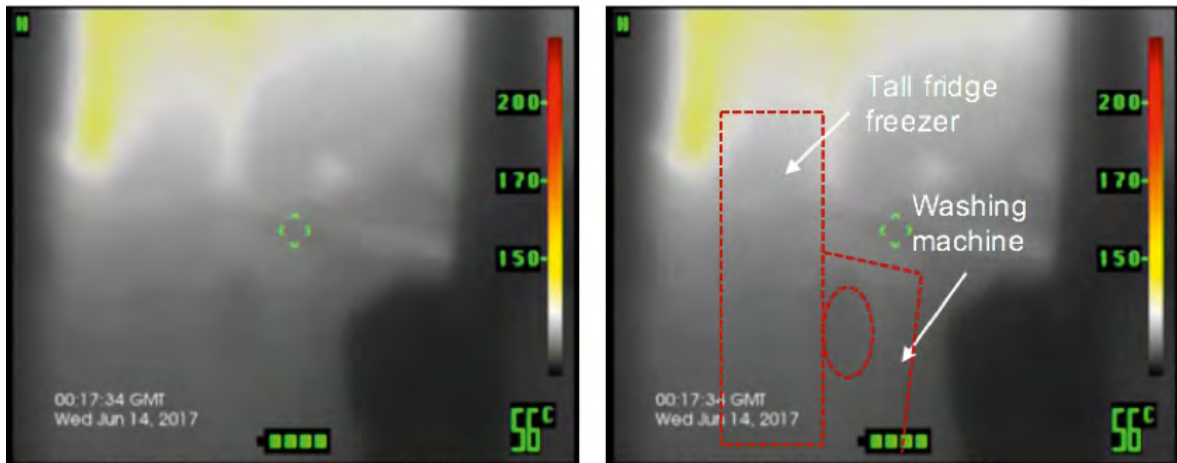
⁵² This is a camera that detects heat and identifies the temperature of items being observed by the operator. It can also capture still and video footage: ORR v 0.7 p. 515.

- 10.38 FF Brown forced the flat entrance door with one blow of the enforcer. With CM Batterbee holding the hose and FF Brown following closely behind holding the thermal imaging camera, they entered Flat 16. According to the times recorded on the thermal imaging camera footage, CM Batterbee first entered bedroom 1 directly opposite the entrance at 01.09⁵³ followed by FF Brown. Once bedroom 1 had been searched and no evidence of fire had been found, the crew changed positions so that FF Brown was the first to enter and search bedroom 2, followed by CM Batterbee. Once the search of bedroom 2 had been completed and no sign of fire had been found, they re-entered the hallway and opened the door on their left-hand side which led to the sitting room. The thermal imaging camera revealed no evidence of fire in the sitting room, so they returned to the hallway.
- 10.39 At this point CM Batterbee and FF Brown changed positions once again. The former now held the thermal imaging camera while the latter held the hose. They opened the door on the right-hand side which led to the kitchen. As the kitchen door was opened, CM Batterbee remembered sensing a significant increase in temperature.⁵⁴ He recalled that as a jet of water was directed into the kitchen it turned to steam.
- 10.40 Images taken from the footage recorded by the thermal imaging camera show that the kitchen door was opened four times: at 01.14.16; 01.14.32; 01.15.33 and 01.18.58.⁵⁵ For present purposes, it is useful to show the location and extent of the fire, as identified by that footage, between 01.14 and 01.15.

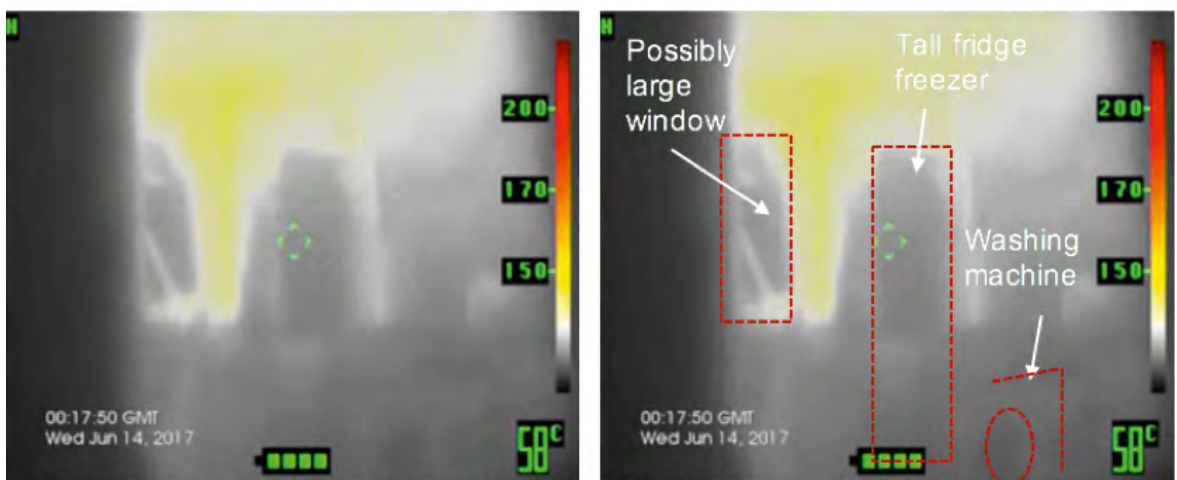
⁵³ ORR v 0.7 p. 19.

⁵⁴ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674] p. 2, 5th paragraph, 4th line.

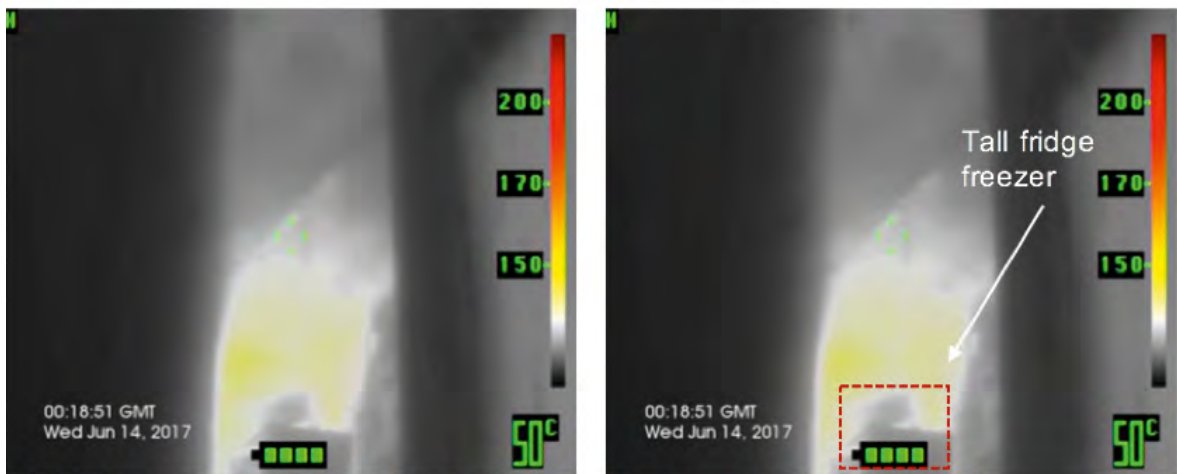
⁵⁵ Professor Nic Daéid supplementary report, paragraph 8.5.14 p. 31.



(a) First opening of the kitchen door by the fire fighters - corrected time is 01:14.16



(b) Second opening of the kitchen door by the fire fighters - corrected time is 01:14.32



(c) Third opening of the kitchen door by the fire fighters - corrected time is 01:15.33

Figure 10.10

- 10.41 At 01.14.16 the thermal imaging camera shows an area of elevated temperature in the form of a yellow glow in the corner of the kitchen above the large fridge-freezer. In paragraph 8.5.16 of her final report Professor Niamh Nic Daéid observed that the image suggested that hot fire, gases and flames had spread across the window space by the time CM Batterbee and FF Brown had first opened the kitchen door.⁵⁶ Another image, timed at 01.14.32, indicated that the yellow

⁵⁶ Professor Nic Daéid supplementary report p. 33.

glow had spread further above and to the side of the large fridge-freezer. A third image, timed at 01.15.33 and taken in the direction of the south-east end of the kitchen, shows a yellow glow at ceiling level immediately above the large fridge-freezer and to the immediate right-hand side of the kitchen window.

- 10.42 At this stage, some five minutes before CM Batterbee and FF Brown first entered the kitchen, it is useful to summarise the extent of the external fire spread (of which they were unaware). The available video footage (including that taken by Behailu Kebede’s mobile telephone) provides clear evidence that, by 01.15.52,⁵⁷ the external flames were extending approximately two floors above Flat 16 to floor 6 and a large amount of burning debris was falling off the building.⁵⁸ It was at around 01.15 when CM Batterbee and FF Brown were opening the kitchen door for the third time.
- 10.43 CM Batterbee recalled that when they opened the kitchen door for the fourth time he had seen a fire at the top left-hand corner of the kitchen,⁵⁹ but that at that stage it had been too hot for them to enter.⁶⁰ He said that he had started to feel a burning sensation in his arms and particularly on the back of his neck and head due to the heat. CM Batterbee also remembered telling FF Brown that he could see what he thought was the large fridge-freezer alight. At this time FF Brown recalled seeing an “isolated curtain of flame 2-3 feet in the air to the ceiling”.⁶¹
- 10.44 CM Batterbee described the deteriorating conditions in the kitchen and the ineffectiveness of his firefighting efforts thus:
- “It felt like the temperature kept on rising and it was at this stage that I started to become very concerned. We were doing all the right things, gas cooling above us, gas cooling into the compartment using door procedure and it was getting hotter and hotter. The heat then felt like it was all around us.
- We took a gauge check and then swapped back round. I started again with our attempts to get in there. I then thought to myself, this plan isn’t working. I spoke with FF Brown and my thinking was that maybe both doors lead to an open plan room and that we were getting the steam and heat from the left as well. Based on this we carried out another door procedure to the left, but again no signs of fire. It didn’t make sense and it felt like there was something else going on. I did another door procedure on the door to the right and at this stage conditions were still very hot but I thought, I can get in there, so we did.”⁶²
- 10.45 Holding the branch, he and FF Brown (who was holding the thermal imaging camera) entered the kitchen at around 01.20. Once inside, he saw the large fridge-freezer alight.⁶³ He applied water on to the flames and, in his words, “knocked it right out”.⁶⁴ Having extinguished the fire, CM Batterbee aimed the jet out of the kitchen window to draw the smoke out of the room.⁶⁵ Once the kitchen had been cleared of smoke he handed the branch to FF Brown and at 01.21 contacted entry board control to provide an update. As he was doing so, both he and FF Brown noticed a flame outside the kitchen window. FF Brown directed the hose at the flame but failed to extinguish the external fire. Both firefighters then looked out of the kitchen window and CM Batterbee thought that the flat immediately above Flat 16 must have caught

⁵⁷ Analysis of external flame spread below with reference to Professor Bisby’s supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 131 Fig. 73 and also Fig. 27 Professor Nic Daéid’s supplementary report, p. 41 which refers to a time of 01.15.38 and 01.15.54.

⁵⁸ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 158 at sections 801-803.

⁵⁹ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674] p. 2, 6th paragraph on page, 2nd line.

⁶⁰ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674] p. 2, penultimate paragraph on page, 2nd-3rd lines.

⁶¹ Brown witness statement [MET00010867] p. 8, 1st substantive paragraph.

⁶² Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674] pp. 2-3, final paragraph on p. 2 and top paragraph on p. 3.

⁶³ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674] p. 3, 2nd paragraph.

⁶⁴ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674] p. 3, 3rd paragraph, line 1.

⁶⁵ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000002].

light.⁶⁶ He then sent a “priority” message to the entry board control officer to tell him that the fire had jumped a floor. Control confirmed that they were aware that it was alight outside.⁶⁷

- 10.46 At around 01.21 the thermal imaging camera captured not only debris falling outside the kitchen window but also signs of elevated temperature or flame above the sliding doors separating the kitchen from the sitting room.⁶⁸

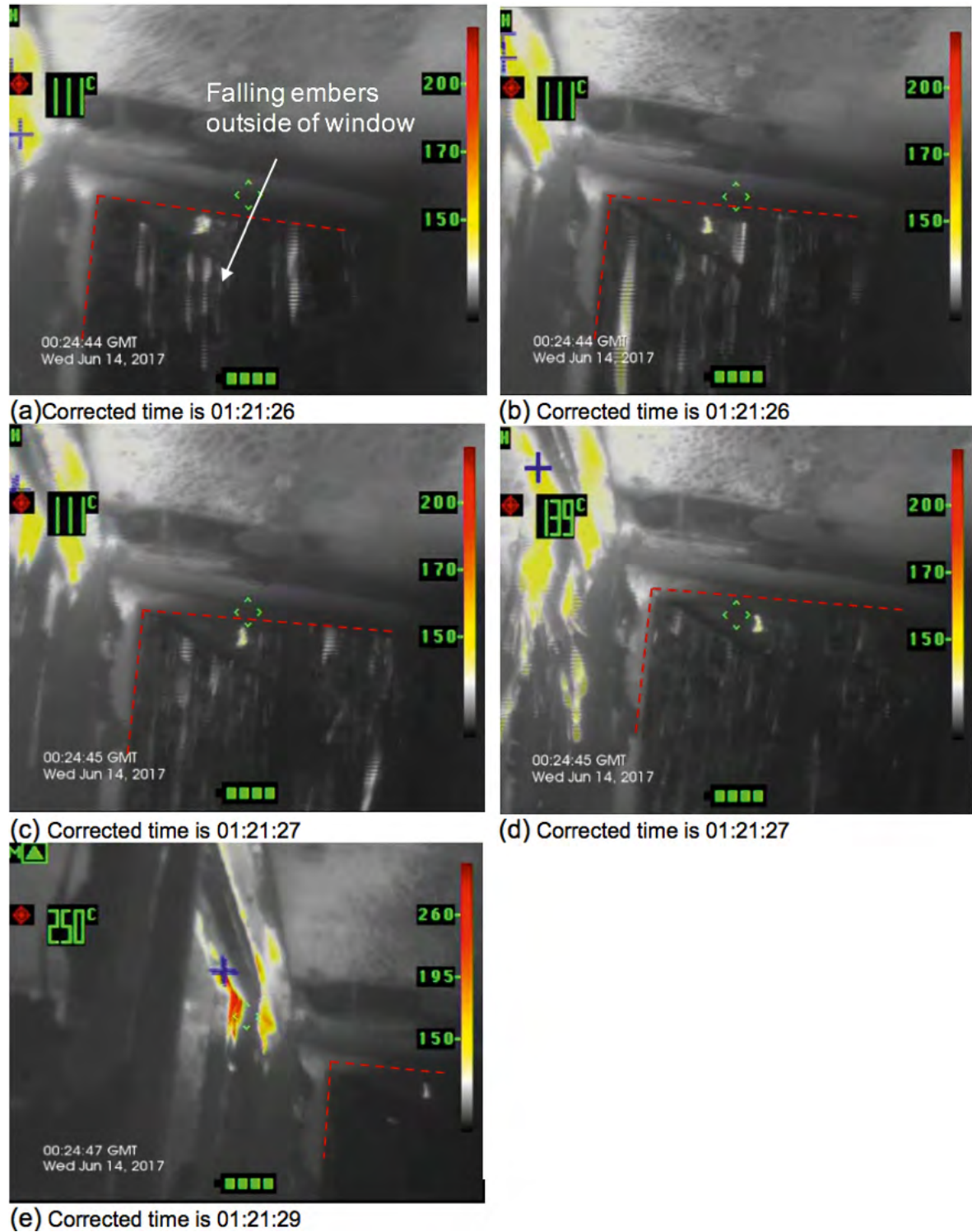


Figure 10.11

⁶⁶ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674], p. 3, 3rd paragraph generally.

⁶⁷ Batterbee witness statement [MET00005674], p. 3, 3rd paragraph, last line.

⁶⁸ Professor Nic Daéid supplementary report p. 34, Fig. 21.

10.47 FF Brown continued to direct the jet at the external fire but without success. As CM Batterbee observed:

“[i]t then became clear that [the fire] was going up the building or at least higher than just the flat above. I remember the intensity of the flame what I can only describe as huge balls of flame falling down along with debris, it didn’t stop. We kept hitting it but again, it was having no bearing on the fire.”⁶⁹

10.48 By that stage, the alarm had sounded on their BA sets, so CM Batterbee and FF Brown left the flat and handed over to the back-up crew, FFs John O’Hanlon and Nicholas Barton, who by then had also entered Flat 16. The LFB’s telemetry records confirm that CM Batterbee and FF Brown stopped wearing their BA sets at 01.29 and 01.28 respectively.⁷⁰ On returning to the bridgehead, CM Batterbee confirmed his earlier message and told WM O’Keeffe (who had arrived at 01.08 on G331 (Hammersmith) and had by then taken command of the bridgehead), that the fire in Flat 16 had been extinguished.⁷¹

10.49 FFs O’Hanlon and Barton also searched the bedrooms, the bathroom and the sitting room of Flat 16. They found no evidence of fire in any of those rooms. At around 01.20⁷² they entered the kitchen as CM Batterbee and FF Brown were extinguishing the fire. FF O’Hanlon said that when he entered the kitchen:

“[t]he fridge was on the right, quite close to the window. You wouldn’t recognise it as a fridge, just a charred rectangle with a bit of melted stuff at the bottom that was still alight. The flame was around 30 cm high.”

10.50 FF O’Hanlon swiftly extinguished the remaining flame in the large fridge-freezer. Having done so, he noticed that the kitchen window had “gone” and that smoke was pouring out of the kitchen, thereby improving visibility within.⁷³ The firefighters were then able to see that the window surround was on fire.⁷⁴ FFs O’Hanlon and Barton started to spray the window frame with water but they failed to extinguish the external fire. FF O’Hanlon then sat on the window sill and leant out so as to direct water towards what he thought was the window surround. In his words, the water “was doing absolutely nothing at all, it didn’t seem to be having any effect at all”.⁷⁵ FFs O’Hanlon and Barton were running low on air and the alarms sounded on their BA sets, so at that point they left Flat 16. The LFB’s records confirm their “end of wear times” as 01.35 and 01.36 respectively.⁷⁶

Firefighting activities within and outside the tower

Breach of Flat 16’s kitchen window

10.51 Although it is not possible to be precise, it was at or soon after 01.06 that CM Secrett was informed, by WM Dowden by radio, that the hose had been set into the dry rising main and that water was available to fight the fire.⁷⁷ During this exchange, WM Dowden said that the fire had breached Flat 16’s kitchen window and that he wanted a covering jet directed at that

⁶⁹ [MET00005674] p. 3, paragraph 4.

⁷⁰ [LFB00023326].

⁷¹ O’Keeffe Day 18/25/5-13.

⁷² O’Hanlon witness statement [MET000080592] final paragraph at bottom of p. 4/top of p. 5.

⁷³ O’Hanlon witness statement [MET000080592] p. 5, 2nd paragraph.

⁷⁴ O’Hanlon witness statement [MET000080592] p. 5, 2nd paragraph, penultimate line.

⁷⁵ O’Hanlon witness statement [MET000080592] p. 5, 3rd paragraph, last two lines.

⁷⁶ [LFB00023326].

⁷⁷ ORR v 0.7 p. 16 suggests 01.06.47 but the evidence does not support that.

window. CM Secrett advised him against doing that because CM Batterbee and FF Brown were about to enter Flat 16. He thought there was a risk that if water from the covering jet entered the fire compartment it would turn to steam and scald the firefighters inside.

Preparation of a covering jet outside the tower

- 10.52 At around 01.07 FFs Abell and Bills started to establish a covering jet. FF Abell was holding the jet and FF Bills was on the pump. Photographs taken at 01.10 do not show a covering jet yet in operation as it would have taken some time for it to be charged with water.

FF O’Beirne’s investigation of the internal extent of the fire

- 10.53 At around 01.07 FFs O’Beirne, Badillo and Dorgu left the lobby on floor 4 for the stairwell due to the smoke. They closed the stair door so as to prevent smoke escaping from the lobby into the stairwell.
- 10.54 FF O’Beirne, who was not wearing BA and had therefore not tallied out from entry control,⁷⁸ went to floor 5 to see whether the fire had spread there and, if so, to what extent. In the course of doing so he met a family of four who had just left Flat 26 directly above Flat 16. They told him that Flat 26 was on fire but was locked. FF O’Beirne went up to Flat 26. He looked through the letterbox and saw that the lights were still on, but he could see no smoke.

Arrival of WM O’Keeffe and G331

- 10.55 G331 arrived at 01.08. Its commander, WM O’Keeffe, said that he saw “flames” issuing from what he had then thought was a balcony and “a significant amount of smoke issuing from the building lobby”. In evidence, he described the presence of smoke in the ground floor lobby as a “mild concern”, which, while not unusual, did indicate the extent of smoke spread within the tower at this relatively early stage.⁷⁹ I should, however, note that no other witness recalled smoke in the ground floor lobby at this early stage of the fire.

The decision to make pumps 6

- 10.56 Soon after his arrival, WM O’Keeffe reported to WM Dowden. WM O’Keeffe’s view was that the fire had “a lot of energy” and could grow in size.⁸⁰ Accordingly, he advised that further resources were needed. WM Dowden agreed and WM O’Keeffe was asked to send an assistance message to the control room asking for further resources, including an aerial appliance. The thrust of WM Dowden’s evidence was that, at the time the decision was made to make pumps 6, the fire had not taken hold and the fire was still contained within Flat 16. Effectively, it was for this reason that, when he decided to make pumps 6, WM Dowden did not consider whether it was appropriate to continue giving “stay put” advice.⁸¹ WM Dowden’s evidence was that:

“at the point I made it pumps 6, I was still quite comfortable, it was more of a contingency thing. That was my point. That’s how I remember it on the night”.⁸²

⁷⁸ Therefore the exact time at which he left the bridgehead to ascend the tower is unknown.

⁷⁹ O’Keeffe Day 18/12.

⁸⁰ O’Keeffe Day 17/194/25.

⁸¹ Dowden Day 10/80-81.

⁸² Dowden Day 10/79-80.

WM O’Keeffe’s assumption of command of the bridgehead

- 10.57 During their conversation WM Dowden also asked WM O’Keeffe to assume command of the bridgehead. At 01.10 WM O’Keeffe entered the tower by the main entrance and went to the bridgehead on floor 2. He described the scene on arrival as calm. He was briefed by CM Secrett who told him that there was a fire in the kitchen of Flat 16, which was being fought by a BA crew with one line of hose.⁸³ At that stage, CM Secrett did not know the extent to which Flat 16 was alight, but said that the BA crew was making progress. Having assumed command, WM O’Keeffe instructed CM Secrett to secure a second BA crew (FFs O’Hanlon and Barton) and an additional hose to provide back-up for the crew fighting the fire in Flat 16. He also ordered a third BA crew (CM Stern and FF Hippel) to deal with hose management.⁸⁴ For this purpose, CM Stern and FF Hippel went under air and tallied out at 01.17.⁸⁵ WM O’Keeffe also asked for an immediate emergency care (IEC) pack to treat casualties.⁸⁶
- 10.58 WM O’Keeffe tested communications with WM Dowden and found them to be good.⁸⁷ Thereafter, CM Secrett stayed at the bridgehead in order to assist WM O’Keeffe until he was redeployed as part of a BA crew. At this stage, FF De St Aubin continued to run the entry control board.

Communication of the decision to make pumps 6

- 10.59 At 01.12.59 FF Broderick, at the direction of WM O’Keeffe, sent a message from G331 to the control room to make pumps 6 and to send a hydraulic platform.⁸⁸ At 01.13.41 another message was sent which asked for an aerial appliance instead of a hydraulic platform.⁸⁹ The request for “an aerial” meant that the nearest aerial appliance (irrespective of type) would be mobilised.⁹⁰
- 10.60 The additional resources were mobilised at 01.15.28.⁹¹ For present purposes, the practical effect of the decision to make pumps 6 was as follows:⁹²
- a. A total of six appliances would attend the fire. As four appliances were already at the tower, the result of the request was to send two additional appliances.
 - b. Three additional Watch Managers would be sent.
 - c. One Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) would be sent.
 - d. Two command units (CU7 and CU8) would be despatched.
 - e. Two Station Managers would be directed to attend.
 - f. One Group Manager would be required to attend as the Monitoring Officer.
 - g. One Press Liaison Officer would be sent.
 - h. One Fire Safety Officer would be sent.
 - i. A Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) would become the remote Monitoring Officer.

⁸³ O’Keeffe Day 18/18/21, 19/11.

⁸⁴ O’Keeffe Day 18/21/2-21.

⁸⁵ [LFB00023326]; O’Keeffe Day 18/34/6-13, 37/1-25.

⁸⁶ O’Keeffe Day 18/19/6; defined in ORR v 0.7, p. 499.

⁸⁷ O’Keeffe Day 18/17/21, 18/5.

⁸⁸ [LFB00002906].

⁸⁹ [LFB00002587].

⁹⁰ ORR v 0.7 p. 24.

⁹¹ SIL pp. 8, 13.

⁹² PN412 (Mobilising Policy) App. 1 [LFB00001531].

Development of the external fire

- 10.61 The extent of the external fire spread around the window of Flat 16 at 01.13 is shown in this image.⁹³



**Intermittent flame
between spandrel
cassettes**

Figure 10.12

⁹³ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 123 Fig. 66(a).

Informative message

- 10.62 An informative message was sent at 01.14.21 from G272.⁹⁴ Its purpose was to inform the control room (and anyone such as SM Walton who was monitoring the airwave radio) of the nature and extent of the incident and provide relevant information regarding the building. The informative message stated:

“... residential block of flats of 20 floors 25 metres x 25 metres, five roomed flat on fourth floor, 7 per cent alight, high rise procedure implemented MDT in use, tactical mode Oscar.”

Exterior firefighting

- 10.63 The video footage shows that, at 01.15.53, a covering jet, operated by FFs Cornelius and Murphy, was directed at the outside of the building below the kitchen window of Flat 16.⁹⁵ Although there is some reference in the evidence to a jet being applied earlier, it is plain from the video evidence that the covering jet applied at 01.15.53 was the first application of water to the outside of the tower.

WM Dowden’s assessment of the developing fire

- 10.64 While he could not be certain of timings, WM Dowden’s evidence was clear: after the informative message had been sent, he started to feel uncomfortable about the rapid development of the external fire.⁹⁶ In his statement, he recalled the following:

“I noticed that the fire had now breached the window of the flat on the 4th floor and was starting to affect the external facia of the building. It was at this point that I noticed the situation was beginning to turn because the fire wasn’t behaving in a way that I would have expected from previous experience. It was sparking and spitting in a similar way to when magnesium burns and was making me feel uncomfortable. I contacted CM Secrett on the radio and checked that the BA crew were tackling the fire to which he replied that they were making good progress. However, I did not feel reassured due to the way the fire was developing on the outside of the building.”⁹⁷

- 10.65 Notwithstanding his growing feeling of unease, WM Dowden appears to have considered that the covering jet would be sufficient to contain and suppress the fire within and around the outside of Flat 16,⁹⁸ despite the clear and rapid development of the fire and his understanding that the covering jet’s maximum reach was four floors⁹⁹ (whatever an untrained observer might think, as evidenced by a shout from a member of the public recorded on video footage that the jet was not aiming high enough to deal with the spread of fire up the building).¹⁰⁰
- 10.66 At 01.16 a still from video footage taken by a member of the public shows the extent of the external flame spread on the eastern elevation.

⁹⁴ [LFB00002619]; [LFB00002949].

⁹⁵ [LBYS0000002].

⁹⁶ Dowden Day 10/99/110/21-111/3.

⁹⁷ Dowden witness statement [MET00010915] p. 5.

⁹⁸ Dowden Day 10/103/4-9.

⁹⁹ Dowden Day 10/102/17-22.

¹⁰⁰ Dowden Day 10/101.



Figure 10.13

Firefighters' activities inside and outside the tower at around 01.16

- 10.67 At around 01.16, the following firefighting activity was taking place inside and outside the tower:
- a. At 01.16.02 G272 sent a message to the control room to confirm that it was the incident command pump (ICP).¹⁰¹
 - b. FF Badillo, who by this stage was on floor 3, met a group of people who appeared to be suffering from exposure to smoke. He said that their eyes were streaming, they were coughing and they looked panicked. They told him that they had come from floors 5 and 6.
 - c. For his part, FF O'Beirne recalled entering the lobby on floor 5, which was clear of any smoke, and encountering a family of three who had come from the flat directly above Flat 16. They told him their kitchen was alight and the flat was locked. FF O'Beirne thought it might just be smoke. He looked through the letterbox but could not see or smell any

¹⁰¹ [LFB00002997].

smoke inside, although he accepted that he had no recollection of smelling anything that night. Using channel 1, he spoke by radio to WM Dowden to tell him that the kitchen was alight and that they needed a BA crew and breaking-in gear. WM Dowden did not recall having received the message. FF O’Beirne did not contact the bridgehead on channel 6 but believed that everyone on the fire ground would have heard the message. FF O’Beirne said that he did not speak to any other occupants while on floor 5 or knock on any doors on that floor.¹⁰²

- d. FFs Cornelius and Murphy continued to apply the covering jet to the outside of the tower below the kitchen window of Flat 16. The jet was directed below the window because firefighters were in the flat.

- 10.68 At 01.17 CM Stern and FF Hippel, the third BA crew to enter the tower, tallied out at the bridgehead for the purposes of managing the hoses. While they were carrying out that task, they heard communications over the radio to the effect that there was fire and smoke on floor 5.¹⁰³ WM O’Keeffe told them to go to floor 5 and tell him what was happening.¹⁰⁴ As their purpose was reconnaissance, not search and rescue, they carried neither breaking-in equipment nor any firefighting media.
- 10.69 At around this time FF O’Beirne had reached the lobby on floor 6, which he described as a little bit smoky. Oscar Millan Gonzalez, Ramiro Urbano and Claudia Montes had left Flat 36, two floors directly above Flat 16. They told FF O’Beirne that their flat was alight but that no one was still inside. FF O’Beirne went into Flat 36 and saw a wall of black smoke from floor to ceiling.
- 10.70 No arrangements had been put in place to count the number of residents leaving the tower. By 01.18 a total of 35 people had left the tower. Although most of them lived on or below floor 8, it is notable that 10 of them had left either floor 12 or floor 13 by that time.¹⁰⁵

The decision to make pumps 8

- 10.71 At 01.19.08 WM Dowden sent a message to the control room to make pumps 8.¹⁰⁶ The decision appears to have been prompted by the extent and speed at which the fire had spread on the outside of the building.¹⁰⁷ In his evidence, WM O’Keeffe’s clear recollection was that he had radioed WM Dowden and advised him to make pumps 8 as a result of information he had received from CM Stern about the amount of smoke on floor 6.¹⁰⁸ However, CM Stern and FF Hippel had tallied out under air at 01.17 to manage the hoses. The message to make pumps 8 was sent two minutes later at 01.19.08. It is unlikely that they could have started working on the hoses, returned to the bridgehead to tell WM O’Keeffe about the message they had overheard about conditions on floor 5, made their way to floors 5 and 6 in response to his request and then reported back to him by radio, all in the space of two minutes. I do not think, therefore, that WM O’Keeffe can have told WM Dowden about conditions on floor 6 just before 01.19, but he was an impressive witness and he clearly recalled telling WM Dowden about conditions on floors 5 and 6 at some time. I am satisfied that he did so, but I think the conversation is likely to have taken place shortly before 01.24, when WM Dowden made pumps 10.

¹⁰² O’Beirne first statement [MET000083321] p. 10 and Day 14/145/15-152/14.

¹⁰³ O’Keeffe Day 18/37/8-38/21.

¹⁰⁴ O’Keeffe Day 18/38/14.

¹⁰⁵ Annex A.

¹⁰⁶ [LFB00002899].

¹⁰⁷ Dowden Day 10/137/22-25.

¹⁰⁸ O’Keeffe Day 18/39-61.

- 10.72 In response to WM Dowden’s request, two more appliances were sent to the incident, making eight in all, as well as Paddington’s FRU (A216). The despatch of an FRU was an important development because only FRU crews were permitted to carry EDBA. As a result of making pumps 8, DAC Andrew O’Loughlin was appointed to act as monitoring officer. Ealing’s Breathing Apparatus Unit (G25) and Finchley’s Damage Control Unit (A39) were also ordered to the incident.
- 10.73 In evidence, WM Dowden said that he thought that it was at that time, or just after, that he had first realised that the outside of the tower was on fire.¹⁰⁹ The extent of the external fire at this stage is usefully illustrated by the following stills at 01.19.04:¹¹⁰

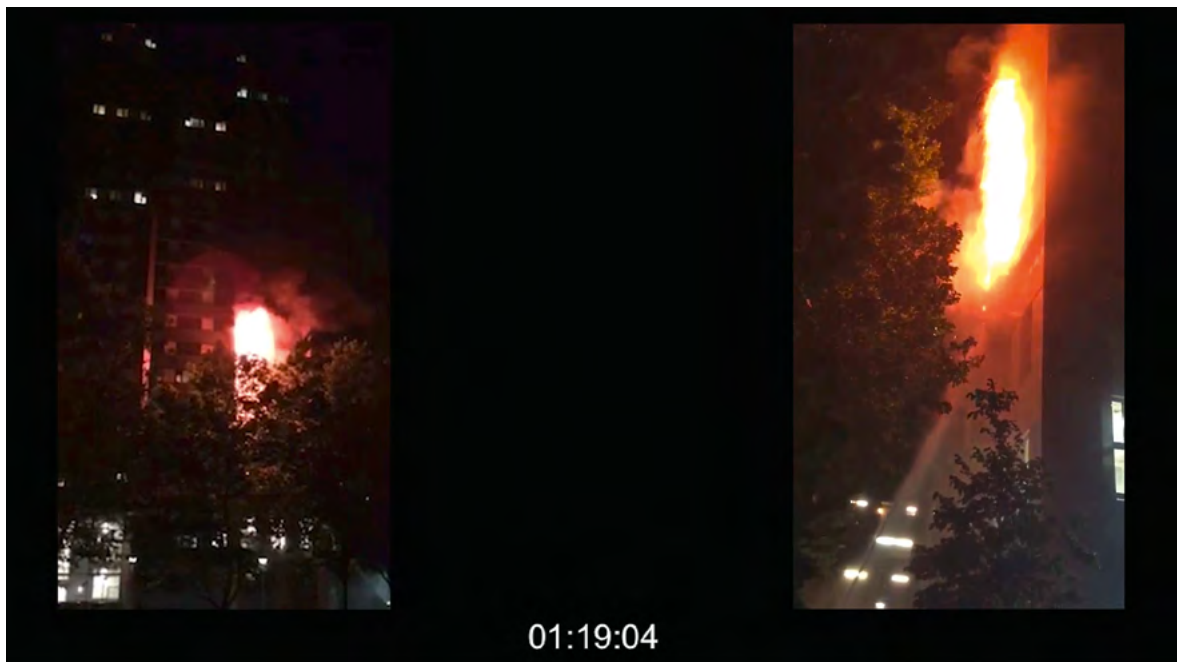


Figure 10.14

- 10.74 He said:

“... this is the point where I’m starting to become very consumed in terms of what was happening in front of me. I think the way it was increasing and developing, I’ve never seen anything like that before and it was almost that I was consumed by that in terms of the sensory overload ...”¹¹¹

- 10.75 Despite that sense of overload, the swift development of the fire and the ineffectiveness of the covering jet, WM Dowden’s evidence was that even at that stage he believed the fire could be brought under control.¹¹² He said he had not given any real thought at that time to the risk of fire breaking back into the building and had not received any information about conditions on floors 5 or 6 generally or in Flat 26 in particular.¹¹³ I accept what he said about that.

¹⁰⁹ Dowden Day 10/121/4-13.

¹¹⁰ Professor Bisby supplemental report, compilation east face [LBYS0000002].

¹¹¹ Dowden Day 10/138/20-139/2.

¹¹² Dowden Day 10/143/2-7.

¹¹³ Dowden Day 10/139/9-17.

- 10.76 WM Dowden did not consider evacuating the tower at that time or changing the advice to residents to remain in their flats.¹¹⁴ The fire was developing rapidly and he plainly felt out of his depth. He had no reliable information about conditions inside the building and felt very uncomfortable.¹¹⁵ Although he was standing at or near the grass verge under the tower's east face, he seems not to have noticed residents leaving the building.¹¹⁶
- 10.77 WM O'Keeffe thought that, with the additional resources attending the incident, he would be able to flood the tower with BA crews to carry out both rescues and firefighting.¹¹⁷ At that point he remained confident that the fire could be extinguished or contained.
- 10.78 Although WM O'Keeffe did not consider mass evacuation, his evidence was that he had discussed a strategy for multiple rescues with WM Dowden. WM O'Keeffe recalled that, by this stage, the bridgehead was receiving calls from the control room relating to people concerned for members of their families who were either trapped or affected by smoke. These calls were, for WM O'Keeffe, the trigger for seeking to implement a rescue strategy. According to WM O'Keeffe, that is the advice he gave WM Dowden who confirmed that those outside the tower were also receiving similar calls.¹¹⁸

Firefighters' activities within the tower

- 10.79 Although there are few reliably accurate timings, in the 10-minute period after 01.19, the following firefighting activities occurred inside the tower:
- a. CM Stern and FF Hippel had made their way to floor 5. In their evidence, each confirmed that floor 5 was heavily smoke-logged. They saw smoke emerging from Flat 26, but without breaking-in equipment they were unable to enter it.
 - b. FF Badillo had returned to the bridgehead. He briefed CM Secrett on the conditions and CM Secrett assured him that WM Dowden was aware of the extent and rate of fire spread. FF Badillo later left the tower by the main entrance at 01.25. At 01.26 he met Melanie Urbano Ramirez, who gave him the keys to Flat 176 on floor 20 and told him that her sister, Jessica Urbano Ramirez, was still there. FF Badillo told Melanie Urbano Ramirez that he would go and rescue Jessica Urbano Ramirez. He was seen re-entering the tower and at 01.27 sought to make his way to floor 20 using the lift.
 - c. FF O'Beirne had gone from floor 6 to floor 7. When he reached floor 7, he went to Flat 46 (the flat three floors directly above Flat 16). CCTV footage on floor 7 suggests that he entered Flat 46 at 01.21.27.¹¹⁹ The CCTV footage does not show any visible signs of smoke in the lobby on floor 7 at this time. The residents (Carmen and Jose Vieiro) told him that their flat was on fire. FF O'Beirne attempted to contact WM Dowden by radio to tell him that the fire had spread to floor 7, but received no response. FF O'Beirne then decided to go to floor 8, where he found that the lobby was heavily smoke-logged. At that stage, he wondered why the lift lobbies were smokier higher up the tower. He left straight away and went to floor 9 where there was no smoke at all. At about that stage FF O'Beirne heard a scream or a shout from somewhere between floors 10 and 12. FF O'Beirne stood at the door to the lobby and, after a few seconds, a woman crawled into

¹¹⁴ Dowden Day 10/147/15-22.

¹¹⁵ Dowden Day 10/138/8-14.

¹¹⁶ Dowden Day 10/139/18-22, 140/11-12.

¹¹⁷ O'Keeffe Day 18/40/14-18.

¹¹⁸ O'Keeffe Day 18/44/11-22.

¹¹⁹ [INQ00000173].

the stairwell on her hands and knees. From this point, FF O’Beirne recalled seeing thick black smoke from floor to ceiling of the lobby from which she had come.

Flat 26

- 10.80 FFs Archer and Abell, having stopped operating the external covering jet, were instructed by CM Davies to put on their BA equipment and go to the bridgehead. They would be the fourth BA crew to enter the tower. At the bridgehead, FFs Archer and Abell were deployed by WM O’Keeffe to floor 5 to help CM Stern and FF Hippel. They tallied out at 01.21.07.¹²⁰
- 10.81 When they got to floor 5, they advised the residents of Flat 25 to leave. They then forced their way into Flat 26. In his evidence, FF Abell described the conditions they found as follows:
- “Almost immediately a thick plume of smoke came out of the flat. I could see thick black smoke, this was to floor level, and visibility was zero. I was very surprised by this and I started to feel concerned. At this point I was only aware of fire on the fourth floor and fire within a tower block should not spread in this way, however it was obvious to me that this was a fire compartment due to the smoke and poor visibility.”
- 10.82 FF Abell could not identify the source of the fire and the various firefighting techniques he used (pulsing and “painting” the fire with water) had no effect. As the temperature in Flat 26 had become very hot, he left Flat 26. Once back in the lobby on floor 5, visibility had deteriorated to the point where it was almost as bad as in the flat. FF Abell estimated that he had been in the flat for about 10 minutes or so. Both he and FF Archer returned to the bridgehead; their respective “end of wear times” were 01.39 and 01.40.¹²¹

Flat 36

- 10.83 While FFs Archer and Abell were fighting the fire in Flat 26, CM Stern and FF Hippel had gone to floor 6. Both described the lobby on floor 6 as heavily smoke-logged. Having helped a number of residents to the stairway, they made their way to Flat 36. The door was closed but unlocked. As they entered they found the flat also heavily smoke-logged. They called the bridgehead by radio to brief them on the conditions and left the flat, closing the door behind them.
- 10.84 It is likely that it was around this time that CM Stern informed WM O’Keeffe about conditions on floor 6. WM O’Keeffe’s clear recollection was that CM Stern had told him that it was completely smoked out.¹²² It is also probable that WM O’Keeffe immediately contacted WM Dowden, who told him that he could see the fire jumping up the outside of the building.

Development of the external fire spread (01.21)

- 10.85 An image captured at 01.21.15 shows the extent of the external fire spread on the east elevation of the tower at that time.¹²³

¹²⁰ [LFB00023326].

¹²¹ [LFB00023326].

¹²² O’Keeffe Day 18/39/1-8.

¹²³ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 168 Fig. 96 (left-hand image 01.21.15).

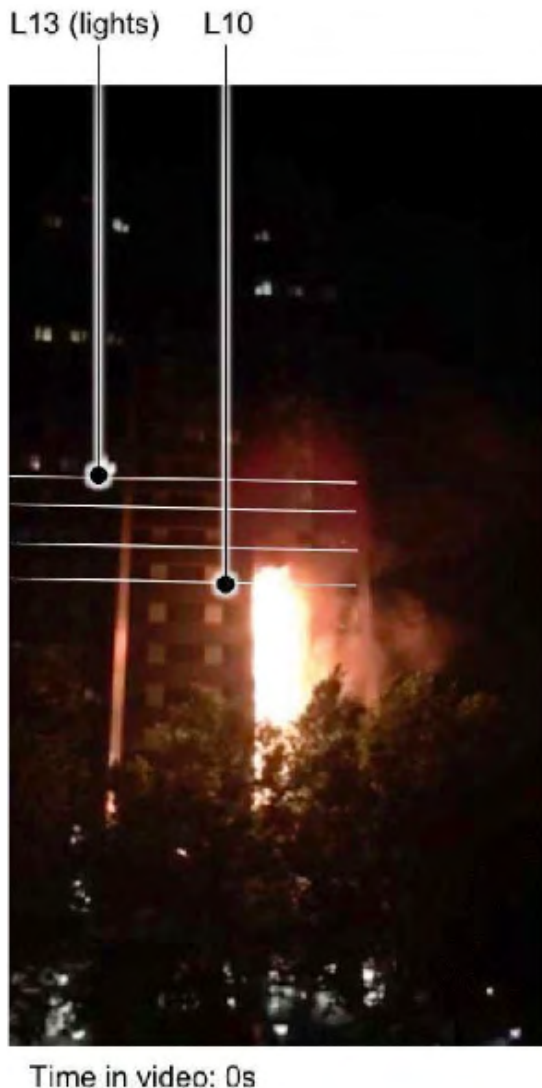


Figure 10.15

First call from a resident within the tower

- 10.86 Although the control room had received calls from members of the public, it was not until 01.21.24 that it received the first call from a resident since Behailu Kebede's original 999 call.¹²⁴ The caller, Chia-Yuan (Naomi) Li, a resident of Flat 195 on floor 22, reported a smell of smoke but no smoke within the flat. She was advised to stay inside and keep her door shut.

Thames Water notified of the incident

- 10.87 At 01.23.22 the control room notified Thames Water of the incident. It asked them to send a water services technician and to increase the pressure remotely.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ [LFB00000303].

¹²⁵ [INQ00000187].

Decision to make pumps 10

- 10.88 WM O’Keeffe advised WM Dowden to make pumps 10.¹²⁶ He said he was prompted to do so by two things: the knowledge that calls for help had been received from within the tower and the sight of flaming debris falling off the building.¹²⁷
- 10.89 At 01.24.09 a message to make pumps 10 was sent from pump G272 to the control room.¹²⁸ It was followed at 01.24.33 by a further message asking for the police to attend for the purpose of crowd control.¹²⁹ The decision was again prompted by the rapid development of the external fire.¹³⁰ However, WM Dowden did not consider at that stage whether the advice to residents to stay put should be changed.¹³¹ As soon as the request to make pumps 10 had been made, the radio traffic increased to the point at which WM O’Keeffe found it impossible to continue transmitting.

Further calls from residents within the tower

- 10.90 At 01.24.57 the control room received the second call from a resident.¹³² The caller, Damiana Louis, who lived in Flat 96 on floor 12, 8 floors directly above Flat 16, said that there was a fire in her kitchen and she could not breathe. At 01.25.16 the third call from a resident was received.¹³³ The caller, Denis Murphy, who lived in Flat 111 on floor 14, said that he could smell smoke but that there was no smoke in his flat. Towards the end of the call he reported that there was smoke coming into his flat from the lobby.
- 10.91 At 01.25.36 the control room received the fourth call from a resident.¹³⁴ The caller, who gave Flat 91 as his location but is likely to have been Abdeslam Sebbar, who lived in Flat 81, said he was scared.

Development of the external fire (01.26)

- 10.92 At 01.26.37 video footage taken by a member of the public shows the extent of the external fire spread on the eastern face of the tower.¹³⁵

¹²⁶ O’Keeffe Day 18/61/7-12.

¹²⁷ O’Keeffe Day 18/61/13-62/23.

¹²⁸ [LFB00002720]. The SIL (at p.17) records the message as sent from G272.

¹²⁹ [LFB00002974].

¹³⁰ Dowden Day 10/155/9-23.

¹³¹ Dowden Day 10/161/14-25.

¹³² [LFB00000304].

¹³³ [LFB00000308].

¹³⁴ [LFB00000305].

¹³⁵ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 168 Fig. 97 (far right-hand image at 01.26.37).



Time in video: 180s

Figure 10.16

Further calls from residents within the tower

- 10.93 At 01.26.54 the control room received the fifth call from a resident.¹³⁶ It was from Helen Gebremeskel, a resident of Flat 186 on floor 21, who said that the whole building was alight and that she was outside. Four seconds later, at 01.26.58, the control room received the sixth call from a resident.¹³⁷ The caller, Katarzyna Dabrowska, a resident of Flat 95 on floor 12 and a neighbour of Damiana Louis from Flat 96 on that floor, who had called at 01.24.57, reported fire coming through the window and smoke coming through the floor and the main door.
- 10.94 At around the same time, two residents (Rhea Rojo from Flat 91 on floor 12 and Nadia Jafari from Flat 86 on floor 11) stepped out of the lift on the ground floor. As they did so, black smoke billowed from the top of the lift door.¹³⁸

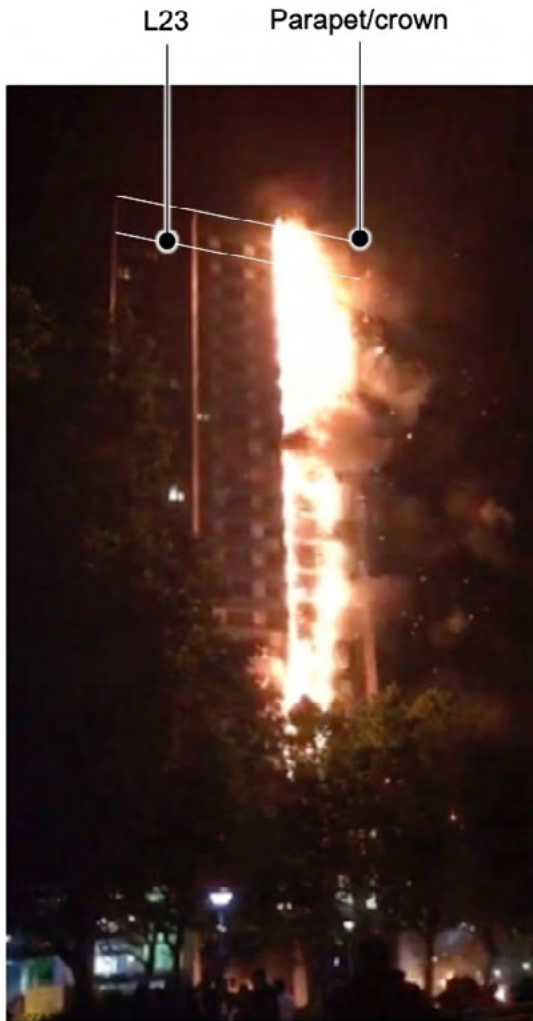
¹³⁶ [LFB00000306].

¹³⁷ [LFB00000309].

¹³⁸ ORR v 0.7 p. 50.

Call for an additional ALP; the decision to make pumps 15; the “persons reported” message

- 10.95 Less than three minutes after making pumps 10, at 01.27.02 a message was sent to the control room to make ALP x2 (i.e. asking for an additional aerial ladder platform).¹³⁹ Less than 30 seconds later, at 01.27.26, a further message was sent to make pumps 15.¹⁴⁰
- 10.96 In WM Dowden’s mind, the decision to make pumps 15 was a “pivotal change”.¹⁴¹ He had two reasons for calling for additional resources. The first was the rapid development of the external fire snaking its way up the eastern elevation by the tower’s external column.¹⁴² That is illustrated by the following image taken at 01.27.58.¹⁴³



Time in video: 34s

Figure 10.17

- 10.97 The second reason was the number of residents evacuating the tower who had been subject to smoke inhalation.¹⁴⁴ That caused WM Dowden to send a message to the control room at 01.28.12 confirming “persons reported”, i.e. that people were involved in the fire.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ [LFB00002600].

¹⁴⁰ [LFB00002698].

¹⁴¹ Dowden Day 11/11/16-12/2.

¹⁴² Dowden Day 11/8.

¹⁴³ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 169 Fig. 98 (right-hand image only at 01.27.58).

¹⁴⁴ Dowden Day 11/10/4-10.

¹⁴⁵ [LFB00002375]; ORR v 0.7 p. 508.

- 10.98 It is clear that, having made pumps 15 and having sent the “persons reported” message, WM Dowden continued to hold the view that the incident could be contained and extinguished.¹⁴⁶ It is equally clear that during his time as incident commander, he could not remember receiving any information about whether fire was penetrating the interior of the tower.¹⁴⁷ In my view, these factors help to explain why WM Dowden gave no consideration to whether the advice to residents to stay put remained appropriate and, if not, how they should be evacuated.¹⁴⁸
- 10.99 In the course of an investigation carried out later by the LFB WM Dowden was noted as having said that by the time he had made pumps 15 all his previous experience “had gone out of the window. Very daunting moment. I felt helpless”.¹⁴⁹ In his oral evidence, he gave an honest insight into his perception of the difficulties of command he encountered that night:

“There were probably moments where I did feel helpless. It’s a very, very difficult place to be as an incident commander when it’s just – it’s just relentless. We can usually try and control and get a grip on the dynamic stage of an incident, but this was like nothing else I had ever experienced before. The ferocity, the way that fire was developing, it was just relentless.”¹⁵⁰

Further call from a resident within the tower

- 10.100 At 01.28.26, the control room received the seventh call from a resident.¹⁵¹ The caller, Natasha Elcock, a resident of Flat 82 on floor 11, reported that she was stuck and did not know how to get out. Although there was no smoke in her flat at that time, there was smoke in the lobby.

Firefighters’ operations within the tower

- 10.101 Between around 01.28 and 01.38 firefighters carried out the following operations within the tower:
- a. As FF Badillo was making his way to floor 20, the lift stopped at floor 15. The doors opened and the lift filled with black smoke. He found his way to the lobby door, into the stairwell and down the stairs.
 - b. Somewhere between floor 10 and floor 14, FF O’Beirne met two adult males, one of whom said that his father was bed-bound in their flat on floor 16. FF O’Beirne radioed this information to the bridgehead, but he could not remember whether his message had been confirmed as received. FF O’Beirne’s message was received by CM Stern and FF Hippel who, at this time, believed they were on floor 5 or 6.
 - c. CM Stern and FF Hippel went directly to floor 16 where they found a man by the lobby door and another man lying on the lobby floor but still conscious. They were able to help the latter to the staircase. They returned to the lobby and entered the first flat they found (most likely Flat 136) to locate and rescue the reported casualty. The interior was heavily smoke-logged and extremely hot. They found no one and, since they were now both low on air, they left floor 16. On their way down CM Stern and FF Hippel helped a number of residents down the stairs and out of the tower. CM Stern and FF Hippel’s “end of wear time” was 01.38.¹⁵² I deal with their debrief at the bridgehead in Period 2.

¹⁴⁶ Dowden Day 11/16/24-17/10.

¹⁴⁷ Dowden Day 11/30/3-9, 11/30/12-19.

¹⁴⁸ Dowden Day 11/20/4-16.

¹⁴⁹ Dowden Day 11/17/11-15.

¹⁵⁰ Dowden Day 11/17/16-22.

¹⁵¹ [LFB00000307].

¹⁵² [LFB00023326]. The telemetry data recorded no tally-in time for this crew so “end of wear time” has been used instead.

10.102 It was at some time during this period that WM Dowden noted a large amount of debris falling from the tower and ordered FFs Murphy and Cornelius (who had been working the covering jet) to move to a safe area. Once they had moved back, WM Dowden realised that the covering jet had had no effect on suppressing the fire. Accordingly, he ordered FFs Murphy and Cornelius to turn off the jet and report to the bridgehead wearing BA.¹⁵³

DAC O’Loughlin on his way to the incident

10.103 At 01.28.05 DAC O’Loughlin called the control room in response to a pager message alerting him to the fact that pumps had been made 8.¹⁵⁴ He was told that it was now a 15-pump fire and he confirmed that he was on his way to the incident.

London Ambulance Service called to the tower

10.104 At 01.29.06 AOM Debbie Real called the London Ambulance Service (LAS) and asked them to attend the tower.¹⁵⁵ She told them that there were a lot of people stuck in flats.

Decision to make pumps 20

10.105 At around 01.29 WM Dowden discussed resources with WM Paul Watson who had arrived at the incident at 01.25 on G361, Hammersmith’s pump ladder.¹⁵⁶ Having just arrived and having seen the extent of the external fire, WM Watson’s firm view was that this was a 20-pump fire and WM Dowden accepted his advice. Accordingly, less than two minutes after the decision to make pumps 15, at 01.29.11 his decision to make pumps 20 and to request two additional FRUs was communicated to the control room.¹⁵⁷

10.106 WM Dowden had no clear plan of how he would deploy the full complement of 20 appliances and two additional FRUs when they arrived.¹⁵⁸ His plan remained as it always had been: to commit crews into the tower to conduct both search and rescue and firefighting operations.¹⁵⁹ He did not consider evacuation to be an option.¹⁶⁰ As the bridgehead was on floor 2, he told WM Watson to set up a staging area on the ground floor.¹⁶¹ (A staging area acts as a holding zone for firefighters waiting to be sent to the bridgehead for deployment.)¹⁶²

10.107 By 01.29 it was plain that the fire on the outside of the building had reached floor 23 and involved both the eastern and the northern elevations. Notwithstanding the extent, speed and ferocity of the fire, WM Dowden continued to believe that it could be brought under control.¹⁶³

10.108 The only firefighting measure he had identified to extinguish the external fire was the deployment of Paddington’s FRU crew to the roof of the tower to set up a line from which firefighters could apply a hose downward onto the flames. However, it is not clear whether he had given any thought to the possibility that the stairwell might be affected by smoke

¹⁵³ Dowden witness statement [MET00010915] p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ ORR v 0.7 p. 56.

¹⁵⁵ [LAS00000009] p. 6; [INQ00000378].

¹⁵⁶ [LFB00000002].

¹⁵⁷ [LFB00002589]; Dowden Day 11/33/15-34/7.

¹⁵⁸ Dowden Day 11/35.

¹⁵⁹ Dowden Day 11/36/5-9.

¹⁶⁰ Dowden Day 11/44/6-11.

¹⁶¹ Watson witness statement [MET00008044] p. 3; Dowden Day 11/35.

¹⁶² Watson witness statement [MET00008044] p. 4.

¹⁶³ Dowden Day 11/40/3-19.

that would hinder the crew's progress. WM Dowden felt he had a professional and moral obligation to try something to bring the external fire under control.¹⁶⁴ At that time there were eight firefighters wearing BA equipment inside the tower.

- 10.109 Although the full severity of the fire had become plain by 01.30, WM Dowden did not declare the fire a Major Incident on behalf of the LFB because he was completely occupied by the task of managing the resources available to him. He accepted that the situation was more than he could cope with.

2 External fire spread

- 10.110 This section describes the spread of the fire on the outside of the tower during Period 1.
- 10.111 At 01.05 the first known video evidence of the fire was captured by Behailu Kebede showing flames at the far-left side of the window when viewed from outside the tower.¹⁶⁵ By 01.07 the window infill panel and mounting of the extractor fan appeared to be burning and the extractor fan unit appeared to be missing.¹⁶⁶ By 01.08 the flames extended further out of the left of the window and burning material was beginning to fall to the ground.¹⁶⁷ By 01.09 the fire had taken hold in the cladding and there was a regular flow of burning material falling from the window opening.¹⁶⁸
- 10.112 By 01.13 intermittent flames could be seen extending from the top left-hand corner of the window between the column and the spandrel cladding panels above the window and flames could also be seen in the gaps between the cladding panels above the window.¹⁶⁹ By 01.14 the flames had grown longer in the corner between the column and the spandrel panels above the window¹⁷⁰ and the fire had also started spreading downward between the column and the spandrel panels below the window.¹⁷¹
- 10.113 At 01.15.06 a noise was heard which was likely to have been the breaking of at least one pane of glass in the kitchen window,¹⁷² which was immediately followed by an increase in the length of the flames. Shortly after that the cladding could be seen burning with some intensity and external flames were extending approximately two floors above Flat 16 to between floors 6 and 7.¹⁷³ A large amount of burning, molten material was falling from the area of the fire and cascading down to the ground.¹⁷⁴ The following images were taken between 01.15.41 and 01.15.54:¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁴ Dowden Day 11/43/5-9.

¹⁶⁵ [LBYS0000002]; [MET000083355]; Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 117.

¹⁶⁶ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 118 Figs. 59 and 114 sections 551-555.

¹⁶⁷ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 119 Figs. 60 and 114 sections 556-559.

¹⁶⁸ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 120 Figs. 61, 62 and 114 section 560 to 115 section 563.

¹⁶⁹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 123 Figs. 66 and 115 section 578.

¹⁷⁰ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p.115-116 sections 580-583.

¹⁷¹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 128 Figs. 70, 71.

¹⁷² Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 129 sections 605-608 [IWS00000050].

¹⁷³ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 131 and Fig. 73.

¹⁷⁴ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 158 sections 801-803.

¹⁷⁵ Professor Bisby supplemental report Fig. 90 [LBYS0000001] p. 163.



Figure 10.18

- 10.114 At 01.16 there was continuous flaming between floors 4 and 6 and intermittent flaming¹⁷⁶ between floors 6 and 8.¹⁷⁷ The flames were highest at the vertex of the junction between the column and the spandrel panels, as can be seen in this image:¹⁷⁸

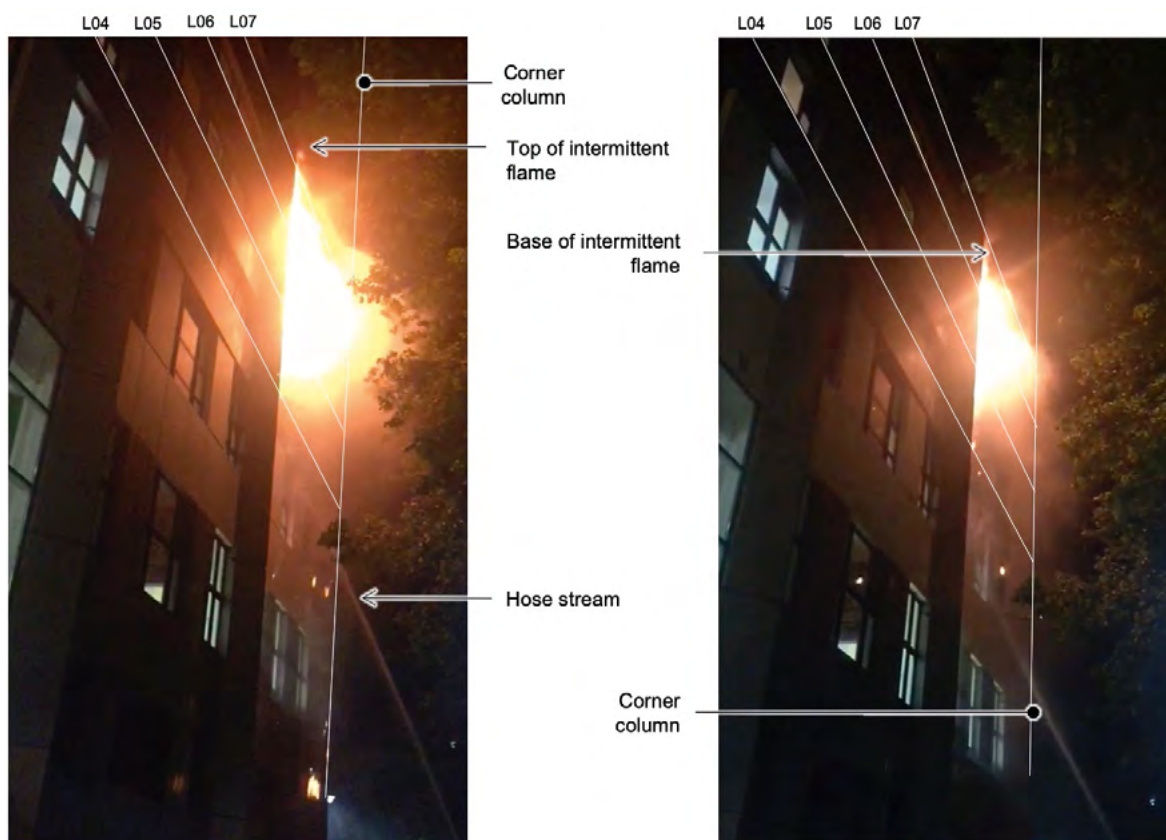


Figure 10.19

- 10.115 By 01.20 approximately seven “Flat 6s” located in the north-east corner of the tower were affected by the external flame front between floors 4 and 10,¹⁷⁹ with flames extending up column line B5.¹⁸⁰
- 10.116 In the period between 01.20 and 01.30 the rate at which the flames spread accelerated considerably. Between 01.21.15 and 01.22.47 the rate of vertical flame spread was approximately 0.75 floors per minute (or 1.3 minutes per floor). At the beginning of that period the fire extended to the top of floor 10; after 45 seconds it had reached the top of floor 11; after 90 seconds it was at the top of floor 12, with intermittent flaming extending past the windows of floor 13.¹⁸¹ The following images show the fire growth during that period:¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ As explained at section 806 of Professor Bisby’s supplemental report, in general, diffusion flames pulsate and are not continuous and hence the use of the word “intermittent” to describe the approximate flame extents.

¹⁷⁷ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 158 sections 805-810.

¹⁷⁸ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] Fig. 92 p. 165. At this point a hose stream is applied onto the external cladding from ground level (for the first time, based on the available visual evidence) with firefighting water being applied to the cladding immediately below floor 4.

¹⁷⁹ Flats 16, 26, 36, 46, 56, 66, 76. Dr Lane supplemental report [BLAS0000012] p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ Column line B5 is shown in Chapter 4 of Dr Lane’s supplemental report [BLAS0000004] p. 9 Fig. 4.7.

¹⁸¹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 159 sections 816-820.

¹⁸² Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 168 Fig. 96.

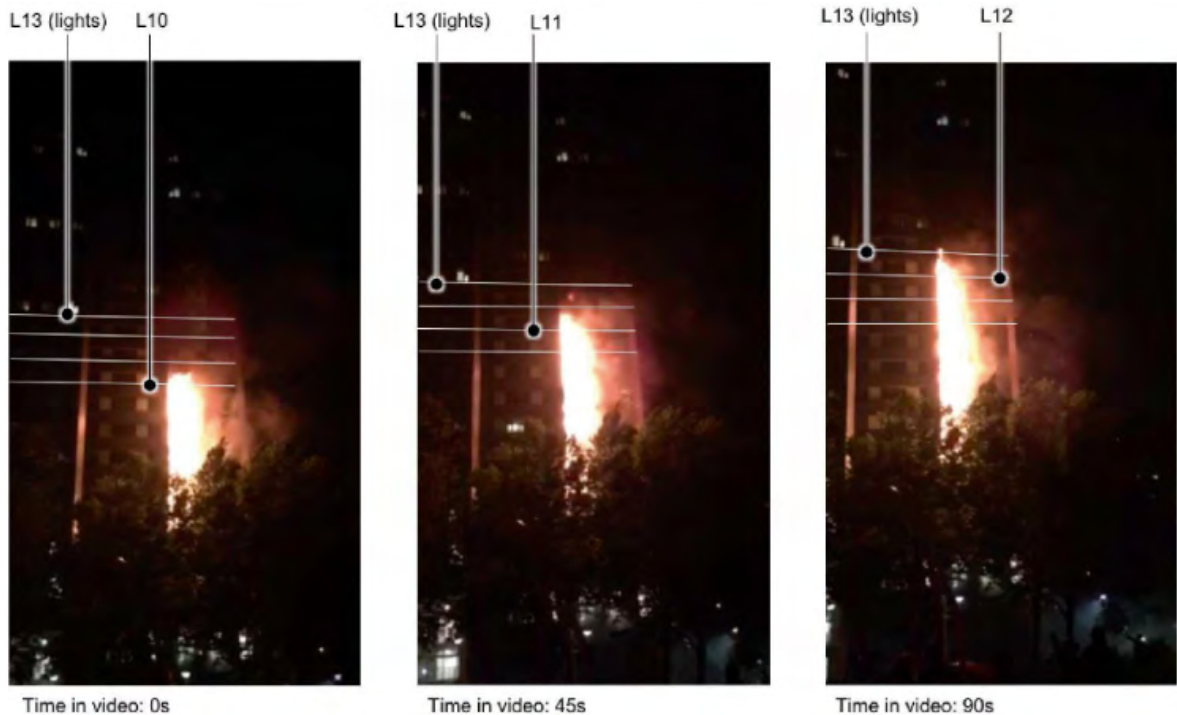


Figure 10.20

- 10.117 Between 01.22 and 01.24 large burning panels from the cladding system were detaching themselves from the building and spiralling down to the ground.¹⁸³
- 10.118 Between 01.23.36 and 01.26.37 the rate of fire spread accelerated from approximately two storeys per minute to approximately four storeys per minute. At the start of this period the fire extended to the top of floor 15; after 60 seconds it had reached the top of floor 17; after 120 seconds it was at the top of floor 19; after 180 seconds it was in the middle of floor 23.¹⁸⁴ By 01.26 the fire had spread 19 floors in approximately 14 minutes. The following series of images captures that sequence:¹⁸⁵

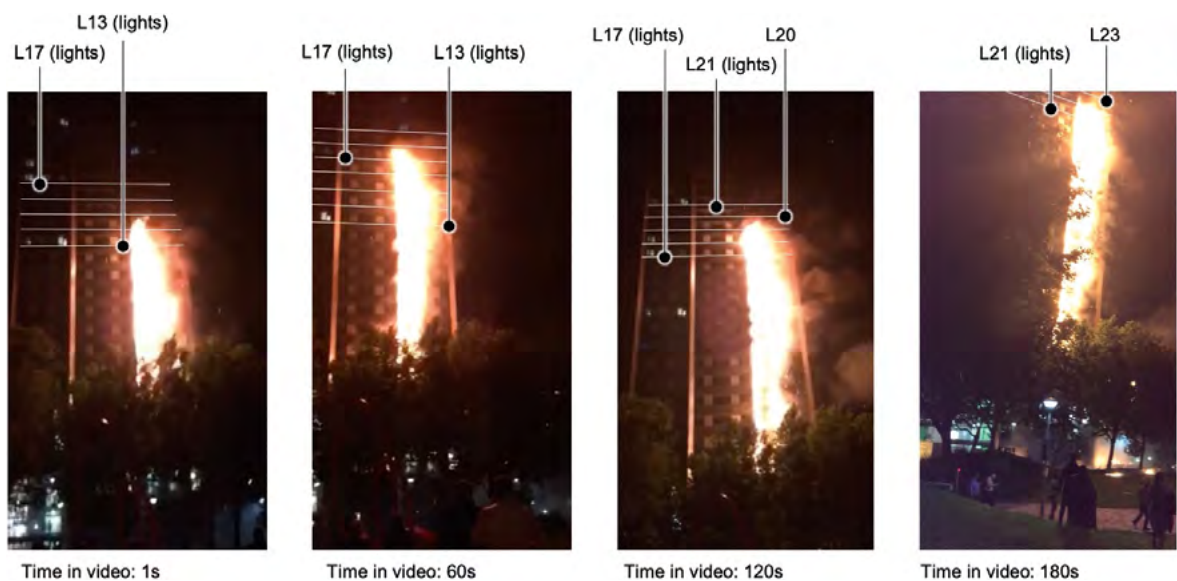


Figure 10.21

¹⁸³ [LBYS0000002] at 01.22-01.23 – in particular at 01.23.58ff.

¹⁸⁴ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 159 sections 821-826.

¹⁸⁵ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 168 Fig. 97.

10.119 By 1.27 the fire had spread to roof level and after 01.27.42 there was continuous flaming at the top of the architectural crown.¹⁸⁶ These images show that final vertical progression.¹⁸⁷

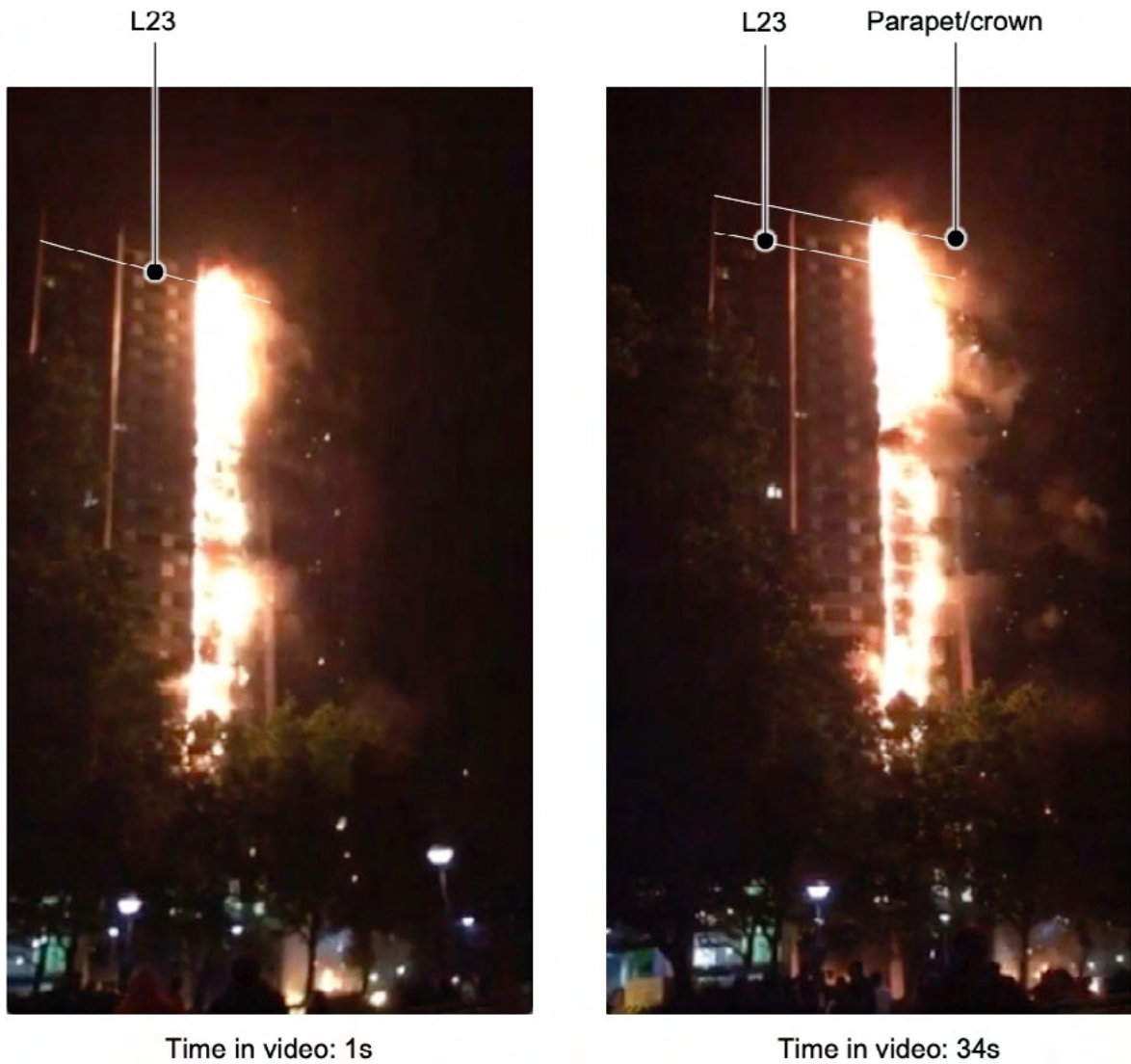


Figure 10.22

¹⁸⁶ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 159 sections 830-831.

¹⁸⁷ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 169 Figs. 98, 99.

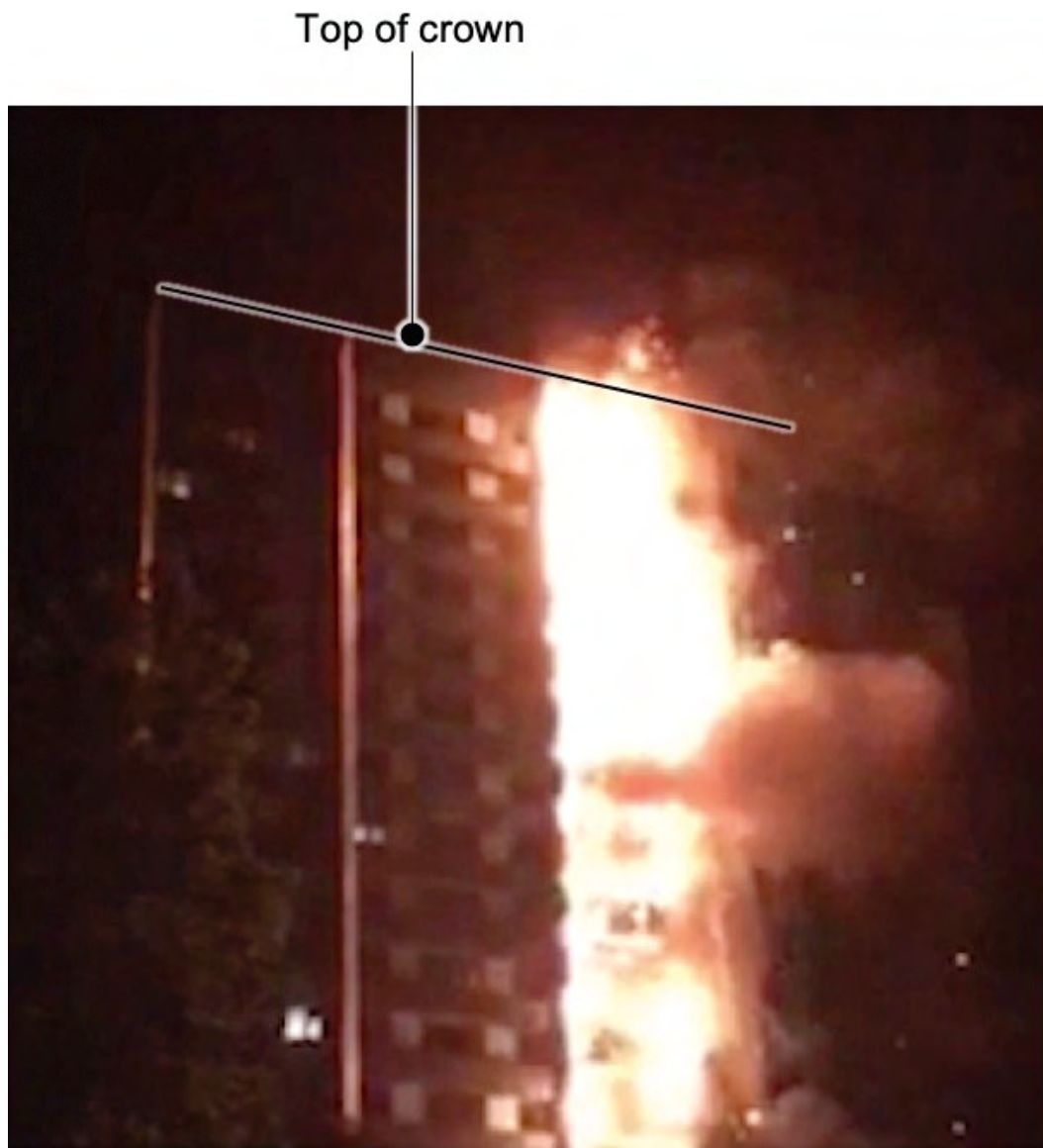


Figure 10.23

- 10.120 At 01.28 the fire was spreading horizontally between the joints of the ACM column panels to the south side of column B5 on the east face at floor 23 and at roof level.¹⁸⁸ That was the result of melting and burning polyethylene dripping and collecting on the ledge created by the column cassette joining detail.¹⁸⁹ Subsequently, the fire spread southwards around the architectural crown.¹⁹⁰ By this point it had also spread northwards towards column A5 on the north-east corner.
- 10.121 At approximately 01.29 the fire reached its maximum height at the top of the northernmost bay of the east face.¹⁹¹
- 10.122 In the period 01.20-01.30 the flame front extended to envelop all the “Flat 6s” between floors 10 and 23.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 204 section 980 and Fig. 122 p. 205.

¹⁸⁹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 46 Fig. 19.

¹⁹⁰ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 204 section 982.

¹⁹¹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 159 section 832 and 168 Fig. 100.

¹⁹² Those are Flats 86, 96, 106, 116, 126, 136, 146, 156, 166, 176, 186, 196 and 206. Dr Lane supplemental report [BLAS0000012] p. 8.

10.123 By 01.30 there were also flames on the south side of column B5 at lower levels of the building at about floor 8. The following images taken from Professor Bisby’s report show the southerly progress of the fire at those lower floors and at the crown; they also show the northerly horizontal progress towards the north-east corner of column A5:

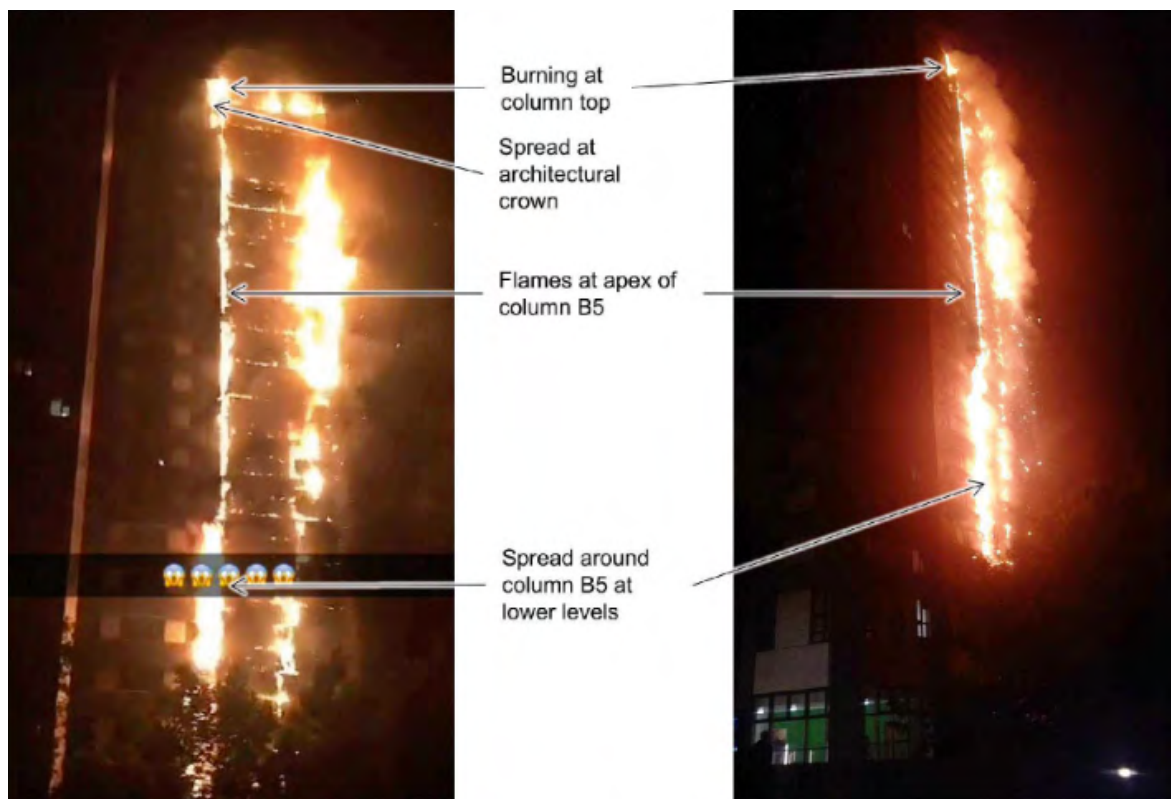


Figure 10.24

10.124 A number of firefighters and other local people gave descriptions of the early spread of fire within the cladding. FFs Murphy and Cornelius witnessed this from directly below Flat 16 as they attempted to apply a covering jet below and around the window of the flat. FF Murphy described what he saw as follows:

“We saw flames move up the tower between the panelling and they lit up the building reminding me of neon lights being turned on in a vertical line between the panels, with bright white-hot glow of fire then spreading rapidly left and right.”¹⁹³

10.125 He also said that he had seen the fire travelling up through the column to the left-hand side of the kitchen of Flat 16.¹⁹⁴

10.126 FF Cornelius described what he saw in similar terms:

“It appeared as if the fire was spreading under the panelling and the cladding. It wasn’t clear whether it was actually breaching any other compartments at that point. It looked to me as if it was more just under the actual cladding going up the side of the building.”

¹⁹³ [MET00010820] p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Murphy Day 38/55/10-25.

He went on to explain that:

“It wasn’t necessarily the actual cladding panels that I could see alight; it was the areas around it initially. As it developed, it seemed that the areas around it or whatever was behind the panels were falling off, sort of melting and dropping down to where me and FF Murphy were standing on the jet.”¹⁹⁵

- 10.127 Fatima Alves, who had let the first LFB crews into the building on their arrival, described the early stages of the fire on the east facade. She said that there had been “a sudden flash like lightning” which was orange and yellow in colour. The kitchen window of Flat 16 had exploded and its glass shattered. Fatima Alves then saw flames shoot out and up from the top of the space where the window had been. She heard crackling and saw drops of what looked like melting plastic falling on the floor. It was “like it was pieces of paper falling down”.¹⁹⁶
- 10.128 Tiago Alves, her son, was in the same area as his mother. He described seeing a fire inside behind the kitchen window of Flat 16. He then saw the window frame fall out and the fire “burst out”. The window frame looked like it was “melting and bubbling”. He watched the fire “come out of the flat and kind of roll under or slightly disappear under the grey cladding. As it did this the cladding caught fire”. Tiago Alves saw a “faint flash of light which, sparked and then once alight, sparks started falling”.¹⁹⁷
- 10.129 Inspector Nicholas Thatcher also provided a vivid description of the intensity of the fire when he first saw the tower as he was approaching by car. That was around 01.26, when he declared a Major Incident.¹⁹⁸ In oral evidence he said:

“I saw the fire for the first time. And it was the intensity; it was like a jet engine coming out of this window and starting to go up the side and just moving around in straight lines. ... It was just like nothing I’d ever seen. The flame came out and went up the building.”¹⁹⁹

3 Conditions in the tower and movement of occupants

The occupants of Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017

- 10.130 On the night of 14 June 2017 there were 297²⁰⁰ people in 129 flats in the tower, including visitors. Seven flats were empty on that night.²⁰¹ Sixty-seven of those present were children under the age of 18.²⁰² Those who were in the tower when the fire began are listed in Annex A.

The detection of fire in Flat 16

- 10.131 The detection of fire in Flat 16, Behailu Kebede’s first call to the LFB, and the immediate actions of Elsa Afeworki, Almaz Kinfu and Behailu Kebede himself have already been described.

¹⁹⁵ Murphy Day 38/67/14-68/24.

¹⁹⁶ Alves Day 52/119/15-124/7.

¹⁹⁷ Tiago Alves first witness statement [IWS00000123] p. 9.

¹⁹⁸ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/34/1-36/22.

¹⁹⁹ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/36/18-37/2-3.

²⁰⁰ This figure is the result of the Inquiry’s analysis of exit times as shown on CCTV footage together with the witness statements it has received.

²⁰¹ Flats 24, 61, 63, 93, 101, 114, 185. Sharon Haley from Flat 24 on floor 5 was in Flat 13 on floor 4 when the fire started, and her own flat was empty.

²⁰² This figure does not include Logan Gomes who was delivered stillborn on 14 June 2017 following his mother’s escape from the fire.

- 10.132 It is likely that Behailu Kebede began knocking on the doors of other residents on floor 4 after he had finished his first 999 call.²⁰³ They spoke of being alerted to a fire either by a man who must be Behailu Kebede or by another neighbour. Given that they left their homes within a short period of becoming aware of a fire on their floor, it is understandable that their recollection of the conditions varied.
- 10.133 Alison Moses lived alone in Flat 11 on floor 4, which faced east and was adjacent to Flat 16. She was still awake when she heard a knock on her front door. Opening it, she spoke to Behailu Kebede but could not smell anything and saw no sign of a fire. Returning to her living room she could smell smoke. Her living room and kitchen windows were open and remained so.²⁰⁴
- 10.134 In Flat 14, Abdulwahab Abdulhamid woke his pregnant wife, Maryam Adam, and told her they had to leave as there was a fire. The couple left with a friend, Amna Mohammed, who was staying with them. Maryam Adam recalled that the door to Flat 16 was open and there was “very little smoke on the landing” (i.e. the lobby). Her husband alerted the residents of Flat 15 and spoke to Mahad Egal who lived in that flat.²⁰⁵
- 10.135 Mahad Egal and his wife Jamie Murray had moved into Flat 15 a few months before the fire. On the night of the fire they were awake when Mahad Egal heard knocking on the front door. He opened it and “a large amount of dense, dark grey smoke came whooshing into the flat”, its hallway filling with dense, black smoke. Mahad Egal took swift action, alerting his wife and wetting towels so that the couple and their two young children could leave. Mahad Egal’s recollection was that, on leaving their flat, they found the lobby so full of dense black smoke that one could only see people in outline. The door to Flat 16 was open with smoke billowing from it. Mahad Egal saw Behailu Kebede in the lobby near to Flat 16. Jamie Murray remembered a smell of smoke in the hallway of Flat 15 and less smoke in the lobby. The lights were on and there was “light grey smoke hazing throughout”. She could see through the smoke. She also saw light grey smoke coming through the open door of Flat 16. The only person she saw at that stage was Abdulwahab Abdulhamid standing by the closed door of Flat 14.²⁰⁶

The arrival of the lift at floor 4

- 10.136 I have already described how Fatima Alves assisted the firefighters to gain access to the tower initially. The tower’s CCTV system shows her and her husband, Miguel Alves, outside the main entrance at 00.56.12, having returned from driving visiting relatives back to their hotel. They did not notice any signs of smoke or fire as they approached the main entrance. Once inside, they walked through the ground floor foyer to the lift lobby. One of the two lifts (the south lift) had a CCTV camera in it²⁰⁷ and Miguel and Fatima Alves are seen on CCTV entering that

²⁰³ The sound of knocking is not audible on the recording of the call nor are there voices in the background indicative of other residents being in the communal area.

²⁰⁴ Moses first witness statement [IWS00000301] pp. 2-3.

²⁰⁵ Adam first witness statement [IWS00000128] p. 10. In her first statement, Maryam Adam said her brother was in Flat 14 on the night of the fire. She has confirmed that this was not the case in a supplementary statement: Adam second witness statement [IWS00001204] p. 1.

²⁰⁶ Egal first witness statement and accompanying exhibit ME1 [IWS00001010] pp. 1-6; Jamie Murray first witness statement and accompanying exhibit JM1 [IWS00001008] pp. 3-4.

²⁰⁷ MPS report on “External Spread of Fire at Grenfell Tower” (v.4). The camera in question is identified as C18 [MET00012593] p. 89.

lift at 00.56.38.²⁰⁸ Two men²⁰⁹ also got into the lift on the ground floor and pressed the button for floor 4.²¹⁰

- 10.137 The men got out of the lift when it reached floor 4. Fatima Alves said that when the lift doors opened she was able to see into the lobby clearly. Both she and her husband noticed a layer of white or light grey smoke at ceiling height in the area outside the lift doors. No smoke came into the lift when the doors opened and the smoke had no physical effect on either of them. The image below is taken from the camera in the lift. It shows Miguel and Fatima Alves leaving the lift on floor 4 at 00.57.24.²¹¹ In oral evidence both said that the CCTV footage showed more smoke than they remembered. Smoke is indeed visible and does appear to enter the lift when the doors open. The couple did not spend long on floor 4. Miguel Alves immediately realised that there was a fire. Stepping out of the lift, the couple decided that Fatima Alves would leave to collect her husband's mobile telephone from their car while he went to floor 13 to wake their two children. Miguel Alves opened the closed door to the stairwell to allow them to leave floor 4.



Figure 10.25

²⁰⁸ The clock on this lift camera is 40 seconds fast requiring the time stamped on any CCTV image to be adjusted accordingly.

²⁰⁹ These men have been identified as John Beadle and Ishmael Boaitay (MPS CCTV schedule at [MET00016072]). John Beadle occupied Flat 13 (Benjamin first witness statement [IWS00000876] p. 2).

²¹⁰ Fatima Alves first witness statement [IWS00000443] pp. 1-3 and Day 52/91/3, 93/18-19; Miguel Alves Day 53/10/14-21; CCTV image [INQ00000394].

²¹¹ CCTV image [INQ00000395]. There was also a call to LFB, timed at 00:57:44 from Tunstall Response, a remote monitoring company [LFB00000470]. The caller reported receiving a call "from a fire alarm" at Grenfell Tower. Tunstall had linked an autodialler unit to the smoke venting system so their remote centre would be alerted.

- 10.138 Miguel and Fatima Alves did not see anyone near the door to the stairwell, but residents had already begun to leave floor 4. CCTV footage shows that Elsa Afeworki had reached the ground floor lobby by 00.56.36. Behailu Kebede overtook Almaz Kinfu on the stairwell, reaching floor 2 by 00.57.59 and the ground floor by 00.58.20. The CCTV footage shows that Almaz Kinfu spent some time on floor 2 by the boxing club.²¹² Fatima Alves encountered her there at 00.59.12. Having tried to assist Almaz Kinfu with her suitcase, Fatima Alves continued down the stairs, reaching the ground floor at 00.59.40.²¹³ By this time, 10 people, the majority of whom lived on floor 4, had left the tower.²¹⁴
- 10.139 Of the residents of floor 4 who had left before 01.08, Alison Moses (Flat 11 immediately next door to Flat 16) was probably one of the last to go. She closed her front door on leaving and saw David Benjamin in the lobby. He was staying with his partner, Zoe Dainton, who lived in Flat 12. Alison Moses advised them to leave. She could not smell any smoke in the lobby at this time. David Benjamin recalled speaking to Alison Moses after he had heard banging on the front door and then walked into the lobby with Zoe behind him. Alison Moses told him that there was a fire in Flat 16. He saw light white smoke “well above head height” concentrated around Flats 15 and 16. Zoe Dainton remembered seeing Alison Moses in the lobby, but could not see or smell smoke at that time, although she thought she could smell gas. She and David Benjamin returned to Flat 12 and decided to follow the “stay put” advice in the safety notices displayed in the tower. Zoe Dainton said that on her return to Flat 12 she had seen Mahad Egal already outside the tower.²¹⁵

The arrival of firefighters on floor 4

- 10.140 David Benjamin and Zoe Dainton opened the front door of Flat 12 for the second time. They saw firefighters by the dry rising main in the south-west corner of the lobby near to Flat 13. David Benjamin’s impression was that they could not get the riser to work. He noticed that the front door of Flat 16 was shut but there was now more smoke, still white in colour, in the lobby. Zoe Dainton described smelling and seeing a thin layer of smoke, like cigarette smoke, above head height in the communal area. David Benjamin also heard a banging noise, which he assumed was a firefighter kicking down the front door of Flat 16.²¹⁶

Alerting residents on floor 13

- 10.141 Meanwhile Miguel Alves had run up the stairs to floor 13. They were clear of smoke and he did not hear any noises or feel any movement of air in the stairwell. Miguel Alves did not come across anyone coming down. Having reached his flat, he woke his son Tiago Alves and daughter Ines Alves. While they were preparing to leave, Miguel Alves knocked on the front doors of all his neighbours on floor 13.²¹⁷ He estimated that around 10 minutes had elapsed between waking his children and leaving floor 13. There was no smoke in the floor 13 lobby at that time.²¹⁸ Notwithstanding the absence of any sign of a fire, those alerted by Miguel Alves took his advice and prepared to leave.²¹⁹

²¹² Reading of Flat 16 evidence Day 8/30/3; 8/51/23ff; 8/52/1-17; 8/52/18-25; 8/90/9-96/15; CCTV images [INQ00000015], [INQ00000060], [INQ00000028].

²¹³ Alves Day 52/101/1-24.

²¹⁴ Annex A. These were Mahad Egal, Jamie Murray and their two children, Elsa Afeworki, Maryam Adam, Abdulwahab Abdulhamid and Amna Mohammed (all from the fourth floor) and two visitors to the tower (Ishmael Boaitey and Jalal Chentite).

²¹⁵ Moses first witness statement [IWS00000301] pp. 2-3; Benjamin first witness statement [IWS00000876] p. 9; smoke and flame descriptor [INQ00000406]; Zoe Dainton first witness statement [IWS00000806] p. 8.

²¹⁶ Benjamin first witness statement [IWS00000876] p. 10; Zoe Dainton first witness statement [IWS00000806] p. 9.

²¹⁷ Only one of the flats on this floor was unoccupied at the time.

²¹⁸ Miguel Alves [IWS00000538] p. 4; Alves Day 53/13/12-14/14; Tiago Alves first witness statement [IWS00000123] p. 5.

²¹⁹ Adriana Zymberaj first witness statement [IWS00000878] p. 2; Suarez-Chans first witness statement [IWS00000985] p. 4.

- 10.142 Before leaving, at around 01.05, Dorinda Suarez-Chans, who lived in Flat 103 on floor 13, decided to alert the Vieiro family, friends of hers who lived in Flat 46 on floor 7. When he got up Jose Vieiro could not see any signs of a fire and could not smell smoke in the flat. Although he was aware of the “stay put” policy, the training he had received at work was to leave at once, if it was safe to do so. Jose Vieiro checked the lobby outside his flat but saw no sign of smoke or fire. He and his wife decided to get dressed.²²⁰
- 10.143 Miguel Alves left floor 13 after his children had started to go down the stairs. He left the tower at 01.08.36. At the main entrance, he handed his fob key to WM Dowden. While he was there Miguel Alves heard a noise “like a fan pushing something”. It came from a vent above the main entrance. He did not notice any smoke coming out, nor did he feel any movement of air when he was in the lobbies on floors 4 or 13, the stairwell or the ground floor lobby.²²¹
- 10.144 At around 01.10 two flats on floor 4 were still occupied. Following a telephone conversation with Alison Moses, who by that time was outside the building, David Benjamin and Zoe Dainton decided to leave. However, they now found conditions in their lobby were very different. The smoke was so thick and black that it was almost impossible to see, although the lights in the lobby were just about visible. The lobby was hot and the smoke made it difficult to breathe. Zoe Dainton heard “crackling sounds in the communal area; it was like popcorn or a campfire with crackling wood”. The couple reached the stairwell door and pushed it open. There were firefighters in the stairwell with hoses. David Benjamin remembered the stairwell door closing behind them.²²²

The smoke control system

- 10.145 Elizabeth Sobieszczak was still awake in Flat 43 on floor 7 when the first fire appliances arrived outside the tower. Her daughter, Florentyna Sobieszczak, had returned home at about half-past midnight; her husband, Michael Sobieszczak, was already asleep. The fire engines had arrived at about the time that Elizabeth Sobieszczak heard a noise from a ventilation grille on the outside of the building above the main entrance. She had heard a similar noise once before in 2016 when, approaching the main entrance from the outside, she had heard a sound like “a hoover on maximum power”. On 14 June she heard that sound again, albeit not as loud as previously, before she saw any smoke. She was clear that the sound had not come from the grille of the smoke ventilation system on the landing by her front door.²²³
- 10.146 Elizabeth Sobieszczak decided to look out of her front door. The lobby was lit as usual. Elizabeth Sobieszczak could immediately smell smoke. It was “an irritating kind of choking smell”. She could not see any smoke nor identify where the smell was coming from. Elizabeth Sobieszczak then went back inside her flat and spoke to her daughter. She did not recall meeting any neighbours on that occasion.
- 10.147 Betty Kasote lived in Flat 41 on the same floor. In her Inquiry witness statement she explained how, unable to sleep, she had heard a faint sound, which she thought was an alarm in the building. Betty Kasote looked at her clock, which said 12.45. She then heard noises outside and saw firefighters outside the tower. Betty Kasote got dressed so she could leave to find out what was going on. In the lobby Betty Kasote met Elizabeth Sobieszczak. Although she could

²²⁰ Jose Vieiro first witness statement [IWS00001122] pp. 1-3 and Day 60/123/15-126/12.

²²¹ Miguel Alves Day 53/23/9ff, 53/17/9-21/2, 53/29/3-25, 53/13/3-3.

²²² Benjamin first witness statement [IWS00000876] p. 10; Zoe Dainton first witness statement [IWS00000806] pp. 9-10.

²²³ Elizabeth Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00001105] pp. 2-3; Elizabeth Sobieszczak Day 69/10/14-17, 69/28/3-29/19, 69/35/17-36/22.

not see any smoke, she noticed “a faint smell of smoke”. She recalled Elizabeth Sobieszczak telling her that “she had come out as she could hear a noise in her flat that sounded like a big fan turning on”. Betty Kasote returned to her flat.²²⁴

10.148 Mohammed (Saber) Neda, his wife Flora (Shakila) Neda and their son Shekeb (Farhad) Neda lived in Flat 205 on floor 23. On 14 June 2017, the family had returned home at 12.52. Farhad Neda said that he did not hear the noise of fans or vents or smell anything when they were in the ground floor lobby. The family took the south lift up to their flat. On reaching their floor, they noticed that the vents of the extractor fans located on the north and south walls of the lobby²²⁵ were making a noise, something which had happened before. Farhad Neda described the sound:

“as if it was coming from the floors downstairs, just all shooting up towards the 23rd floor. And then every few minutes you could hear the fans sort of closing. So it had like - I think it was a mechanical sound of the fans opening and closing. But it didn’t happen too much, it was like every 5 minutes, it would happen once.”

The sound was as loud as a vacuum cleaner – loud enough to be heard clearly in the living room of the flat.²²⁶

10.149 At 01.10, Farhad Neda telephoned the TMO’s out of hours service, operated by Pinnacle PSG.²²⁷ He reported that “in the lift area in the communal area the air vents are making lots of noise and there’s a kind of electrical burning smell”. The call responder told Farhad Neda that the out of hours service had received a call about fire alarms and that the fire brigade was on its way.²²⁸

10.150 Farhad Neda was certain that the electrical smell he had described had been coming from the vents in the lobby on floor 23 and that it had grown stronger, to the extent that within five or ten minutes of the call to Pinnacle it had reached Flat 205. He said:

“So it began off quite light and it started getting stronger and stronger. But what I clearly remember is that it was definitely coming from the vents.”²²⁹

At that time he did not see any smoke coming from the vents.²³⁰ He had never experienced this smell before. During the call, Farhad Neda also noticed that the lift closest to Flat 203 (the south lift which contained the camera) had stopped working.²³¹

Analysis of fire on individual floors

10.151 As I have already explained, the fire broke out of Flat 16 into the cladding at around 01.09. The speed at which it developed up the outside of the building in the following 20 minutes caused conditions at different floors within the tower to differ at any one time, in some cases quite markedly. For that reason I think it is likely to be most helpful if I to refer to the events that occurred within the building between 01.09 and 01.30 by reference to individual floors.

²²⁴ Kasote first witness statement [IWS00000768] pp. 6-7.

²²⁵ The typical layout of floors in Grenfell Tower from floor 4 up is shown in [MET00012593] p. 12. Flat 205 was in the north-west corner. Smoke vents were located on the north side of the lobby at the divide between Flats 205 and 206.

²²⁶ Neda Day 61/13/13-15/6.

²²⁷ The TMO has confirmed that Pinnacle PSG operated the out of hours service [PIN00000098].

²²⁸ Neda Day 61/25/22-61/26/25.

²²⁹ Neda Day 61/28/4-6.

²³⁰ Neda Day 61/28/15-17.

²³¹ Neda Day 61/29/16-22.

The fire reaches floor 5

- 10.152 Hiwot Dagnachew lived in Flat 26. That night she had fallen asleep on the sofa; her partner, Wintom Temesgen, and children were already in bed. Woken by the sound of an alarm, Hiwot Dagnachew could smell smoke. There was no smoke in the living room and she could see nothing outside the living room windows. On opening the kitchen door, she saw that her kitchen was full of dark grey smoke. She could see through the smoke but could not tell where it was coming from. Her kitchen window had two casements and Hiwot Dagnachew confirmed that the smaller of these (located below the extractor fan fixed in the top right-hand corner of the window) had been left open. Within seconds fire came in through the window. Hiwot Dagnachew’s recollection was that the flames covered the whole window, “instantaneously” flowing up to the ceiling. The kitchen blinds caught fire at once and dropped to the floor.²³²
- 10.153 Hiwot Dagnachew shut the kitchen door and woke up her family. Wintom Temesgen tried to see if he could deal with the fire. He found the kitchen full of smoke and recalled that:

“the whole window area of the kitchen and the top part of the kitchen blinds [were] engulfed in flames, the bottom of the blinds were on fire on the floor. The kitchen window was open. The fire was an orange colour.”

He shut the kitchen door. Hiwot Dagnachew estimated that the family left within a minute of her discovering the fire. They closed their front door, which she said had a working self-closing device. At that time, there was no smoke in the hallway of the flat. No one was in the lobby; the lights were on and the temperature felt normal. The stairwell door was shut and they had to open it. Hiwot Dagnachew assumed that it closed behind them because it was a door that shut automatically.²³³

Contact between the occupants of Flat 26 and FF O’Beirne

- 10.154 The stairwell was free of smoke when Hiwot Dagnachew, Wintom Temesgen and their two children entered it. They came across FF O’Beirne in the stairwell one floor down. Having told him of a fire in their kitchen they took FF O’Beirne back to Flat 26 at his request. The conditions on floor 5 had not changed. They were unable to open their front door, having rushed out without keys. While at the door, Hiwot Dagnachew did not see any smoke emerging around its frame or through the letterbox. Concerned for their children, she and Wintom Temesgen left FF O’Beirne outside Flat 26 and descended the stairs again. Although Hiwot Dagnachew said that she had little recollection of conditions in the stairwell on this second journey, Wintom Temesgen’s recollection was that there were no signs of smoke or fire.²³⁴

Firefighters return to Flat 26

- 10.155 Three of the flats on floor 5 were unoccupied by 01.20 when firefighters returned. Residents remained in Flats 22, 23 and 25.
- 10.156 Gitiara Pahlavani was home alone in Flat 22.²³⁵ She decided to leave the flat when, from an east-facing window, she saw “orange flames and dark smoke being blown down from above and towards the window ...”. She found the lobby on floor 5 to be dark and filled with strong-

²³² Dagnachew first witness statement [IWS00000845] p. 6 and Day 55/65/2-72/12. A photograph of the type of kitchen window fitted in Flat 26 is found in Dr Barbara Lane’s report dated 12 April 2018 [BLAR00000003] p. 23.

²³³ Dagnachew first witness statement [IWS00000845] p. 7 and Day 55/76/17-79/11; Temesgen first witness statement [IWS00000382] p. 5.

²³⁴ Dagnachew first witness statement [IWS00000845] p. 8 and Day 55/80/16-55/87/2; Temesgen first witness statement [IWS00000382] p. 6.

²³⁵ Pahlavani first witness statement [IWS00000929] p. 7.

smelling smoke that made her cough. Visibility was poor, but she could see the shadows of what looked like firefighters. She then closed her front door and remained in her flat for a few minutes. No one knocked on the door and she again decided to leave. This time, she reached the already open stairwell door. There was less smoke in the stairwell. It was light grey in colour and thinned out as Gitiara Pahlavani descended.²³⁶

- 10.157 In Flat 25, Munira Mahmud woke on hearing that her father-in-law, Ahmed Abd El Rasoul, was up. Her husband and two children (a son aged five and a daughter aged one and a half years) were asleep. Munira Mahmud got up concerned because Ahmed Abd El Rasoul is elderly and in poor health. She then heard people outside shouting: “Get out! Fire!”. The bedroom and living room windows were open that night. From her bedroom window, which faced north, she saw orange-coloured flames reflected in the glass of the Kensington Aldridge Academy, although she could not see or smell smoke. Munira Mahmud told her husband, Mohammed Rasoul. He explained that they did not need to evacuate the flat as no one had told them to do so. At this point, no one had knocked on their front door and there was no smoke in the flat or flames outside it.²³⁷
- 10.158 Still concerned, Munira Mahmud opened the front door with her husband behind her. She estimated that this was some three minutes after she had first woken up. There was dark smoke in the lobby. The lights were on, but it felt hotter than normal; it was still possible to see through the smoke. The front doors of other flats were closed. Munira Mahmud saw two firefighters wearing masks in the lobby, one with a hose and the other banging on flat doors telling people to leave. This firefighter told them they had two seconds to leave and that there was no time even for Munira Mahmud to put her daughter in a buggy. Within less than a minute she was ready to leave with her children. There was no smoke coming into the flat when they left. The smoke in the lobby was darker and getting thicker, but less so towards the floor. Munira Mahmud saw no other residents in the lobby. The stairwell door was open. This door was not one that would close automatically, although it was usually shut.²³⁸
- 10.159 Mohammed Rasoul thought that it had been between 01.15 and 01.30 when his wife spoke to him. He was already aware of an unusual but strong burning smell and a reflection in the windows of the Kensington Aldridge Academy. He followed his wife to their front door from where he could see dark grey smoke emerging from the sides and bottom of the closed door to Flat 26. Within 20 seconds, two or three firefighters wearing masks and carrying hoses arrived in the lobby. One told Mohammed Rasoul to get out and not to take anything. The family moved quickly to leave. Munira Mahmud went ahead with their children but Mohammed Rasoul was slower as he had to help his father. He recalled that he had slammed shut the front door of the flat on leaving.²³⁹ According to both Mohammed Rasoul and his wife, that door lacked a self-closer.²⁴⁰
- 10.160 Three firefighters say they had contact with the family in Flat 25. FF Abell said that he had advised a family of four who had emerged from the flat to the left of the “fire flat” (i.e. Flat 26) to leave. It was a decision he took on the spur of the moment. The family, he said:

“looked very willing to leave. They wanted to get out, and they were more or less coming out the door, so I thought I’ll just -- I’d let them, make sure they got out.”

²³⁶ Pahlavani first witness statement [IWS00000929] pp. 7-8.

²³⁷ Mahmud first witness statement [IWS00000776] pp. 1, 4-5; Mahmud Day 54/77/3-23, 84/3-17, 90/15-92/24; Rasoul first witness statement [IWS00000670] p. 2.

²³⁸ Mahmud first witness statement [IWS00000776] pp. 5-6; Mahmud Day 54/84/20-85/5, 93/11-14, 102/7-103/11.

²³⁹ Rasoul first witness statement [IWS00000670] pp. 4-6.

²⁴⁰ Rasoul first witness statement [IWS00000670] p. 6; Mahmud Day 54/81/2-15.

FFs Dorgu and Hippel then assisted them.²⁴¹ FF Dorgu said he made it fairly clear that they could not use a pram; they had to move quickly.²⁴² FF Hippel said that he spoke to a man from what must have been Flat 25 and:

“told him he needed to get out, and he said his wife was in there so I said he needed to go and grab his wife and leave.”²⁴³

- 10.161 It is likely that Gitiara Pahlavani left floor 5 before the family from Flat 25. In Annex A she is recorded as having left the tower before Munira Mahmud, who was descending the stairs with two young children. Given that the firefighters had not entered Flat 26, it is likely that the lobby on floor 5 was less smoke-filled than Gitiara Pahlavani recalled and that the evidence of Mohammed Rasoul and Munira Mahmud is more reliable.
- 10.162 When he was asked if firefighters had knocked on doors on floor 5, FF Dorgu said he was “pretty sure” they had knocked on all of them, adding “Tom [Abell] was with me [and] Wayne Archer. They did that before they set in”.²⁴⁴ That is inconsistent with the evidence of FF Abell, but on balance I think the evidence of FF Dorgu, whose recollection appeared in general to be better, is more reliable. Rebin Sabir and his friend Milad Kareem were in Flat 23 on the night. Their recollection is that, when they had first opened the front door, there had been thick black smoke in the lobby, which made visibility very poor. They did not suggest that anyone had knocked on their door before that. They were eventually evacuated at around 2.20 through a window. That neither of them recalled having heard knocking might suggest that FF Dorgu’s recollection is mistaken, but the fact that they did not hear anything does not necessarily mean that the firefighters did not make an attempt to rouse them.

The fire reaches floor 6

- 10.163 Daniel Griffin lived alone in Flat 31 on floor 6. At just before 01.00 he was woken by what he described as “a fizzing and a bang”. He heard the sound of sirens. From his bedroom window, which faced east, Daniel Griffin saw not only a fire engine and firefighters below but also “yellow flames and smoke coming up towards me from the exterior of the building below me and to my left”. The flames had reached the floor immediately below him. He decided to leave. Closing the bedroom window, he dressed and left the flat pulling the front door closed. The lights were on in the lobby and he noticed “puffs of light grey or greyish-white smoke” coming through the grille on a “riser” located on the south wall of the lobby, which was part of the smoke extraction system. Daniel Griffin took the lift down to the ground floor to leave the tower.²⁴⁵
- 10.164 That night, Ramiro Urbano and Claudia Montes were staying with Oscar Millan Gonzalez, the tenant of Flat 36 on floor 6. Oscar Millan Gonzalez was woken up by the sound of the smoke alarm in the kitchen. He saw “yellowish flames” coming through the open kitchen window from below. Ramiro Urbano joined Oscar Millan Gonzalez in trying to tackle the flames. He recalled that they were orange in colour. Ramiro Urbano saw the PVC around the window melting and “toxic-smelling smoke” beginning to come through the window. As their efforts were not succeeding, Oscar Millan Gonzalez decided they should all leave. Ramiro Urbano recalled that at the point they left, “the whole kitchen window was aflame and the wind was

²⁴¹ Abell Day 14/61/6-9, 62/13-16, 63/8-13.

²⁴² Dorgu Day 19/115/3-116/15.

²⁴³ Hippel Day 26/40/21-41/17.

²⁴⁴ Dorgu Day 19/116/2-9.

²⁴⁵ Griffin first witness statement [IWS00000173] pp. 1, 6-8, 13; MPS report on “External Spread of Fire at Grenfell Tower” (v.4) [MET00012593] p. 12. For a photograph of the grille located on the south-facing wall of floor 6 taken after the fire: [BLA00002514].

blowing flames into the kitchen. You could hear a cracking noise as the PVC melted”. Claudia Montes did not go into the kitchen, but from the hallway she was able to see yellow flames on the right side of the kitchen window. She also noticed white smoke in the hallway.²⁴⁶

10.165 When the group left the flat, they saw firefighters in the lobby. Ramiro Urbano recalled that Oscar Millan Gonzalez told a firefighter, probably FF O’Beirne, that fire was coming “into our kitchen from downstairs”. Claudia Montes recalled that the firefighters were directing people towards the open stairwell door. She remembered that there was “a very little bit of smoke” in the lobby. She noticed a similar level of smoke in the stairwell as they all descended, which she described as “very light and clear white”. Oscar Millan Gonzalez and Ramiro Urbano’s recollection was that the stairway was clear of smoke. It is not clear from the accounts of these three witnesses if the front door to Flat 36 was closed when they left, although Oscar Millan Gonzalez said that it was not a self-closing door.²⁴⁷

The fire reaches floor 7

10.166 There was a CCTV camera positioned in the lobby on floor 7, the only such camera on any residential floor. This faced in the direction of the north lift and gave a view of the front doors of Flats 44 and 45.²⁴⁸ Although the footage available from this camera is not continuous, it is useful in understanding the sequence of events at about this time.

10.167 Jose and Carmen Vieiro lived in Flat 46. Their youngest daughter Vanessa Vieiro was still living with them in 2017, but was away on the night of the fire.²⁴⁹ Having been told of a fire by Dorinda Suarez-Chans, Jose Vieiro opened the front door, but found nothing untoward in the lobby and then got dressed. Jose Vieiro then went into the living room, the two windows of which faced east. His recollection was that some of the windows were open that night. He looked out from the window closest to the kitchen and saw thick black smoke “moving upwards from below the window” and orange sparks below the kitchen window. He also noticed “the strong smell of plastic burning”. There was no smoke or sparks or smell inside the flat.²⁵⁰

10.168 Jose Vieiro opened his front door for a second time. His wife was with him. He could hear some of his neighbours speaking. He confirmed that he is the person in the striped shirt shown in a CCTV still timed at 01.14.10. Although this is the first time that he is seen on the CCTV footage, it appears to show him in the lobby on this second occasion. The image indicates that Jose Vieiro moved out further into the lobby than he recalled. It confirms his recollection that at this time there was no smoke in the lobby. No one else can be seen in the image, which also shows the closed doors of Flats 44 and 45.²⁵¹ The CCTV recording shows Jose Vieiro walking back towards his flat.

10.169 The neighbours whom Jose Vieiro recalled overhearing are likely to have been Betty Kasote from Flat 41 and Elizabeth and Florentyna Sobieszczak from Flat 43. None of them appears on the CCTV footage at this point.

10.170 On returning to Flat 41, Betty Kasote had changed into a dress. Looking east from her kitchen or living room window she saw:

²⁴⁶ Millan Gonzalez first witness statement [IWS00001234] pp. 4-5; Ramiro Urbano first witness statement [IWS00000495] p. 5; Montes [IWS00001229] pp. 2-3.

²⁴⁷ Millan Gonzalez first witness statement [IWS00001234] p. 5; Ramiro Urbano first witness statement [IWS00000496] p. 6; Montes [IWS00001229] pp. 2-3.

²⁴⁸ MPS report on “External Spread of Fire at Grenfell Tower” (v.4). The camera in question is identified as C15 [MET00012593] p. 94.

²⁴⁹ Vanessa Vieiro first witness statement [IWS00000874] p. 1; Jose Vieiro first witness statement [IWS00001122] pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁰ Jose Vieiro Day 60/126/11-128/3.

²⁵¹ Jose Vieiro first witness statement [IWS00001122] p. 3; Jose Vieiro Day 60/128/4, 60/135/15-136/7; CCTV image [INQ00000461].

“a very large fire coming around the corner of the building towards the far end of my living room”
 ... The flames were huge and burning upwards. They were a very deep orange ... There was very dark black smoke billowing away from the flames.”

Betty Kasote quickly left her flat. Her written account records that she checked her watch which said 01.10.²⁵²

- 10.171 When she returned to her flat, Elizabeth Sobieszczak spoke to her daughter Florentyna Sobieszczak. Elizabeth Sobieszczak’s recollection was that together they had looked out from a bedroom window facing south and had noticed first white smoke and then black smoke. They decided to go to the lobby where they encountered Betty Kasote. At that time, Elizabeth Sobieszczak noticed that there was some smoke in the lobby (“it was like coming slightly foggy”). She recalled that Betty Kasote had told them that there was a lot of smoke in her own flat. Florentyna Sobieszczak then went to Flat 41 with Betty Kasote.²⁵³ Florentyna Sobieszczak found Flat 41 to be full of “heavy white smoke”, thick enough to make her cover her face. From the kitchen window, she could see flames to the left side level with the window and travelling upward. Florentyna Sobieszczak decided that they needed to leave the building.²⁵⁴
- 10.172 On returning to his flat, Jose Vieiro walked towards the kitchen. The first thing he saw was the extractor fan located in the top right-hand corner of the kitchen window burning. “It gave in and it was hanging by the electric wire that support it”, he said. Flames, bright orange in colour, came through the resulting gap setting fire to the kitchen curtains. Jose Vieiro pulled them down and stamped out the flames. Fire then began to come through the left side of the window, “more towards the top than the bottom”. Suddenly, the left-hand side of the kitchen window fell inwards leaving the right-hand side in place. The entire window frame, including the sill, was melting. The fire was concentrated around the window; Jose Vieiro saw nothing burning inside the kitchen. Smoke, grey-black in colour, began to enter the kitchen. It smelt of plastic. Acknowledging that timing is difficult, Jose Vieiro estimated that he spent no more than two minutes in the kitchen before closing the door. He and his wife left the flat and he locked his front door, which did not have a self-closing mechanism. There were no signs of smoke in the lobby at that time.²⁵⁵
- 10.173 The CCTV footage shows Jose Vieiro and his wife walking towards the lift holding clothes over their mouths at 01.21.50. There is no visible smoke on the footage.
- 10.174 In her written account, Betty Kasote recalled that on leaving her flat at 01.10 she began to knock and ring on the doors of other flats. The CCTV footage shows her in the lobby at 1.20.16.²⁵⁶ It is likely that she alerted her neighbours after Florentyna Sobieszczak had gone into Flat 41, because that is more consistent with the time at which the Vieiros left Flat 46 and with Betty Kasote’s account that, before she reached their flat, Jose and Carmen Vieiro opened their door and “smoke started to pour out from the ceiling of their flat”.²⁵⁷

Firefighters arrive on floor 7

- 10.175 Having seen smoke emerging from Flat 46, Betty Kasote opened the stairwell door to leave. She saw a firefighter coming up stairs, who told her to get out, as did a second firefighter further down.²⁵⁸

²⁵² Kasote first witness statement [IWS00000768] pp. 7-8.

²⁵³ Elizabeth Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00001105] pp. 4-5; Elizabeth Sobieszczak Day 69/21/18-24.

²⁵⁴ Florentyna Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00000831] p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Vieiro Day 60/129/9-134/16.

²⁵⁶ [INQ00010829]. The time on the CCTV still is recorded as 01.20.56. It has been adjusted by 40 seconds to reflect real time.

²⁵⁷ Betty Kasote first witness statement [IWS00000768] p. 7.

²⁵⁸ Kasote first witness statement [IWS00000768] p. 8.

- 10.176 Jose Vieira’s evidence was that a single firefighter (probably FF O’Beirne) had entered the lobby on floor 7 as he and his wife were walking towards the stairwell. The firefighter asked to check Flat 46. Unlocking his front door, Jose Vieira followed the firefighter into the kitchen. Bright orange flames and black smoke outside the kitchen window were now reaching up to the higher floors. The whole of the plastic window frame had melted; the pane of glass on the right of the window was still in place but the whole window surround was aflame. Fire was beginning to burn the sliding doors between the kitchen and the living room. Smoke was gathering at ceiling level. The kitchen temperature was “a lot hotter than it had been before”. Jose Vieira’s recollection was that the firefighter had said words to the effect of “there is nothing we can do with this” and told them they had to leave. Jose Vieira believed the firefighter had then closed the kitchen door.²⁵⁹
- 10.177 Jose Vieira left with the firefighter, but returned to collect his mobile telephone and glasses. On entering he was struck by the smell which he described as “pungent and particularly acrid” and stronger than before. There was smoke in the hallway. The conditions made his eyes hurt. He walked no more than two paces into the hallway of Flat 46 before leaving again to join his wife by the lifts. He did not see the firefighter at that time. There was no smoke outside Flat 46 but some between the lifts and the stairwell door (on the opposite side of the lobby). The couple opened the stairwell door and took the stairs. Jose Vieira’s last appearance on the floor 7 CCTV footage is timed at 01.21.38.²⁶⁰ An image taken at that time shows no smoke in the lobby area and the open door of Flat 45.²⁶¹
- 10.178 The occupants of Flat 45, Hannah West, her then partner Michael Paramasavian and Hannah West’s five-year-old daughter were still in the flat at this time. They left shortly after. Neither Michael Paramasavian nor Hannah West describes seeing a firefighter on floor 7, although Hannah West recalls hearing a male voice saying: “Get out! Get out!” as they left the flat. Michael Paramasavian recalled that the door of Flat 45 did not close automatically.²⁶²
- 10.179 Although her parents do not mention it in their written accounts, Florentyna Sobieszczak records that, as they were getting ready to leave Flat 43, a firefighter knocked on their front door to tell them to leave.²⁶³ While recalling the smell of smoke in the lobby, no member of the Sobieszczak family says that there was a significant amount of smoke there at that point. When they left, Michael Sobieszczak shut all the windows (including the window vents) and locked the bedroom doors. Their front door did not have a self-closing mechanism, but did lock automatically. Both Florentyna and Elizabeth Sobieszczak recall that the former banged on the door of Flat 42 as they were leaving.²⁶⁴
- 10.180 Hermine Harris lived in Flat 42. Her partner, Jean Lavine, was staying at her home on the night of the fire. Hermine Harris recalled that Florentyna Sobieszczak (whom she identifies as Florence) knocked on her door and warned her to leave. Florentyna Sobieszczak was with a fireman. Hermine Harris and Jean Lavine left quickly. The front door of Flat 42 had a self-closing mechanism. Hermine Harris described the lobby as clear and free of smoke. They pushed open the stairwell door and found the stairwell to be well lit and free of smoke.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ Jose Vieira first witness statement [IWS00001122] pp. 3-4 and Day 60/136/9-138/23.

²⁶⁰ [INQ00010832]. The time on the CCTV still is recorded as 01.22.18. It has been adjusted by 40 seconds to reflect the correct time.

²⁶¹ Jose Vieira first witness statement [IWS00001122] p. 5 and Day 60/138/18-60/142/10.

²⁶² West first witness statement [IWS00000021] p. 3; Paramasavian first witness statement [IWS00001003] p. 3.

²⁶³ Florentyna Sobieszczak [IWS00000831] p. 3.

²⁶⁴ Florentyna Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00000831] p. 3; Michael Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00001111] p. 2; Elizabeth Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00001105] p. 5; Elizabeth Sobieszczak Day 69/23/17-27/3.

²⁶⁵ Harris first witness statement [IWS00000087] p. 3.

- 10.181 FF O’Beirne said he came across a family on floor 7 coming out of Flat 46, who told him their flat on was on fire. There was a little smoke in the lobby but he had no difficulty with visibility and could see the flat door, which was open as he approached it. FF O’Beirne confirmed he was the firefighter who appears in a still from the camera on Floor 7 timed at 01.21.57 (with an adjusted time of 01.21.17). He could not remember clearly whether he had ushered the family to the stairs. He did recall asking them as they were on the half-landing between floors 6 and 7 if there was anyone else in the flat. The woman started to come back, but he told her to keep going down. He may then have gone back to the door of the flat but did not go inside because of the amount of smoke in the flat, which was dark in colour. FF O’Beirne said he was the last person to touch the door of Flat 46. He could not remember if he had closed it or left it ajar. He did not alert other residents of floor 7, but he did radio WM Dowden.²⁶⁶
- 10.182 The CCTV footage, which it must be remembered is not continuous, is more supportive of Jose Vieiro’s account. It shows that at 01.21.17, he and FF O’Beirne apparently went towards Flat 46.²⁶⁷ Jose Vieiro is not seen again until 01.21.38.²⁶⁸ A firefighter wearing BA equipment can later be seen approaching Flat 46 at 01.24.55²⁶⁹ and appearing to leave it at 01.25.01.²⁷⁰ It is possible that this firefighter was FF Hippel, but his evidence is that he did not go to floor 7.²⁷¹ In any event, the firefighter seen at 01.25 cannot have been the one described by Florentyna Sobieszczak and Hermine Harris. It is likely that Florentyna Sobieszczak had left floor 7 by that time. She left the tower at 01.26.24 hours, having remained on the ground floor for a time directing other occupants towards the exits.²⁷²

The fire reaches floor 8

- 10.183 At around 01.10 Shantilal Patel in Flat 56 smelt something burning. Looking out of his living room window he saw a fire appliance. He woke his wife, Kiran Patel, and son, Chiraag Patel. As Shantilal Patel walked back into the living room, he saw flames outside the windows. All the windows in the flat were closed that night. Going to the kitchen window, Shantilal Patel noticed light grey smoke coming through the extractor fan in the window. Flames suddenly shot up outside the kitchen window and heavier smoke began to enter through the fan. At this point Shantilal Patel realised that the fire was just underneath his flat.²⁷³
- 10.184 Shantilal Patel saw the extractor fan in the kitchen window fall into the kitchen. The plastic housing had melted. Thick black smoke began to pour through the resulting gap in the window “as if shooting from a hose”. It filled the kitchen quickly. The situation was frightening. Both smoke alarms had gone off and as the family hurried to leave their home, the lights in the flat went out. Shantilal Patel moved back to shut his kitchen and living room doors. He noticed that flames were covering the whole of the kitchen window area. When he left the flat, he saw hazy grey smoke in the lobby. It was still possible to see and he shut his front door to stop smoke entering the lobby from his flat. There were neighbours from other flats in the lobby.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁶ O’Beirne first witness statement [MET000083321] p. 14 and Day 14/186/17-194/10.

²⁶⁷ [INQ00000173]. The time on the CCTV still is recorded as 01.21.57. All the times recorded by this camera have been adjusted by 40 seconds to reflect the correct time.

²⁶⁸ [INQ00010832]. The time on the CCTV still is recorded as 01.22.18.

²⁶⁹ [INQ00000467]. The time on the CCTV still is recorded as 01.25.35.

²⁷⁰ [INQ00010835]. The time on the CCTV still is recorded as 01.25.41.

²⁷¹ ORR v 0.7 p. 47; Hippel Day 26/50/12-52/7.

²⁷² Florentyna Sobieszczak first witness statement [IWS00000831] p. 4; Elizabeth Sobieszczak [IWS00001105] p. 6 and Day 69/33/12, 35/8; CCTV image [INQ00000435].

²⁷³ Shantilal Patel first witness statement [IWS00000798] pp. 2-3.

²⁷⁴ Shantilal Patel first witness statement [IWS00000798] p. 3.

- 10.185 Having been alerted by his father, Chiraag Patel realised that there was enough light smoke in his bedroom to obscure vision. More smoke was travelling along the hallway. Leaving the bedroom he saw a bright red light through the opaque glass of the closed kitchen door. Smoke began to fill the flat, which became darker. As he was standing at the open front door waiting for his father, Chiraag Patel could feel smoke blowing into his face. It burnt his eyes and throat. He described the smoke in the lobby as coming from Flat 56 and said that once they had closed the front door it had stopped being a problem.²⁷⁵
- 10.186 Khalid Ahmed lived with his aunt, Amina Mohamed, in Flat 51. Alerted by the smell of what he thought might be something burning, he saw signs of a fire lower down the tower. At that time, Khalid Ahmed was unaware of what was happening inside Flat 56. He woke his aunt and they decided to leave. There was no smoke in their flat or in the lobby when he stepped into it. Starting with Flat 52 he began knocking on the front doors of the other flats on floor 8.²⁷⁶ He recalled seeing a man come out of Flat 56 with his mouth covered. There was so much smoke spilling out of the flat that it filled the lobby within 30 seconds. The smoke was “very dark and greyish”. It made it difficult to breathe and everyone was coughing. Amina Mohamed described the smoke that poured out of Flat 56 as “not very thick but it was black and there was a lot of it”.²⁷⁷
- 10.187 William Thompson, of Flat 52 on floor 8, explained in his witness statement that, when he first opened the front door to Khalid Ahmed, there was no smoke in the lobby and he could hear no alarms. Khalid Ahmed told him that there was a fire and asked if they should evacuate. William Thompson reminded him of the “stay put” advice posted by the lifts. Within five minutes, he got up to answer the door again to Khalid Ahmed. This time he saw “black smoke drifting into the landing from the lift shaft”. He continued:
- “I am pretty sure it was coming out of the bottom of the lift door and also coming out of the bottom of the right hand side of that door.”
- The lift in question was the north lift closest to Flat 56. The smoke smelt acrid. William Thompson decided that he, his partner and their daughter should leave. They closed the front door when leaving. The lobby was filling with black smoke.²⁷⁸
- 10.188 When Makrem Harzi and Rawda Said opened the front door of Flat 54 to Khalid Ahmed, they saw what Rawda Said described as “faint smoke”. Makrem Harzi described it as grey or white in colour. They decided to leave with their young child. Both then recall seeing thick black smoke stream out from Flat 56 when the front door was opened.²⁷⁹
- 10.189 It is likely that when Khalid Ahmed first began to alert his neighbours there was no smoke in the lobby on floor 8. That remained the position until the door of Flat 56 was opened. The smoke that emerged at that time was black in colour and sufficient to fill at least the northern half of the lobby.
- 10.190 On leaving floor 7, FF O’Beirne went to floor 8. He found that there “was quite heavy smoke in the [floor 8] lift lobby”. From his position he could not see the lift doors. He left immediately and went to floor 9. FF O’Beirne did not try to identify the source of the smoke he saw on floor 8. He thought that he had not sent a radio message about conditions on floor 8. FF O’Beirne did not describe seeing any other person on floor 8.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Chiraag Patel first witness statement [IWS00000855] pp. 2-3.

²⁷⁶ By this time, the occupants of Flats 53 and 55 had exited the tower (Annex A).

²⁷⁷ Khalid Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000859] pp. 1-3; Amina Mohamed first witness statement [IWS00000857] pp. 2-3.

²⁷⁸ William Thompson first witness statement [IWS00000158] pp. 6-7, 12.

²⁷⁹ Makrem Harzi first witness statement [IWS00000952] pp. 6-7; Rawda Said first witness statement [IWS00000920] pp. 4-5.

²⁸⁰ O’Beirne witness statement [MET000083321] p. 14 and Day 14/196/4-198/14.

The fire reaches floor 9

- 10.191 Salah Chebiouni, Hanan Wahabi and their two children lived in Flat 66, which had three bedrooms. The family was home on the night of the fire. At some time, which he can only put as after 12.38, Salah Chebiouni woke up to use the bathroom. He could smell “a strong plastic burning smell” in the hallway. It was stronger when he checked the kitchen. Salah Chebiouni then heard crackling. He saw flames outside the kitchen window. He opened that window and straight away smoke came in and he felt an immense heat. He closed the window. He then looked out of the living room window and saw flames below his flat. He woke his wife and son, Zakariya Chebiouni. When Zakariya Chebiouni went into the kitchen he could see smoke coming through the extractor fan in the kitchen window. His recollection was that the kitchen window was closed.²⁸¹
- 10.192 In her bedroom, Hanan Wahabi woke up to what she described as a “very strong, immediate smell”. Her bedroom door was open and she described the smell as “like plastic burning”. Hanan Wahabi candidly admitted that at that point panic had kicked in. She ran into the hallway and noticed white smoke and ash coming into it from the living room. She was still smelling plastic. The smoke was:
- “literally like a cloud just above, like the whole ceiling ... I would say 30 centimetres from the ceiling down, I estimate. But the ash was coming down lower, so you could see.”
- 10.193 Once Hanan Wahabi reached the living room, she could see small particles of ash blowing in from the only living room window left open. That was the window closest to the kitchen. She described the heat in the living room as similar to that which you feel when you take a cake out of the oven. She could see through the smoke in the living room. Both Hanan Wahabi and Zakariya Chebiouni recall going to the living room window. They both saw flames shoot up suddenly past the window and remembered feeling scared. Hanan Wahabi closed the window.²⁸²
- 10.194 Zakariya Chebiouni insisted on leaving the flat with his sister. He checked the lobby and stairwell. In his written account, he explained that he had not told his parents that he had seen white smoke in the lobby and stairwell. He then carried his sister down the stairs. The smoke got worse as they went down and although Zakariya Chebiouni does not remember having difficulty breathing he was “spitting black stuff” when he got out.²⁸³
- 10.195 Meanwhile Hanan Wahabi was moving between her living room and kitchen. She saw that ash and smoke, white-grey in colour, were coming in either through the right-hand window, which was ajar, or through the extractor fan above it. On her last visit to the kitchen she closed that window. The level of smoke in the living room and kitchen was increasing and the smell of plastic burning was getting stronger, but she could not see any flames outside the kitchen window. The temperature in the kitchen was still like an oven.²⁸⁴
- 10.196 Salah Chebiouni and Hanan Wahabi then left Flat 66 shutting their front door. It did not have a functioning door closer and so did not shut automatically. A smoke alarm went off just as they were about to leave. Hanan Wahabi said that there had been two smoke alarms in the property, one in the hallway and one in the kitchen, both of which were easily triggered. She was unsure which alarm had been triggered on this occasion. At that time there was smoke and ash all around in both the living room and the kitchen and it was beginning to move into

²⁸¹ Salah Chebiouni first witness statement [IWS00000945] p. 7; Zakariya Chebiouni first witness statement [IWS00001076] p. 4.

²⁸² Hanan Wahabi first witness statement [IWS00000074] pp. 11-12 and Day 70/138/10-149/12.

²⁸³ Zakariya Chebiouni first witness statement [IWS00001076] p. 5.

²⁸⁴ Hanan Wahabi first witness statement [IWS00000074] p. 12 and Day 70/151/5-157/25.

the hall. The lights were on in the lobby. Hanan Wahabi saw smoke in the lobby, which she said was like cigarette smoke. There was no one else in the lobby and it was not unusually hot. They had to open the door to the stairwell in order to begin to go down.²⁸⁵

The fire reaches floor 10

- 10.197 On the evening of 13 June 2017, Hoang Khanh Quang had gone to bed by 21:00. She had lived in Flat 76, as a tenant of the TMO, since 1990. It was where her two daughters had grown up. Her eldest daughter, Lucy Ho, was staying nearby, while her youngest daughter, Jenny Quang, was at university. Hoang Khanh Quang's former husband, Van Quang Ho, would stay at the flat occasionally.²⁸⁶
- 10.198 Hoang Khanh Quang gave oral evidence with the assistance of an interpreter. She confirmed the account set out in her Inquiry witness statement of being woken up in the early hours of 14 June by the sound of the smoke alarm located in the hallway outside her bedroom. All the windows in the flat were closed that night. Getting up, Hoang Khanh Quang switched on the lights in the hallway and walked towards her kitchen. As she did so she noticed flames outside the kitchen window on the left-hand side. The plastic internal cover over the extractor fan in the kitchen window fell down. Hoang Khanh Quang assumed this was because of the fire. She panicked and moved back calling out: "Fire! Fire!". It was then that she realised that Van Quang Ho was also in the flat. He emerged from the second bedroom and told her to call their daughter. Hoang Khanh Quang had not seen any smoke or smelt anything unusual at this stage. She went into her bedroom to collect her glasses and a jacket.²⁸⁷
- 10.199 Hoang Khanh Quang estimated she was in the bedroom for about a minute or so. On leaving, she found the hallway full of thick black smoke. She could not see any lights; nor could she see Van Quang Ho. He tugged on her clothes and Hoang Khanh Quang followed him out of the flat. The door did not close by itself and she did not think that she had closed it. Hoang Khanh Quang explained that at some time before the fire the TMO had removed the automatic closing mechanism from the door to enable it to close properly. If the door was shut and unlocked it could be opened again without a key.²⁸⁸
- 10.200 Hoang Khanh Quang recalled that, while there was always a light on in the lobby on floor 10, the area was very dark on this occasion. The lobby was full of smoke and she could not see anything. Van Quang Ho went ahead through the stairwell door, which closed after she had gone through it. The stairwell was lit and free of smoke. Hoang Khanh Quang recalled encountering a firefighter in the stairwell one floor down who was going up and then a second firefighter at the floor 8 level, who asked them to continue making their way down.²⁸⁹
- 10.201 Van Quang Ho did not give oral evidence, but he did provide a witness statement. That night he had gone to bed in the other bedroom in the flat. He recalled having been woken up by Hoang Khanh Quang calling out: "Fire!". There was no smoke in the bedroom. When he opened the bedroom door he found thick black smoke in the hallway, which made it impossible to see. He did not see any flames in the flat but saw a flickering light in the kitchen and flames reflected

²⁸⁵ Hanan Wahabi first witness statement [IWS00000074] pp. 12-13 and Day 70/124/12-126/10, 70/159/4-163/25; Salah Chebiouni first witness statement [IWS00000945] p. 8.

²⁸⁶ Lucy Ho first witness statement [IWS00000655] p. 2; Jenny Quang first witness statement [IWS00000766] pp. 1-2; Hoang Khanh Quang Day 67/80/20-81/10.

²⁸⁷ Quang Day 67/88/19-95/12.

²⁸⁸ Quang Day 67/95/13-97/20, 85/6-87/5.

²⁸⁹ Quang Day 67/97/21-102/17.

through the open door of the kitchen. Van Quang Ho thought that the smoke was coming into the flat through the open kitchen window. He described Hoang Khanh Quang going into her bedroom and, when she came out, feeling for her hand and leading her to the front door.²⁹⁰

- 10.202 Van Quang Ho's perception of conditions in the lobby was rather different from that of Hoang Khanh Quang. He recalled that there had been no smoke in the lobby. He saw two or three firemen in the lobby, one of whom directed them to the stairs. Van Quang Ho did not shut the front door; instead he left it for the firemen to deal with. He did not see anyone else in the stairwell as he ran down and recalls that there was no smoke on the stairs.²⁹¹ The couple were leaving their flat at speed under difficult circumstances and the difference in their recollection of conditions in the lobby is probably no more than a reflection of that fact. Flat 76 appears to have filled rapidly with smoke and the smoke Hoang Khanh Quang recalled in the lobby must have come from there. Van Quang Ho and Hoang Khanh Quang left the tower at 01.26.²⁹²
- 10.203 At 01.28.01, Adam Supareogsanond dialled 999 and was put through to the police. He gave his address as Flat 73 and said that there seemed to be smoke seeping into his flat. He was not sure where it was coming from. His cousin, Ann Chance, who also lived in Flat 73, recalled having been woken up by her aunt at around 01.00. Her aunt had heard noises from the lobby and could smell smoke. Ann Chance walked out of her bedroom and noticed very thin smoke entering the flat from underneath the front door.²⁹³

The fire reaches floor 11

- 10.204 Flat 86 was a three-bedroom flat on floor 11 occupied by Ali Yawar Jafari, his wife and their two daughters, Maria and Nadia Jafari.²⁹⁴ Nadia Jafari was in her parents' bedroom when her sister woke her to tell her of a fire. Her mother asked Nadia Jafari to wake her father and bring him outside. Fatima Jafari and Maria Jafari had already left the flat when Nadia Jafari went to her father. He was 82 years old and suffered from diabetes and a heart problem. They both moved to the living room, which faced east. Its windows were closed. The window closest to the kitchen felt hot to the touch. Nadia Jafari saw flames 2 inches below that window. Believing the fire would not come into the flat, she told her father to use the bathroom before they left.²⁹⁵
- 10.205 While waiting for her father, Nadia Jafari went into the kitchen, the window of which was closed. She saw flames push in the extractor unit located in the top-right corner of the kitchen window and come through the gap. There was a smell similar to burning plastic. Nadia Jafari left to alert her father. Standing together at the doorway into the kitchen, they saw the window frame "fall out" and the glass in the window smash. Nadia Jafari saw flames covering the entire window area and the plastic around the window burning. The curtains over the internal sliding doors between the kitchen and living room caught fire.²⁹⁶
- 10.206 Nadia Jafari closed the kitchen door and turned off the electricity before she and her father left the flat. In the lobby she met Natasha Elcock from Flat 82 and told her about the fire. Together they returned to the hallway of Flat 86, from which Nadia Jafari saw flames through

²⁹⁰ Van Quang Ho first witness statement [IWS00000925] pp. 4-5.

²⁹¹ Van Quang Ho first witness statement [IWS00000925] pp. 5-6.

²⁹² Annex A.

²⁹³ [INQ00000282]; Chance witness statement [IWS00000783] p. 4.

²⁹⁴ Maria Jafari first witness statement [IWS00000744] p. 1.

²⁹⁵ Nadia Jafari first witness statement [IWS00000683] pp. 3-4; exhibit NJ/1 [IWS00000681] p. 2; Nadia Jafari Day 54/19/11-25/13.

²⁹⁶ Jafari Day 54/25/16-31/10, 9/17-10/17, 41/12-42/18.

the glass panel of the kitchen door. The kitchen was “fully bright, something like very bright”. There was some smoke in the hallway and the smoke alarm had been activated. She and Natasha Elcock then moved back into the lobby. Natasha Elcock returned to her flat.²⁹⁷

- 10.207 Nadia Jafari returned to her home to try to turn on the taps in an effort to counteract the fire. She was unable to do so, however, and saw that the flames were still inside the kitchen but now level with the closed kitchen door.²⁹⁸ Back in the lobby, she and her father knocked on neighbouring doors. One neighbour, Youssef Khalloud from Flat 85, came to look through their front door. Nadia Jafari stood with him but did not go in. She could not close the front door properly as she did not have the keys. It was left partly open when she and her father left. She said that the door had not been self-closing.²⁹⁹
- 10.208 Nadia Jafari did not see or smell smoke in the time she and her father were in the lobby on floor 11. Concerned for his health and the effects of her own recent surgery, she suggested they use the lifts, only one of which was working. She remembered that a woman had entered the lobby on floor 11 from the stairwell and pressed the button for the lift. There was no smoke in the lift when it arrived on floor 11. Nadia Jafari was originally uncertain how many people had already been in the lift, but thought that there had been about six people in it once she, her father and the woman from the stairwell had entered. She was more confident that one of the occupants had been a “healthy and muscular man”.³⁰⁰
- 10.209 Natasha Elcock remembered opening her flat door and seeing the Jafaris standing at the north end of the lobby close to their own front door. They were saying something about smoke but did not mention fire. Natasha Elcock’s recollection is that she did not go into the lobby or Flat 86, but looked around a corner from her flat. She could not see the front door of Flat 86 but saw “a really thin wisp of smoke” where the Jafaris were standing. It was “a tiny bit of smoke. It was like a really light grey cigarette-type smoke, but a little bit thicker than that”. Natasha Elcock did not hear any alarms. The lobby was lit and one of the lifts, which had been working earlier, was by then out of service. Natasha Elcock was unsure of what was going on and not in a position to leave. She told the Jafaris to leave as they looked worried and returned to her flat.³⁰¹
- 10.210 At 01.28.26, Natasha Elcock made a 999 call which was answered by CRO Duddy. When, in the course of that call, she told him that there was smoke in the lobby,³⁰² she was probably referring to the smoke she had seen when speaking to the Jafaris, since she had not opened her front door between that conversation and her call to CRO Duddy.
- 10.211 Youssef Khalloud did not recall meeting Nadia Jafari or going to the front door of Flat 86. Prompted by a friend’s call telling him of emergency vehicles outside the tower, Youssef Khalloud had earlier left his flat to investigate. He had found nothing unusual in the lobby on floor 11. He went down the stairwell as far as floor 4, where he encountered firefighters. While in the stairwell, Youssef Khalloud did not see any smoke or smell anything unusual.³⁰³ Youssef Khalloud then returned to his flat where, at around 01.20, he received a second call from his friend warning him to leave because of a fire in the tower. His wife, Mouna El-Ogbani, was being told the same in a separate call. Youssef Khalloud’s call lasted about five minutes. The couple woke their three young children. When Youssef Khalloud opened the front door of

²⁹⁷ Nadia Jafari Day 54/32/5-35/5.

²⁹⁸ Nadia Jafari Day 54/35/6-37/24.

²⁹⁹ Nadia Jafari Day 54/38/2-54/39/21, 54/14/3-15/5.

³⁰⁰ Nadia Jafari Day 54/40/2, 54/42/21-46/19.

³⁰¹ Elcock first witness statement [IWS00000310] p. 2; Elcock exhibit NE/2 [IWS00000306]; Elcock Day 70/27/19-33/17.

³⁰² [LFB00000307].

³⁰³ Khalloud first witness statement [IWS00000473] pp. 8-9.

their flat he saw thick black smoke in the lobby which was “covering the ceiling at roughly the level of my neck, meaning I could see the floor. I could maybe see a metre or two into the smoke and I could not see the other side of the lobby”. Ali Yawar Jafari was standing close to the front door of Flat 85.³⁰⁴

- 10.212 Youssef Khalloud shut his door. He opened it again 2 to 3 minutes later to find that the smoke had thickened. It now “covered the whole hallway half way down to the floor and I could not see more than 1 or 2 metres into the smoke”. The smoke smelled like a burning sponge. The family then left. Youssef Khalloud locked his flat door with a key and they moved towards the stairwell from where they could see a light. When they reached the stairwell door, they found it was being held open by a firefighter wearing a mask. Youssef Khalloud did not see Nadia Jafari at that point.³⁰⁵
- 10.213 Mouna El-Ogbani described seeing thick smoke from ceiling to floor in the lobby on floor 11. It smelt gassy. Ali Yawar Jafari was standing by the lifts when she and her family were moving towards the stairwell. There was a single firefighter on floor 11 who told them to leave.³⁰⁶
- 10.214 Again, there are differences between the recollections of the witnesses about smoke conditions in the lobby on floor 11, but I think they are probably to be explained by a combination of differences in perception and the rapidly changing conditions in the lobby.

The descent from floor 11 in the lift

- 10.215 Nadia Jafari described how the lift in which she, her father and others were travelling had only reached floor 10 before it had become stuck. The lights went out and smoke began coming in at the edges of the doors. When they opened there was a rapid inward rush of smoke. The smoke was “dark and with a strong and bitter chemical smell”. Nadia Jafari was unable to breathe and had to close her eyes. She was coughing and felt like vomiting. She heard others in the lift shouting and coughing badly. There was panic: a man was banging against the doors with his legs, someone else went to the floor and someone was holding on to Nadia Jafari’s leg. The lobby area of floor 10 was dark and full of smoke. The lift doors then closed and the lift continued down. It was dark inside the lift, which was “packed with smoke”. The smoke lessened as the lift descended and Nadia Jafari was able to breathe. The lift door next opened on the ground floor and she ran out.³⁰⁷
- 10.216 The following three CCTV images taken from the camera located in the lift lobby on the ground floor give some idea of the amount of smoke that must have entered the lift.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Khalloud first witness statement [IWS00000473] pp. 9-10.

³⁰⁵ Khalloud first witness statement [IWS00000473] pp. 10-12.

³⁰⁶ El-Ogbani first witness statement [IWS00000844] pp. 4-5.

³⁰⁷ Nadia Jafari first witness statement [IWS00000683] p. 6 and Day 54/46/20-54/50/24.

³⁰⁸ CCTV images [INQ00000423], [INQ 00000424], [INQ 00000426].



Figure 10.26



Figure 10.27



Figure 10.28

- 10.217 The first image was taken at 01.26.24 shortly before the lift reached the ground floor.³⁰⁹ The third, timed at 01.26.29, shows Nadia Jafari leaving the lift.³¹⁰ There was no one else in the lift when she did so. She went outside to see if her father had somehow left ahead of her, but then realised he must have got out on floor 10. As she confirmed, CCTV footage from another camera showed Nadia Jafari with smoke marks on her face.³¹¹
- 10.218 The woman seen in the second image above, timed at 01.26.26, is Rhea Rojo.³¹² She had been staying in Flat 91 on floor 12. Rhea Rojo’s recollection was that there had been no smoke in that flat or in the lobby on floor 12 when she decided to leave. She got into the lift on floor 12.³¹³ Both Rhea Rojo and Roy Smith, who lived in Flat 95, recall speaking to each other by the lifts on that floor. He told her not to use the lift, but saw her get into it.³¹⁴
- 10.219 Rhea Rojo’s recollection was that there had been “a black man in his twenties or thirties” in the lift when she had got in it. She said that it had then gone up to floor 18 and that two women had got into the lift on that floor. It had then begun to descend. The lift had stopped at every floor from floor 12 down, but the doors had not opened. After floor 12, the lift had suddenly filled with thick smoke making it impossible to see. When the lift reached the ground floor Rhea Rojo had to crawl out.³¹⁵ Rhea Rojo did not recall the lift stopping on floor 11 or floor 10, nor did she recall an elderly man getting into it. In the circumstances, I think that Nadia Jafari’s evidence about the movement of the lift is probably to be preferred to that of Rhea Rojo.
- 10.220 A possible explanation for the lifts having stopped at floor 10 comes from the evidence of Mustafa Abdu. He left the tower at 01.28.21.³¹⁶ Mustafa Abdu lived alone in Flat 184 on floor 21. At around 01.10 his brother telephoned and told him to leave because of the fire.

³⁰⁹ The time on the still is recorded as 01.27.00. It has been adjusted by 36 seconds to reflect real time.

³¹⁰ The time on the still is recorded as 01.27.05. It has been adjusted by 36 seconds to reflect real time.

³¹¹ Nadia Jafari first witness statement [IWS00000683] p. 6 and Day 54/46/20-57/11.

³¹² The time on the still is recorded as 01.27.02. It has been adjusted by 36 seconds to reflect real time.

³¹³ Rojo first witness statement [IWS00000066] pp. 4-5.

³¹⁴ Smith first witness statement [IWS00000771] p. 9.

³¹⁵ Rojo first witness statement [IWS00000066] p. 5.

³¹⁶ Annex A.

The smoke in the stairwell got thicker as he ran down. Mustafa Abdu described how he began to panic and found it hard to see due to the smoke. He entered the lobby on floor 10. The lights were off and he could not see because of the smoke. He called a lift but, thinking that they were not working, he continued on down the stairs.³¹⁷

The identity of those in the lift

- 10.221 Nadia Jafari and Rhea Rojo were the only two people in the north lift when it reached the ground floor, but it is likely that at some point in its descent Ali Yawar Jafari, Mohamednur Tuccu and Khadija Khalloufi had also been in it and that when it left floor 11 it contained five passengers rather than six. Nadia Jafari thought that there had been only one other woman in the lift,³¹⁸ but Roy Smith and Rhea Rojo confirmed that the latter had got in to the lift at floor 12 and there was the woman who had entered the lobby on floor 11 from the stairwell and called the lift. It is more likely than not that that woman was Khadija Khalloufi, since her presence in the lift is consistent with what is known of her movements after the fire had broken out.
- 10.222 Before he left floor 17, Mesrob Kassemajian, who lived in Flat 146, had banged on the door to Khadija Khalloufi's flat, Flat 143, and told her to leave. She turned back into the flat to speak to her husband, Sabah Abdullah.³¹⁹ Mesrob Kassemajian left the tower at 01.25.51.³²⁰ Mouna El-Ogbani, whose evidence is considered above and who left the tower at 01.27.39, saw Sabah Abdullah walking down the stairwell.³²¹ Rita Tankarian, the aunt of Mesrob Kassemajian, described Khadija Khalloufi as one of her best friends. Rita Tankarian left the tower at about the same time as her nephew. Outside she met Sabah Abdullah who told her that he had lost his wife in the stairwell between floors 14 and 17.³²² It seems likely, therefore, that Khadija Khalloufi, having left floor 17 with her husband, had lost him on the stairs and then gone into the lobby on floor 11 where she called the lift.
- 10.223 The evidence that Mohamednur Tuccu was in the lift is less clear. The descriptions of a man in the lift given by Nadia Jafari and Rhea Rojo could be that of Mohamednur Tuccu, whose wife, Amal Ahmedin, and daughter, Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin lived in Flat 166 on floor 19. Amna Idris was visiting the family on the night of the fire. As set out below, Meron Mekonnen saw Amal Ahmedin and Amna Idris in the lobby on floor 19 that evening. Meron Mekonnen did not see Mohamednur Tuccu and she left the tower at 01.32.25. Amal Ahmedin, her daughter and Amna Idris subsequently sheltered in Flat 201.³²³
- 10.224 However, there is also the evidence of the firefighters who later recovered the bodies of Mohamednur Tuccu, Khadija Khalloufi and Ali Yawar Jafari from the lobby on floor 10. FF Desforges³²⁴ conducted a search of the lobby while his colleague FF Mitchell remained at the stairwell door. FF Desforges found a casualty whom he described as a large black male who weighed around 17 stone. He then found a female casualty. FF Mitchell described these two casualties as a "black male of large build" and a "white female".³²⁵ Other firefighters, including FFs John Wright, Scott Bell and Zade Alassad³²⁶ helped to carry these casualties out.

³¹⁷ Abdu first witness statement [IWS00000307] pp. 1-3.

³¹⁸ Nadia Jafari Day 54/49/21, 54/53/7.

³¹⁹ Kassemajian first witness statement [IWS00000951] pp. 8-9; Tankarian first witness statement [IWS00000434] p. 4.

³²⁰ Annex A.

³²¹ El-Ogbani first witness statement [IWS00000844] p. 6.

³²² Tankarian first witness statement [IWS00000434] p. 7.

³²³ Mekonnen Day 55/22/16-25/22; Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] pp. 3-4.

³²⁴ Who tallied out from the bridgehead at 02.04.09 with FF Mitchell, and later again at 04.14.12 (second wear).

³²⁵ Desforges Day 32/169/25-32/176/20; Mitchell first witness statement [MET000086063] p. 5.

³²⁶ Who tallied out at 02.08.45, 02.10.24 and 02.10.25.

FF Alassad described the man as “big and tall, but not fat. I believe he was black but he was covered in ash”, and the woman as “black or Asian with long hair”.³²⁷ These casualties were Mohamednur Tuccu and Khadija Khalloufi, whose bodies were carried out of the tower at 02.28.³²⁸

- 10.225 CM Martin Hoare and FF Matthew Tanner tallied out at 02.55, having been briefed to go to floor 10.³²⁹ They found a male casualty by the lifts who, according to CM Hoare, was of “North African appearance”. CM Hoare accepted that he had been wrong in identifying this casualty as Mohamednur Tuccu in his written account.³³⁰ Ali Yawar Jafari’s body was carried out of the tower at 03.34.³³¹

The fire reaches floor 12

- 10.226 Roy Smith and his partner, Katarzyna Dabrowska, lived in Flat 95 with their two daughters. They had converted the flat into a three-bedroom property.³³²
- 10.227 On the night of the fire, Roy Smith first noticed smoke at around 01.10, when he got up to use the toilet. He immediately smelt “a funny smell like burning plastic”. The windows in the flat were closed that night. Roy Smith checked the hallway, kitchen and his daughters’ bedroom and returned to bed. He got up again as the smell became stronger in his bedroom. Roy Smith estimated that by now it was 01.20. Switching on the lights, he saw that his bedroom was full of a “fog and mist-like smoke” which was light grey in colour. He could not tell where the smoke was coming from and saw no signs of the fire. When he checked, there was less smoke in other rooms in the flat and no sign of smoke coming from the front door.³³³
- 10.228 Roy Smith could not be exact about how many times he had opened his front door, but he had done so at least three times. On the first occasion he had seen smoke in the lobby of a similar colour to that in his bedroom. He had not been able to see where the smoke was coming from and had not been able to hear the smoke extraction system working.³³⁴
- 10.229 Roy Smith also recalled speaking briefly to a “Thai lady” in the lobby on floor 12 the first time he had opened the door. That was Rhea Rojo from Flat 91, who told him that there was a fire on floor 4. He was firm in his recollection that there had been smoke in the lobby on floor 12 at that time and suggested that Rhea Rojo may have been mistaken in saying that it was clear. He saw her get into a lift. Roy Smith did not notice if there was anyone else in that lift. He did not look to see if the front door to Flat 96 was open at that time.³³⁵
- 10.230 The call made by Damiana Louis at 01.24.57 lasted for 1 minute and 57 seconds.³³⁶ By that time Katarzyna Dabrowska was awake. She made a 999 call, which was answered at 01.26.58. She reported that smoke was coming into the flat “from our main door because it’s outside”, and that a neighbour was “shouting that she’s having the fire in the kitchen”.³³⁷

³²⁷ Bell first witness statement [MET00012995] p. 4 and Day 40/51/20-53/16; John Wright [MET000083339] p. 3; Alassad [MET00012991] pp. 4, 11.

³²⁸ MPS CCTV schedule [MET00016072].

³²⁹ Hoare witness statement [MET00008027] p. 12; LFB BA Telemetry Schedule [LFB00023326].

³³⁰ Hoare first witness statement [MET00008027] p. 16 and Day 39/198/23-204/12; Tanner [MET00010826] p. 8.

³³¹ MPS CCTV schedule [MET00016072].

³³² Smith first witness statement [IWS00000771] pp. 1-2.

³³³ Smith Day 64/32/7-38/12; Smith first witness statement [IWS00000771] p. 8.

³³⁴ Smith Day 64/40/12-41/4, 64/45/9-45/13.

³³⁵ Smith first witness statement [IWS00000771] p. 9; Smith Day 64/47/13-49/10.

³³⁶ Andrew Mobbs exhibit AM/1 [LFB00004695].

³³⁷ [LFB00000309]; Smith second witness statement [IWS00001169] p. 1.

10.231 Roy Smith confirmed that Damiana Louis was the neighbour referred to in this call. They could hear her during the call screaming that there was a fire in her kitchen. He said that the smoke Katarzyna Dabrowska had mentioned coming through the front door must have come in when it was opened, as none had come in after it had been closed.³³⁸ He had opened that door twice before when, prompted by hearing Damiana Louis screaming, he had opened it again in time to see her open her front door and run towards the lift. The smoke in the lobby was dark grey and smelled like plastic, as it had when he had opened the front door for the second time. Roy Smith choked when he encountered it. He did not notice if Damiana Louis had left her flat door open or closed.³³⁹ In his written account, Roy Smith did say however:

“Mrs Lewis [sic] used to bang her door shut when she came in at night; it used to wake us up. But on the night of the fire I can’t remember hearing her door slam so she may have left her door open.”³⁴⁰

10.232 Katarzyna Dabrowska’s 999 call was answered after the call from Damiana Louis had finished. It lasted 2 minutes and 10 seconds,³⁴¹ ending at 01.29.08. Since Damiana Louis left the tower at 01.28.03,³⁴² Roy Smith must have opened the door of his flat while his partner was still on the telephone. Given that Roy Smith noted an increase in the density of smoke in the lobby, it is possible that Damiana Louis had left her front door open.

The fire reaches floor 14

10.233 Nida Mangoba went to bed around midnight on the evening of 13 June 2017. Her husband and teenage son were already in bed.³⁴³

10.234 Nida Mangoba was woken by the noise of an alarm. From her living room she could see a fire blazing outside. Moving to her kitchen, she saw that “there was even more fire blazing outside my kitchen window”. Orange and yellow flames were “shooting up the outside of the Tower”. Nida Mangoba then heard “a loud noise, like a ‘pop’”. The extractor fan fitted into a panel in the kitchen window and the window pane itself “smashed into my kitchen”.³⁴⁴

10.235 Nida Mangoba ran into the hallway. Her husband and son were awake and had managed to get dressed. They waited for her by the front door as she went into her bedroom to locate passports. She did not take time to change. When Nida Mangoba left the bedroom she could see “thick black smoke in my hallway; it was from the ceiling and nearly all the way down to the floor”. Nida Mangoba was the last member of the family to leave their home and thought that in the panic and rush she had left the front door open. In her second written account, Nida Mangoba explained that the self-closing mechanism on the door had been broken for some time. She said she had reported it, but that it had not been repaired. There was light smoke in the lobby “like a cloud”. It was not like the thick black smoke in the flat.³⁴⁵

10.236 At 01.25.16 OM Norman answered a call from Denis Murphy. He identified his location as Flat 111 and reported that the fire was “right outside my window”. Initially Denis Murphy said that although he could smell smoke, there was none in his flat. Later in the call he reported that smoke was “coming in from the landing” (i.e. the lobby). During the call, which lasted 3 minutes and 57 seconds, Denis Murphy added that “he had tried to open the door but there

³³⁸ Smith Day 64/40/7-64/45/8.

³³⁹ Smith Day 64/38/13-64/39/8, 64/43/24-44/9, 64/46/14-47/11, 64/49/13-52/12.

³⁴⁰ Smith first witness statement [IWS00000771] p. 9.

³⁴¹ Andrew Mobbs exhibit AM/1 [LFBO0004695].

³⁴² Annex A.

³⁴³ Mangoba first witness statement [IWS00001084] pp. 1, 4.

³⁴⁴ Mangoba first witness statement [IWS00001084] p. 4.

³⁴⁵ Mangoba first witness statement [IWS00001084] p. 4; Mangoba second witness statement [IWS00001145] p. 1.

was a lot of smoke”.³⁴⁶ Flat 111 was adjacent to Flat 116 on the east side of the tower. The fact that Denis Murphy had seen smoke outside his door indicates that by 01.25 it had penetrated the lobby on floor 14 to an extent where it appeared to have deterred Denis Murphy from leaving.

- 10.237 At 01.29.02 Zainab Deen called the MPS and told them that she was on floor 14, that the fire was coming into the building and that she had a baby.³⁴⁷

The fire reaches floor 16

- 10.238 Hamid Wahbi was the only member of his family at home in Flat 136.³⁴⁸ When he returned to the tower at around 00.30 he heard a noise like a fan on floor 16.³⁴⁹ It was a sound he had heard regularly. At around 01.15, Hamid Wahbi was prompted by hearing a crackling sound to go into his kitchen. There was no smoke there, but he saw flames outside the window, which seemed to be coming from the floor below.³⁵⁰ Hamid Wahbi opened the smaller window on the right-hand side. It could open only slightly. Thick black smoke began to come into the kitchen. It had “a plastic smell”. Hamid Wahbi also saw flames enter the kitchen. He hurriedly dressed but by the time he left his flat smoke had moved into the living room and hallway. On leaving, Hamid Wahbi left his front door open. The lobby on floor 16 was still clear of smoke. He went down the stairs as far as floor 14 before returning to floor 16.³⁵¹

The fire reaches floor 17

- 10.239 The occupants of Flat 141 were the first survivors from floor 17 to leave the tower. Mesrob Kassemajian was in that flat with his girlfriend, Fung Hee-Cheung. His aunt, Rita Tankarian, was asleep in the bedroom. Concerned over the arrival of fire engines outside the tower, the couple left the flat. Mesrob Kassemajian could smell smoke in the lobby. Fung Hee-Cheung walked down the stairwell and met another resident who told her that she and her daughter were evacuating. On returning to Flat 141, Mesrob Kassemajian saw firefighters directing water at a “glow coming from the building below”. It then “looked like the glow exploded”. Mesrob Kassemajian decided that they should all leave their flat. They did so within about a minute.³⁵²
- 10.240 Mesrob Kassemajian recalled smelling smoke in the lobby and hearing the smoke extraction system making a lot of noise. Before they all made their way down the stairs, he spoke to Khadija Khalloufi. Rita Tankarian’s sense on leaving the flat was of being able to smell smoke like “burning plastic”. Mesrob Kassemajian pressed the button to call a lift, but both his aunt and girlfriend said they should not use it.³⁵³
- 10.241 Virgilio (Larry) Castro, who lived in Flat 146, had a friend, Genaro Batoan, living with him. His girlfriend, Elisa Rabaya, was staying at the flat on the night of the fire.³⁵⁴
- 10.242 At around 01.15 Larry Castro was woken by the sound of smoke alarms in the flat and Elisa Rabaya shouting “Fire!”. Genaro Batoan came into the bedroom. He also said there was a fire. He then left the flat. Larry Castro went into the hallway from where he could see into the

³⁴⁶ [LFB00000308].

³⁴⁷ 350 [INQ00000270].

³⁴⁸ Hamid Wahbi first witness statement [IWS00001157] p. 10.

³⁴⁹ Hamid Wahbi Day 62/25/23.

³⁵⁰ Hamid Wahbi Day 62/26/1-30/9.

³⁵¹ Hamid Wahbi Day 62/30/10-43/10.

³⁵² Kassemajian first witness statement [IWS00000951] pp. 6-8; Tankarian first witness statement [IWS00000434] pp. 3-4.

³⁵³ Kassemajian first witness statement [IWS00000951] pp. 8-9; Tankarian first witness statement [IWS00000434] p. 4.

³⁵⁴ Castro first witness statement [IWS00001091] p. 2.

kitchen. The fire was outside the closed kitchen window. Going into the kitchen, Larry Castro saw flames coming through a circular extractor fan located in the top right of the kitchen window. They were moving along the ceiling. He recalled that there “was a strong smell of smoke in my flat but I was not coughing at this point”. He described the smoke as grey in colour and at ceiling height.³⁵⁵

- 10.243 In panic, Larry Castro and Elisa Rabaya ran out of the flat. Genaro Batoan had left the front door open. It would close automatically only about half way and then had to be pulled shut. Larry Castro said that he had not shut the door on leaving the flat, although an inspection of the building carried out by the BRE after the fire suggests that the door had been closed at some point. He noticed some black smoke in the lobby, which he could smell and taste and which made him cough. Larry Castro’s recollection of the stairwell was that it had been completely dark. He had been aware of others in the stairwell, most going down. Some however had been walking up. Larry Castro was about to do the same when his neighbour from Flat 156, Shahid (Shah) Ahmed, shouted at him to go down. Larry Castro also remembered that the door to the roof was usually locked.³⁵⁶ In his written evidence Shah Ahmed confirmed he saw Larry Castro in the stairs and told him to go down, not up.³⁵⁷
- 10.244 Corinne Jones, her partner, Jason Miller, and their two sons had moved into Flat 145 in July 2016. Jason Miller was away that night. Corinne Jones was in her bedroom when she was woken by a strong smell which “smelt like someone was burning plastic in my room”. As there seemed to be nothing wrong, she went back to sleep, only to be woken by one of her sons telling her there was a fire. Seeing lights and embers from her window, Corinne Jones realised there was a fire and got herself and her children dressed ready to leave.³⁵⁸
- 10.245 Approaching her front door to leave, Corinne Jones could hear voices in the lobby. When she opened the door “a plume of smoke came into the flat” and set off the alarm in the hallway. Corinne Jones saw Larry Castro standing outside his front door. Thick black smoke was coming from the top of that door and moving along the ceiling. Corinne Jones could not see any smoke coming from anywhere else in the lobby. She briefly returned to her flat to collect her handbag. On returning to the lobby she found “a massive difference ... The smoke had quadrupled and had covered most of the ceiling and was now just above my head (I am 5ft 4)”. Although the lights were on, the smoke had made the lobby darker.³⁵⁹
- 10.246 There were other people in the stairwell when Corinne Jones entered it and “There seemed to be a lot of confusion”. Some people were going down the stairs but there was a group of 10-12 people going up. This group seemed to be “questioning and panicking” and appeared to know each other. They were speaking (but not in English) to a group of four women standing in the stairs, who seemed to be deciding whether to go up or down. No one responded to Corinne Jones when she asked where the fire was and so she decided to make her way downstairs with her sons. Larry Castro was just ahead on the stairs.³⁶⁰
- 10.247 At 1.29.02 an MPS operator answered an emergency call from a female caller who gave her address as Flat 142. That caller was probably Husna Begum. She, her parents and two brothers died in the fire. In a call that lasted 8 minutes and 51 seconds, Husna Begum reported that

³⁵⁵ Castro first witness statement [IWS00001091] pp. 6-7; [INQ00000406].

³⁵⁶ Castro first witness statement [IWS00001091] pp. 3, 7.

³⁵⁷ Shah Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000388] p. 11.

³⁵⁸ Corinne Jones first witness statement [IWS00000033] pp. 1, 5-6.

³⁵⁹ Corinne Jones first witness statement [IWS00000033] pp. 6-7.

³⁶⁰ Corinne Jones first witness statement [IWS00000033] pp. 7-8.

there was smoke coming into the flat, that they could see “flames from our window” and that the fire was “in the house right next to us”. During the call a smoke alarm was heard sounding in the background.³⁶¹

- 10.248 The occupants of Flats 145 and 146 left the tower at 01.30.³⁶² Taken together with the time of the call from Flat 142, that indicates that smoke had penetrated the lobby on floor 17 before 01.29.

The fire reaches floor 18

- 10.249 Shah Ahmed and his wife Sayeda Ahmed were at home in Flat 156 on floor 18. On the night of the fire, Shah Ahmed was woken by the sound of the smoke alarms in the flat. He went into the kitchen. Looking out of the window he saw “a big fireball coming up from the outside of the building. It was the colour of a burning sunset.” The kitchen window then “exploded inwards”. Shah Ahmed dialled 999. He did not speak to anyone but threw the handset down and left the flat.³⁶³
- 10.250 As the caller had not asked for any particular emergency service, the BT operator referred it to the MPS at 01.27.56. The MPS operator asked for a playback of the recorded call. This revealed male and female voices shouting “Fire!” and the sound of people banging on doors. That was Shah Ahmed and his wife knocking on the doors of neighbouring flats. Their recollection was that Flats 153 and 155 had been the only flats which had not opened their front doors in response. Those who had opened their doors were Hamid Kani, who lived alone in Flat 154 and Sakina Afrasehabi (using a walking frame), who lived in Flat 151 and whose sister Fatemeh Afrasiabi was staying with her. Shah Ahmed then opened his own front door. He saw “thick white and black mixed smoke” and shut the door again. He and his wife then entered the stairwell and began to descend.³⁶⁴
- 10.251 Rabia Yahya was in Flat 152 with her three children. Her husband was not at home. Rabia Yahya recalled making a 999 call at around 01.00 after she had heard a commotion outside and seen fire appliances.³⁶⁵ She was told that there was a fire on floor 4 and to stay in her flat. She decided to wake her children in case it became necessary to leave. Some 20 minutes later, as she looked from her kitchen window, Rabia Yahya became aware of grey smoke which smelled of burnt plastic at a lower floor of the tower. There was then a knock at the front door. Rabia Yahya opened it to see Shah Ahmed standing near the stairwell door and his wife at her door. Sayeda Ahmed told her that the fire had spread and she should get out. Rabia Yahya was unsure what to do; she did not know if it was safe to stay or what the conditions were like on the stairs. At that time, there were no signs of smoke or fire in her flat. There was only a “little bit of smoke” coming into the lobby through the open stairwell door. Rabia Yahya remained in Flat 152.³⁶⁶
- 10.252 Paulos Tekle and Genet Shawo were asleep in Flat 153 when they were woken by sounds from the lobby including at least two women’s voices. When they opened the front door, they saw Rabia Yahya with her children. Genet Shawo recalled that although there was some smoke she could see clearly through it. Paulos Tekle did not see or smell smoke, although he said that, unusually, it was dark in the lobby. He could see Rabia Yahya because of the light

³⁶¹ [INQ00000264].

³⁶² Annex A.

³⁶³ Shah Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000388] pp. 1, 10.

³⁶⁴ [INQ00000263]. The MPS operator called Shah Ahmed’s number back at 01:30:13 and 01:30:40 with the call going to voicemail each time; Shah Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000388] p. 10; Sayeda Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000676] p. 4.

³⁶⁵ There is no record of such a call and 01.00 would have been very likely too early in the incident.

³⁶⁶ Rabia Yahya Day 63/126/2-137/15.

from Flat 153. He remembered Rabia Yahya telling Genet Shawo that there was a fire. This conversation occurred before Paulos Tekle called his friend Abraham Abebe who lived in Flat 44 at 01.32.³⁶⁷

- 10.253 Yehualashet Enyew was lodging with Berkti Haftom at her home in Flat 155 on floor 18. At around 01.15 he was woken by the smell of smoke. He saw lights and smoke outside his bedroom window, which faced towards the school. Realising that there was a fire, Yehualashet Enyew shouted a warning to Berkti Haftom. He thought that it was by then around 01.20. As he prepared to leave, he could hear Berkti Haftom calling from the hallway and then heard the door slam. Berkti Haftom and her son were not in the lobby by the time Yehualashet Enyew left Flat 155. As discussed elsewhere, he subsequently went into Flat 153.³⁶⁸
- 10.254 Given that no one from Flat 155 answered the Ahmeds' knocking and no other residents describe seeing Berkti Haftom and her son, it is likely that they had left floor 18 before the Ahmeds first left their own flat.

The fire reaches floor 19

- 10.255 Meron Mekonnen lived in Flat 163 on floor 19 with her partner and two daughters aged four and six years. Her partner was at work on the night of the fire. At 01.25 Meron Mekonnen was woken by a call from her aunt, Hiwot Dagnachew. She told Meron Mekonnen that there was a fire and she should leave. Meron Mekonnen could not see any signs of a fire nor was there any smoke in her flat. With her daughters she ran out of the flat. The front door was "missing the automatic door closing mechanism ..." so she pulled it shut.³⁶⁹
- 10.256 The lights in the lobby were on when Meron Mekonnen opened her front door. She immediately saw smoke similar in colour to cigarette smoke. She described it as "very light grey, almost sort of whitish". She could not tell where it was coming from. It did not affect her visibility or have any physical effect on her or her children.³⁷⁰
- 10.257 Amal Ahmedin, the wife of Mohamednur Tuccu, was in the lobby on floor 19 with a female relative, Amna Idris. The door of Amal Ahmedin's home, Flat 166, was wide open. She and Meron Mekonnen told each other of a fire. Amal Ahmedin ran back into Flat 166. Amna Idris however followed Meron Mekonnen and her daughters into the stairwell, the door of which would usually close automatically.³⁷¹
- 10.258 The stairwell was lit and Meron Mekonnen immediately noticed grey smoke which was slightly darker than that in the lobby. It had no effect on her or her children. As soon as she entered the stairwell she became aware of people walking down. She thought there were about 10 people, all of whom seemed to be tower residents but none of whom she recognised. They had not gone far, perhaps to the level of floor 15 or 16, when she heard a man's voice shout: "Go back! Go back!". He spoke with a clear English accent. There had been no change in conditions in the stairwell at that time. Meron Mekonnen said that she had "assumed something terrible, something worse, was happening below us. I assumed maybe it is another resident who has probably seen flames in the stairwell". The shout that she recalled had serious consequences. It caused panic and the group began to run back upstairs. Meron Mekonnen reached floor 19. The door into the lobby was shut and she did not open it.

³⁶⁷ Shawo first witness statement [IWS00001050] p. 7; Tekle first witness statement [IWS00001051] pp. 4-5 and Day 63/17/8-23/13; Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] p. 2.

³⁶⁸ Enyew first witness statement [MET00007347] pp. 1-2.

³⁶⁹ Mekonnen Day 55/20/3-22/15, 55/12/11.

³⁷⁰ Mekonnen Day 55/22/16-23/23.

³⁷¹ Mekonnen Day 55/22/16-25/22.

She could not recall what had happened to others in the group, including Amna Idris. Standing at floor 19, Meron Mekonnen decided to ignore the shouted advice and go back down the stairs.³⁷²

- 10.259 At around 01.20, Fadumo Ahmed received a call alerting her to the fire. Fadumo Ahmed lived alone in Flat 164. She gathered some things and left with the idea to go down. Fadumo Ahmed found the lobby to be full of smoke which was “thick, dark grey and steamy and was very hard to see through”. It smelt like “gas and chemicals” and burned her eyes. She saw her neighbour, Deborah (Debbie) Lamprell, who lived in Flat 161, near the lifts. Debbie Lamprell said people were going upstairs. In her written account, Fadumo Ahmed explained:

“I thought that she had instructions to go upstairs. She was not panicking but it was as though she had been given an instruction. It was also clear that fire was lower down the tower and walking down towards the fire made less sense.”³⁷³

- 10.260 Fadumo Ahmed opened the door to the stairwell. There was only a little bit of smoke in it as she walked up the stairs to floor 23 followed by Debbie Lamprell. She saw no one else on the stairs. The smoke in the lobby on floor 23 was worse than on floor 19. It was “very dark and very thick” and “as before, smelt of chemicals”. Fadumo Ahmed saw people at the door to Flat 201. She was able to get into the flat and joined a group in its hallway. In her written evidence she confirmed that this group included Debbie Lamprell, Gary Maunders, Amal Ahmedin and her daughter Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin, Amna Idris, Raymond (Moses) Bernard, Berkti Haftom and her son Biruk Haftom. Later, Fadumo Ahmed left Flat 201.

Smoke on floor 20

- 10.261 Emma O’Connor and her partner, Luke Towner, lived in Flat 171 on floor 20. She is disabled and he also has restricted mobility. They were in bed when they heard the sound of sirens. From their kitchen window they saw a fire lower down the building and fire engines outside the tower. Emma O’Connor noticed specifically a fourth fire engine arriving.³⁷⁴ They decided to leave. There was no smoke in the flat, but once in the lobby of floor 20 Emma O’Connor noticed smoke coming up through the vents and that one of the lifts was not working.³⁷⁵
- 10.262 The couple took the other lift, which stopped first on floor 11 where two women entered. Emma O’Connor could see a bit of smoke in the lobby. There was more smoke than she had seen on floor 20, but she could still see through it. The women who entered the lift were Maria Jafari and her mother, Fatima Jafari. They lived in Flat 86 with Maria Jafari’s father, Ali Yawar Jafari, and her sister, Nadia Jafari. Having heard noises and seen fire engines, Maria Jafari had agreed to accompany her mother outside. She did not see or smell any smoke in the lobby on floor 11 when she left.³⁷⁶
- 10.263 The lift stopped again on floor 3 where both Emma O’Connor and Maria Jafari describe seeing a woman who was speaking about a fire. That woman was Mahboubeh Jamalvatan who lived in Flat 10 on floor 3 and confirmed in her evidence that she had called the lift. However, she decided not to get in. Those in the lift got out when it reached the ground floor and then left the tower. When she was at ground floor level Emma O’Connor heard “the vents ... making

³⁷² Mekonnen Day 55/26/5-32/17, 55/46/13-48/22; Mekonnen first witness statement [IWS00000912] p. 3.

³⁷³ Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] pp. 2-3.

³⁷⁴ The ORR records that the fourth appliance (call sign Golf 331) arrived at the tower at 01.08.33: ORR v 0.7 p. 18.

³⁷⁵ O’Connor first witness statement [IWS00000121] pp. 1, 6.

³⁷⁶ O’Connor first witness statement [IWS00000121] p. 6; Maria Jafari first witness statement [IWS00000744] p. 3.

very loud noises, as though they were working overtime". Mahboubeh Jamalvatan used the stairs to leave the tower shortly after.³⁷⁷ Maria Jafari and her mother are shown getting out of the lift at 1.20.13.³⁷⁸

The fire reaches floor 21

- 10.264 In Flat 186 Helen Gebremeskel was woken in the early hours of 14 June by the sound of her kitchen smoke alarm. Turning on her bedroom light, she could not see any smoke but noticed a smell similar to that of burning plastic. As she moved into the kitchen, Helen Gebremeskel saw smoke in the hallway of the flat.³⁷⁹
- 10.265 The kitchen window of Flat 186 had an extractor fan fitted into a square panel in the top right-hand corner of the window. Helen Gebremeskel found that the entire fan unit had broken away and disintegrated leaving a square hole. Flames were coming through the hole. There was black smoke coming into the kitchen which smelled like plastic. Helen Gebremeskel estimated that she spent seconds in the kitchen before leaving. She, her daughter and their dog quickly left the flat closing the front door behind them. There was not much smoke, but Helen Gebremeskel could hear a "very strong" and "very high" noise, which she had not heard before. She could not tell where that sound was coming from.³⁸⁰
- 10.266 Hanan Wahabi had left the tower by 01.21.³⁸¹ She then telephoned her brother, Abdulaziz El Wahabi, who lived with his family in Flat 182, to warn him of the fire. The call was made just after 01.25, the time when Hanan Wahabi's son used her mobile telephone to take a photograph. Abdulaziz El Wahabi and his family were in their home. Hanan Wahabi advised her brother to leave.³⁸²
- 10.267 On entering the lobby of floor 21, Helen Gebremeskel saw the El Wahabi family outside their home and told them that there was a fire in her flat. They told her the whole building was affected.³⁸³ Still in the lobby, Helen Gebremeskel made a 999 call. CRO Duddy answered it at 01.26.54. She told him that there was "a fire in 186 Grenfell Tower" and later said: "Everyone is out" and "In the building, in the building, the whole building, there has been a fire." CRO Duddy explained that the fire brigade were already there and asked if she was in the flat or outside the building. She responded: "Everybody is out, the whole, the whole people are out." Helen Gebremeskel said that the reference to everyone being "out" might have led CRO Duddy to think that everyone was out of the flat or the whole tower, although she was actually referring to the El Wahabi family, who were in the lobby.³⁸⁴
- 10.268 The Gebremeskels and the El Wahabis tried to leave through the stairwell door. They could not go down the stairs as a group of people were coming up. Helen Gebremeskel could not say how many there were in this group. She said that they had told them to go back to their flat. Helen Gebremeskel assumed that the instruction had come from the firefighters.³⁸⁵

³⁷⁷ O'Connor first witness statement [IWS00000121] p. 6; Maria Jafari first witness statement [IWS00000744] p. 4; Mahboubeh Jamalvatan first witness statement [IWS00000078] p. 5. Mahboubeh Jamalvatan used the stairs to leave the tower shortly after.

³⁷⁸ MPS CCTV schedule [MET00016072]. The unadjusted time is given as 1:20:53 in that schedule.

³⁷⁹ Gebremeskel Day 68/138/21-140/14.

³⁸⁰ Gebremeskel Day 68/140/16-146/17; [BLAR00000003]; Gebremeskel first witness statement [IWS00000933] p. 4.

³⁸¹ Annex A.

³⁸² Wahabi first witness statement [IWS00000074] p. 15; Wahabi Day 70/170/18-171/14.

³⁸³ Gebremeskel Day 68/149/2-150/23.

³⁸⁴ Gebremeskel Day 68/146/20-149/1; Gebremeskel first witness statement [IWS00000933] p. 4; [LFB00000306].

³⁸⁵ Gebremeskel Day 68/151/1-152/8, 68/155/20-158/21; Gebremeskel first witness statement [IWS00000933] p. 4.

- 10.269 Helen Gebremeskel then knocked on the front door of Flat 183, the home of the Gomes family. Marcio Gomes' recollection was of being woken by a banging on their front door. He followed his wife, Andreia Perestrelo, to the front door. When they opened it, Helen Gebremeskel told them that there was a fire in one of the flats in the tower. Helen Gebremeskel told him that she and a group had been sent back by a firefighter, although there is no evidence that a firefighter had in fact given such an instruction, whatever they thought. Marcio Gomes overheard, but did not see, Abdulaziz El Wahabi speaking to others. He could not hear clearly what was being said. There was a mix of three or four male and female voices, which Marcio Gomes assumed were people who had come up from lower floors, but were probably members of the El Wahabi family speaking to each other. There is no evidence that anyone else was sheltering in Flat 182.³⁸⁶
- 10.270 Throughout this conversation, Marcio Gomes was at his front door, standing just behind his wife. From there he could not see the front door of Flat 186 or the stairwell door. They invited Helen Gebremeskel, her daughter, with their dog to come into Flat 183. When they came in, Marcio Gomes could see a layer of black smoke about 2 inches thick close to the ceiling of the lobby. He noticed it because of the light fitting outside his front door. He said that the smoke "sort of sparkled" in the light, which caught his attention. He could not see where it was coming from. He thought that Helen Gebremeskel and her daughter had come into his flat between 01.25 and 01.30.³⁸⁷ Helen Gebremeskel said that it had been around 01.30.³⁸⁸
- 10.271 The evidence of Marcio Gomes about the extent of smoke on floor 21 at around 01.30 is not easy to reconcile with that of Mustafa Abdu, to whose evidence I have referred above. Mustafa Abdu lived alone in Flat 184 on floor 21. His decision to leave his flat was prompted by a telephone call from his brother at around 01.10. When Mustafa Abdu closed his front door on leaving he found the lobby empty of people. The doors of all the other flats were closed. He remembered having heard the ventilation system working, which he said was unusual. He said he had been able to see smoke, which was getting thicker. He described it as "normal – blacking in colour". Mustafa Abdu did not refer to any people coming up the stairs when he entered the stairwell. He left the tower at 01.28.21.³⁸⁹ The absence of any contact with other residents on floor 21 or with others coming up would suggest that he left before Helen Gebremeskel emerged from her home and that there may not have been as much smoke in the lobby on floor 21 as Mustafa Abdu recalled.

The fire reaches floor 22

- 10.272 In June 2017 Naomi Li was living in Flat 195 on floor 22 with her husband, Lee Chapman, and cousin, Chin-Hsuan (Lydia) Liao.³⁹⁰ On the night of the fire Lee Chapman was abroad on business, but Naomi Li and Lydia Liao were at home. Naomi Li was in her bedroom exchanging text messages with her husband when at around 01.15 to 01.17 she noticed a smell like burning plastic. Her bedroom window, which faced north, was closed. She went to Lydia Liao's bedroom, the window of which also faced north. When Naomi Li opened that window she again smelt the smell of burning plastic, which she was pretty sure was coming from outside. She saw an orange reflection on the side of the Kensington Aldridge Academy, but could not tell if it was a fire.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ Gomes Day 71 (Fri)/32/7-38/7.

³⁸⁷ Gomes Day 70/38/9-41/20; Gomes first witness statement [IWS00001078] p. 19.

³⁸⁸ Gebremeskel Day 68/158/13.

³⁸⁹ Abdu first witness statement [IWS00000307] pp. 2-3; Annex A.

³⁹⁰ Li first witness statement [IWS00000515] p. 2.

³⁹¹ Li Day 62/128/2-131/10; Li first witness statement [IWS00000515] p. 4; exhibit NL/4 [IWS00000514] p. 2.

- 10.273 Lydia Liao’s recollection of the smell at this time was that it was “not very strong, it just smelt like a BBQ”. She also recalled hearing the noise of a fan that she had not heard before coming from the direction of Flat 206.³⁹²
- 10.274 In the hallway of her flat, Naomi Li heard the sound of the smoke extraction system in the lobby. She said that before the fire it would come on at random times. The noise it made was loud enough to be heard in the living room of Flat 195 and was about as loud as a vacuum cleaner. When this happened both lifts would usually stop working.³⁹³ Hearing the system making the same noise, Naomi Li had been prompted to see if the lifts were working. She opened her flat door and could smell smoke. One lift was showing as out of service.³⁹⁴
- 10.275 Naomi Li telephoned her husband at 01.20 because she was not sure if she should call the fire brigade. The call lasted one minute and seven seconds.³⁹⁵ Having spoken to Lee Chapman, she dialled 999. CRO Adams answered the call at 01.21.24.³⁹⁶ The times of these two calls means that Naomi Li must have called her husband and then 999 after she had opened her front door.
- 10.276 In answer to CRO Adams, Naomi Li gave her flat number and confirmed that there was no smoke in the flat itself but she could smell smoke in the lobby. She referred to what she described as a “very light fog” throughout the lobby. It was not very smoky, more like a blur. Naomi Li could not tell where the smoke was coming from nor did she see it moving in a particular direction. The smell was different from that which she had noticed earlier, more like the smell of a distant wood fire.³⁹⁷
- 10.277 CRO Adams informed Naomi Li that the fire brigade was in attendance dealing with a fire on the fourth floor. She advised her to remain in her flat. Naomi Li thought she should tell her neighbours. Some were already out of their flats when Naomi Li opened her front door. She told them that there was a fire on floor 4 and the advice was to stay inside. She spoke first to Nura Jemal, who turned back into her flat. She then saw her next-door neighbours, Mariem Elgwahry and her mother Eslah Elgwahry, come out of Flat 196. Naomi Li repeated that the fire was on floor 4, only for Mariem Elgwahry to say: “No, it’s in our kitchen, the fire is in our kitchen.” Naomi Li did not notice any smoke coming out of Flat 196 at this time. She watched Mariem Elgwahry and her mother open the stairwell door and leave. She assumed that they were going down. Naomi Li next spoke to Anthony Disson, who then walked back into his flat. That was the last time that she saw Anthony Disson. She did not see her neighbours from Flats 193 and 191 at this time. The lobby was still clear with only very light smoke at that time.³⁹⁸ By reference to the times of her text exchanges with her husband, Naomi Li was able to say that she was probably in the lobby speaking to her neighbours at 01.25.³⁹⁹
- 10.278 Concerned by what Mariem Elgwahry had told her about the location of the fire, Naomi Li returned to her flat and told Lydia Liao that they had to leave.⁴⁰⁰ That appears likely to have been at some time after 01.26, when Lydia Liao says she took two photographs from her bedroom window.⁴⁰¹ When they left all the windows in Flat 195 were closed as well as the

³⁹² Liao first witness statement [IWS00000505] p. 2.

³⁹³ Li Day 62/112-114-113/23.

³⁹⁴ Li Day 62/133/13-136/9.

³⁹⁵ Li Day 62/131/11-132/16.

³⁹⁶ [INQ00000471].

³⁹⁷ Li Day 62/135/13-138/9.

³⁹⁸ Li Day 62/138/10-145/16, 62/162/1-16.

³⁹⁹ Li Day 62/172/18-173/25.

⁴⁰⁰ Li Day 62/163/12-164/25.

⁴⁰¹ Liao [IWS00000505] p. 3.

internal doors. The front door closed automatically behind them. That was the third time Naomi Li had opened her front door. On this occasion, the front doors of those flats she could see were closed. The smoke in the lobby seemed thicker.⁴⁰²

- 10.279 Naomi Li and Lydia Liao entered the stairwell. It was smokier than the lobby, but Naomi Li did not have any difficulty breathing. The smoke was white and smelt “just like smoke”. Standing at the stairwell door, Naomi Li saw a group of between five and ten people on the stairs. The group looked as if they had just got out of bed. Some were walking towards floor 22, others had passed it but none of them tried to enter that floor. No one in the group said why they were going upstairs and Naomi Li assumed that it was to try to get on to the roof. She assumed the door to the roof was locked as in the past it had been locked. There was no space to allow Naomi Li and Lydia Liao to descend. They hesitated and then returned to the lobby. At that point, Nadia Choucair, who lived with her family in Flat 193, opened her front door. Naomi Li explained that there was a fire, and that the fire brigade had said it was on the fourth floor “but our neighbour says it is in her kitchen, so we are not sure”. Nadia Choucair invited them into her home, as it was free of smoke.⁴⁰³
- 10.280 CRO Angie Gotts answered a second emergency call made by Naomi Li at 01.30.08.⁴⁰⁴ Naomi Li confirmed that she had made that call from Flat 193, indicating that she and Lydia Liao were there before 01.30.
- 10.281 In a statement provided after she had given oral evidence, Naomi Li said that when she had seen Mariem Elgwahry in the lobby on floor 22, the door to Flat 196 had been closed. Mariem Elgwahry had been facing that door and her hand movements suggested she had been locking it. The door to Flat 196 was still closed when Mariem Elgwahry and her mother left the lobby and when Naomi Li went into Flat 193.⁴⁰⁵
- 10.282 Mariem Elgwahry and her mother did not go down the stairs. In a telephone call, which began at 01.56, Mariem Elgwahry told her sister-in-law, Ferzana Elgwahry, that she and her mother had tried to go down but as they had been doing so, people coming up the stairs had told them to go up and to stay inside. Mariem Elgwahry did not tell her sister-in-law who these people were. Ferzana Elgwahry assumed it was other residents. Mariem Elgwahry also said that they had tried to go to the roof but had found the access to it locked.⁴⁰⁶

Smoke on floor 23

- 10.283 The burning smell that Farhad Neda reported to Pinnacle had not dissipated. He estimated that it was no longer than 15 minutes after making that call that he and his mother looked out into the lobby on floor 23. The burning smell was still detectable as was the noise from the smoke extraction system. There was no smoke, however. Farhad Neda also noticed that neighbours had opened their doors. His father then looked out from a window and said that he thought there was a fire downstairs. The family decided to get dressed and leave. By now Farhad Neda estimated that around half an hour had elapsed since the telephone call to the out-of-hours service.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰² Li Day 62/165/2-166/15.

⁴⁰³ Li Day 62/166/16-172/13.

⁴⁰⁴ Li Day 62/177/16.

⁴⁰⁵ Li third witness statement [IWS00001231] p. 1.

⁴⁰⁶ Ferzana Elgwahry first witness statement [IWS00000995] pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰⁷ Farhad Neda Day 61/36/19-40/11.

10.284 The Neda family locked their front door and entered the stairwell. Farhad Neda did not notice any smoke in the stairwell nor any burning smell. The family could not go down, however, because of people coming up from lower floors. He said:

“There were so many people that were coming up that we couldn’t get past them to go down. So I think the first few people that were in front, we asked them what was going on. I think they said something along the lines like, ‘There’s no way out, there’s a fire and there’s no way out’. I think someone had mentioned that the fire was in the stairwell as well, so we couldn’t make our way down the stairs. So we just went back into our door, into our apartment.”

Farhad Neda estimated that at least 10 people had come up the stairs, the first four of whom came into his home. These were Mariem Elgwahry and her mother Eslah and the sisters, Sakina Afrasehabi and Fatemeh Afrasiabi. Mariem Elgwahry told Farhad Neda that the fire had already reached her flat. Mariem Elgwahry did not say who had told them to go up the stairs. One of the sisters said that they had been told that helicopters would rescue them from the roof.⁴⁰⁸ At about this time, Farhad Neda saw Hesham Rahman, who lived alone in Flat 204, open the door of that flat and then close it again.⁴⁰⁹

10.285 Visibility in the lobby was clear when the Neda family tried to leave. Farhad Neda noticed, however, that smoke was entering the lobby from the vents of the smoke extraction system. It was black, but not thick and with the same burning smell he had noticed earlier. After they had returned to their flat, Farhad Neda kept returning to look at the floor 23 lobby. He noticed that smoke was coming in slowly. He said:

“So say if you were coming out of the lift, you would be in the middle of the lobby area, you could see the smoke sort of filling in from the two sides and making its way towards the middle, and that’s something you could see clearly. It didn’t happen all at once, it was a slow process, but you could see it slowly, slowly filling up the lobby with smoke, and you could see that’s where it was coming from.”

As the smoke started to collect in the lobby, Farhad Neda eventually made the decision to lock the door. He was still able to view the lobby through the spyhole in the door. On the first occasion he did this, the lobby did not appear misty. Farhad Neda saw the smoke “getting thicker and thicker, and it got to a point where we couldn’t see anything at all from that peephole”. From the peephole, he could not see the smoke vent located on the north wall. Eventually smoke began to come through the front door.⁴¹⁰

10.286 Farhad Neda must first have seen the smoke he described as coming from the vents before 01.30, when, as discussed elsewhere, Mariem Elgwahry made a 999 call from Flat 205.

The upward migration of occupants

10.287 The remains recovered from floor 23 included those of 15 people who had either lived in, or were visiting residents who lived in, flats on lower floors. They were:

Sakina Afrasehabi	Flat 151, floor 18
Fatemeh Afrasiabi	Flat 151, floor 18
Hamid Kani	Flat 154, floor 18
Berkti Haftom	Flat 155, floor 18
Biruk Haftom	Flat 155, floor 18
Gary Maunders	Flat 161, floor 19

⁴⁰⁸ Farhad Neda Day 61/40/12-44/9, 61/47/18-49/16; Farhad Neda [IWS00000886] pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰⁹ Farhad Neda Day 61/51/13-17.

⁴¹⁰ Farhad Neda Day 61/40/25-45/18.

Ernie Vital	Flat 162, floor 19
Majorie Vital	Flat 162, floor 19
Amal Ahmedin	Flat 166, floor 19
Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin	Flat 166, floor 19
Amna Idris	Flat 166, floor 19
Debbie Lamprell	Flat 161, floor 19
Jessica Urbano Ramirez	Flat 176, floor 20
Mariem Elgwahry	Flat 196, floor 22
Eslah Elgwahry	Flat 196, floor 22

- 10.288 There was a significant increase in the number of people who entered the stairwell after 01.15. Before that time 26 people had left the tower using the stairs, and a further two using the lift. Between 01.15 and 01.31, a further 77 people left the tower by the stairs, and a further seven using the lift.⁴¹¹ The evidence shows that during the latter period when an increasing number of people were using the stairs, a group of occupants made their way up to floor 23 at a time where others were making their way down.
- 10.289 While I cannot entirely exclude the possibility that one or two of those in the table above may have moved to floor 23 at a later time, the following evidence suggests that the great majority of those who died there were in a group that moved upwards together and that they had reached floor 23 by around 01.30:
- a. Farhad Neda said that Mariem Elgwahry, her mother and the Afrasehabi/Afrasiabi sisters came into his flat. Mariem Elgwahry's first 999 call at 01.30.00 was made from there.
 - b. By around 01.27 hours Shah Ahmed had alerted Hamid Kani and Sakina Afrasehabi to the fire.
 - c. Fatemeh Afrasiabi told her niece, Solmaz Sattar, in a telephone call that when she and her sister left Flat 151 they had met other residents who told them not to go down as there was a fire lower in the building. They had gone to a flat on floor 23.⁴¹² In a separate call, Sakina Afrasehabi told her son, Shahrokh Aghlani, that she and her sister had been told by others to go up to floor 23. Shahrokh Aghlani did not know who those others were.⁴¹³
 - d. Berkti Haftom and her son may have left their flat even before Shah Ahmed alerted his neighbours. At 01.32.10, CRO Howson answered a call from a child who must be Biruk Haftom. He told CRO Howson that he was on the top floor with others and that "my actual door number is 155 but I'm at someone else's house".⁴¹⁴
 - e. Amal Ahmedin, her daughter, Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin and Amna Idris were already in Flat 201 when Fadumo Ahmed reached it. Meron Mekonnen, who left the tower at 01.32.25, had seen Amal Ahmedin in the lobby on floor 19. Given that Amal Ahmedin was at this time already aware of the fire and that she lived in a "Flat 6" it appears likely that she evacuated her home at an early stage. Amna Idris was probably in the stairwell before 01.30 and was seen to go up the stairs.
 - f. At 01.29.48 CRO Sarah Russell made a return call to a mobile telephone which was answered by Jessica Urbano Ramirez. During that call Jessica Urbano Ramirez confirmed

⁴¹¹ Annex A.

⁴¹² Sattar first witness statement [IWS00000769] p. 4.

⁴¹³ Aghlani first witness statement [IWS00001200] p. 3.

⁴¹⁴ [LFB00000667].

her location as Flat 201 on floor 23.⁴¹⁵ Earlier Jessica had made two telephone calls to her mother, Adriana Ramirez. In the first she told her mother she was on floor 18 and in both agreed that she would come down the stairs.⁴¹⁶

- g. Gloria Trevisan was living in Flat 202 with her partner, Marco Gottardi. She called her mother, Emanuela Disaró, at 01.34. She told her mother that they had opened the front door to find a young man and a woman who had then come into the flat. This must have been Ernie and Majorie Vital.⁴¹⁷
- h. Fadumo Ahmed and Debbie Lamprell may not have been part of this group. When they reached Flat 201 others, including Gary Maunders, were already there.

10.290 The evidence suggests a number of reasons why some residents decided to go further up the building rather than down:

- a. A belief that they might be rescued from the roof by helicopter.
- b. A belief that there was a fire at a lower floor.
- c. Instructions to go up rather than down. (Although some witnesses appear to have assumed that instructions to that effect had been given by the firefighters, there is no evidence that they had.)

10.291 Dr Lane has suggested other possibilities.⁴¹⁸ One is that people thought it too smoky to descend, but that does not fit with the general evidence as to conditions in the stairs. Another is that they considered the stairs too congested for them to escape. That would apply only to residents such as Naomi Li, Farhad Neda and Helen Gebremeskel who said that the presence of people coming up prevented them leaving. It does not explain why some chose to go up when others were going down.

10.292 It is not possible to reach any conclusion on this question and it is unlikely that any further evidence will emerge that would assist me to arrive at one.

4 Events in the control room

10.293 The following supervisors and CROs were present on the night shift starting at 20.00 on 13 June 2017: OM Alexandra Norman, AOM Peter May, AOM Debbie Real, CRO Sharon Darby, CRO Sarah Russell, CRO Pam Jones, CRO Yvonne Adams, CRO Angie Gotts, CRO Heidi Fox, CRO Christine Howson, and CRO Peter Duddy.

10.294 At 00.54.29 on 14 June, the first call concerning a fire at Grenfell Tower came into the control room.⁴¹⁹ CRO Jones picked up the call on the ICCS system and spoke to the caller, Behailu Kebede, who lived in Flat 16 on floor 4.⁴²⁰ He provided the postcode, address, flat and floor number and stated that the fire had started in a fridge.⁴²¹ CRO Jones checked that he was outside the building and told him that fire engines were on their way.⁴²² During the call, CRO Jones opened a call collection form on VISION and selected the Incident Type Code (ITC)

⁴¹⁵ [LFB00055504].

⁴¹⁶ Ramirez first witness statement [IWS00001116] p. 5.

⁴¹⁷ Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] pp. 5-6.

⁴¹⁸ [BLAS0000020] p. 11 section 20.4.14.

⁴¹⁹ [LFB00000301].

⁴²⁰ Jones witness statement [LFB00032090] and [LFB00000301].

⁴²¹ [LFB00000301] pp. 2-3.

⁴²² [LFB00000301] pp. 2-3.

for a simple fire, A1, instead of a high-rise fire (A1HR).⁴²³ This generated a pre-determined attendance (PDA) of three appliances. She mobilised the three appliances nearest to Grenfell Tower: G272 and G271, North Kensington’s pump and pump ladder, and G331, Kensington’s pump. After CRO Jones had finished the call and within the next few minutes, all the appliances were on their way to the incident.⁴²⁴ The control room received two further calls about the fire, one from the remote monitoring company which alerted the LFB to the fact that the automatic fire alarm in the building had been activated and another from a member of the public reporting a fire. The control room (CRO Howson and AOM Real respectively) confirmed that the firefighters were on their way.⁴²⁵

- 10.295 After the appliances had been mobilised, AOM May noticed the call on the incident list on his screen and saw that only three appliances had been mobilised.⁴²⁶ He thought that the address was a high-rise building, so he checked on the internet and discovered that it was a building of at least 20 floors.⁴²⁷ He changed the ITC for the incident on VISION to A1HR, which increased the PDA to 4 pumps.⁴²⁸ As only three had been mobilised, he assigned a fourth, G362, Hammersmith’s pump, to the incident at 00.59.12.⁴²⁹ At 00.59.01 and 00.59.12 CRO Darby informed G271 over the radio that an additional appliance was attending the incident and that further calls were being received.⁴³⁰ In the meantime, the appliances from North Kensington had arrived at Grenfell Tower at 00.59.24 (G272) and 00.59.28 (G271) and booked “on scene” (status 3).⁴³¹ As set out above, WM Dowden became incident commander and that was recorded in the incident log.⁴³²
- 10.296 At 01.01.16, G362 mobilised to the incident and booked mobile to incident (status 2).⁴³³
- 10.297 At 01.08.27 and 01.08.33, G362 and G331 respectively arrived at the incident.⁴³⁴ It had taken them approximately 7 minutes and 12 minutes respectively to reach the incident ground. By that time, the first four appliances mobilised as a result of Behailu Kebede’s call had arrived at Grenfell Tower.
- 10.298 The next communication the control room received was from the incident ground at 01.12.59. FF Broderick from G331 sent a radio message relaying a message from WM O’Keeffe to increase the number of pumps to 6 and to request one hydraulic platform.⁴³⁵ CRO Darby received the message and recorded it in the incident log as a “make-up” message.⁴³⁶ It was her practice when she received messages from the incident ground to shout them out to the control room so that everyone was aware of what was happening and as an early warning.⁴³⁷

⁴²³ Long incident log p. 38.

⁴²⁴ SIL p. 8, ORR v.0.7 p. 10, definition of status 2: Bell Day 8/112/1-4.

⁴²⁵ ORR v 0.7 p. 8.

⁴²⁶ May witness statement [MET00007895] pp. 2-3.

⁴²⁷ May witness statement [MET00007895] p. 3.

⁴²⁸ May witness statement [MET00007895] pp. 2-3; long incident log p. 43.

⁴²⁹ May witness statement [MET00007895] p. 3; SIL p. 8.

⁴³⁰ SIL p. 17; ORR v.0.7 p. 9.

⁴³¹ SIL p. 8.

⁴³² He is recorded as the Officer in Charge on the long incident log (by his call sign 49327M) at p. 39 at 00.55.14.

⁴³³ SIL p. 8.

⁴³⁴ SIL p. 8 and ORR v 0.7 p. 18. Note that the VISION time for status 3 for G362 is wrong and the GPS data from the ORR should be used instead.

⁴³⁵ ORR v 0.7 p. 22; [LFB00002906].

⁴³⁶ At time mark 01.13.39, SIL p. 17.

⁴³⁷ CRO Darby witness statement [MET00013961] p. 4.

She would then type and send the message to the relevant people and the supervisors to deal with.⁴³⁸ Less than a minute later, at 01.13.41, G331 sent another radio message to CRO Darby asking for an aerial ladder platform instead of a hydraulic platform.⁴³⁹

10.299 Before any appliances could be mobilised in response to that request, CRO Darby received the following informative message by radio from G272 at 01.14.21:⁴⁴⁰

“Golf 272, residential block of flats of 20 floors, 25 metres by 25 metres. Five room flat on fourth floor 75% alight. High rise procedure implemented. MDT in use, tactical mode Oscar received, stand by.”

10.300 OM Norman saw the message come up on the incident log as it was relayed. She said that she was not overly concerned about the incident at that time as the message was quite standard for a high-rise fire.⁴⁴¹ Most of the CROs became aware of the informative message, which was logged on the incident log at 01.16.02, and so learned that the fire was on floor 4 of the building.⁴⁴²

10.301 The control room did not receive another similar informative message about how the incident was progressing until 02.39.17, over 1 hour and 25 minutes later.⁴⁴³ OM Norman, who was in charge at the time, would normally have expected to receive another informative message describing the progress of the incident or the nature of the incident, given the number of make-up messages that the control room subsequently received.⁴⁴⁴ SOM Smith explained that it sometimes happens that informative messages are not sent for quite a long period of time when make-up messages have been sent. The control room staff would not depend on routine informative messages in order to carry out their role.⁴⁴⁵

10.302 At 01.15.28, AOM Real assigned appliances to attend the incident ground in response to the make pumps 6 message. Two pump ladders (G361 from Hammersmith and A212 from Paddington) and two command units (CU7 from Wembley and CU8 from Fulham) were assigned.⁴⁴⁶ The aerial ladder, A213 from Paddington, was assigned a few minutes later, at 01.19.19.⁴⁴⁷ At the same time as assigning the four appliances, AOM Real also paged GM Patrick Goulbourne and four Station Managers (SM Brett Loft, SM Daniel Egan, SM Walton and SM Gareth Cook) to attend the incident.⁴⁴⁸ SM Walton was already monitoring the incident. WM Matt Leaver, a Fire Investigation Officer, was also informed of the incident at the same time.⁴⁴⁹

10.303 GM Goulbourne was paged so that he could act as the monitoring officer at the scene.⁴⁵⁰ He was not on duty that evening (a fact which had not been correctly recorded on the system) and so he should not have been paged.⁴⁵¹ As such, he did not respond to the pager message until the control room contacted him by telephone at 01.45.23.⁴⁵²

⁴³⁸ CRO Darby witness statement [MET00013961] p. 4.

⁴³⁹ [LFB00002587]. Incident log is updated at 01.14.12, SIL p. 17.

⁴⁴⁰ Radio message from Control to Incident Ground confirms the series of messages that makes up the informative message [LFB00002949]. It is logged onto VISION at 01.16.02, SIL p. 17.

⁴⁴¹ Norman Day 42/69/7-21.

⁴⁴² For example, Russell Day 76/23/167-24; Gotts Day 43/163/16-25-164/1-13; Adams Day 80/35/18-25, 36/1-4.

⁴⁴³ SIL p. 23 at 02.42.03.

⁴⁴⁴ Norman Day 42/93/20-25.

⁴⁴⁵ Smith Day 22/93/21-25-22/94/1-16.

⁴⁴⁶ SIL pp. 8, 13; Real Day 43/15/7-25.

⁴⁴⁷ At 01.19.19, SIL p. 8.

⁴⁴⁸ SIL p. 13.

⁴⁴⁹ At 01.15.28, ORR v 0.7 p. 26.

⁴⁵⁰ For which see Appendix 1 of PN412, p. 17.

⁴⁵¹ Goulbourne Day 41/67.

⁴⁵² Goulbourne Day 41/67/13-25, 41/68/1-21.

- 10.304 Within a few minutes after the Station Managers had been paged, they all called in to the control room to book status 2 and started to make their way to the incident.⁴⁵³ When SM Loft called in at 01.17.21, he was told by CRO Duddy that he was the first Station Manager to call in to control.⁴⁵⁴
- 10.305 In accordance with PN412, AOM Real informed the MPS of the incident at 01.16.43⁴⁵⁵ and at 01.18.18 all the ORT officers were paged through a group page system.⁴⁵⁶
- 10.306 At 01.16.05, G272 had informed the control room by radio that it was the ICP. Three minutes later, at 01.19.08, G272 relayed a further make-up message, make pumps 8.⁴⁵⁷ OM Norman was still not very concerned as she considered it to be a common attendance for a high-rise building.⁴⁵⁸ Further resources were mobilised in response to the make-up message at 01.20.58: two pump ladders, an FRU and two operational support units.⁴⁵⁹ At the same time DAC O’Loughlin was paged to act as a monitoring officer at the incident ground (as opposed to being a remote monitoring officer).⁴⁶⁰ Although PN412 stated that the control room Senior Manager, SOM Smith, and the duty Assistant Commissioner (who that night was AC Andrew Roe), should be informed, neither was contacted at that time.⁴⁶¹ AC Roe’s role would have been to act as remote monitoring officer.
- 10.307 DAC O’Loughlin was paged at 01.20.57 in order to carry out the role of remote monitoring officer.⁴⁶²
- 10.308 At 01.21.24, the first 999 call from a resident inside the tower (other than Behailu Kebede’s 999 call) was received by the control room.⁴⁶³ The call was from Naomi Li in Flat 195 (floor 22). A number of calls from members of the public outside the tower had already been received. The callers had been told that the fire brigade was in attendance.⁴⁶⁴ CRO Adams, who had decided to combine her role as paging officer with answering calls,⁴⁶⁵ answered the call from Naomi Li, who told her that she could smell smoke but that there was no smoke coming into her flat. CRO Adams told her that the fire was on floor 4, that the fire brigade was in attendance and that she should stay in her flat.⁴⁶⁶ CRO Adams said that the information gathered in this call did not require a further message to be sent to the incident ground because the firefighters were already there. She thought that the smell of smoke was likely to be residual smoke from the fire on floor 4 and so she told Naomi Li to call back if the situation changed.⁴⁶⁷
- 10.309 At 01.24.09, G271 sent a radio message to control to make pumps 10⁴⁶⁸ followed by a rapid succession of further make-up messages. At the same time, the control room started to receive a large number of 999 calls from trapped residents and members of the public.

⁴⁵³ SIL p. 13.

⁴⁵⁴ ORR v 0.7 p. 30.

⁴⁵⁵ [INQ00000285].

⁴⁵⁶ Long incident log p. 59; ORR v 0.7 p. 33.

⁴⁵⁷ [LFB00002899] and recorded on SIL p. 17 at 01.19.35.

⁴⁵⁸ Norman witness statement [MET00080589] p. 4.

⁴⁵⁹ SIL p. 8; ORR v 0.7 p. 34; End of Incident Report pp. 65-66.

⁴⁶⁰ ORR v 0.7 p. 34.

⁴⁶¹ ORR v 0.7 p. 34. SIL and long incident log show that SOM Smith was paged and notified 10 minutes later at 01.29 (p. 91 of long incident log) and AC Roe was only called to be mobilised 17 minutes later, when it reached 25 pumps at 01.36 (SIL p. 14).

⁴⁶² SIL p. 13.

⁴⁶³ [LFB00000303].

⁴⁶⁴ The Control Room Report pp. 10-12.

⁴⁶⁵ Adams Day 80/29/22-25-30/10.

⁴⁶⁶ [LFB00000303].

⁴⁶⁷ Adams Day 80/32/18-25-34/13.

⁴⁶⁸ [LFB00002720]. Recorded at 01.24.34 on the SIL, p. 17.

- 10.310 Between 01.24 and 01.30, the control room received 20 calls from people trapped inside the building and members of the public reporting the fire.⁴⁶⁹ The critical phone and the admin line was also constantly ringing as other services were also calling in.⁴⁷⁰ OM Norman instructed her AOMs not to answer calls but to focus on mobilising resources to the incident and to assist her with the management of the control room.⁴⁷¹
- 10.311 OM Norman said that at that point “all hell broke loose”.⁴⁷² She thought that the fire might be spreading and that the firefighters had not got it under control.⁴⁷³ At around 01.25, SM Jason Oliff, the Officer of the Day, was paged to attend the control room.⁴⁷⁴
- 10.312 The control room was now receiving 999 calls from residents on different floors in the building. At 01.24.57, CRO Duddy received a call from Damiana Louis in Flat 96 who reported a fire in her kitchen, but the call was lost before CRO Duddy could gather any more information.⁴⁷⁵ At 01.25.16, Denis Murphy, in Flat 111 on floor 14 told OM Norman that the fire was coming right past his window.⁴⁷⁶ He said that there was no smoke in his flat, although he had seen a lot of smoke when he tried to open the door to the lobby. She told him to stay where he was and that she would tell crews where to find him. Towards the end of the call, he reported that there was smoke coming in from the lobby. She told him to block the door to stop the smoke coming in and repeated that she would tell the crews. The information was not recorded on VISION by OM Norman as a service request.⁴⁷⁷
- 10.313 At 01.26.58, CRO Fox took a call from Katarzyna Dabrowska in Flat 95 on floor 12, who said that her neighbour had said that there was a fire in her kitchen.⁴⁷⁸ She said that smoke was coming under the door. CRO Fox told her to put sheets or towels down to stop the smoke coming in and said she would tell the crews.⁴⁷⁹ CRO Fox did not record the message on VISION as a service request; she may have written the number down on a piece of paper instead.⁴⁸⁰
- 10.314 Over the next few minutes WM Dowden increased the make-ups. At 01.27.26, a message was sent from G271 to make pumps 15 and to request two aerial pump ladders.⁴⁸¹ Less than a minute later, at 01.28.12, another message was sent from G271 stating that there were persons reported.⁴⁸² About a minute after that, at 01.29.11, a message was sent from G271 to make pumps 20 and to ask for two more FRUs.⁴⁸³ When this happened, CRO Gotts remembered thinking: “Oh my God, this is worse than Lakanal” and she knew it was going to be a huge incident.⁴⁸⁴ When the “persons reported” message came through, OM Norman thought that there was going to be a lot of smoke affecting flats further up the building, which would make people think that they could not leave.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁶⁹ The Control Room Report pp. 13-23. The figure does not include call-backs.

⁴⁷⁰ Norman witness statement [MET00080589] p. 5.

⁴⁷¹ Norman witness statement [MET00080589] p. 6.

⁴⁷² Norman witness statement [MET00080589] p. 5.

⁴⁷³ Norman Day 42/70/2-6.

⁴⁷⁴ Oliff witness statement [MET00012791] p. 3.

⁴⁷⁵ [LFB00000304].

⁴⁷⁶ [LFB00000308].

⁴⁷⁷ [LFB00000308].

⁴⁷⁸ [LFB00000309].

⁴⁷⁹ [LFB00000309].

⁴⁸⁰ Fox Day 80/203/2-7.

⁴⁸¹ [LFB00002698] and [LFB00002765].

⁴⁸² [LFB00002375] and ORR v 0.7 p. 508.

⁴⁸³ [LFB00002589].

⁴⁸⁴ Gotts witness statement [MET00007694] p. 5 and Day 43/157/19-158/11.

⁴⁸⁵ Norman Day 42/71/23-25-72/1-5.

- 10.315 When the “persons reported” message came through at 01.28.12, AOM May recalled CRO Gotts and CRO Fox from their break.⁴⁸⁶ CRO Russell handed over the monitoring of radio channel 2 to CRO Darby so that she was free to take calls.⁴⁸⁷ Every CRO in the control room was fully occupied taking calls but there were not enough of them to respond immediately to all the calls being received. In those circumstances OM Norman decided to take 999 calls and was on the phone almost continuously from 01.25.16 to approximately 01.33.⁴⁸⁸
- 10.316 At 01.28.26, CRO Duddy took a call from Natasha Elcock in Flat 82 on floor 11.⁴⁸⁹ She said that she was stuck, because there was smoke on her landing, although not in her flat.⁴⁹⁰ CRO Duddy advised her to keep the doors closed and explained that he would let the crews know.⁴⁹¹ No service request was created to pass this message to the crews on the incident ground. CRO Duddy may have written the message down on a piece of paper and passed it to CRO Adams, who was collecting notes of flat and floor numbers where people were trapped with a view to passing them to the incident ground together.⁴⁹²
- 10.317 At the beginning of a call which began at 01.29.48, Jessica Urbano Ramirez told CRO Russell that her kitchen was on fire and that a lot of smoke was coming from the floor. CRO Russell established later in the call that Jessica Urbano Ramirez and about 10 others were in Flat 201 on floor 23.⁴⁹³ CRO Russell spent the next 55 minutes on the phone to Jessica Urbano Ramirez.⁴⁹⁴ During the early stages of the call, CRO Russell told Jessica Urbano Ramirez that the fire was on floor 4 and advised her to block out the smoke coming through the door.⁴⁹⁵
- 10.318 The CROs also received numerous calls from members of the public reporting that the tower was on fire.⁴⁹⁶ They described what they could see using expressions such as: “a whole tower block on fire”,⁴⁹⁷ “a line of fire going right up the outside of the tower”⁴⁹⁸ and “a whole block of flats on fire”.⁴⁹⁹ None of that information was recorded on the incident log and CROs did not communicate it to each other by any other means.⁵⁰⁰ There was no system for collating information so that all CROs would be able to understand the extent of smoke and fire spread.⁵⁰¹
- 10.319 While OM Norman did not supervise or listen to any of the 999 calls during that period, she said that she had been able to hear the CROs sitting near to her (CROs Jones, Adams and Duddy) and was aware of people saying they were unable to leave due to smoke affecting their premises.⁵⁰² CRO Adams explained that she did not think there was much she could do with the information she received at that time, since she knew that fire crews were already in attendance.⁵⁰³ She described herself and her colleagues as bewildered by the number of calls

⁴⁸⁶ Gotts witness statement [MET00007694] p. 5; Fox witness statement [MET00007764] p. 4.

⁴⁸⁷ Russell witness statement [MET00007698] p. 6.

⁴⁸⁸ Control Report pp. 15-28. OM Norman calls: one at 01.25.16 to a male caller in Flat 111 on floor 14 (3 mins 57 secs), one at 01.30.02 to a female caller with her family in Flat 175 on floor 20 (2 mins 40 secs) and one at 01.32.51 to a female caller outside the tower (1 min 4 secs).

⁴⁸⁹ [LFB00000307].

⁴⁹⁰ [LFB00000307].

⁴⁹¹ [LFB00000307].

⁴⁹² Duddy Day 42/204/15-22.

⁴⁹³ [LFB00000481] and [LFB00055504].

⁴⁹⁴ Control Report p. 24.

⁴⁹⁵ [LFB00055504] pp. 3-7.

⁴⁹⁶ Control Report pp. 12-25.

⁴⁹⁷ Control Report p. 12.

⁴⁹⁸ Control Report p. 13.

⁴⁹⁹ Control Report p. 24.

⁵⁰⁰ Adams Day 80/37/10-17 and Duddy Day 42/199/2-21.

⁵⁰¹ Norman Day 42/79/10-16.

⁵⁰² Norman Day 42/75/16-19, 42/78/10-25-79/1-5.

⁵⁰³ Adams Day 80/45/17-46/1.

coming in.⁵⁰⁴ CRO Howson could not understand what was happening. She thought she knew that the fire was on the lower floors and could not understand how there could be smoke outside the windows of flats much higher up the building.⁵⁰⁵

- 10.320 While the 999 calls were flooding in, AOM Real and AOM May continued to mobilise resources and officers to the incident as each make-up request was made.⁵⁰⁶ AOM Real also called the LAS at 01.29.06 to inform them of the incident.⁵⁰⁷ At the same time, officers and crews on appliances continued to call into the control room to book their status.⁵⁰⁸
- 10.321 At around 01.29.42, SOM Smith was paged and informed of the incident.⁵⁰⁹

5 The actions of the MPS, the LAS, RBKC and the TMO

- 10.322 The initial involvement of the MPS came at 01.16.45 when the make-up of the pumps at the tower went to 6 pumps.⁵¹⁰ At that stage the MPS's call handling system (CHS) created a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) record, namely CAD 482, for the Grenfell Tower incident.⁵¹¹ CAD 482⁵¹² is broadly similar to the SIL created by the LFB and contains all the significant radio messages and actions attributed to the incident which passed through the MPS CAD system. It is not possible to identify clearly which call to the MPS's control room⁵¹³ (MetCC) prompted the creation of CAD 482. Upon opening CAD 482, a call went out for police assistance across London.⁵¹⁴
- 10.323 At 01.18.34 a MetCC control room operator entered the following details on CAD 482 (showing at 01.19.00):
- "5 roomed flat on the 4th floor
75% alight."
- 10.324 The information had come from AOM Real in the LFB control room, who had notified the MPS of the incident at 01.16.43 in accordance with the protocol that at six pumps the MPS should be informed.
- 10.325 At the point when the MPS was informed that the fire had been made up to six pumps, Inspector Thatcher, the night duty Inspector for Kensington and Chelsea, was in his car on the King's Road in Chelsea listening to his Airwave radio.⁵¹⁵ Detective Superintendent Paul Warnett, the night duty officer with responsibility for south London, including Kensington and Chelsea, was sitting in his office in Kensington aware that the call had come in and was monitoring the situation.⁵¹⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Adams Day 80/46/2-13.

⁵⁰⁵ Howson Day 80/143/6-17.

⁵⁰⁶ SIL pp. 8-9.

⁵⁰⁷ Call to LAS [INQ00000378].

⁵⁰⁸ SIL p. 8.

⁵⁰⁹ End of Incident Report p. 91 and Smith Day 21/191/23-192/15.

⁵¹⁰ [INQ00000285].

⁵¹¹ Refer to Winch witness statement [METS00020664] pp. 2-4 for a full description of the CHS and CAD systems in operation in the MPS.

⁵¹² [MET00023294].

⁵¹³ There are three MetCC control rooms, at Bow, Lambeth and Hendon.

⁵¹⁴ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/15/1-23.

⁵¹⁵ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/22/18-25.

⁵¹⁶ Warnett witness statement [MET000080605] p. 1.

10.326 PC Josh Rees and PC Kiran Sangha were the first police officers at the scene, arriving at 01.22.00.⁵¹⁷ At 01.23.08 PC Sangha (call sign 119BS) sent a radio message calling for another unit for crowd control, and at 01.23.28 he sent the following radio message:

“OTHER FLATS AT RISK OF FIRE. GOING TO BE A MASSIVE EVACUATION.”

10.327 At 01.26.04 he sent another message saying that large pieces of the building were falling off.

10.328 At 01.26.05 Detective Superintendent Warnett (call sign MXB155) sent a message saying:

“CONSIDER LINKING WITH COUNCIL RE EVACUATION”

10.329 At this point Inspector Thatcher had asked his colleague in the Kensington and Chelsea police hub (Sergeant Blondell) to call RBKC to find a place to put occupants who were, or soon would be, leaving the building.⁵¹⁸ It was followed at 01.29.39 by a message from Inspector Thatcher to the local hub to the effect that RBKC should be contacted, as they would need to rehouse residents from the building.

10.330 At 01.26.21 PC Sangha sent a message saying:

“THIS IS TURNING INTO A CRITICAL INCIDENT”

10.331 A critical incident is defined by paragraph 1.4.5 of the London Resilience Partnership Strategic Co-ordination Protocol as: “Any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community”.⁵¹⁹

10.332 Inspector Thatcher heard the message over his radio and put on his siren and blue lights. A few seconds later, at 01.26.32, he declared a Major Incident. Although CAD 482 records him (under his call sign BS1N) as having declared a critical incident, he told the Inquiry (and I accept) that he had declared a Major Incident at that time and the reference to “critical” in CAD 482 at that time mark was an error.⁵²⁰ A Major Incident is defined by paragraph 1.4.7 of the London Resilience Partnership Strategic Co-ordination Protocol as: “an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency”.⁵²¹

10.333 At 01.28.37 PC Sangha sent a further message:

“THE BUILDING IS 30 STOREYS HIGH – IT IS BEING EVACUATED NOW. WE NEED OFF-BOROUGH UNITS TO ASSIST. LOTS OF BURNING MASONRY FALLING FROM THE BUILDING.”

10.334 During this period he and other police officers were seeking to control the growing crowd gathered outside the building and keep them away from it for their own safety, despite the efforts of some in the crowd to run into the building to rescue loved ones.⁵²² Inspector Thatcher was probably on the incident ground by that point.⁵²³

⁵¹⁷ Sangha witness statement [MET00007837] p. 1.

⁵¹⁸ Thatcher Day 71(Mon)/27/22-28/6.

⁵¹⁹ [MET00023288] p. 12.

⁵²⁰ Thatcher Day 71(Mon)/33/19-34/5.

⁵²¹ [MET00023288] p. 12.

⁵²² Sangha witness statement [MET00007837] p. 2.

⁵²³ Thatcher Day 71(Monday)/54/21-25. He said that he probably arrived at 01.15 but that cannot be correct because he was still en route (but very close) when he declared a Major Incident at 01.26.32.

10.335 At 01.29 he sent the following message to contact RBKC:

“BS2N TO CONTACT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY AS THEY WILL NEED TO REHOUSE RESIDENTS FROM THIS BUILDING.”⁵²⁴

10.336 The LAS were first alerted to the fire by the LFB by way of a 999 call at 01.29.06.⁵²⁵ The LFB told the LAS that it was a 20-pump fire, that they were receiving calls from people stuck in flats, and that there were “persons reported”. The incident changed to a 25-pump fire during the course of the call.

10.337 At 01.30.04 the first message was sent by the MPS to marshal the NPAS helicopters for “overview and scene management”.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ CAD 482 p. 6.

⁵²⁵ [INQ00000378].

⁵²⁶ CAD 482 pp. 6-7.

Chapter 11

Period 2: 01.30-01.40

1 External fire spread

11.1 Between 01.34 and 01.35 the fire had spread from the east face to the north face of the tower, progressing over the top of column A5 on the north east corner.¹ The following images capture the development of the fire at that stage:



Figure 11.1

11.2 At 01.36 there was continued burning to the south side of column B5 on the east face, at the apex of column B5 and also at lower levels of the building at about floor 8,² as can be seen in this image:³

¹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 213 sections 1007-1012.

² Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 204 sections 989-992.

³ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 206 Fig. 124.



Figure 11.2

- 11.3 In the period 01.30 to 01.40 all the “Flat 6s” between floors 4 and 23 of the tower continued to be affected by the external fire.⁴

⁴ Those are Flats 86, 96, 106, 116, 126, 136, 146, 156, 166, 176, 186, 196 and 206: Dr Lane supplemental report [BLAS0000012] p. 9.

2 Events on the incident ground

Arrival of CU8

- 11.4 At 01.30.48 Fulham’s CU8, in which WMs Mark Kentfield and Daniel Meyrick were riding, arrived.⁵ It was the first command unit to arrive. WM Meyrick, who was driving, parked CU8 on Bomore Road where it remained for the duration of the incident.⁶ WM Kentfield was the team leader.⁷
- 11.5 Shortly after its arrival at the incident, the control room started to pass FSG information to CU8. WM Michael Dowden stated that it was only after the arrival of CU8 that he became aware that there were FSG calls in progress, when CU8’s team leader came up to him outside the tower.⁸ WM Meyrick remained on CU8 receiving FSG information from the control room on the main-scheme radio, which he in turn passed to WM Kentfield, who was on the incident ground, using channel 10.⁹ At this stage WM Meyrick recorded the FSG information he had received on a blank piece of paper.¹⁰

Arrival of SM Brett Loft

- 11.6 SM Loft arrived at 01.32.08.¹¹ He was the first Station Manager to arrive and said that he had realised fairly early on that the fire was within the building, not just on the outside.¹² On arrival SM Loft approached WM Dowden and the two of them decided jointly that, rather than taking over incident command, SM Loft would manage the FSG calls.¹³ SM Loft said that he had been confident that it was appropriate for WM Dowden to remain in control of the incident.¹⁴ At around the time that decision was made, SM Loft and WM Dowden were approached by WM Kentfield who gave them a list of calls he had made on a piece of A4 size paper. At that point they became aware that there were a large number of FSG calls.¹⁵ That was at around 01.40.¹⁶
- 11.7 There was no discussion about the “stay put” advice, about the possibility of a total or partial evacuation, or about declaring a Major Incident.¹⁷ During their conversation WM Dowden indicated that he was not sure if the fire had penetrated inside the building, but SM Loft did not recall having told him that, in his view, it had.¹⁸ There was no discussion about how SM Loft should go about taking the information from the command unit, how it should be recorded, or what SM Loft’s line of communication with the incident commander should be. SM Loft did not speak to anyone in the control room.¹⁹

⁵ SIL p. 8.

⁶ WM Meyrick witness statement [MET00007760] p. 3.

⁷ WM Kentfield witness statement [MET00023051] p. 10.

⁸ Dowden Day 10/149/5-151/21.

⁹ Meyrick Day 20/25/17-28/18.

¹⁰ Meyrick Day 20/41/10-42/1.

¹¹ SIL p. 13.

¹² Loft Day 37/126/4-127/7.

¹³ Loft Day 37/138/5-21.

¹⁴ Loft Day 37/138/23-139/4.

¹⁵ Loft Day 37/134/18-23, 138; SM Loft estimated that there were eight or 10 flats recorded on this list: Loft Day 37/151/24-152/1.

¹⁶ Loft Day 37/145/5-17.

¹⁷ Loft Day 37/137/14-25.

¹⁸ Loft Day 37/128/7-129/3.

¹⁹ Loft Day 37/149/3-13, 156/4-18.

to go up to Flat 176 with him.²⁵ Accordingly, at 01.33, FFs Badillo and Dorgu and CM Secrett entered the stairs under air with the intention of rescuing Jessica Urbano Ramirez from Flat 176 on floor 20.²⁶

- 11.11 The crew entered the lift and pressed the button for floor 20, but the lift stopped and opened at, in all likelihood, floor 8²⁷ and, again, filled with smoke. They made their way to the stairwell and began to climb.²⁸

Arrival of A216, Paddington's FRU

- 11.12 At 01.35.18, A216, Paddington's FRU, booked status 3.²⁹ It was the first FRU to be mobilised and to arrive at the incident. CM Philip Wigley was in charge, riding with FFs Martin Gillam, Russell Gonzalez, Andrew Harris and Dean Roberts.
- 11.13 On arrival CM Wigley went to find the incident commander to obtain instructions.³⁰ WM Dowden asked the crew to go up to the roof of the tower and, using the FRU's line equipment, run a jet of water down from the top of the building.³¹ FF Roberts recalled that on being informed of the brief by CM Wigley he had thought it was a strange task,³² and had had concerns that the roof might have been compromised. He had also questioned whether the crew would be able to gain access to the roof as in high-rise buildings that usually requires a key.³³ By contrast, FF Gillam said in his oral evidence that he had not questioned the feasibility of the task, and thought that the combination of the turntable ladder applying water from the bottom of the tower and the FRU crew applying water from the roof would succeed in extinguishing the fire.³⁴
- 11.14 WM Dowden explained that his intention had been to produce an effect similar to a drencher system, and that at the time he gave the order he believed that the spread of fire over the outside of the building could be controlled.³⁵ In hindsight he could see that it was never going to work and that the fire had been progressing too rapidly for the available resources.³⁶ He had no information about the layout of the roof and its access, and did not recall having been given any information about the conditions in the staircase by which he had envisaged the crew getting to the top of the building.³⁷

CM Jamal Stern and FF Richard Hippel returned to the bridgehead

- 11.15 As noted in Period 1, CM Stern and FF Hippel arrived back at the bridgehead at around 01.38. FF Hippel told WM Brien O'Keeffe, in relation to the conditions on floor 16, that "it's fucked"³⁸ and CM Stern recalled informing WM O'Keeffe that he and FF Hippel had been unsuccessful in their rescue and that one person was unaccounted for, although he was not sure if he

²⁵ Badillo witness statement [MET00010080] pp. 5-6. The evidence is not clear as to whether the crew specifically told entry control the flat number of their intended rescue.

²⁶ BA Telemetry data [LFB00003115]. Note that FF Dorgu's tally out time is slightly later, at 01.35.01.

²⁷ FFs Badillo and Dorgu say it was floor 8 (Badillo Day 147/24-148/2; Dorgu Day 19/151/6-8); CM Secrett in his first witness statement ([MET00010105] p. 6) said floor 6 but accepted in oral evidence he could be mistaken: Secrett Day 17/72.

²⁸ Badillo witness statement [MET00010080] pp. 6-7.

²⁹ SIL [MET00013830] p. 8.

³⁰ Wigley witness statement [MET00010927] p. 4.

³¹ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 6.

³² Roberts witness statement [MET00007890] p. 4.

³³ Roberts Day 27/112/5-114/16.

³⁴ Gillam Day 27/56/4-16; 97/20-98/22.

³⁵ Dowden Day 10/143/9-144/10.

³⁶ Dowden witness statement [MET00010915] p. 6.

³⁷ Dowden Day 11/42/3-43/9.

³⁸ Hippel Day 26/47/9-48/12.

said that the person was bedbound.³⁹ FF Justin O’Beirne said that when he left the tower, he informed SM Loft that there was a bedbound man on floor 16 whom the crews had been unable to reach.⁴⁰ SM Loft did not recall this exchange with FF O’Beirne.⁴¹

WM Paul Watson and the setting-up of a BA staging post

11.16 Meanwhile, at around this time on the ground floor of the tower, WM Watson began to establish a BA staging area within the ground floor lobby, after receiving a very quick briefing from WM Dowden.⁴² The purpose of the staging area was to hold BA wearers until the bridgehead was ready to receive them. WM Watson tried, but failed, to communicate with WM O’Keeffe by radio. Accordingly WM O’Keeffe came out onto the mezzanine on floor 2 and shouted down to WM Watson on the ground floor.⁴³

Arrival of SM Gareth Cook

11.17 SM Cook arrived at the incident at 01.38.25.⁴⁴ He was the second Station Manager in attendance, after SM Loft. SM Cook had been mobilised to perform the role of Press Liaison Officer.⁴⁵ On arrival he walked towards the tower and took the following five photographs of the building, which he sent to AC Andrew Roe at 01.43 (in Period 3):



Figure 11.4

³⁹ Stern Day 26/193/8-20.

⁴⁰ O’Beirne Day 15/31/10-32/8.

⁴¹ Loft Day 37/173/3-10.

⁴² Watson Day 28/18. CCTV images show WM Watson entering the tower at 01.33, although he does not set up the staging post immediately: Watson Day 28/17/19-18/21.

⁴³ Watson Day 28/32/19-33/17.

⁴⁴ SIL p. 13.

⁴⁵ ORR v 0.7 p. 88.



Figure 11.5

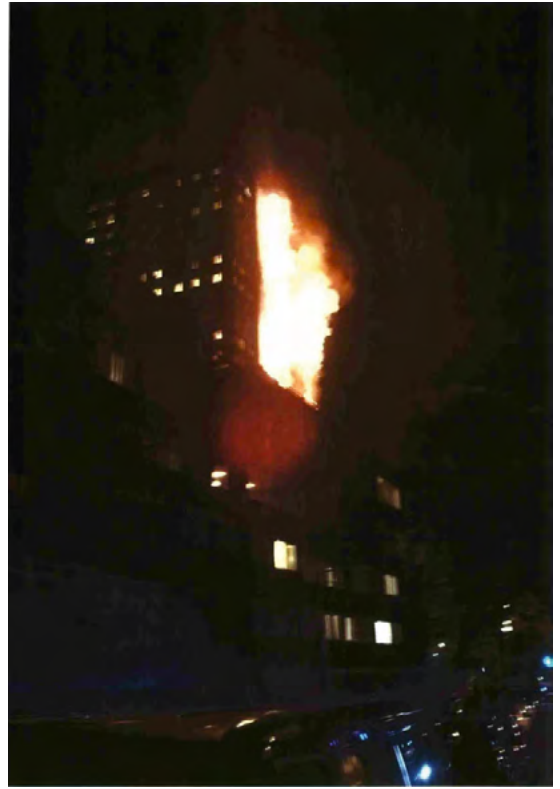


Figure 11.6

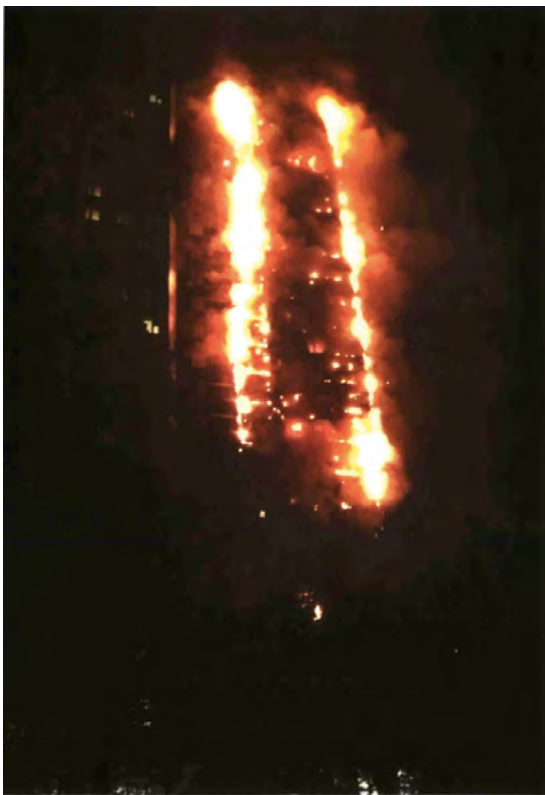


Figure 11.7

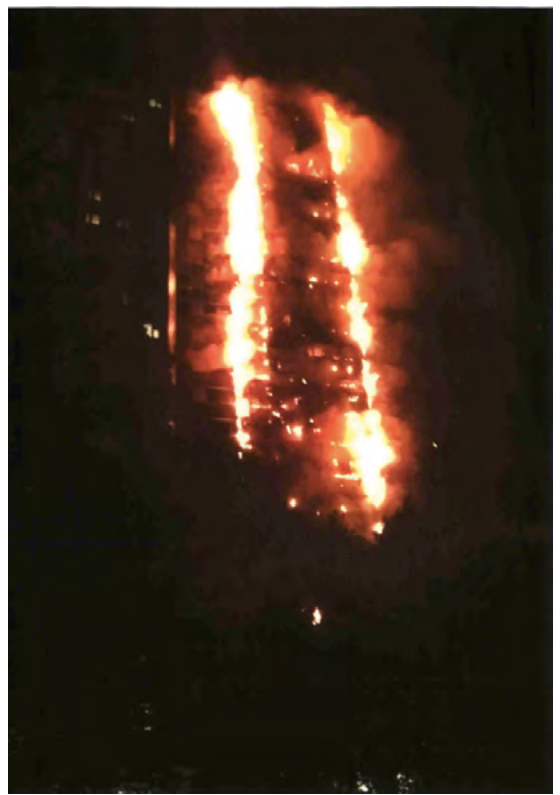


Figure 11.8

AC Roe mobilised

- 11.18 At 01.36.02, AC Roe was assigned to attend the incident.⁴⁶ He called the control room at 01.38.51 to obtain further information about the incident and to book his status as attending. He spoke to AOM Peter May, who confirmed the details and explained that there were “loads of people trapped in flats”.⁴⁷ AC Roe asked who was in charge of the incident, but AOM May could not tell him.⁴⁸ He asked if a Deputy Assistant Commissioner and a Group Manager were in attendance, but AOM May could only tell him that DAC Andrew O’Loughlin was on his way and that GM Patrick Goulbourne had been assigned but had not yet mobilised.⁴⁹
- 11.19 AC Roe heard a “very considerable level of stress” in AOM May’s voice which he considered unusual. He also heard background noise in the control room which suggested an “absolutely exceptional incident”.⁵⁰ By the end of the call, AC Roe believed that the informative message was “inaccurate” in the sense that it underplayed the scale and gravity of the incident. His oral evidence to the Inquiry bears setting out in full:

“So my sense was we had a very dynamic incident that had grown exponentially quickly, and therefore it was outstripping officers’ ability probably to effectively decision-make at that point, certainly to pass effective messages, that the control room would be under massive pressure because they must have been handling multiple FSGs... my guess is it was going to carry on developing.... All of my instincts as a professional officer told me I was driving towards a major incident.”⁵¹

Arrival of G341, Chelsea’s pump ladder

- 11.20 G341, Chelsea’s pump ladder, booked status 3 at 01.39.13.⁵² There was a crew of five riding on G341, including WM Louisa De Silvo.

Arrival of SM Andrew Walton

- 11.21 SM Walton’s recorded arrival time is 01.40.12.⁵³ He had made several attempts to book in by mobile telephone and radio before he had been able to make contact with the control room.⁵⁴

3 Conditions in the tower and movement of occupants

Firefighters’ evidence

- 11.22 When CM Secrett and FFs Badillo and Dorgu arrived on floor 8, CM Secrett described the smoke as fairly thick. It filled the lift so that, when it opened, he could not really see FFs Dorgu and Badillo beside him.⁵⁵ It was also smoky when the crew moved into the stairwell, though a little clearer than it had been in the lobby.⁵⁶ The conditions in the stairwell worsened as the crew went up,⁵⁷ with the temperature also gradually increasing.⁵⁸

⁴⁶ SIL p. 14.

⁴⁷ [INQ00000202] p. 2.

⁴⁸ [INQ00000202] p. 3.

⁴⁹ [INQ00000202] pp. 3-5.

⁵⁰ Roe Day 48/196/16-197/17.

⁵¹ Roe Day 48/198/1-18.

⁵² SIL p. 8.

⁵³ SIL p. 13.

⁵⁴ Walton Day 46/107/18-25.

⁵⁵ Secrett Day 17/72/23-73/5.

⁵⁶ Secrett Day 17/79/7-12.

⁵⁷ Secrett Day 17/80/6-11.

⁵⁸ Secrett Day 17/89/7-19.

11.23 CM Matthew Sephton and FFs Benjamin Broderick and Mark Brodrick were committed under air shortly after CM Secrett, FF Dorgu and FF Badillo.⁵⁹ They were instructed to go to floor 5. FF Brodrick described arriving at floor 5 and seeing FF Wayne Archer on his way out, covered in black soot. He saw black smoke in the lobby. FF Broderick said that the smoke affected visibility in the stairwell but that it improved slowly as the smoke rose up.⁶⁰ Once inside the lobby on floor 5, FF Brodrick could not see because of the smoke and there was also intense heat inside the flat they entered, which they thought was immediately above the flat from which the fire originated.⁶¹ CM Sephton described inadvertently walking into the bin chute as the crew were on their way out, which was illuminated and completely free of smoke. CM Sephton did not see any fire on floor 5.⁶²

The evidence of the occupants

11.24 Of the 297 occupants of the tower, 112 had left the building by 01.30. A further 36 successfully evacuated in the following 10 minutes.⁶³ Once again, given that significant events were occurring almost simultaneously on different floors, it is convenient to consider the evidence available from those occupants still in the tower on a floor by floor basis. Between 01.24 and 01.40 there was a significant increase in the number of emergency calls from those still inside the tower. They included a cluster of calls from people in flats on floors 20 and above, six⁶⁴ of which were handled by the emergency services between 01.29 and 01.32. It is therefore convenient to begin this part of the narrative at the top floor of the tower.

Conditions on floor 23

11.25 As previously noted, at 01.29.48 CRO Sarah Russell made a call back to Jessica Urbano Ramirez.⁶⁵ Between around 01.30 and 01.40, Jessica Urbano Ramirez said that:

- a. She was with a group of about 10 people in the hallway of a flat on floor 23.⁶⁶ (Later she gave the flat number as 201).⁶⁷
- b. Smoke was coming “from the floor” and “it’s completely smoky outside”.⁶⁸
- c. People on the floor were having difficulty breathing.⁶⁹
- d. The group was at the front but there was a fire “at the back”. The fire was “out the window”.⁷⁰
- e. Fire had entered the living room (which Jessica Urbano Ramirez herself had not seen) and was setting things alight, which other occupants had tried to put out with water.⁷¹
- f. The group had moved from the hallway into a bedroom.⁷²

⁵⁹ BA Telemetry data [LFB00003115] records tally out times of 01.27.10, 01.38.00 and 01.38.02 for this crew.

⁶⁰ Broderick witness statement [MET00012658] p. 6.

⁶¹ Brodrick [MET00016789] p. 7.

⁶² Sephton witness statement [MET00010895] pp. 4-5.

⁶³ I include in this number Leanne Jackson Le-Blanc, Joseph John and their son, although for the reasons explained it is not possible to be precise about their exit time.

⁶⁴ This number does not include the call from Flat 142 timed at 01.29.02.

⁶⁵ [LFB00055504].

⁶⁶ [LFB00055504] pp. 3, 5, 9.

⁶⁷ [LFB00055504] p. 31.

⁶⁸ [LFB00055504] p. 13.

⁶⁹ [LFB00055504] p. 10.

⁷⁰ [LFB00055504] pp. 7, 11.

⁷¹ [LFB00055504] pp. 10-13.

⁷² [LFB00055504] p. 19.

- 11.26 The information that Jessica Urbano Ramirez provided to CRO Russell indicated that there was by then smoke in the lobby, which was coming through the front door of Flat 201. The reference to the fire being “at the back” would have been to the east face of the tower. In her written account Fadumo Ahmed, who also sheltered in Flat 201, said there were about 10 people in the hallway. Her recollection was that the lobby on floor 23 had been thick with smoke. Those in the hallway had been finding it difficult to breathe. From her position Fadumo Ahmed could see fire at the living room window. She and Amal Ahmedin decided to throw water from the bathroom onto the living room window, the top of which was burning. This was not successful.⁷³
- 11.27 When Mariem Elgawahry spoke to CRO Peter Duddy at 01.30.00 from Flat 205, she told him that there was smoke everywhere.⁷⁴ The call was disconnected. Mariem Elgawahry made another 999 call which was answered by CRO Heidi Fox at 01.38.16.⁷⁵ Mariem Elgawahry explained that the line had cut out when she had previously called. She gave the location of her flat and confirmed that no smoke was coming into it.
- 11.28 Biruk Haftom and his mother were also in Flat 201. In a 999 call answered at 01.32.10, Biruk Haftom said “We can’t come out” when asked by CRO Christine Howson if he was in the tower. He also said “there’s a lot of smoke in the flat and in the building...”. The smoke was coming into the flat. Biruk Haftom confirmed that the fire was not in the flat but added, “I can see it and the window’s already burning up.” He then handed the phone to an adult who first said that the “fire is coming through” and then “the smoke’s coming through the window”. CRO Howson advised them both to try to stop the smoke coming into the flat.⁷⁶
- 11.29 There is also video evidence of the conditions in the lobby on floor 23 at that time. Rania Ibrahim was at home in Flat 203 on the night of the fire with her two daughters, Fethia and Hania, aged four and three years. Her husband was abroad at the time.⁷⁷
- 11.30 At 01.38 Rania Ibrahim began to live stream a video to Facebook.⁷⁸ The recording runs for 6 minutes 33 seconds ending at 01.44.33.⁷⁹ It shows the conditions inside Flat 203 and in the lobby on floor 23 and it is important evidence of the internal movement of occupants and the location and effects of smoke.
- 11.31 At the start of the recording Rania Ibrahim is by the front door. A smoke alarm is audible in the background. A female voice is heard telling Rania Ibrahim not to open the front door as it will allow smoke into the flat.⁸⁰ While the speaker does not appear on the video, to judge by the voice she is likely to have been Isra Ibrahim, who sheltered in Flat 203 with her mother Fathia Ahmed Elsanousi. Rania Ibrahim agrees with the speaker but expresses concern that there may be people in the lobby. Shortly afterwards she opens the front door and calls out to people to come to her apartment.⁸¹ A white man, who has since been identified as Gary

⁷³ Fadumo Ahmed [IWS00000729] pp. 4-5.

⁷⁴ [LFB00000310].

⁷⁵ [LFB00000317].

⁷⁶ [LFB00000667] p. 3.

⁷⁷ Ibrahim [IWS00000323] p. 1.

⁷⁸ Ismail first witness statement [IWS00001230] p. 2.

⁷⁹ Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232].

⁸⁰ Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232] at 00.09 seconds.

⁸¹ Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232] at 00.50 seconds.

Maunder, enters the flat.⁸² A black man, since identified as Abufras Ibrahim, then appears on the video and tells Rania Ibrahim to close the door as she is letting smoke in.⁸³ Gary Maunder had moved to Flat 203 from Flat 201 where he was first seen by Fadumo Ahmed.

- 11.32 At this point the camera is facing towards the lobby. A light in the ceiling of the lobby is on and the darkness in that area appears to be caused by smoke.⁸⁴



Figure 11.9

- 11.33 At 1 minute 14 seconds into the recording, Rania Ibrahim says she is going out. She then appears to step out into the lobby. She returns to the flat at 1 minute 32 seconds. She was able to breathe and speak while in the lobby and a man can be heard responding to her shouts of “Hello” and “Come here” with “We are here. I am inside our apartment”.⁸⁵ No one is heard to cough on the recording. That and the fact that people are heard shouting suggests that the smoke in the lobby was not so thick that Rania Ibrahim could not stand there, at least for a short period.

⁸² Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232] at 00.59 seconds; Spence first witness statement [IWS00001235] p. 1 and Exhibit CS/1 [IWS00001235] p. 3.

⁸³ Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232] at 01.05 minute and seconds. Abu Baker Ibrahim [IWS00001238].

⁸⁴ Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232] at 01.14 minute and seconds.

⁸⁵ Ismail exhibit SI/2 [IWS00001232] at 01.24 minute and seconds.

- 11.34 About five minutes into the video (at around 01.43), it is possible to hear a voice coming from outside the tower shouting “This is the fire service. If you are able, exit the building”. That is likely to have been FF Patrick Murray, who had been instructed by WM Watson shortly after his arrival to provide reassurance to residents in their flats using a loudhailer. FF Murray’s evidence was that he did that for about 10 to 15 minutes, before recognising that the conditions were changing and that the fire was rapidly escalating, at which point he decided to tell residents to leave the building if they were able to.
- 11.35 Emanuela Disaró, Gloria Trevisan’s mother, believed the man answering Rania Ibrahim’s shouts was Marco Gottardi, her daughter’s partner.⁸⁶ Gloria Trevisan and Marco Gottardi were in Flat 202. Gloria Trevisan called her mother at 01.34. The call lasted 30 minutes and 53 seconds. In the course of it Gloria Trevisan told her mother that she had been woken by knocking at the front door. When they had opened the door they had found the lobby “filled with a thick, dense smoke”.⁸⁷ As I have mentioned already, outside were Majorie and Ernie Vital who had then come into Flat 202. Gloria Trevisan told her mother that they could not leave because of the smoke or go to the roof because the gate to it was locked. They were making signs to attract attention.⁸⁸
- 11.36 At 01.39.15, OM Alexandra Norman took a 999 call from Hesham Rahman, who was alone in Flat 204.⁸⁹ He reported that a little smoke was coming into his home and he could smell it. He asked OM Norman if she could hear the alarm and told her that he could not see outside at all.

Conditions on floor 22

- 11.37 Anthony Disson was alone in Flat 194 on the night of the fire. His son Charles (Charlie) Disson who lived with him was away.⁹⁰ At 01.30.38, CRO Fox responded to a 999 call from Anthony Disson. He told CRO Fox: “it’s terrible up here” and you “can’t see a hand in front of ya”.⁹¹ It appears likely that Anthony Disson was referring to conditions in the lobby rather than in his flat. He did not say that there was smoke in Flat 194. By contrast in a later 999 call at 01.50.03 Anthony Disson said that smoke was coming into his flat.⁹²
- 11.38 CRO Fox advised Anthony Disson to use towels to prevent smoke coming in, to which he responded that he would “tell the rest”.⁹³ He must have been referring to other residents on floor 22. As I said earlier under Period 1, Naomi Li had spoken to him at 01.25 when, as she described it, there had been no more than very light smoke in the lobby.
- 11.39 There is no evidence to show that Anthony Disson was able to, or did, leave his flat at this point. A further indication of the conditions in the lobby on floor 22 at that time comes from another 999 call, which was made by Naomi Li and answered by CRO Angie Gotts at 01.30.38. Naomi Li confirmed that she had been in Flat 193 when she made that call.⁹⁴ She told CRO Gotts “there’s all smoke now”.⁹⁵ This contrasts with her description of conditions in the lobby at 01.25 when she met Anthony Disson and other neighbours.

⁸⁶ Disaró second witness statement [IWS00001227] pp. 3-4.

⁸⁷ Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] p. 6.

⁸⁸ Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] pp. 4-5; Disaró second witness statement [IWS00001227] p. 6.

⁸⁹ [LFB00000329].

⁹⁰ Charles Disson [IWS00000239] p. 1; Cordelia Disson [IWS00000242] p. 1.

⁹¹ [LFB00000459].

⁹² [LFB00000328].

⁹³ [LFB00000459].

⁹⁴ Li Day 62/177/21.

⁹⁵ [INQ00000472].

- 11.40 At the end of this 999 call Naomi Li asked CRO Gotts if she should stay in the flat. CRO Gotts responded, “I obviously can’t really advise you, but I’ll let the firemen know you’re there, okay?”⁹⁶ When she gave oral evidence, Naomi Li explained that she had been unhappy with that advice, expecting a more direct answer. She was reassured by being told that the fire was on floor 4 and she made her own judgement to stay rather than relying on that advice.⁹⁷
- 11.41 At 01.34.50 CRO Duddy answered the first call the emergency services received that night from Flat 192.⁹⁸ That was the home of Nura Jemal, her husband Hashim Kedir and their three children. In that call, CRO Duddy is told that the family “couldn’t get down the stairs, because the stairs is full of smoke.” Later he was told that smoke was coming into the flat from “the corridor”, which must be a reference to the lobby. CRO Duddy advised that windows should be closed and blankets or towels used to block the door. At the end of the call he said “We’ve got people ... coming to you now, okay.”

Conditions on floor 21

- 11.42 Outside the tower, Hanan Wahabi called her brother Abdulaziz El Wahabi for a second time at around 01.30. Abdulaziz El Wahabi told his sister that he had been unable to leave because “there was too much black smoke”. He had reached the stairwell but then turned back. Hanan Wahabi believed that the smoke her brother had encountered had been in both the lobby and the stairwell.⁹⁹
- 11.43 Hanan Wahabi’s description of conditions on floor 21 as given to her by her brother was consistent with the content of a 999 call he had made at about that time.¹⁰⁰ CRO Pam Jones had answered the call at 01.38.38. It lasted for just under an hour. While the content of the transcript indicates that other members of the El Wahabi family also spoke to CRO Jones, the evidence that Abdulaziz El Wahabi was speaking at an early stage comes not only from his sister but also the caller’s reference to “me, the wife and three kids” when asked how many people were in the flat.¹⁰¹
- 11.44 It is relevant to an assessment of conditions on floor 21 that between 01.38 to 01.42, Abdulaziz El Wahabi told CRO Jones that they had tried to go downstairs but that it had been “too smoky”, that smoke was coming through the front door and that it was “very smoky in the landing”.¹⁰²

Conditions on floor 20

- 11.45 At 01.31 four of the six flats on floor 20 were still occupied. Jessica Urbano Ramirez from Flat 176 had reached floor 23. Emma O’Connor and Luke Towner from Flat 171 had left the tower.
- 11.46 Omar Belkadi and his wife, Farah Hamdan, lived in Flat 175.¹⁰³ The couple were at home on the night of the fire with their three daughters, the youngest just six months old.

⁹⁶ [INQ00000472].

⁹⁷ Li Day 62/179/8-181/17.

⁹⁸ [LFB00000315].

⁹⁹ Hanan Wahabi first witness statement [IWS00000074] p. 15; Hanan Wahabi Day 70/171/15-172/24.

¹⁰⁰ [LFB00055498].

¹⁰¹ Hanan Wahabi second witness statement [IWS00001146] p. 9; [LFB00055498] p. 8.

¹⁰² [LFB00055498] pp. 3, 4, 7.

¹⁰³ Samira Hamdan [IWS00001180] p. 1.

- 11.47 At 01.30.02, OM Norman responded to a call from Farah Hamdan that lasted 2 minutes and 40 seconds.¹⁰⁴ Farah Hamdan gave her flat and floor number and reported that the fire was “right next-door to my building” and in a neighbour’s flat. That probably meant Flat 176. When told the fire was on a lower floor, Farah Hamdan said that smoke was coming into her flat. OM Norman told her to stay in the flat unless it was safe to leave, adding that she did not know what the conditions in the stairs were like. She advised Farah Hamdan to block the doors and asked if the family were in a room furthest from “the actual fire”. Farah Hamdan responded that the family were in their living room which was the “furthest from the front door”. From that answer, it seems likely that the smoke Farah Hamdan had described had been entering from the lobby. That would indicate that there must have been a substantial amount of smoke in the lobby on floor 20 by the time of the call.
- 11.48 Petra Doulova lived with her husband in Flat 174.¹⁰⁵ The couple went to sleep on the night of the fire leaving windows open in their flat. Petra Doulova’s evidence is helpful in assessing the speed with which smoke built up in the lobby on floor 20. She woke up at 01.20 when her husband got out of bed, alerted by the sound of a smoke alarm in the hallway of the flat. Petra Doulova first saw smoke when she went there. The hallway lights were on and the smoke was concentrated at ceiling height. Petra Doulova compared the situation to being in a room where people were smoking. She suggested that the smoke might have come in from the lobby when her husband opened their front door just after getting up.¹⁰⁶
- 11.49 There was no smoke in the kitchen, which faced west. From its open window Petra Doulova could hear people screaming about a fire but she saw no smoke or fire. Her husband leant out of the same window and, as he later told Petra Doulova, he looked upwards and saw “a lot of smoke rising from the back at the top of the tower”. The smoke was “completely at the top”. This prompted his decision to leave.¹⁰⁷ On returning to the hallway, Petra Doulova noticed that the smoke there seemed thicker and hazier than before. She could not tell where it was coming from.¹⁰⁸
- 11.50 Some two months before the fire, the couple had resolved that they would leave their home if there were a fire. They had a pre-packed bag containing important documents. They had reached this decision after Petra Doulova saw a sign which was “just a note printed on paper and placed between the two lifts we had in the lobby on the ground floor”. It advised residents to remain in their flats in the event of a fire.¹⁰⁹
- 11.51 The couple gathered wet towels and collected their pre-packed bag. Petra Doulova told me that she was “astounded” by what she saw on opening her front door. Closing the door she returned to the kitchen window for air before attempting to leave again. When she left, Petra Doulova found the lobby to be “pitch black and full of really horrible what felt like toxic smoke and the sound was very strange as well, it was kind of like weird, low humming strange sound.”¹¹⁰ The conditions made it difficult to breathe. While the lobby felt warmer than her flat, Petra Doulova did not notice much difference in temperature.¹¹¹ Using her hands, Petra Doulova felt her way to the stairwell door. At one point she encountered the locked cupboards

¹⁰⁴ [LFB00000314] p. 2; ORR v 0.7 p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ Doulova first witness statement [IWS00000835] p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Doulova Day 60/36/3-39/21.

¹⁰⁷ Doulova Day 60/38/19-42/12.

¹⁰⁸ Doulova Day 60/42/24-43/20.

¹⁰⁹ Doulova Day 60/25/9-27/25; Day 60/31/12-32/7.

¹¹⁰ Doulova Day 60/43/18-44/7.

¹¹¹ Doulova Day 60/49/9-49/19.

opposite the lifts which she mistook for that door. She had no difficulty in pushing open the stairwell door when she found it and kept it opened until her husband joined her some 10 to 15 seconds later.¹¹²

- 11.52 The sound which Petra Doulova described hearing on leaving her flat was not something she had heard before. It was lower in volume but similar to a noise she had noticed previously coming from the air vents in the lobby on floor 20.¹¹³ Petra Doulova told the Inquiry that the noise was a regular occurrence that began only after the refurbishment. She described it as “quite an unusual sound, quite -- humming, haunting, really quite difficult to comprehend. It was as if something was sucking up a lot of air at the same time” and compared it to “a fan that’s going on really, really fast.” The sound was low, dull and loud but not as loud as a vacuum cleaner. Petra Doulova could not recall whether the noise from the vents had been triggered by particular conditions or whether the vents had been making this sound on the evening of 13 June 2017.¹¹⁴
- 11.53 Petra Doulova recalled that the stairwell door had closed after them when she and her husband entered the stairwell. There was smoke in that space, albeit it was thinner than that in the lobby. Nonetheless, breathing without a towel over the face was difficult. Petra Doulova thought that the stairwell had been illuminated. She was struck by the absence of anyone else on the stairs. She and her husband ran down as fast as they could. Her recollection was that conditions worsened as she descended particularly, she estimated, below floor 10 and at about the level of floor 6. Smoke was filling the stairwell and visibility had worsened. Petra Doulova said: “As we were running towards that space, the smoke was getting really quite worrying and thick, and I felt, wow, are we running into something, you know, quite bad here!” It was at this stage that Petra Doulova encountered a group of firefighters. There was a lot of activity and the smoke was at its thickest at that point. The firefighters had a stairwell door open. It was the only such door Petra Doulova saw open and it looked as though smoke was entering the stairwell through it from the lobby. Conditions were much clearer once they had passed the firefighters.¹¹⁵
- 11.54 Petra Doulova estimated that it had taken about five minutes to get from her front door to the exit on the east side of the tower by which she and her husband left the building.¹¹⁶ They are recorded as having done so at 01.41.¹¹⁷

Conditions on floor 19

- 11.55 Nicholas Burton and his wife Maria Del Pilar Burton (known as Pily) lived in Flat 165 on floor 19. By 2017, Pily had been unwell for some years and was suffering from dementia.¹¹⁸ It is likely that by 01.30 they were the only occupants remaining on floor 19. Others had by then left, either to leave the tower or to move to a higher floor.
- 11.56 On the night of the fire, Nicholas Burton was woken by the sound of banging on the front door. He went straight to the door. There was no one outside, but Nicholas Burton “was confronted by a wall of acrid, black smoke.” He compared it to that produced when a tyre is on fire. It was so thick he could not see the opposite wall, which was a metre to a metre and

¹¹² Doulova Day 60/44/8-15; Day 60/51/22-55/21.

¹¹³ Doulova Day 60/50/18-51/20.

¹¹⁴ Doulova Day 60/9/17-14/8.

¹¹⁵ Doulova Day 60/46/4-7.

¹¹⁶ Doulova Day 60/59/20-60/2.

¹¹⁷ Annex A.

¹¹⁸ Burton Day 68/5/8-10.

a half away. The smoke “came rushing into the flat”. Nicholas Burton thought that he had the door open for “no more than a couple of seconds” before slamming it shut. No smoke then came through the door but there remained a thin haze of smoke in the hallway of the flat.¹¹⁹

- 11.57 Nicholas Burton estimated that he had been woken at some time between 01.20 and 01.30. As I have mentioned earlier, his neighbour, Meron Mekonnen, described smoke conditions in the lobby on floor 19 when she left Flat 163 at 01.25 as light and having no effect on visibility. Given that Meron Mekonnen and her two daughters left the tower at 01.32.25, it seems more likely that it was shortly after 01.30 when Nicholas Burton opened his door.¹²⁰ Asked why he did not consider leaving at that stage, Nicholas Burton explained that he had thought that they would be safe in the flat and that the LFB would deal with any fire in a short time.¹²¹ He was aware of the “stay put” advice contained in a notice placed next to the lifts.¹²² He wet some towels, placing one across the bottom of his front door, although no smoke was coming through the door at that time. He then woke his wife and helped her to dress. They returned to their living room to wait. Nicholas Burton had begun to receive calls from a friend, Simon Jolly, urging him to leave. He felt it was too dangerous to do so as his wife was very frail.¹²³

Conditions on floor 18

- 11.58 By around 01.30, Flats 152 and 153 remained occupied and Yehualashet Enyew was probably still in Flat 155.
- 11.59 At 01.33.55, CRO Gotts answered a 999 call from Rabia Yahya, who was in Flat 152. Rabia Yahya told CRO Gotts that there was no smoke in her house and then said “but I tried to get out to go through the fire escape and there’s just thick black smoke.” She was advised to remain in her flat.¹²⁴ Rabia Yahya could not remember trying to cross the lobby to get to the stairwell but thought, given the content of this call, that she must have done so. She was clearer in her recollection that the smoke she was referring to had been in the stairwell. She had seen it when outside her front door speaking to Sayeda Ahmed.¹²⁵ Rabia Yahya also remembered that at the time of this conversation there had been only a small amount of smoke coming into the lobby from the stairwell.¹²⁶
- 11.60 Yehualashet Enyew said that he had heard Berkti Haftom calling him from the front door of Flat 155 at around 01.20. He then heard the door slam. On leaving a few minutes later he saw Genet Shawo in the lobby. Finding the stairwell “filled with thick choking [sic] smoke” he decided to remain on floor 18 and went into Flat 153 with Genet Shawo.¹²⁷
- 11.61 The evidence of Genet Shawo and her husband, Paulos Tekle, is that they saw Yehualashet Enyew in the lobby after making calls to friends who lived on other floors in the tower. Paulos Tekle made two calls to Abraham Abebe, who lived in Flat 44, the second at 01.34. Genet Shawo spoke to Hashim Kedir, who lived in Flat 192, at 01.43. Hashim Kedir told Genet Shawo that he had spoken to the emergency services and had been told to remain in his flat. He advised her to do the same.

¹¹⁹ Burton Day 68/22/5-30/3; Burton first witness statement [IWS00000064] pp. 3-4.

¹²⁰ In his witness statement Nicholas Burton said that after the fire he met “one of the residents from Flat 163, all of whom thankfully survived the fire, who told me it was one of them who banged on my door”. [IWS00000064] p. 3. That can only be Meron Mekonnen.

¹²¹ Burton Day 68/30/4-31/1.

¹²² Burton Day 68/7/14-9/12.

¹²³ Burton Day 68/31/5-35/8.

¹²⁴ [LFB00000662] p. 2.

¹²⁵ Yahya Day 63/136/14-139/18.

¹²⁶ Yahya Day 63/135/6-7.

¹²⁷ Enyew first witness statement [MET00007347] p. 2.

- 11.62 The couple saw Yehualashet Enyew when they opened their front door for the second time. Genet Shawo said that there had then been more smoke in the lobby.¹²⁸ Paulos Tekle recalled that there was no light in the lobby. The light from his own flat allowed him to see Yehualashet Enyew standing by the lifts. Paulos Tekle could not remember if there had been any smoke in the lobby at that time. He did not smell anything which might have indicated a fire, nor was there any noise from nearby flats. Yehualashet Enyew asked to come into the flat. He told Paulos Tekle that Berkti Haftom and her son had left before him and that he had left Flat 155 because smoke was coming into it.¹²⁹
- 11.63 No other residents refer to seeing Yehualashet Enyew at about the time that Shah Ahmed alerted his neighbours. The only neighbour he mentioned was Genet Shawo. That makes it likely that Yehualashet Enyew left Flat 155 after 01.30.

Conditions on floor 17

- 11.64 By 01.30 Flats 142 and 144 were the only flats still occupied on floor 17. Vincent Chiejina lived in Flat 144. He did not contact the emergency services on the night and the Inquiry has not received evidence of his contact with other individuals either inside the tower or outside. It is not known if he was aware of the fire at this time.
- 11.65 Kamru Miah, his wife Rabeya Begum and three of his adult children lived in Flat 142, a three-bedroom flat. Kamru Miah was not in good health, having had two strokes in 2015. He was at home on the night of the fire together with his wife, his sons Mohammed Hamid and Mohammed Hanif and his daughter Husna Begum.¹³⁰
- 11.66 At 01.29.02, an MPS operator received a call from a female caller who gave her location as Flat 142. This must have been Husna Begum.¹³¹ The call began with Husna Begum saying that there was a fire in the building. Later she said that it was “right next door” and that they were able to see flames from their window. They were probably the flames on the east face of the tower, the fire by that time having reached Flat 146. The MPS operator told Husna Begum that the LFB had been made aware of her call and that “there’s someone coming up to help you.”¹³² During the call a smoke alarm was activated in the flat. Husna Begum also reported that there was smoke on their floor and that it was coming into the flat. That suggests that even at that early stage there was sufficient smoke in the lobby on floor 17 to penetrate into other flats.

Conditions on floor 16

- 11.67 Samuel Daniels and his father Joseph Daniels lived in Flat 135. By 2017, Samuel Daniels was a full-time carer for his father. Joseph Daniels had difficulties with mobility and could manage no more than a couple of flights of stairs. He also suffered from dementia. It was difficult for him to be left alone.¹³³

¹²⁸ Shawo first witness statement [IWS00001050] p. 8.

¹²⁹ Tekle Day 63/26/13-31/8.

¹³⁰ Hakim [IWS00000019] pp. 1-4.

¹³¹ [INQ00000264].

¹³² CRO Howson took a call from the MPS at 01.38.02 reporting a family stuck in Flat 142 [LFB00000668]. In a later 999 call, answered at 02.27.12 by CRO Fox, Husna Begum complains that she had been waiting for an hour but no one had come [LFB00000354].

¹³³ Daniels Day 56/4/1-9/16.

- 11.68 Samuel Daniels was in his bedroom on the night of the fire when he noticed a faint burning smell which was electrical or plastic in nature. He could not find the source of the smell in the flat. Save for noticing the same smell in the lobby, he saw nothing unusual when he then walked around that area. The stairs were normal without any smell.¹³⁴
- 11.69 Sener Macit and his wife, Hanife Macit, were at home in Flat 133 where they had lived since 1992.¹³⁵ Sener Macit thought it was at around 01.10 when he first saw fire appliances outside the tower. He was not concerned, because he had seen the LFB attend previous fires at the tower and was aware of the sign advising residents to “stay put”. Curiosity led him a few minutes later to check the lobby and stairs. There was nothing unusual and he saw no other residents.¹³⁶
- 11.70 After Samuel Daniels had returned to Flat 135 he remained concerned by the smell in the lobby and decided that he and his father should leave. In between explaining to his father that there was a fire, he went into the lobby twice more. On the first occasion he saw smoke from the ceiling down to waist level. He could not tell where it was coming from, but thought it was “inside the block”. Entering the stairwell, the door of which closed automatically behind him, Samuel Daniels found it clear of smoke. On the second occasion, there was still smoke in the lobby but it was possible to breathe. Again, the stairwell was clear. In between these two occasions, Samuel Daniels had seen from a window orange and red flames coming round to the north face of the tower from the right. These flames were lower down and he assumed there was a fire on floor 5.¹³⁷
- 11.71 Richard Fletcher and his wife, Hime Gashaw, lived in Flat 131. Richard Fletcher had seen fire appliances arrive, but seeing no signs of a fire and thinking that someone might have been stuck in a lift, he went to bed. He was woken at approximately 01.30 by a continuous popping sound similar to a “firework being let off on the ground”. From his bedroom window, which faced east, he saw an orange streak on the left side of the tower running the length of the building from above him and down. When he moved to the living room window, Richard Fletcher realised that it was a fire.¹³⁸
- 11.72 There was no smoke in the flat at that time. When Hime Gashaw opened the front door, with Richard Fletcher behind her, thick black smoke rushed into the hallway. The smoke in the lobby extended from floor to ceiling. The lobby was “pitch black” and felt “about 10 degrees hotter” than the flat “as if there was a fire on the other side of the door”. Richard Fletcher put the lobby temperature in the mid-30 degrees Celsius.¹³⁹
- 11.73 Richard Fletcher and his wife decided to ignore the “stay put” advice, of which they were aware, and to leave. There was still no smoke in their flat when the couple stepped into the lobby, with Hime Gashaw carrying their daughter. Conditions in the lobby had not improved but the smoke had no physical effect on Richard Fletcher. The only light came from the open door of Flat 133 where their neighbour (Sener Macit) was holding a mobile phone torch. They shouted to him that there was a fire and to get out. Richard Fletcher could not say how he and his family managed to reach the stairwell door. He pushed it open and it closed behind him.¹⁴⁰ The family left the tower at 01.31.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ Daniels Day 56/28/7-38/13.

¹³⁵ Hanife Macit first witness statement [IWS00000904] pp. 1-2, 7; Sener Macit first witness statement [IWS00000069] pp. 2, 10.

¹³⁶ Sener Macit first witness statement [IWS00000069] p. 11; Hanife Macit first witness statement [IWS00000904] p. 7; Sener Macit Day 65/117/1-122/4.

¹³⁷ Daniels Day 56/37/9-14, Day 56/37/9-23, Day 56/41/9-51/18.

¹³⁸ Fletcher first witness statement [IWS00000913] pp. 3-4; Fletcher Day 57/83/4-87/6.

¹³⁹ Fletcher Day 57/87/25-91/6.

¹⁴⁰ Fletcher Day 57/95/22-102/12; Gashaw first witness statement [IWS00000990] p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Annex A.

- 11.74 Sener Macit’s recollection is that he had opened his flat door after his brother-in-law had sent him a picture, timed at 01.35, showing the tower on fire and had then called urging him to leave. Sener Macit was shocked and panicked by the image.¹⁴² His wife was with him. There was light smoke in the lobby but it was possible to see people’s faces. There was lighting. He did not see any neighbours from floor 16, but saw neighbours from other floors open the stairwell door briefly to shout of a fire.¹⁴³ Hanife Macit, in her written account, recalled thin smoke in the lobby at this point. She remembered seeing neighbours from another flat on floor 16, who must have been the family from Flat 131.¹⁴⁴
- 11.75 Shutting their front door, the Macits prepared to leave. They estimated that it had taken them about 5 minutes to get ready. Opening their front door, they were confronted with thick, hot black smoke. It filled the whole lobby and made it impossible to see. The lobby was “pitch black”. They ran back inside their flat.¹⁴⁵ The inconsistency between the description of conditions in the lobby given by Richard Fletcher and that given by Sener Macit is probably to be explained mainly by differences in perception, but Sener Macit’s account also suggests that conditions were capable of changing very quickly.
- 11.76 Sener Macit then made a 999 call which was put through to an MPS operator at 01.37.27.¹⁴⁶ The MPS operator set up a conference call to the LFB. Sener Macit told both operators that he had been unable to get to the stairs because it was dark and there was “so much smoke” and that smoke was now coming into the flat underneath his door. CRO Yvonne Adams advised him to block the doors and call back if the situation deteriorated.
- 11.77 Meanwhile, Joseph Daniels was refusing to leave Flat 135. His son described him as “strong, stubborn and disorientated”. Samuel Daniels left the flat calling to his father to follow. Thick black smoke poured into the flat when he opened the front door. It made him feel light-headed and caused his knees to buckle. He slammed the door shut. When he opened the door again he left it open so his father could follow. Joseph Daniels was near the door of his bedroom opposite the front door. The front door did not close by itself.¹⁴⁷
- 11.78 In oral evidence Samuel Daniels said:
- “As far as I remember, I covered my head with my hood, held my breath before I made the dash out of the front door, and felt my way along the wall where the box was. I knew at the end of the box was the fire -- was the stair door, and once I got there, I just kicked it open and got into the fresh air.”
- He described the lobby as not entirely pitch black but estimated that it was only possible to see about a foot from the floor. The stairwell when he reached it was clear and lit.¹⁴⁸
- 11.79 In the stairwell, Samuel Daniels came across FF O’Beirne at about the level of floor 11 and told him about his father.¹⁴⁹ FF O’Beirne radioed for a BA crew to rescue a bedbound male on floor 16.¹⁵⁰ Samuel Daniels’ recollection was that three or four firefighters had come up the stairs. Samuel Daniels remained with FF O’Beirne while this group continued up. The team of firefighters returned to check the floor number and then went up again.¹⁵¹

¹⁴² Sener Macit Day 65/123/13-125/5.

¹⁴³ Sener Macit Day 65/125/16-129/11.

¹⁴⁴ Hanife Macit first witness statement [IWS00000904] p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ Sener Macit Day 65/131/17-133/6; Hanife Macit first witness statement [IWS00000904] p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ [INQ00000280].

¹⁴⁷ Daniels Day 56/55/16-59/15; Daniels first witness statement [IWS00000808] p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ Daniels Day 56/61/11-62/11.

¹⁴⁹ Daniels Day 56/63/8-25.

¹⁵⁰ O’Beirne Day 15/11/9-12/10; 15/16/5-19/6.

¹⁵¹ Daniels Day 56/65/4-68/6.

- 11.80 Another resident of floor 16, Edward Daffarn, got out of bed after hearing a smoke alarm in Flat 135 followed by shouting. Opening his front door he saw the lobby full of smoke. He then received a call from William Thompson urging him to leave. William Thompson made this call shortly after he had left the tower at 01.25.¹⁵²
- 11.81 Edward Daffarn left Flat 134 shortly afterwards, using a wet towel to cover his face. Shutting his door, he found the smoke in the lobby to be so thick it was impossible to see. He was struggling to find the stairwell door when he felt a tap on his leg and saw a firefighter face down on the floor with his legs in the stairwell. He ran out into the stairwell and down the stairs. On his way down he passed Samuel Daniels.¹⁵³ Edward Daffarn left the tower at 01.34.51.¹⁵⁴
- 11.82 Samuel Daniels remembered meeting Hamid Wahbi in the stairwell itself rather than at the stairwell door to floor 16 and thought that he had been with him when he spoke to FF O’Beirne.¹⁵⁵ Hamid Wahbi had returned to floor 16 to try and collect his passport. He recalled holding the stairwell door open and seeing the lobby full of “very black, thick smoke” which felt hot. Hamid Wahbi recalled his neighbours, Edward Daffarn, Richard Fletcher and his family and then Samuel Daniels, entering the stairwell from floor 16. Given the evidence of his neighbours it is likely that Hamid Wahbi was mistaken about the order in which he encountered them. It is likely, however, that Hamid Wahbi was at the stairwell door at some stage for some time. FF Hippel, who with CM Stern went to floor 16, recalled that a man was holding the stairwell door to that floor open. He thought this person was called “Sam” but subsequently learned it was someone different. FF Hippel had no discussion with this person.¹⁵⁶
- 11.83 Samuel Daniels said that it was after he had seen Edward Daffarn that the firefighters who had gone to floor 16 had returned. He tried to ask them where his father was and they told him to get out.¹⁵⁷ At this time there was some wispy smoke in the stairs but the conditions were not bad.¹⁵⁸ Samuel Daniels followed by Hamid Wahbi left the tower at 01.38.
- 11.84 Richard Fletcher said that he had been able to see smoke coming from above as people opened doors into the lobbies on higher floors.¹⁵⁹ He also said that as people came out of the lobbies above and below they opened the fire doors onto the stairwells, allowing the smoke to spread.¹⁶⁰ Hamid Wahbi also recalled having seen smoke entering the stairwell from open doors on floors 14 and 16.¹⁶¹ He was probably at the open stairwell door at floor 16 when a firefighter pulled out Edward Daffarn.¹⁶² Compared to other occupants Samuel Daniels spent a long time waiting for the firefighters who had gone into floor 16 to return. When they came back and he began to go down the stairs with them, he recalled the conditions in the stairs as having been reasonably clear with some wispy smoke.¹⁶³

¹⁵² Daffarn first witness statement [IWS00000169] pp. 4-5; William Thompson first witness statement [IWS00000158] p. 9; Annex A.

¹⁵³ Daffarn first witness statement [IWS00000169] pp. 5-6; Daniels Day 56/68/7-11.

¹⁵⁴ Annex A.

¹⁵⁵ Daniels Day 56/62/21-63/7, Day 56/68/17-23.

¹⁵⁶ Hippel Day 26/69/19-73/7.

¹⁵⁷ Daniels Day 56/69/13-70/11.

¹⁵⁸ Daniels Day 56/70/12-15.

¹⁵⁹ Fletcher Day 57/103-105.

¹⁶⁰ Fletcher Day 57/103/8-18.

¹⁶¹ Wahbi Day 62/43/21-44/3, 61/5-18.

¹⁶² Daffarn first witness statement [IWS00000169] p. 6 section 13.

¹⁶³ Daniels Day 56/70/12-15.

Conditions on floor 15

- 11.85 At this time, Flats 122, 123, 124 and 125 were still occupied. During this period, the occupants of two of the flats left.
- 11.86 Reem Dedrich was alone in Flat 123 on the night of the fire. At around 01.15 she heard screaming. She looked through the front door spyhole but saw nothing unusual in the lobby. She decided to leave shortly after, however, because she heard people screaming and shouting about a fire. When she opened the front door, Reem Dedrich found the lobby to be without light and full of dense black smoke. She shut her door again, but then made herself leave. The smoke had a “burnt plastic smell” and “a weird plastic taste”. Reem Dedrich was able to locate the stairwell door by the light coming through the glass of that door from the stairwell. When she pushed the door open, she found the stairs were clear of smoke.¹⁶⁴ Reem Dedrich left the tower at 01.33.35.¹⁶⁵
- 11.87 Sid-Ali Atmani had remained in Flat 125 after his wife, Rashida Ali, had left with their daughter. Sid-Ali Atmani was unwell and Rashida Ali had been unable to persuade him to leave with them.¹⁶⁶ He was woken by a “popping and crackling sound”. From the bedroom window, which faced north, he could see smoke coming from the right side and the reflection of a flame below.¹⁶⁷ There was no smoke in the flat. Having decided to leave, Sid-Ali Atmani found the lobby filled from floor to ceiling with thick dark smoke. He could not see any light and had to feel his way to the stairwell door. When he found it, he pushed it open. There was less smoke in the stairwell. It looked foggy. The smoke was white and “high up”.¹⁶⁸ Sid-Ali Atmani left the tower at 01.35.58.¹⁶⁹

Conditions on floor 14

- 11.88 I have previously referred to the first 999 call made by Denis Murphy at 01.25.16 from Flat 111, in which he reported smoke in the lobby. OM Norman had told him to stay in his flat and that the stairwells were filled with smoke.¹⁷⁰
- 11.89 By 01.40.17, when Denis Murphy made a second 999 call, conditions appeared to have deteriorated rapidly in Flat 111. His call was answered by CRO Howson. He told her that the whole flat was full of smoke, including the locked bathroom to which he had retreated. Smoke was coming “through windows and through the door”. CRO Howson advised him to block the bathroom door with towels and reassured him that firefighters would come to him.¹⁷¹
- 11.90 Rosemary Oyewole and her partner Oluwaseun Talabi were in Flat 113 with their four-year-old daughter. They first became aware of a fire at around 01.30 when Oluwaseun Talabi was woken by noises outside the tower. From his kitchen window he could see smoke “shooting up” from a concrete column to his right.¹⁷² The lobby on floor 14 was already full of smoke when they opened the front door; it looked “pitch-black”.¹⁷³ Oluwaseun Talabi described the lobby as:

¹⁶⁴ Dedrich first witness statement [IWS00000102] pp. 8-9.

¹⁶⁵ Annex A.

¹⁶⁶ Rashida Ali [IWS00000003] pp. 7-8; Rashida Ali Day 67/41/13-25, Day 67/49/18-50/14; Atmani Day 67/116/20-117/12.

¹⁶⁷ Atmani 67/119/24-122/14.

¹⁶⁸ Atmani 67/124/16-134/19.

¹⁶⁹ Annex A.

¹⁷⁰ [LFB00000308] p. 4.

¹⁷¹ [LFB00000322].

¹⁷² Talabi Day 59/115/12-118/13; Talabi first witness statement [IWS00000851] p. 9; Oyewole first witness statement [IWS00000852] p. 5 section 15.

¹⁷³ Oyewole first witness statement [IWS00000852] p. 5; Oyewole Day 58/16/22-19/8.

“akin to opening a hot oven, this wall of heat and smoke hit you. The only light was from the flat behind me. It illuminated only inches outside of the front door, and as soon I [sic] opened the door thick, acrid smoke began to pour into the flat.”¹⁷⁴

- 11.91 They quickly closed the door but decided that they still had to leave. Oluwaseun Talabi left first carrying their daughter. Rosemary Oyewole recalled him disappearing into the smoke (which “felt like a steam room”) but reappearing very soon after. Her daughter was gasping for breath so she held her head out of the window to get some air.¹⁷⁵ They then placed wet towels around the front door to stop smoke coming into the flat.¹⁷⁶
- 11.92 Rosemary Oyewole called 999 after this failed attempt to leave. CRO Duddy answered the call at 01.37.58.¹⁷⁷ Rosemary Oyewole reported that the lobby on floor 14 was black, that smoke was entering the flat through the front door and that she had a baby. Rosemary Oyewole said that at that time she could not stop the thick black smoke that was coming through the door and letterbox and filling the hallway.¹⁷⁸
- 11.93 Rosemary Oyewole’s call is consistent with one made by Zainab Deen from Flat 115. CRO Adams took that call at 01.38.18.¹⁷⁹ In it Zainab Deen said that smoke was coming into her flat under the front door and through her open windows. She was advised to block the door and close the windows.¹⁸⁰
- 11.94 Omar Alhaj Ali and his brother Mohammad Alhajali were at home in Flat 112 on the night of the fire; their friend and flatmate, Mahmoud Al-Karad, was at work.¹⁸¹ Omar Alhaj Ali was still awake at around 01.00 when he heard sounds and then shouting outside. His brother came to tell him that he could smell smoke. When he looked out of a living room window which faced east, Omar Alhaj Ali saw flames to the left and at about the level of floors 4 or 5. The brothers decided to leave immediately.¹⁸²
- 11.95 Smoke was coming under the front door as they approached it. Omar Alhaj Ali estimated that they had first opened the front door at around 01.15. They found the lobby full of smoke. In his written account, Omar Alhaj Ali said:
- “the communal area was dark, full of smoke and in complete darkness. You could only see your hand a little bit. I could not see the lifts or the staircase. I would say it was 80% dark.”
- They closed the door and then began to shout for help from a window until a firefighter on the ground shouted back to stay where they were.¹⁸³
- 11.96 It is likely that Omar Alhaj Ali was mistaken about the time when he and his brother first opened their front door. When Nida Mangoba left Flat 116 there was only light smoke in the lobby. Nida Mangoba left the tower just before 01.30.¹⁸⁴ That and the evidence of other residents on floor 14 suggests that Omar Alhaj Ali looked into the lobby some time closer to 01.30.

¹⁷⁴ Talabi first witness statement [IWS00000851] p. 10.

¹⁷⁵ Oyewole Day 58/19-9-22/15.

¹⁷⁶ Talabi Day 59/121/16-24.

¹⁷⁷ [LFB00000678].

¹⁷⁸ Oyewole Day 58/28/4-29/22.

¹⁷⁹ [LFB00000678].

¹⁸⁰ [LFB00000321]. This was the second 999 call made by Zainab Deen.

¹⁸¹ Alhaj Ali first witness statement [IWS00000781] pp. 1, 4.

¹⁸² Alhaj Ali Day 59/13/3-16/21.

¹⁸³ Alhaj Ali Day 59/17/5-19/23; Alhaj Ali first witness statement [IWS00000781] p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ Annex A.

Conditions on floor 12

- 11.97 By 01.30, only Flats 92, 94 and 95 remained occupied.
- 11.98 Karen Aboud lived in Flat 92 with her two sons.¹⁸⁵ She first learned of the fire when she made a 999 call to the police to report a disturbance that had woken her up. That was at 01.37.17.¹⁸⁶ The MPS operator told her that there was a fire four floors above her and advised her to leave. In her written account, Karen Aboud said that she had felt reassured by the operator telling her that the LFB was on its way and so had taken her time in waking her children and getting ready to leave.¹⁸⁷
- 11.99 In Flat 94, Alemishet Demissie was woken up by a call at around 01.30 from a member of her church telling her to prepare to leave as there was a fire.¹⁸⁸ Ethiopia Assefa, a friend and fellow member of her bible group, was staying with Alemishet Demissie that night.¹⁸⁹
- 11.100 There was no smoke in the flat when they woke. Alemishet Demissie’s instinct was to leave and she estimated that they had tried to do so between 01.35 and 01.45. Ethiopia Assefa said that when Alemishet Demissie had opened the front door “heavy, thick black smoke suddenly entered the flat. It came pouring in”. Alemishet Demissie described the smoke as thick, black and with a chemical smell. It was so dark in the lobby that she could not see any lights. Alemishet Demissie explained that they had wanted to leave but had been deterred by the conditions in the lobby. They had decided to remain in the flat and await help.¹⁹⁰
- 11.101 Roy Smith opened the front door of Flat 95 again after seeing Damiana Louis leave. He then made a 999 call which was answered by CRO Gotts at 01.38.37. Roy Smith told her that he could not leave because it was “all smoke”, by which he meant in the lobby. CRO Gotts advised him to block any smoke coming in and said she would “let the firemen know you’re there”. Roy Smith made this call from his kitchen. He could not see any flames from the window but noticed the flat was becoming smokier. After the call, Roy Smith expected that firefighters would come to the flat within five to ten minutes. He did not want to risk leaving with his family as it was “too dark” in the lobby and it was still safer to stay in the flat.¹⁹¹

Conditions on floor 11

- 11.102 Flats 81, 82 and 83 were still occupied at this time. Coincidentally, 999 calls from Natasha Elcock from Flat 82 and Abdeslam Sebbar from Flat 81 were both connected to the emergency services at 01.33.
- 11.103 In her second 999 call, timed at 01.33.01, Natasha Elcock told CRO Duddy that there was no smoke in the flat but that it was getting worse outside. She said that, since calling 999 at 01.28.26, she had woken her daughter and got dressed. From a window she had seen her neighbour Youssef Khalloud, who lived in Flat 85, outside the tower. That prompted her to leave. Her second call came after her partner had stepped into the lobby and had returned to say that it was unsafe to leave. Natasha Elcock described the lobby as “pitch black” with no lights.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Aboud first witness statement [IWS00000130] p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ [INQ00000287].

¹⁸⁷ Aboud second witness statement [IWS00001123] p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Demissie first witness statement [IWS00000860] p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ Assefa first witness statement [IWS00000891] p. 2; Demissie first witness statement [IWS00000860] p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Demissie Day 65/10/20-14/5; Demissie first witness statement [IWS00000860] p. 3; Assefa first witness statement [IWS00000891] pp. 4-5.

¹⁹¹ [LFB00000318]; Smith Day 64/56/23-61/3.

¹⁹² Elcock Day 70/44/5-49/11.

- 11.104 In oral evidence, Natasha Elcock said that later on, after she had noticed a burn mark on his arm, her partner had told her that he had seen a blue flame in the lobby.¹⁹³ Unable to leave, Natasha Elcock went to the bathroom and ran the bath until it overflowed.
- 11.105 Natasha Elcock's evidence indicates a rapid change in the density of the smoke in the lobby on floor 11 between her first call (when there was only a small amount of smoke) and her second call (by which time the lobby was pitch black).
- 11.106 CRO Gotts answered the call from Abdeslam Sebbar at 01.33.12. Abdeslam Sebbar said that the fire was inside his flat but then disconnected the call. CRO Gotts did not call him back and there was no further communication from him to the emergency services. He did, however, speak to his son, Mohamed Sebbar.
- 11.107 Mohamed Sebbar was first alerted to the fire and to the fact that his father was still in Flat 81 at around 01.15. He drove to the tower taking his own son with him. While he was on the way there, his father called him. Mohamed Sebbar tried to reassure his father. He told his father to leave although he knew that he would need assistance to do so. Mohamed Sebbar was still on the telephone to his father when he reached the tower at around 01.30.¹⁹⁴ I return to these conversations at a later stage.
- 11.108 In Flat 84, Miran Lovsin and Branislav Lukic were woken by the sound of the smoke alarm in their kitchen. Branislav Lukic did not notice any smoke in his bedroom or hall as he went to the kitchen. He reset the alarm several times while trying to identify what was setting it off. There was a smell "like when the plastic is burning". He thought this might mean a problem with the wiring, but the walls were not hot. At this point, Branislav Lukic noticed a layer of light grey smoke at ceiling height. He compared it to cigarette smoke.¹⁹⁵
- 11.109 The kitchen window was open but Branislav Lukic did not notice any signs of fire or smoke. About this time, Miran Lovsin opened the front door. Branislav Lukic recalled that:
- "The whole flat seemed to fill up with incredibly thick, black, acrid smoke within seconds. It felt like there was a draught coming through which sucked all of the dark smoke into the flat."
- 11.110 He rushed to shut the door. He described the smoke that had entered the flat as "like a black smoke which is similar to one when you are burning tyres or something what can make you invisible around". Trying to clear the smoke, Branislav Lukic broke the clasp on the kitchen window to open it further.¹⁹⁶
- 11.111 Deciding to leave together, Miran Lovsin and Branislav Lukic wrapped wet tea towels around their faces. Branislav Lukic described the lobby as full of thick black smoke. It was impossible to see anything. He found the conditions disorientating. As he was feeling his way to the stairs, he heard Miran Lovsin say that he was returning to the flat.¹⁹⁷
- 11.112 By chance, Branislav Lukic entered the bin room. This had less smoke, which was grey rather than black in colour, and it was easier to breathe. After a minute he made his way back to Flat 84.¹⁹⁸ When he then looked out of the kitchen window he still could not see any signs of fire or smoke.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Elcock Day 70/49/21-24.

¹⁹⁴ Sebbar first witness statement [IWS00000903] pp. 1-2.

¹⁹⁵ Lukic first witness statement [IWS00000770] p. 6; Lukic Day 56/88/7-93/20.

¹⁹⁶ Lukic first witness statement [IWS00000770] p. 7; Lukic Day 56/93/24-95/3; 56/96/18-99/1.

¹⁹⁷ Lukic first witness statement [IWS00000770] p. 8; Lukic Day 56/103/3-105/9.

¹⁹⁸ Lukic Day 56/105/10-108/24.

¹⁹⁹ Lukic first witness statement [IWS00000770] p. 9; Lukic Day 56/109/2-23

Conditions on floor 10

- 11.113 With the exception of Flat 76, all the flats on floor 10 remained occupied at 01.30. A number of the occupants tried to leave their flats at this point.
- 11.114 Nagawa (Prossy) Nalukwago was alone in Flat 71.²⁰⁰ Woken by a noise, she looked out from the kitchen window and saw flames to her left “shooting up the side of the building”. Flames then entered the living room through a window. They were “eating” the television and running along the ceiling. In panic, Prossy Nalukwago called a friend who persuaded her to leave. On opening the front door she was hit by “a wall of black smoke”. The smoke was hot. Prossy Nalukwago made her way across the lobby, covered with a wet duvet in darkness. As she did so she stumbled and fell over what she thought were three bodies, the last of which was close to the stairwell door. Prossy Nalukwago could not remember there being any smoke in the stairwell.²⁰¹ She left the tower at 01.35.²⁰²
- 11.115 Clarita Ghavimi was also alone at home in Flat 75.²⁰³ In her statement Clarita Ghavimi said she had been woken at around 01.30 by the sound of the smoke alarm in the hall. Although she could not see any smoke, Clarita Ghavimi could smell it. She opened the windows in the lounge and kitchen to get rid of the smell. From her bedroom window, she saw flames “coming up the corner of the tower”. She went to her front door,²⁰⁴ opened it and found the lobby to be “pitch black and smoky”. She closed the door. On opening it again a little later she thought that conditions had worsened. She remained in her flat. Clarita Ghavimi noticed that smoke was coming into her hallway from the living room (where she had opened windows). The hallway alarm was still sounding. Clarita Ghavimi thought she had to leave immediately.²⁰⁵ I return to the circumstances of Clarita Ghavimi’s departure below.
- 11.116 Meron Woldelessie Araya and Lina Hamide were staying in Flat 74 on the night of the fire.²⁰⁶ Meron Woldelessie Araya was woken by the sound of shouting. When she investigated she realised that people were shouting about a fire. She woke Lina Hamide. (Lina Hamide thought all that had happened between 01.35 and 01.41.) The conditions in the lobby prevented them from leaving immediately. Meron Woldelessie Araya recalled that the lobby was pitch-black and full of thick black smoke. It made her eyes sting. Lina Hamide recalled the heat of the smoke in the lobby.²⁰⁷
- 11.117 Lina Hamide and Meron Woldelessie Araya said that after that attempt to leave they had contacted relatives and dialled 999, which is supported by their telephone records. That indicates that they must have tried to leave before 01.40.²⁰⁸

Conditions on floor 9

- 11.118 Flats 62, 64 and 65 were still occupied at 01.30. Flats 61 and 63 were not occupied on the night of the fire.

²⁰⁰ Nalukwago second witness statement [IWS00001118] p. 1; Olwa second witness statement [IWS00001181] p. 1.

²⁰¹ Nalukwago first witness statement [IWS00000009] pp. 2-5.

²⁰² Annex A.

²⁰³ Ghavimi first witness statement [IWS00000943] p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Ghavimi first witness statement [IWS00000943] p. 2.

²⁰⁵ Ghavimi first witness statement [IWS00000943] p. 3.

²⁰⁶ Meron Woldelessie Araya first witness statement [IWS00001193] p. 1; Hamide first witness statement [IWS00001175] p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Hamide first witness statement [IWS00001175] p. 3; Meron Woldelessie Araya first witness statement [IWS00001193] p. 5.

²⁰⁸ Hamide first witness statement [IWS00001175] p. 3; exhibit LH4 [IWS00001177] p. 6; Meron Woldelessie Araya first witness statement [IWS00001193] pp. 5-6; exhibit MWA3 [IWS00001193] p. 14.

- 11.119 Maher Khoudair lived in Flat 64 with his wife, Iman Alkuedi and their three daughters. Since 2009, he has used crutches to walk.²⁰⁹
- 11.120 Maher Khoudair thought that it was around 01.15 when his daughter, Walaa Khdeir, woke him to tell him that there was a fire.²¹⁰ His daughters had been awake in the living room and had become aware of a burning smell. They had seen signs of a fire outside. Maher Khoudair's second daughter, Rawan Khdeir, described it as "coming from the right side of the building."²¹¹ Flat 64 is on the west side of the tower, so what she saw could have been the reflection of the fire in the panels of the Kensington Aldridge Academy.
- 11.121 Maher Khoudair checked the lobby. The lights were on and he noticed black smoke coming from a hole created for pipes to run through. The hole was on a wall "perpendicular to the ceiling". Next to the hole was a door for "maintenance". In his statement Maher Khoudair said that the pipes he had in mind were in a cupboard next to his front door. In oral evidence he confirmed that he was not referring to the cupboard located on each floor opposite the lifts.²¹²
- 11.122 Maher Khoudair's recollection is that he had then told his daughters to go to bed because he had heard the sirens of the LFB and had assumed that it had dealt with any problem. He also recalled that his daughters had already been dressed to leave and that his youngest daughter had told him that a wall was hot to the touch. His daughter, Rawan Khdeir, told him that she had seen debris "like balls of fire" falling from the building. All that caused him to change his mind and decide that his family should leave.²¹³
- 11.123 Maher Khoudair recalled that five minutes had elapsed between his waking and the family leaving the flat.²¹⁴ The smoke in the lobby was thicker than before. It had a plastic smell and still appeared to be coming from the same hole.²¹⁵ Both lifts were out of service. His wife shut the front door after the family had left. It had never closed automatically.²¹⁶ Rawan Khdeir, Walaa Khdeir and Iman Alkuedi also described a plastic smell and more smoke in the lobby than Maher Khoudair remembered. None said that the density of the smoke made it impossible to see.²¹⁷
- 11.124 Flat 62 was a two-bedroom flat. On the night of the fire, Erlinda Ignacio had taken her seven-month-old granddaughter into her bedroom. Her son Wesley Ignacio and his wife Madylyn Ignacio were asleep in the other bedroom. At about 01.00, Erlinda Ignacio was disturbed by noises outside. She got up and from her kitchen saw a "flamed piece of material" fall from above her flat. Erlinda Ignacio woke her son. He thought that was at around 01.15. He received a call warning him of the fire and telling him to leave. The family left the flat within five minutes.²¹⁸ They left the tower at 01.33.²¹⁹
- 11.125 Both Erlinda and Wesley Ignacio recall closing the front door, which did not shut by itself. Erlinda Ignacio did not remember there having been any smoke in the lobby area. She remembered that the communal lighting had been working. Her son recalled that there had been a burning

²⁰⁹ Khoudair first witness statement [IWS00000182] p. 2.

²¹⁰ Khoudair Day 55/117/7-118/24.

²¹¹ Rawan Khdeir first witness statement [IWS00000204] p. 3; Walaa Khdeir first witness statement [IWS00000208] p. 3.

²¹² Khoudair first witness statement [IWS00000182] p. 5; Khoudair Day 55/119/2-123/25.

²¹³ Khoudair Day 55/125/1-128/3.

²¹⁴ Khoudair Day 55/131/21-132/3.

²¹⁵ Khoudair Day 55/129/21-131/14.

²¹⁶ Khoudair Day 55/134/20-136/22; Alkuedi first witness statement [IWS00000205] p. 5.

²¹⁷ Walaa Khdeir first witness statement [IWS00000208] p. 4; Alkuedi first witness statement [IWS00000205] p. 5.

²¹⁸ Erlinda Ignacio first witness statement [IWS00000830] pp. 1, 7-8; Wesley Ignacio first witness statement [IWS00000826] pp. 2, 9-10.

²¹⁹ Annex A.

smell and smoke in the lobby. It was not thick, was light grey in colour and at head height. He saw the smoke drifting towards the left-hand side of the lobby. Neither described having had any difficulty in reaching the stairwell, the door of which shut automatically behind them.²²⁰

- 11.126 Given his use of crutches, Maher Khoudair was behind his family as they descended the stairs. Wesley Ignacio recalled passing him on the stairs, which indicates the Ignacios left floor 9 after Maher Khoudair. After that, only Flat 95 was still occupied.

Conditions on floor 7

- 11.127 Flat 44 was the only flat on this floor still occupied at 01.30. It was the home of Turufat Girma, her husband Abraham Abebe and their five-year-old son.²²¹
- 11.128 Having noticed that he had missed two telephone calls from his friend Paulos Tekle (timed at 01.32 and 01.34), Abraham Abebe called Paulos Tekle. That was at 01.37. Paulos Tekle said that there was a fire in the tower and advised Abraham Abebe to check his flat and floor.²²²
- 11.129 Turufat Girma recalls looking out the window of the living room and seeing people shouting fire, but she could not see any sign of fire outside the tower.²²³ There was no smoke in the flat. Through the spyhole Abraham Abebe saw thin, grey-white smoke in the lobby. The lobby lights were on and visible through the smoke. Although aware of the “stay put” notices displayed in the tower, Abraham Abebe decided they should leave. He left carrying his son with Turufat Girma following behind. She locked their front door.²²⁴ The CCTV on floor 7 shows Abraham Abebe leaving the lobby just after 01.40. It suggests that the smoke was denser than they recalled.

Conditions on floor 6

- 11.130 Four of the six flats on this floor (Flats 32 to 35) were still occupied after 01.30. Two residents who were still in their flats provided witness statements to the Inquiry.
- 11.131 Paul Menacer was alone in Flat 33, a two-bedroom flat he shared with his uncle Rafik Menacer. He thought it was around 01.30 when he was woken by screaming. Outside, people were shouting “Don’t jump!” and “Wait for help!” and he assumed someone was threatening to commit suicide. Paul Menacer was not initially concerned, but when the shouting continued he opened his front door where:

“There was a black, thick smoke. It was quite thick, black but was not pitch black. When I put my arm out, I could see my arm, but could not see my hand. There was a smell of burning plastic.”²²⁵

- 11.132 Paul Menacer returned to his bedroom and blocked his door to stop smoke coming into the room. After a short time, however, he decided to leave. When he did so, he knocked on his neighbours’ doors and shouted to them that they should get out, but no one responded.²²⁶

²²⁰ Wesley Ignacio first witness statement [IWS00000826] p. 11; Erlinda Ignacio first witness statement [IWS00000830] p. 8.

²²¹ Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] pp. 1-2; Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] p. 1.

²²² Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] pp. 2-3; Tekle first witness statement [IWS00001051] p. 5.

²²³ Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] p. 4.

²²⁴ Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] p. 3; Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] pp. 4-5.

²²⁵ Menacer first witness statement [IWS00001031] pp. 6-7.

²²⁶ Menacer first witness statement [IWS00001031] p. 7.

- 11.133 Kerry O’Hara was in Flat 34. Having become aware of a burning smell and a commotion outside, she had seen people outside shouting “Get out!” and “Jump!” A firefighter on the ground had told her to stay put and they would get to her eventually.²²⁷ In her statement Kerry O’Hara did not say that she had heard anyone knocking on her door or shouting outside it.
- 11.134 Realising that there was a fire, Kerry O’Hara decided to leave her flat. She thought that it had been around 01.30 when she opened her front door. There was no smoke in her flat but the lobby was “pitch black and full of smoke”. Her recollection is that the stairwell was also “pitch black”. Kerry O’Hara ran down the stairs and it was not until she reached floor 2 that she noticed a reduction in the amount of “thick black smoke” in the stairwell.²²⁸
- 11.135 Paul Menacer’s recollection was that there was no smoke in the stairwell.²²⁹ He left the tower at 01.43, a minute before Kerry O’Hara.²³⁰ Paul Menacer’s recollection is that he entered the lobby on floor 5, which was free of smoke, and knocked on people’s doors. Given the other evidence (such as that of FF O’Beirne) about smoke in the lobby on floor 5, it is likely that he was mistaken about the smoke conditions on floor 5 or that he was confused about which floor he had entered. His account is inconsistent with, for example, that of FF Brodrick who was sent to floor 5 at 01.38²³¹ and said that there was no visibility in the floor 5 lobby.²³² It is also inconsistent with the evidence of the two occupants still on floor 5, which is set out below.

Conditions on floor 5

- 11.136 Milad Kareem and Rebin Sabir were the only occupants still on floor 5 after 01.30. Milad Kareem was visiting Rebin Sabir in Flat 23 on the night of the fire. The two friends both described first becoming aware of a burning smell. While this caused concern to Milad Kareem, it was the sound of shouting outside that alerted them to the fire.²³³ At some point, Milad Kareem shouted to a firefighter who asked their location and told them to stay in the flat. Rebin Sabir thought this advice confusing as local residents were shouting at them to leave.²³⁴
- 11.137 After about 10 to 15 minutes, no firefighters had come to the flat, so Milad Kareem shouted again to the same firefighter, who told them to use the stairs. Going to the front door he saw smoke entering the flat under the door.²³⁵ Opening the door he saw that “the communal hallway was already filled with a wall of intense thick black smoke, so thick I couldn’t see anything clearly except the smoke. It was pitch black.”²³⁶
- 11.138 Milad Kareem was able to speak to the same firefighter again and tell him that they could not leave. The firefighter told them to stay in the flat and that firefighters would come to them.²³⁷

²²⁷ O’Hara first witness statement [IWS00000991] p. 2.

²²⁸ O’Hara first witness statement [IWS00000991] pp. 2-3.

²²⁹ Menacer first witness statement [IWS00001031] p. 7.

²³⁰ Annex A.

²³¹ The ORR v 0.7 p. 82 records that FF Brodrick and two others were tasked to floor 5 at 01.38.

²³² Brodrick first witness statement [MET00016789] pp. 6-7.

²³³ Sabir first witness statement [IWS00001224] pp. 4-5; Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] pp. 1-3.

²³⁴ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 4; Sabir first witness statement [IWS00001224] p. 5.

²³⁵ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 5.

²³⁶ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 5.

²³⁷ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] pp. 5-6; Sabir first witness statement [IWS00001224] p. 7.

Floor 2

- 11.139 The layout of floor 2 differed from that of floors 4 and above. It contained only one flat (Flat 6). In June 2017, this was occupied by Leanne Jackson Le-Blanc, her former partner Joseph John and their one-year-old son.²³⁸ Joseph John became aware there was a fire when he heard noises and saw a fire engine outside. He left Flat 6 and came across a number of firefighters one of whom told him that there was a “minor fire” and to return to his flat and wait for further instructions. There was no smoke in the flat, the lobby or the stairwell at this time.²³⁹
- 11.140 Joseph John woke up Leanne Jackson Le-Blanc and told her that there was a fire but the firefighters were dealing with it.²⁴⁰ The couple, however, eventually decided to leave. They climbed out of a window on to the gated walkway that connects to Grenfell Walk. Hicham and Hanan Cherbika and Elias Aitequakrim helped them climb over the locked gate.²⁴¹ As Leanne Jackson Le-Blanc and Joseph John did not leave by the stairs, they were not recorded on CCTV leaving the building. Leanne Jackson Le-Blanc estimated that it was around 01.30 when they left.²⁴²

4 Events in the control room

- 11.141 At 01.30.00, CRO Duddy spoke to Mariem Elgwahry, from Flat 196 on floor 22. She told him that she was with other people on floor 23.²⁴³ When CRO Duddy told her that the fire was on floor 5 (trying to relay the details of the original incident, but mistaking the floor number), she told him that it had broken into her flat on floor 22 and they had been forced to run to a neighbour’s flat. The call cut out before he could give her any advice.²⁴⁴
- 11.142 At 01.31.30, only three minutes after the last make-up message, G271 asked to make pumps 25.²⁴⁵ By that point, OM Norman wondered what was going on, as apart from those messages the control room had received no further information from the incident ground.²⁴⁶
- 11.143 The witnesses described the make-up of pumps as extremely quick.²⁴⁷ Given the speed of the make-up messages, OM Norman knew that something had gone badly wrong.²⁴⁸ CRO Sharon Darby said that when the message to make pumps 25 had come in it was obvious that the situation was really bad and very rare.²⁴⁹ AOM Debbie Real described it as “not normal”.²⁵⁰ However she, and the CROs, all thought that the fire was still on floor 4, although OM Norman and CRO Russell did think that perhaps the fire had started spreading into other flats on floor 4.²⁵¹

²³⁸ Jackson Le-Blanc first witness statement [IWS00000177] p. 1; John first witness statement [IWS00000062] p. 1.

²³⁹ John first witness statement [IWS00000062] pp. 3-4.

²⁴⁰ Jackson Le-Blanc first witness statement [IWS00000177] p. 8; John first witness statement [IWS00000062] p. 4.

²⁴¹ Jackson Le-Blanc first witness statement [IWS00000177] p. 11; John first witness statement [IWS00000062] p. 5; Aitequakrim first witness statement [IWS00001030] pp. 3-4; Hicham Cherbika first witness statement [IWS00000038] pp. 5, 7; Hanan Cherbika first witness statement [IWS00000016] pp. 11-12.

²⁴² Jackson Le-Blanc first witness statement [IWS00000177] p. 10.

²⁴³ [LFB00000310]; ORR v 0.7 p. 60.

²⁴⁴ [LFB00000310]; ORR v 0.7 p. 60.

²⁴⁵ [LFB00002606].

²⁴⁶ Norman witness statement [MET00080589] p. 5.

²⁴⁷ Norman Day 42/71/18-19; Darby witness statement [MET00013961] p. 4; Real Day 43/16/8-17.

²⁴⁸ Norman Day 42/70/23-25/71/1-3.

²⁴⁹ Darby witness statement [MET00013961] p. 4.

²⁵⁰ Real Day 43/16/8-17.

²⁵¹ Norman Day 42/71/23-25-/72/1-20; Russell Day 76/24/7-12.

11.144 At 01.31.48, the first service request concerning persons trapped in the building was created on VISION by CRO Duddy.²⁵² It read:

“RT4 – G271 – FURTHER CALL TO SAY FIRE ON 20TH FLOOR ALSO – PEOPLE TRAPPED.”²⁵³

11.145 The message was later updated by CRO Duddy with the flat number at 01.34.11. The message read:

“RT4 – G271 – FURTHER CALL TO SAY FIRE ON 20TH FLOOR ALSO – PEOPLE TRAPPED, to RT4 – G271 – FURTHER CALL TO SAY FIRE ON 20TH FLOOR FLAT 82 ALSO – PEOPLE TRAPPED.”²⁵⁴

11.146 The call which prompted the initial service request by CRO Duddy is not clear as he did not take a call from anyone on floor 20 before 01.31.48. At 01.33.01, CRO Duddy took a second call from Natasha Elcock in Flat 82 on floor 11 which would explain the updated service request.²⁵⁵ She asked him to get someone to help her and her daughter and that the fire was getting worse outside. CRO Duddy told her “it’s just smoke going up”.²⁵⁶ He reassured her and said somebody would come to help.²⁵⁷

11.147 CRO Darby saw the service request created by CRO Duddy and attempted to call G271 to pass over the message. She made three attempts to contact G271 but did not receive a response,²⁵⁸ so she decided to contact G261, another appliance that had already been mobilised to the incident.²⁵⁹

11.148 Before CRO Darby spoke to G261 to pass the message intended for G271, OM Norman rang CU8 at 01.35.24 using the admin line and spoke to WM Meyrick.²⁶⁰ She said in evidence that she had seen that CRO Darby was not getting a response from G271 and wanted to pass the messages over quickly.²⁶¹ However, CRO Darby was not aware that OM Norman had contacted the incident ground.²⁶² This was the first time FSG messages were passed to the incident ground.

11.149 In OM Norman’s conversation with WM Meyrick he explained that CU8 had just arrived at the incident ground and that they were in the process of taking over.²⁶³ OM Norman asked WM Meyrick to arrange for the crews to check on people who were trapped in their flats. She explained that:

- a. There was one person in Flat 111 on floor 14 and five people in Flat 175 on floor 20. Both flats were recorded as having trapped residents and a lot of smoke entering the premises.
- b. There was one person on floor 18.
- c. The top floor had “adults and eight children” with smoke coming in.²⁶⁴

²⁵² SIL p. 18.

²⁵³ SIL p. 18.

²⁵⁴ SIL p. 18.

²⁵⁵ ORR v 0.7 p. 69.

²⁵⁶ [LFB00000313].

²⁵⁷ [LFB00000313].

²⁵⁸ Radio messages: 01.34.55 [LFB00002500]; 01.35.22 [LFB00002846], 01.35.36 [LFB00002662].

²⁵⁹ This is as per the policy, refer to PN790 paragraph 5.10. Radio message sent at 01.35.54 [LFB00003095].

²⁶⁰ [INQ00000194] and ORR identifies it was WM Meyrick who she spoke with: ORR v 0.7 p. 75.

²⁶¹ Norman Day 42/76/1-25.

²⁶² Darby Day 33/163/3-20.

²⁶³ [INQ00000194].

²⁶⁴ [INQ00000194].

- 11.150 She could not provide the flat numbers for the latter two flats and she said in evidence that it did not occur to her to go back to the CROs to ask for specific flat numbers. She explained that by saying that she had been focused on getting the information over and that the control room was overwhelmingly busy.²⁶⁵
- 11.151 During the call OM Norman told WM Meyrick that the control room was being inundated with calls.²⁶⁶ As she ended the call, she said to him “It’s going to be every floor”.²⁶⁷ OM Norman explained that she was concerned at that time at the possibility that the smoke would affect all the floors and that she had the impression that it was “obviously going a long way up”.²⁶⁸ She wasn’t aware that the fire had spread; nor was she aware of the information that CRO Duddy had obtained indicating that fire had already reached floor 20.²⁶⁹
- 11.152 While OM Norman was speaking to WM Meyrick, G261 responded to CRO Darby’s request at 01.35.54, and agreed to take the message.²⁷⁰ By that point, a number of other 999 calls relating to trapped residents had been received. CRO Darby passed over information relating to:²⁷¹
- a. A caller on floor 18, who said she had thick smoke in her flat.
 - b. Persons on floor 22 “with smoke coming into their flat”.
 - c. Someone reporting “a fire on the 20th floor”.
 - d. People trapped in Flat 82.
- 11.153 These messages had all appeared on the incident log as new service requests which needed to be passed over to the incident ground.²⁷² CRO Darby explained in evidence that she was not aware that OM Norman had contacted the command unit on the incident ground separately to pass over FSG messages.²⁷³
- 11.154 The message about the caller on floor 18 appears to have come from a call at 01.33.55 with Rabia Yahya.²⁷⁴ That was almost certainly a duplicate message that had been passed over by both CRO Darby and OM Norman as Rabia Yahya’s call at 01.33.55 was the only call made before the admin line call and radio message contact was made.
- 11.155 G261 responded and asked CRO Darby to confirm the FSG calls and the flat numbers.²⁷⁵ CRO Darby could not provide specific flat numbers, however. She repeated the message and added that a further call had been received from the top floor of the building concerning adults and eight children who had smoke coming into their flat and were unable to leave.²⁷⁶ OM Norman had already passed over the message about the adults and eight children in the admin line call. G261 confirmed that they would pass the messages to the incident commander, but also explained that, as they had just arrived, it might take some time.²⁷⁷ It was not until 01.43,

²⁶⁵ Norman Day 42/77/12-19.

²⁶⁶ [INQ00000194].

²⁶⁷ [INQ00000194].

²⁶⁸ Norman Day 42/78/2-9.

²⁶⁹ Norman Day 42/86/5-12.

²⁷⁰ Radio message sent at 01.35.54 [LFB00003095].

²⁷¹ [LFB00003055].

²⁷² SIL pp. 18-19. Although note: 01.36 service request by CRO Gotts says “CALLER ON 118TH FLOOR THICK SMOKE OUTSIDE FLAT SHE IS IN HER FLAT” but CRO Darby reports it as thick smoke in her flat.

²⁷³ Darby Day 33/163/3-20.

²⁷⁴ [LFB00000662].

²⁷⁵ [LFB00002563].

²⁷⁶ [LFB00002076].

²⁷⁷ [LFB00002891].

approximately six minutes later, that CU8 contacted CRO Darby to ask for messages to be passed to them, thereby indicating that only then were they “set up” and ready to take further FSG messages.²⁷⁸

- 11.156 While CRO Darby had been trying to contact the incident ground, AOM Real had requested two FRUs. She had also mobilised further appliances at 01.33.50 in response to the message to make pumps 25.²⁷⁹
- 11.157 As the messages were being passed to the incident ground, the CROs continued to take many 999 calls. In this ten-minute period, the control room received 38 emergency 999 phone calls either from persons trapped in the tower or from members of the public reporting the fire.²⁸⁰ As CRO Duddy explained, he and his colleagues had been anxious to process as many calls as possible.²⁸¹ In many of the calls with trapped residents, the CROs continued to reassure them that the fire was a long way away on floor 4.²⁸² When smoke was reported to be entering the flat or in the corridor or staircase, the advice given by the CROs was to stay put, to block up the doors and to close the windows. They also told callers that the firefighters were coming.²⁸³ CRO Duddy explained that they were just making the assumption that it was bad smoke.²⁸⁴ The residents were reassured that someone was coming to help them.²⁸⁵ At that stage, OM Norman did not consider whether to tell the CROs to stop reassuring callers; nor did she consider whether it was still appropriate to advise callers to stay put. She thought that the “stay put” advice was still appropriate.²⁸⁶
- 11.158 At 01.36.23, unbeknown to the LFB control room, North West FRS received their first 999 call relating to the incident from Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis in Flat 9 on floor 3.²⁸⁷ It was the first time the overflow call arrangements described in Chapter 29 had been brought into play and provides an indication of the high volume of emergency calls coming in to the control room.²⁸⁸ The caller reported that there was smoke coming into her room, that there were five people in the flat, one of whom was a wheelchair user.²⁸⁹ The CRO spoke to the caller for approximately 30 minutes until she had been rescued.²⁹⁰ During the course of the call, at 01.43, North West FRS contacted the LFB control room to inform it of the call.²⁹¹
- 11.159 At 01.37.18, the control room received a call from the LAS confirming its attendance at the incident.²⁹²

²⁷⁸ [LFB00002726].

²⁷⁹ SIL pp. 9, 13.

²⁸⁰ Control Report pp. 23-40. This figure does not include call-backs.

²⁸¹ Duddy Day 42/218/1-10.

²⁸² E.g. call at 01.33.01, call between CRO Duddy and Natasha Elcock, Flat 82, floor 11: [LFB00000313]; 01.33.55, a call between CRO Gotts and Rabia Yahya from floor 18: [LFB00000662]; 01.34.50, call between CRO Duddy and Hashim Kedir from Flat 192, floor 22: [LFB00000315]; 01.39.15, a call between OM Norman and Hesham Rahman in Flat 204, floor 23: [LFB00000329].

²⁸³ E.g. call at 01.32.10 taken by CRO Howson with Biruk Haftom who was on the top floor [LFB00000667]; 01.33.55 with Rabia Yahya on floor 18: [LFB00000662]; 01.34.50 Flat 192 on floor 22, Hashim Kedir: [LFB00000315].

²⁸⁴ Duddy Day 42/218/1-10.

²⁸⁵ E.g. the call at 01.32.10 taken by CRO Howson with Biruk Haftom who was on the top floor [LFB00000667]; 01.33.55 with Rabia Yahya on floor 18: [LFB00000662]; 01.34.50 Flat 192 on floor 22, Hashim Kedir: [LFB00000315].

²⁸⁶ Norman Day 42/87/4-22.

²⁸⁷ [LFB00000506].

²⁸⁸ As per the meaning of “spike” conditions in paragraph 1.2 of [LFB00003607].

²⁸⁹ [LFB00000506].

²⁹⁰ Control Report p. 34.

²⁹¹ Control Report p. 42.

²⁹² Control Report p. 35.

- 11.160 At 01.37.58, Rosemary Oyewole in Flat 113 on floor 14 reported that there was smoke “coming from the corridor” and that when they had tried to escape it had been “all black”. She then reported that there was smoke coming through the door and “filling up the whole house”. She was advised by CRO Duddy to cover up the door and was told that someone would come to get them.²⁹³
- 11.161 At 01.38.02, CRO Howson received a call from the MPS advising that they had received a call from a five-person family in Flat 142 on floor 17 who had said that there was smoke coming into the flat.²⁹⁴ This was the first time that the control room had been informed that another control room was taking FSG calls on its behalf. It was also the first time that anyone in the control room knew that another emergency service was taking FSG calls. CRO Howson recorded it in the incident log as a new service request, but there were no discussions about how the MPS was to handle calls and no arrangements were made in relation to it.²⁹⁵
- 11.162 It is worth mentioning at this point that the LAS later took three calls from people in the tower,²⁹⁶ and that OM Norman asked BT operators to provide FSG advice to callers²⁹⁷ and had given the BT operators advice about how callers could protect themselves.²⁹⁸ She could not remember at what time that had been done, but she believed that it had been before the “stay put” advice was changed.²⁹⁹ It is unclear how many callers were given FSG advice by BT as OM Norman did not obtain details of the calls taken by BT.³⁰⁰
- 11.163 At 01.38.16, Mariem Elgwhary in Flat 205 on floor 23 called the control room for a second time because she had got cut off on the previous occasion.³⁰¹ She reported to CRO Fox that there was no smoke coming into the flat from which she was calling (which was not her own flat but a flat she had escaped to), but she described what had happened in her own flat (Flat 196 on floor 22) as follows:
- “--but our flat was underneath, and that – there was no smoke in there. It was absolutely fine, but then all of a sudden the flames just blew into our kitchen --”³⁰²
- 11.164 CRO Fox ascertained that there were seven people in the flat, and told her to “put things on the door” and to keep the windows closed if the smoke started to come in.³⁰³
- 11.165 At 01.38.17, CU2, A431 (Kentish Town’s pump ladder), and SM Nicholas Myatt were mobilised for the purposes of handling FSG messages.³⁰⁴ The appliances arrived at approximately 01.58 and 02.02 respectively; SM Myatt arrived at around 02.10.³⁰⁵ However, none of them was used for that purpose as by the time they arrived other appliances and officers had already been assigned to that task.

²⁹³ [LFB00000678].

²⁹⁴ Control Report p. 37.

²⁹⁵ SIL p. 19 [LFB00000668].

²⁹⁶ For the LAS Calls refer to table 1 of Woodrow witness statement [LAS00000009] p. 4.

²⁹⁷ Norman witness statement [MET00080589] p. 5.

²⁹⁸ Norman Day 42/124/9-19 and Day 42/123/1-3.

²⁹⁹ Norman Day 42/123/24-25-124/1-8.

³⁰⁰ Norman Day 42/124/9-19.

³⁰¹ [LFB00000317].

³⁰² [LFB00000317] p. 3.

³⁰³ [LFB00000317] p. 4.

³⁰⁴ SIL pp. 9, 14; ORR v 0.7 p. 87.

³⁰⁵ SIL p. 9 Myatt Day 35/163/11-25. The reference on p. 9 of the SIL to A431 arriving at 09.09.52 is likely an error for 02.02.52.

11.166 At 01.39.08, SOM Joanne Smith called the control room while she was on her way in.³⁰⁶ She spoke with AOM Real, who told her that the control room was going “absolutely crazy”.³⁰⁷ AOM Real told SOM Smith that the control room was receiving many FSG calls from people stuck in their flats and when she was asked whether they had had any prolonged calls, she confirmed that they had.³⁰⁸

5 Actions of the MPS, the LAS, RBKC and TMO

11.167 At 01.31.06 the MPS made the LAS aware of the incident, possibly through their shared CAD system,³⁰⁹ but in fact the LAS had already learned about the incident from the LFB at 01.29.06. At 01.32.27 CAD 482 recorded the fact that a Major Incident had been declared by the MPS.

11.168 Inspector Nicholas Thatcher could not explain the six minute delay between his declaring a Major Incident at 01.26.32 and the entry at 01.32.27, and he believed (and I accept) that the later entry reflected his own earlier declaration.³¹⁰ As he said, to go from a critical incident to a Major Incident is a “massive step”. Detective Superintendent Paul Warnett had asked him a little earlier whether he was going to declare a Major Incident. Inspector Thatcher had wanted to defer a decision until he had reached the incident ground,³¹¹ but he knew what the decision had to be as soon as he saw the tower on fire from his car at the top of the hill on Ladbroke Grove.³¹²

11.169 At that point he did not know whether or not the LFB had declared a Major Incident (they had not, and would not do so until 02.06) and had no expectation one way or the other.³¹³ He did not himself take any steps to inform the LFB that a Major Incident had been declared, and did not follow up with MetCC whether they had passed the message on to the LFB.³¹⁴ Similarly, the LAS did not know at that time that the MPS had declared a Major Incident.³¹⁵

11.170 At 01.33.05 Inspector Thatcher sent a message:

“TOP TWO FLOORS OF BUILDING IS ON FIRE”

and a further message at 01.34.28:

“ENTIRE SIDE OF BUILDING IS ON FIRE”

He was underneath the building by this point and he wanted people to understand the “phenomenal” speed at which the fire had spread.³¹⁶

11.171 At 01.33.13 the first LAS incident response officer was despatched to the scene. That was Laurence Ioannou (call sign IR61),³¹⁷ who was the senior LAS Incident Response Officer (IRO) at the scene until he was relieved by Colin Passey at 07.38. The standard LAS procedures require an IRO and a HART³¹⁸ to be despatched to any fire where there are persons reported.³¹⁹

³⁰⁶ [INQ00000198].

³⁰⁷ [INQ00000198].

³⁰⁸ [INQ00000198].

³⁰⁹ CAD 482 p. 6.

³¹⁰ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/35/2-18.

³¹¹ Thatcher first witness statement [MET00012582] p. 2.

³¹² Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/36/8-37/4.

³¹³ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/39/6-13.

³¹⁴ Thatcher Day 71 (Mon)/49/14-50/4.

³¹⁵ Woodrow Day 72/89/3-5.

³¹⁶ Thatcher Day 71(Mon)/52/1-18.

³¹⁷ Woodrow witness statement [LAS00000009] p. 6.

³¹⁸ Hazardous Area Response Team.

³¹⁹ Woodrow Day 72/83/21-84/6.

- 11.172 Meanwhile, at 01.34.26, the LAS CAD (CAD 247)³²⁰ records that LAS was now aware of the incident and would deploy multiple LAS crews to attend. Four HARTs were despatched at 01.34. There was some initial confusion over the location of Grenfell Tower. LAS personnel were initially despatched to SW11 but that was soon corrected³²¹ and is unlikely to have caused any material delay.
- 11.173 At 01.35.23 the MPS summoned the aid of the Territorial Support Group (TSG) to assist with evacuation. It was intended to evacuate the buildings in the immediate vicinity of the tower because there was a concern that the fire might spread beyond the tower itself.³²² The TSG was not able to evacuate the tower, because they did not have the equipment or training to enter a firefighting environment.³²³

³²⁰ [MET00019931].

³²¹ [INQ00000378] p. 6; [MET00013955] pp. 4-5; Woodrow Day 72/93/10-94/1.

³²² Jerome Day 71 (Mon)/195/21-196/25.

³²³ Jerome Day 71 (Mon)/197/1-6.

1 External fire spread

- 12.1 During this period the flames continued to spread southwards across the east face both at the crown and at the lower floors (about floor 8). By around 01.43 the flames were approaching column C5 (the internal column on the far southern side of the east face). By that time the fire appears to have spread further at the lower floors than across the upper parts of the building, as can be seen from this image taken at 01.44:¹



Figure 12.1

¹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 207.

12.2 By 01.48 the fire had spread to the north face at both the upper and lower floors of the tower, reaching column A4, as can be seen from this image taken at that time:²



Figure 12.2

² Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 213 section 1013, p. 201 Fig. 121 and p. 215 Fig. 132.

2 Events on the incident ground

Deployment of CMs Guy Tillotson, James Wolfenden, and Ben Gallagher and FFs Benjamin Felton and Harry Bettinson

- 12.3 Inside the tower at around this time, this crew of five principally from Paddington (CMs Tillotson, Wolfenden and Gallagher and FF Bettinson, together with FF Felton from Hammersmith), were at the bridgehead ready to be committed under air. I accept CM Tillotson’s evidence that it was he who told WM Brien O’Keeffe that they needed to start clearing the floors and rescuing people and that he would be taking the entire crew of five with him. CM Tillotson then told the crew that they would search every floor and rescue anyone they could. He also told them not to take any firefighting media, as the priority was to save people.³ FF Felton referred to this as a “snatch rescue... where we prioritise getting people out as quickly as possible over fighting the fire”.⁴
- 12.4 The crew tallied out between 01.40.32 and 01.42.09.⁵ They went first to floor 5, where they knocked on all the doors. They then went up to floor 6 and continued knocking on the doors, one of which was opened by a family of three whom CM Gallagher, FF Felton and FF Wolfenden then escorted down the stairs. CM Tillotson recalled the adult male asking him if they needed to get out through all the smoke, to which CM Tillotson replied “You have to get out now, if you don’t you won’t get out.”⁶
- 12.5 CM Tillotson then proceeded with FF Bettinson to enter floors 7, 8 and 9, continuing to knock on the flat doors. The first to answer was Sharon Laci in Flat 65 on floor 9. CM Tillotson told her that they would come back for her and then went to check floor 10, which he was unable to enter due to the amount of smoke in the lobby. He and FF Bettinson then returned to floor 9, where CM Gallagher, FF Felton and FF Wolfenden rejoined them.⁷

Deployment of CM Secrett and FFs Badillo and Dorgu – contd

- 12.6 CM Secrett and FFs Badillo and Dorgu were also still inside the tower at this time. Once the crew reached floor 20, they entered the lobby and CM Secrett and FF Badillo located Flat 176, the door to which was slightly ajar. They entered and performed a right-hand wall search but did not find anyone inside. They left the flat and returned to the lift lobby, where FF Dorgu had been trying unsuccessfully to make contact with the bridgehead on his handheld radio.⁸ FF Badillo did not knock on the door of Flat 175 (the Belkadis’ flat) to alert them to the fire. At that time Alexandra Atala and Victoria (Vicky) King were still in Flat 172 and Khadija Saye and Mary Mendy were still in Flat 173.

SM Andrew Walton makes his way to the tower

- 12.7 Meanwhile, having notified the control room of his arrival at 01.40.12, SM Walton had left his vehicle and was making his way towards the tower when he passed CU8 on Bomore Road. He was told by the officer inside that he was the first Station Manager to arrive and he booked in.⁹ He then ran towards the bottom of the tower.¹⁰ He had a view of the east side but did

³ Tillotson witness statement [MET000080603] pp. 5-6.

⁴ Felton witness statement [MET00012467] p. 3.

⁵ BA Telemetry Schedule.

⁶ Tillotson witness statement [MET000080603] p. 6.

⁷ Tillotson witness statement [MET000080603] pp. 7-8.

⁸ Day 19/157.

⁹ Walton Day 46/110/5-111/1.

¹⁰ Walton witness statement [MET00010828] p. 21.

not see anything to indicate that the fire had entered the flats.¹¹ At that stage he did not turn his mind to evacuation because he first needed to find out from the fire crews whether they were keeping the fire out of the building.¹²

Arrival of CU7

12.8 Wembley's CU7 arrived at the incident at around 01.42.¹³ WM Antony Peckham and WM Norman Harrison who were riding on CU7 went straight to CU8, where WM Daniel Meyrick and WM Mark Kentfield were.¹⁴ Almost immediately WM Peckham began assisting WM Meyrick with taking the FSG information that was coming in from the control room.¹⁵ WM Meyrick thought that he had been passing on information to WM Peckham who had then recorded it on the whiteboards in CU8,¹⁶ but WM Peckham was clear that he had started to speak directly to the control room (although he could not recall if that was by radio or on the phone).¹⁷ However, he did not remember how the information that he had received was passed to the incident ground.¹⁸ WM Peckham also said that he did not recall any whiteboards having been used to record FSG information on CU8 and nor did WM Harrison.¹⁹ This is consistent with DAC Andrew O' Loughlin's recollection that the whiteboards on CU8 were "blank" when he got there.²⁰ On the other hand, SM Daniel Egan's recollection was that WM Harrison had been writing on whiteboards in CU8 when he had first arrived.²¹ It is therefore unclear whether, at this stage in the incident, there was any system for collating the information being received on CU8, apart from the pieces of paper to which WM Meyrick referred. The weight of the evidence suggests that there was not. WM Meyrick identified the following laminated sheet as having been compiled on CU8.

¹¹ Walton Day 46/114.

¹² Walton Day 46/106/24-107/3.

¹³ ORR v 0.7 p. 95 taken from GPS data.

¹⁴ Day 45/95.

¹⁵ Day 30/121.

¹⁶ Meyrick Day 20/92/24-94/2.

¹⁷ Day 30/121-124.

¹⁸ Day 30/148.

¹⁹ Day 30/124, 45/118.

²⁰ [MET00012563] p. 12.

²¹ Egan Day 15/94.

FLAT	FLOOR	PERSONS	Notes
193	22	10 people	*
161	19	10 PERSONS	
204	4	23	1 PERSON disabled light smoke
14	"		
201	"	23	1 PERSON lost CALL
182	21	23	2 children * 2 adults
175	20	5 PERSONS	
9	3		2 ADULTS, 3 KIDS, 1 wheelchair
122	15		2 PERSONS
186	18		
205	23		7 ADULTS - FIRE IN FLAT
203	23		5 adults, 2 children
152	18		3 KIDS, 1 PREGNANT
182	18		5 PERSONS. 2 ADULT 3 CHILDREN
95	12		1 ADULT, 2 KIDS, 1 KID
94	12		
133	16		2 adults 1 child in bedroom unable to 2 ADULTS IN living room, FIRE IN F
192	22		1 woman 3 children unable to le
94	12		2 ADULTS
183	21		6 ADULTS, 1 PREGNANT
115	14		1 ADULT, 1 child
151	18		3 KIDS, 1 ADULT
165	17		2 ADULTS, 1 BABY
84	8		4 PEOPLE
142	17		8 PEOPLE
82	11		3 PEOPLE
112	14		8 PEOPLE
153	18		4 adults 5 children cant escape

Figure 12.3

- 12.9 However, WM Harrison was very clear that he had been the author of the laminated sheet and that he had started to use it later in the incident, after the handling of FSG calls had been moved to CU7 as a means of consolidating the information recorded on the slips of paper that had been created on CU8. GM Thomas Goodall also thought that the laminated sheet had been compiled on CU7 and had not been brought over from CU8.²²
- 12.10 WM Meyrick said that any decisions about how to prioritise the FSG calls would be the responsibility of the incident commander or whoever the incident commander had delegated to oversee the committing of crews.²³ However, he also said that he had asked the control room to provide him with details of smoke conditions from the calls in order to allow some prioritisation to take place.²⁴ The command unit did not receive any feedback from firefighters deployed into the tower in response to the FSG information that had been relayed to the bridgehead.²⁵
- 12.11 While WM Peckham began to assist WM Meyrick, WM Kentfield asked WM Harrison to accompany him to the base of the tower.²⁶ As they got to the north-east corner WM Harrison saw that the fire was not only on the outside of the building but was inside the flats from floor 4 upwards.²⁷ His evidence was that on seeing this he knew immediately that the “stay put” policy should no longer apply.²⁸ WM Harrison did not discuss the matter with WM Kentfield at that point, but his evidence about comments that he made later on his return to CU8 is referred to in Period 5.²⁹

SM Gareth Cook’s email to AC Roe with photographs

- 12.12 At 01.43, SM Cook sent an email to AC Roe attaching the five photographs of the tower that he had taken shortly after his arrival.³⁰ As noted under Period 4 below, AC Roe sent these on to DAC O’Loughlin at 01.56. SM Cook said that he sent the photographs because he thought that it would be beneficial to give AC Roe a picture of what was happening. He did not, however, attempt to contact AC Roe to discuss it.³¹
- 12.13 In oral evidence AC Roe said that on receiving those photographs he could not see whether the fire had spread to internal compartments but that he had felt that the people inside the building were at very significant risk of losing their lives, whether or not compartmentation had been breached.³² As he made his way to the incident a little later (he arrived at 02.31.18), he recalled that his “guess” was that his focus was going to be on the residents rather than on external firefighting, because “our ability to fight fire that has spread that significantly externally is relatively limited.”³³

²² Goodall Day 35/32/14-24.

²³ Meyrick Day 20/70-71.

²⁴ Meyrick Day 20/74-75.

²⁵ Meyrick Day 20/71/23-72/22, 30/82.

²⁶ Harrison Day 45/96.

²⁷ Harrison Day 45/97-98.

²⁸ Harrison Day 45/99-100.

²⁹ Harrison Day 45/106-107.

³⁰ Exhibit of GM Foster [MET00016929].

³¹ Cook Day 28/163-164.

³² Roe Day 48/209, 211.

³³ Roe Day 48/213-214.

Deployment of FFs James Cuthbert and Graham Shaw

- 12.14 At around 01.45, FFs Cuthbert and Shaw tallied out at the bridgehead, having been briefed to carry out search and rescue operations on floors 4 and 5. They forced entry to a number of flats.³⁴ All the occupants of floor 4 had either left or were leaving by this point and all those on floor 5 except the occupants of Flat 23 were also leaving.

Arrival of Fulham’s pump ladder, G351, with WM Glynn Williams

- 12.15 At 01.45.27, Fulham’s pump ladder, G351, arrived at the incident.³⁵ G351 had a crew of five, including WM Williams. After booking in, WM Williams made his way to the front of the tower where he saw WM Michael Dowden standing on or near the south-east corner. WM Williams recalled that WM Dowden had a look of shock on his face and said: “Glynn, I don’t know what the fuck happened”.³⁶ WM Williams did not receive any kind of briefing from WM Dowden.³⁷
- 12.16 A minute or two after this exchange, WM Williams and his crew made their way to the main entrance. CCTV images of the ground floor lobby show that they entered the building at around 01.55.³⁸

Arrival of Soho’s pump ladder, A241, with WM Stuart Beale

- 12.17 At around 01.46, Soho’s pump ladder, A241, arrived at the incident.³⁹ It carried a crew of five, including WM Beale. WM Beale went to book in at the command unit before making his way to the tower. It was completely clear to him that the fire had internally penetrated those flats on the right-hand side of the east face, between floors 4 and 8.⁴⁰

SM Brett Loft continuing with FSG calls

- 12.18 At about this time, SM Loft started his role managing FSG calls from outside the front of the tower, having received an initial briefing from WM Dowden as described in Period 2. He continued to receive FSG information from WM Kentfield on pieces of paper and relayed that information to the bridgehead (initially to WM O’Keeffe but later to WM Louisa De Silvo as well),⁴¹ using channel 3 of his fireground radio.⁴² In oral evidence he was shown the following photograph of the list of FSG calls on an A4 sheet of paper that was subsequently given to WM Paul Sadler:⁴³

³⁴ Cuthbert witness statement [MET00012878] p. 4.

³⁵ SIL p. 8.

³⁶ Williams Day 31/15.

³⁷ Williams Day 31/16-17.

³⁸ Williams Day 31/29-30.

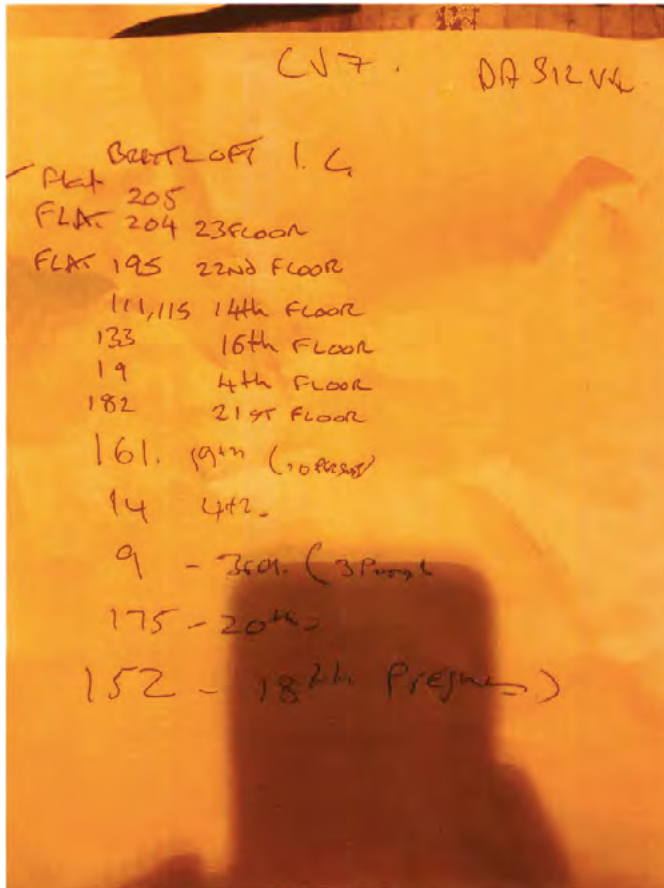
³⁹ ORR v 0.7 p. 104 based on GPS data.

⁴⁰ Beale Day 34/88.

⁴¹ Loft Day 37/165.

⁴² Loft Day 37/143, 153, 155. This is addressed further in Period 5.

⁴³ [MET00016967].



Metropolitan Police Station			
Exhibit No. PAS/3	Cust No.	Serial No. MPSZ13134651	
Ex. Book No. 2511686	DCU:	Other Sta. Ref:	Lab Ref. No.
Description of exhibit: ENVELOPE CONTAINING FLAT AND FLOOR NUMBERS			
From place/person: F.F PAUL SADLER			
Taken by: JIM PAINE Date: Time:			
Sealed by: S.S. Date: 15/11/18 Time:			
I IDENTIFY THIS EXHIBIT AS THAT REFERRED TO IN MY STATEMENT			
Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>			
Signature(s) of additional witness(es) <i>[Signature]</i>			
MP 1404/04 MPSZ13134651 Form 4206			

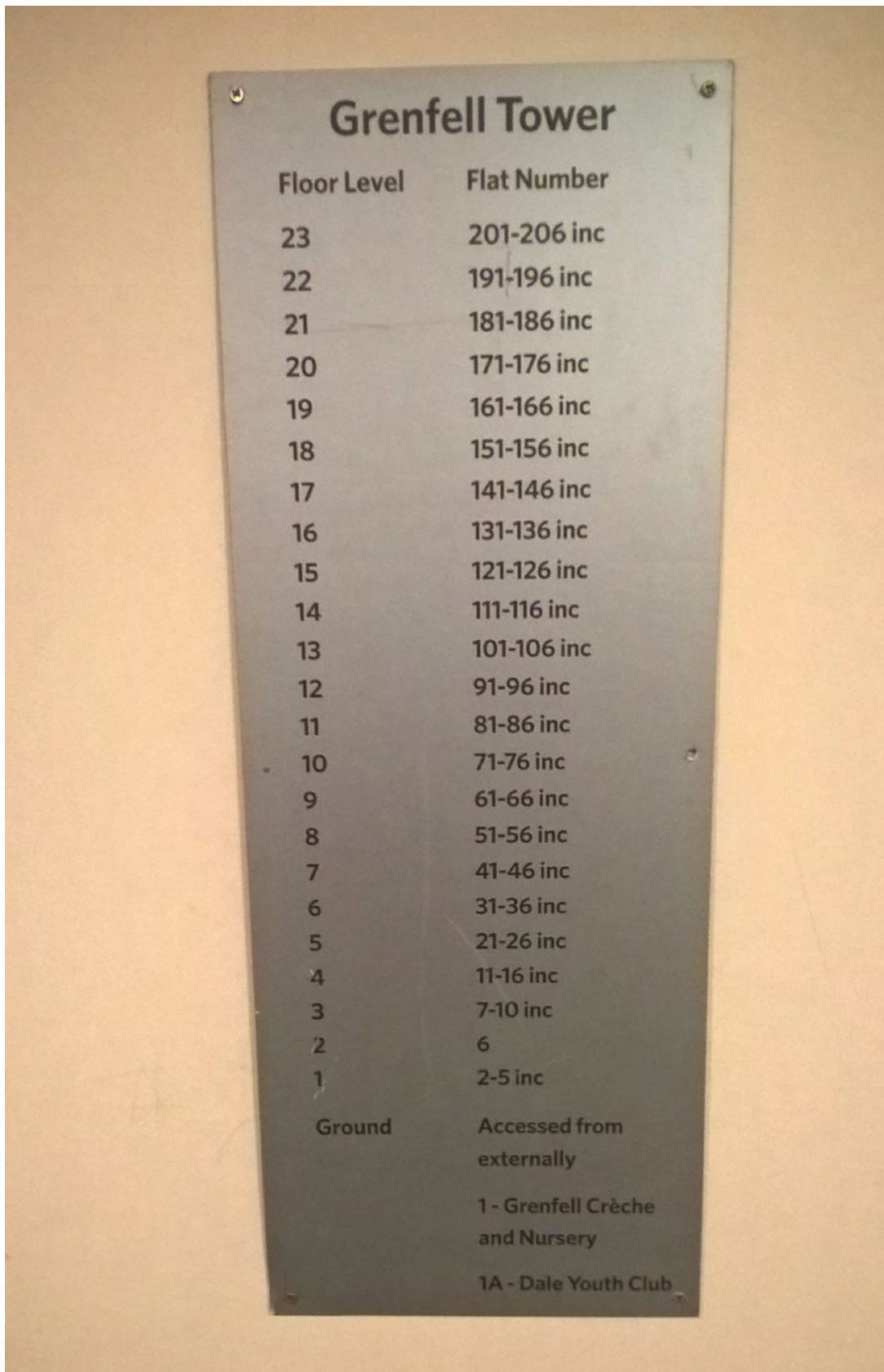
Figure 12.4

12.19 SM Loft confirmed that the photograph looked familiar to him, in particular the reference to Flat 205, which he recalled was the first piece of FSG information that he had sent to the bridgehead.⁴⁴ He could remember having received in total two or possibly three pieces of paper like that from WM Kentfield at around 01.40.⁴⁵ Some of the pieces of paper that he had received during this 20-minute period had flat numbers but no floor numbers, so SM Loft went into the lobby of the tower and took the following photograph of the plaque showing the flat and floor numbers. CCTV images show that this photograph was taken at 01.49.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Loft Day 37/152, 159-160.

⁴⁵ Loft Day 37/157-158. Refer to Period 2.

⁴⁶ Photograph of floor plaque [MET00015644]; CCTV image [INQ00000302].



Grenfell Tower

Floor Level	Flat Number
23	201-206 inc
22	191-196 inc
21	181-186 inc
20	171-176 inc
19	161-166 inc
18	151-156 inc
17	141-146 inc
16	131-136 inc
15	121-126 inc
14	111-116 inc
13	101-106 inc
12	91-96 inc
11	81-86 inc
10	71-76 inc
9	61-66 inc
8	51-56 inc
7	41-46 inc
6	31-36 inc
5	21-26 inc
4	11-16 inc
3	7-10 inc
2	6
1	2-5 inc
Ground	Accessed from externally
	1 - Grenfell Crèche and Nursery
	1A - Dale Youth Club

Figure 12.5

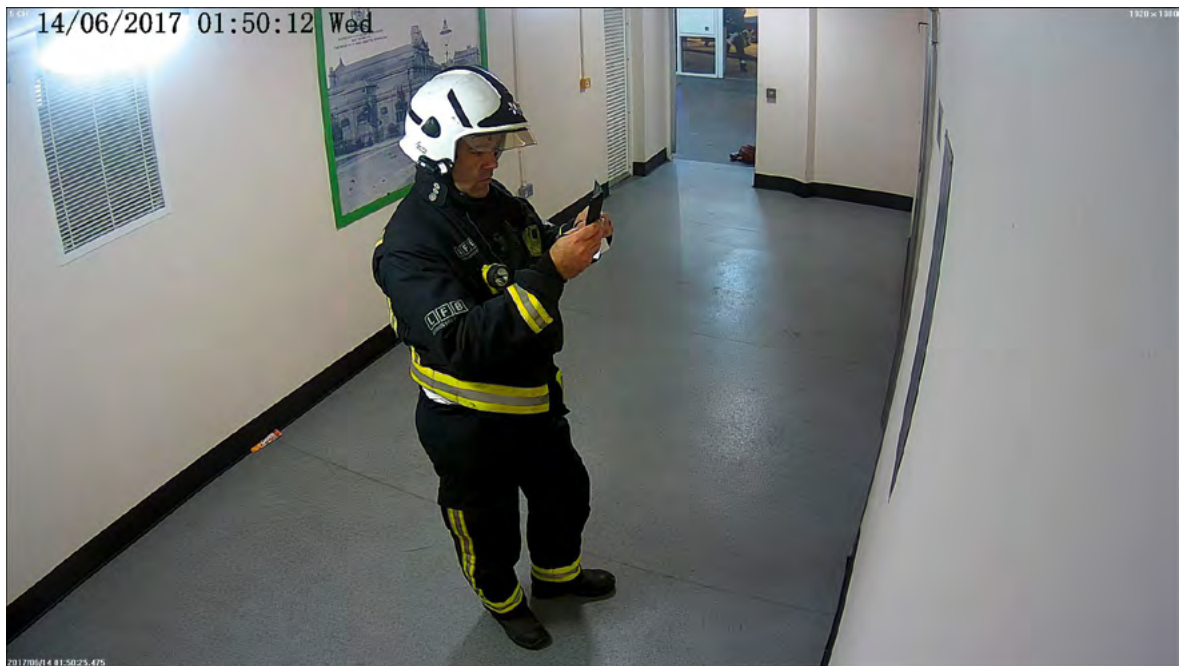


Figure 12.6

- 12.20 After he had left the tower having taken that photograph, SM Loft came across SM Walton, with whom he had a brief exchange, directing SM Walton to go and talk to WM Dowden because he (SM Loft) was dealing with FSG calls. SM Loft assumed that SM Walton would be taking over command from WM Dowden.⁴⁷
- 12.21 Throughout that time SM Loft received no information from the bridgehead and had put in place no system for recording FSG information apart from the slips of paper that were being provided to him.⁴⁸ Similarly, there was no system that he was aware of for prioritising the calls coming in.⁴⁹ SM Loft was not aware of any FSG information going to the bridgehead otherwise than through himself.⁵⁰

External firefighting: A213

- 12.22 By about this time, Paddington's turntable ladder had been set up with a water supply on the east side of the tower. CM Daniel Harriman was in the cage which was being operated by FF Christopher Reynolds at ground level. FF Reynolds recalled that the ladder reached to about floor 10 and was positioned about 10 or 12 feet away from the building.⁵¹ FF Raymond Keane remained at G272 in order to monitor the water supply while the turntable ladder was in operation.⁵² Below is a picture (timed at 02.05) taken from Dr Barbara Lane's report of A213 fully extended applying water on the east elevation:

⁴⁷ Loft Day 37/170-172.

⁴⁸ Loft Day 37/160-162, 174, 177.

⁴⁹ Loft Day 37/196-197.

⁵⁰ Loft Day 37/166.

⁵¹ Reynolds witness statement [MET00010894] p. 4.

⁵² Keane Day 25/23/1-10.



Figure 12.7

Arrival of G346, Chelsea's FRU

- 12.23 At 01.47.33 G346, Chelsea's FRU, booked status 3.⁵³ This was the second FRU to arrive at the incident. Riding on G346 were CM Raoul Codd and FFs Alan Sime, Earnest Okoh, Nikki Upton and Tom Reddington.
- 12.24 On arrival the crew waited with their BA sets under the covered area outside the tower.⁵⁴ FF Upton recalled being given their first task by a Watch Manager from Hammersmith, probably WM Watson, who instructed them to fetch as much hose and breaking-in gear as they could carry. As the appliances that were parked closer to the tower had already been stripped of their equipment, this involved the crew returning to their own appliance that was further away.⁵⁵ It is worth noting that FFs Upton and Reddington (EDBA wearers) were not in fact committed under air until 02.44, almost an hour later.

⁵³ SIL p. 9.

⁵⁴ Sime witness statement [MET00010896] pp. 3-4.

⁵⁵ Upton witness statement [MET00007524] p. 4.

Arrival of H221, Lambeth's pump ladder

- 12.25 At 01.48.53, H221, Lambeth's pump ladder, arrived at the incident.⁵⁶ There was a crew of four riding on H221, including WM Sadler. After booking in, the Lambeth crew also went to wait under the covered area on the south-east corner of the tower.⁵⁷

WM De Silvo enters the tower

- 12.26 Having taken her crew's nominal roll board to CU8, WM De Silvo made her way towards the tower in order to find the incident commander. In fact, she found a team leader from the command unit⁵⁸ who told her that BA crews and equipment were required at the bridgehead. She then instructed her crew by radio to meet her at the bottom of the tower with the equipment.⁵⁹ At around this time, she had a passing conversation with CM Philip Wigley, who was on his way into the building. He told her that his EDBA crew had been instructed to go to the roof of the tower to carry out a rescue.⁶⁰
- 12.27 Once she had the equipment, WM De Silvo entered the tower and went up on foot to the bridgehead. She estimated that this had been at around 01.50, 10 minutes after her crew's arrival at the incident.⁶¹

3 Conditions in the tower and the movement of occupants

The evidence of the firefighters

- 12.28 FF Cuthbert described the heat and smoke he had encountered on floors 4 and 5 as more intense than any he had previously experienced, with smoke-logging in the stairwell that was increasingly bad and significantly reduced visibility in the lobby on floor 5.⁶² FF Graeme Shaw also recalled jet black smoke and extreme heat.⁶³ Flat 23 on floor 5 to which the crew gained entry was clear inside, but when they came back out into the lobby conditions had worsened and the smoke was much thicker.⁶⁴
- 12.29 Slightly higher up in the building on floor 6, the smoke was black and worsening and visibility was impaired, though it was still possible to see shapes.⁶⁵ The flat that CM Tillotson's crew entered on that floor was clear. The smoke then became denser in the lobbies of floors 7 and 8 and the stairwell was beginning to be compromised due to the constant opening of the lobby doors.⁶⁶ When CM Tillotson opened the door to floor 10 he found it full of thick, black, hot smoke that the crew could not enter without water.⁶⁷

⁵⁶ ORR v 0.7 p. 108 based on GPS data.

⁵⁷ Sadler witness statement [MET00012481] p. 3.

⁵⁸ She was unable to identify him.

⁵⁹ De Silvo Day 29/187, 193.

⁶⁰ De Silvo Day 29/193-194.

⁶¹ De Silvo Day 29/195-196.

⁶² Cuthbert witness statement [MET00012878] p. 5.

⁶³ Shaw witness statement [MET00012798] pp. 3-5.

⁶⁴ Cuthbert witness statement [MET00012878] pp. 5-6.

⁶⁵ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] p. 6; and Day 26/213-214.

⁶⁶ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] p. 7.

⁶⁷ Tillotson witness statement [MET000080603] pp. 6-7.

- 12.30 Meanwhile, on floor 20 visibility was reduced both in the stairwell and in the lobby. CM Secrett described needing to grab hold of FF Badillo, who was holding open the lobby door, in order to see him⁶⁸ and, on entering the lobby, being unable to see the equipment that he had placed on the floor.⁶⁹
- 12.31 Inside Flat 176 visibility was very poor. FF Badillo observed an “orange curtain of flame” at the window of one of the rooms, although there was no fire in the flat itself.⁷⁰ CM Secrett described the flat as being completely smoke-logged, but with no fire, and recalled that the temperature had started to increase at a steady rate. He saw that the window where fire could be seen was intact but about to fail.⁷¹

The evidence of the occupants

- 12.32 By 01.40, nearly half of the 297 people who had been in the tower at 00.50 had left. A total of 152 occupants remained inside the building.⁷² A further 20 occupants left the tower between 01.40 and 01.50. After 01.50 there was a period of 29 minutes during which no one from above floor 4 left the tower.

The last occupants leave floor 7

- 12.33 I described earlier how Turufat Girma and Abraham Abebe left Flat 44 with their young son. Turufat Girma said that when she had entered the stairwell she had been able to breathe relatively easily in the stairwell at her level. Abraham Abebe, who was carrying their son, recalled that he had been able to see through the smoke in the stairwell. Both said that they had not seen thick smoke until they had reached floors 4 and 5. There they saw a firefighter with a hose holding open the stairwell door into the lobby on floor 4. Thick black smoke was pouring into the stairwell from floor 4. Frightened that flames might follow the smoke and endanger her family, Turufat Girma called to her husband. He was minded to move through the smoke but stopped when he heard his wife. They returned to Flat 44.⁷³
- 12.34 Less than four minutes elapsed between the time when Abraham Abebe first left Flat 44 (01.40) and the time when his wife, now back in Flat 44, made a 999 call. CRO Yvonne Adams answered it at 01.43.49.⁷⁴ Turufat Girma told CRO Adams that she was unable to leave her flat and that smoke was coming into it. CRO Adams advised Turufat Girma to block the door and told her that firefighters were dealing with a fire on floor 4. At the end of the call, Turufat Girma confirmed that the firefighters were with them.
- 12.35 Turufat Girma said her husband had been blocking the space under the front door with a quilt cover when a firefighter wearing a mask knocked. When the door was opened, she noticed that the smoke in the lobby was now “significantly thicker”. The firefighter told them to get out, even after Turufat Girma had explained that they had already tried and considered it unsafe to do so. Abraham Abebe left with their son, his wife following behind. On leaving, Abraham Abebe saw another firefighter banging on other doors on floor 7.⁷⁵ Footage from the CCTV camera on floor 7 shows Abraham Abebe leaving the flat accompanied by a firefighter at 01.45.59.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Secrett Day 17/87.

⁶⁹ Secrett Day 17/89-90.

⁷⁰ Badillo Day 13/155-157.

⁷¹ Secrett Day 17/96-99.

⁷² Annex A.

⁷³ Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] pp. 5-6; Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] p. 4.

⁷⁴ [INQ00000373]; Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] p. 6; Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] p. 5.

⁷⁵ Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] pp. 6-8; Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] pp. 5-6.

⁷⁶ The unadjusted time on the CCTV camera is 01:46:39.

- 12.36 When going down the stairs for the second time, Abraham Abebe noticed that the smoke was heavier higher up in the stairwell than it had been when he had first tried to escape, but there was no problem with visibility. The smoke thickened again as they reached floor 4. There was a firefighter on the stairs at that level. Abraham Abebe said that he did not recall having seen the door into the lobby open at that time and as a result the smoke in that area was not as thick as it had been before. The smoke thinned out after floor 4.⁷⁷
- 12.37 On entering the stairwell Turufat Girma recalled “a strong and overpowering sensation of burning in my throat as I was hit by heavy smoke”. She and her husband ran down the stairs. The smoke became thicker and more acrid as she descended. On floor 4 she saw that smoke was still pouring into the stairwell from the open door to the landing. A firefighter had been holding the door open. Once she had passed floor 4, the smoke had become less dense.⁷⁸
- 12.38 Abraham Abebe and Turufat Girma left the tower with their son at 01.48.⁷⁹

Branislav Lukic and Miran Lovsin leave floor 11

- 12.39 At this time, Branislav Lukic and Miran Lovsin were still in Flat 84 on floor 11, having given up an attempt to leave. The flat had begun to fill with light grey smoke which was coming through the front door. Branislav Lukic kept the windows open to try to get rid of the smoke. He estimated that it had taken him 15 to 20 minutes to persuade Miran Lovsin to leave the flat again. Miran Lovsin wanted to wait to be rescued. Branislav Lukic was concerned by the smoke entering the flat and thought that waiting would reduce their chances of getting out.⁸⁰
- 12.40 Miran Lovsin having agreed, they opened the front door of the flat. Branislav Lukic recalled that the conditions in the lobby had been even worse than before.⁸¹ He said: “It was hot smoke. It was way worse than the first time.”⁸² He led Miran Lovsin by the hand to the stairwell door, which he pushed open. Conditions in the stairwell were better. There was less smoke and it was grey rather than black in colour. It was possible to breathe and talk. That led Branislav Lukic to believe that the smoke might have entered the lobby through the grilles of the ventilation system. However, because it was so smoky he had not been able to see whether any smoke was coming through the grilles and he had not heard the vents making any noise that night.⁸³
- 12.41 Alerted by a noise, Miran Lovsin stopped and opened the stairwell door to floor 10. They saw Clarita Ghavimi surrounded by black smoke. Branislav Lukic described Clarita Ghavimi as “frozen in place, shaking and crying.” He pulled her into the stairwell and closed the door. As Clarita Ghavimi appeared to have trouble walking, they tried to carry her. Eventually Branislav Lukic picked her up in a fireman’s lift and carried her down the stairs. He did not recall having seen any other people in the stairwell until they saw some firefighters at floor 5 or 6.⁸⁴
- 12.42 Having decided to leave Flat 75, Clarita Ghavimi had put a wet towel over her mouth. She thought she had left her front door open. Its self-closing mechanism was broken. The lobby on floor 10 was “pitch black” and Clarita Ghavimi could not see anything. There was thick smoke. She did not hear any noise in the lobby and could not recall whether it was hot. Clarita

⁷⁷ Abebe first witness statement [IWS00000847] pp. 6-7.

⁷⁸ Girma first witness statement [IWS00000848] pp. 8-9.

⁷⁹ Annex A.

⁸⁰ Lukic first witness statement [IWS00000770] p. 10 and Day 56/111/21-114/22.

⁸¹ Lukic Day 56/114/8-22.

⁸² Lukic Day 56/115/1.

⁸³ Lukic Day 56/115/23-117/21.

⁸⁴ Lukic first witness statement [IWS00000770] pp. 11-12 and Day 56/117/22-120/16.

Ghavimi had to feel her way to the stairwell and relied on her familiarity with the building. She described crossing the lobby as a struggle, scary and disorientating. She was very distressed by the time she reached the stairwell.⁸⁵

- 12.43 Her recollection was that she had managed to open the stairwell door. The conditions in the stairwell were very different from those in the lobby: it was lit and there was only a little smoke. Two men came down the stairs. One picked her up and placed her over his shoulder. She remembers him saying “Don’t worry, we have got you.” Clarita Ghavimi kept her eyes shut for most of the journey down the stairs. She, Miran Lovsin and Branislav Lukic are recorded as having left the tower at 01.49.09.⁸⁶

The last occupants leave floor 4

- 12.44 Sharon Haley lived in Flat 24. She had spent the evening of 13 June 2017 visiting Denis Murphy in Flat 111. Leaving there at around 23.00 she had gone to Flat 13 where John Beadle was staying. Another friend, Kenny Smith, was already there. Sharon Haley’s recollection is that she had first become aware of the fire when she had tried to leave the flat to go home. She had found the lobby filled with thick, white smoke. Having told John Beadle and Kenny Smith about it, they opened the front door twice more. On the second occasion the smoke in the lobby appeared to have become worse. At this time, Sharon Haley rang Denis Murphy and Anthony Disson (who was also a friend) to tell them of the fire.⁸⁷
- 12.45 Sharon Haley said that, when she went out into the lobby for the third time, she saw “the man from Flat 16”.⁸⁸ That would have been Behailu Kebede, but I think Sharon Haley must have made a mistake, because Behailu Kebede had left floor 4 before smoke had accumulated in the lobby to the extent she describes. Nothing turns on this, however, and it may be that Sharon Haley had seen Behailu Kebede earlier that night.
- 12.46 What is clear is that Sharon Haley and her friends were in Flat 13 for some time. They were still there at around 01.40. The degree of smoke in the lobby appears to have deterred them from leaving and Sharon Haley described having shouted to a woman on the walkway opposite that there was too much smoke to leave. However, they felt able to leave when, having opened the door again, they saw that “the smoke had calmed down”.⁸⁹ It smelt like burning plastic. Sharon Haley went straight to the stairs and found the stairwell door open. A firefighter was there. She found the stairwell free of smoke. Sharon Haley and Kenny Smith left the tower at 01.44; John Beadle left shortly after at 01.46.⁹⁰

Floor 10

Antonio Roncolato attempts to leave floor 10

- 12.47 Antonio Roncolato had lived in Flat 72 on floor 10 for 27 years. In June 2017 his son, Christopher Roncolato, and sister-in-law, Gloria Wilson, were living with him. Antonio Roncolato returned home from holiday on the evening of 13 June 2017. His sister-in-law was out and Christopher Roncolato was working a late shift.

⁸⁵ Ghavimi first witness statement [IWS00000943] pp. 3-4.

⁸⁶ Ghavimi first witness statement [IWS00000943] pp. 3-4; Annex A.

⁸⁷ Haley first witness statement [IWS00001219] pp. 7-8.

⁸⁸ Haley first witness statement [IWS00001219] p. 8.

⁸⁹ Haley first witness statement [IWS00001219] p. 8.

⁹⁰ Annex A.

- 12.48 Christopher Roncolato was on his way home when he received a call telling him there was a fire at the tower. At 01.42.34, he telephoned his father, waking him up. Christopher Roncolato was still speaking to his father when he reached the tower. Seeing the extent of the fire, he urged his father to leave.⁹¹
- 12.49 When Antonio Roncolato woke, there was no smoke inside Flat 72, although he noticed “thick dark dust” which he later suggested was like light grey smoke. He could hear a crackling sound “like dry wood burning” outside the kitchen window. He closed that window after a piece of “smoking debris” came through it.⁹²
- 12.50 When he tried to leave his flat, he found the handle of the front door very warm to the touch. Unusually, there was no light from the lobby shining through the glass panels in the front door. No smoke had been coming through the door before he opened it. When he did open it, thick black smoke came billowing in. He could see nothing of the lobby. Antonio Roncolato described the effect of the smoke as follows:
- “I felt like I’d been hit by gas as well as smoke, so basically it would stop me from breathing.”
- The smoke had a horrible smell; it was hot and irritated his eyes, making him wash them immediately.⁹³
- 12.51 Antonio Roncolato’s attempt to leave the building probably occurred soon after Clarita Ghavimi had left the lobby on floor 10. By this time Christopher Roncolato had sent his father a photograph showing the extent of the fire.⁹⁴ Antonio Roncolato’s recollection was that he had then spoken to his son again. Christopher Roncolato had passed the telephone to a “fire marshal” (by which Antonio Roncolato meant a person in charge). Antonio Roncolato confirmed his location and was advised by that person to stay put and that someone would come to get him. Antonio Roncolato said that he had been reassured by that call.⁹⁵

Other occupants of floor 10

- 12.52 At 01.41.21, CRO Peter Duddy spoke to Ann Chance in Flat 73. She told him that she and her family could not evacuate because it was “pitch black outside”.⁹⁶ Smoke was coming into the flat and the front door was “completely hot.” Ann Chance had a limited recollection of this call.⁹⁷ It is possible that the information she provided to CRO Duddy followed an attempt to leave, given that her cousin, Adam Supareogsonond, had been advised to leave by an MPS operator at 01.28.01.⁹⁸ CRO Duddy advised Ann Chance to stay where she was until the firefighters came to get her and to block any smoke coming in through the doors and windows.
- 12.53 At 01.47.49, CRO Angie Gotts spoke to Lina Hamide.⁹⁹ Having told CRO Gotts which floor she was on, Lina Hamide repeatedly asked if she and Meron Woldelessie Araya could “go outside”. CRO Gotts advised her to block the bottom of the door. When Lina Hamide said that they were going to go outside, CRO Gotts said: “I can’t advise you to do that”.¹⁰⁰ Meron

⁹¹ Christopher Roncolato first witness statement [IWS00000840] p. 7; Antonio Roncolato Day 52/27/12-52/28/6.

⁹² Antonio Roncolato Day 52/28/4-32/7.

⁹³ Antonio Roncolato witness statement [IWS00000894] p. 11 and Day 52/37/7-41/5.

⁹⁴ Antonio Roncolato Day 52/34/9-35/20, 52/37/25-38/14.

⁹⁵ Antonio Roncolato Day 52/35/22-37/6.

⁹⁶ [LFB00000319].

⁹⁷ Chance first witness statement [IWS00000783] p. 4.

⁹⁸ [INQ00000282].

⁹⁹ [LFB00000330].

¹⁰⁰ Hamide, Exhibit LH/5 [IWS00001177] p. 11.

Woldeselassie Araya took over the call and told CRO Gotts that they did not know what to do, because they were being told by some people to stay inside and by others to leave. CRO Gotts repeated her advice to block the smoke from coming in and then said:

“Yeah, I mean, I, obviously, don’t know the best thing to do from here, if you can – I can tell the firemen you’re there. And what’s – you’re on the 10th floor?”¹⁰¹

CRO Gotts ended the call by repeating that she would “let them know”. Lina Hamide and Meron Woldeselassie Araya did not leave Flat 74 at that point.

Floor 11

- 12.54 Natasha Elcock’s third 999 call is timed at 01.43.19.¹⁰² In oral evidence she described her situation at that time as “exceptionally serious”. From Flat 82, she was able to see the firefighting effort and the police evacuating Grenfell Walk. She had received calls from a friend telling her of the progress of the fire.¹⁰³ During that call CRO Gotts advised Natasha Elcock to block up the door, which she had already done. CRO Gotts asked if Natasha Elcock could go outside, to which she responded: “No. The stairs will be completely full of smoke now”.
- 12.55 During the call Natasha Elcock told CRO Gotts that she had called before and asked her to send someone to get her out. She mentioned that she had a daughter. CRO Gotts confirmed that she would “let them know”. Later in the conversation Natasha Elcock asked how long it would take. She also told CRO Gotts that smoke was coming into the flat. However, in her evidence she said that at the time the amount of smoke in the flat had not had “a major effect”; blocking the door had been “relatively effective” and smoke did not really get into the flat until later. She explained that she had been trying to prompt someone to take action.¹⁰⁴ Natasha Elcock remained in her flat.

Floor 12

- 12.56 Roy Smith was still in Flat 95 with his partner and two daughters. His second 999 call of the night is timed at 01.44.33. At the start Roy Smith told CRO Duddy that he was on floor 12. When CRO Duddy told him that the fire was on floor 4, Roy Smith said that it had reached the kitchen of the flat next door, “96 Grenfell Tower”. He then said that smoke was still coming into his flat even though he had blocked the front door.¹⁰⁵ In his oral evidence Roy Smith explained that he had not been sure where the smoke was coming in. It had started to “creep in” and there was now a cloud of smoke in the living room, kitchen and hallway. When he was reminded that he had told CRO Duddy that smoke had been coming through the windows, Roy Smith explained that he had assumed that it was coming through gaps in the windows as the front door was blocked.¹⁰⁶
- 12.57 During the call, Roy Smith said: “We can’t breathe”. He asked CRO Duddy to send someone as they needed help to get out. CRO Duddy told him that firefighters would be there as soon as they could and that they would deal with the fire in Flat 96 as well.¹⁰⁷ During the call, CRO Duddy referred to Roy Smith being on floor 14 rather than floor 12. Roy Smith said that that

¹⁰¹ Hamide, Exhibit LH/5 [IWS00001177] p. 12.

¹⁰² [LFB00000323].

¹⁰³ Elcock Day 70/50/25-53/17.

¹⁰⁴ Elcock Day 70/51/4, 54, 7.

¹⁰⁵ [LFB00000324].

¹⁰⁶ Smith Day 64/63/12-66/12

¹⁰⁷ [LFB00000324].

had made him think: “We’re not going to get out”. At the end of the call he believed that he and his family either had to stay or leave on their own without assistance.¹⁰⁸ They remained in the flat.

Floor 14

- 12.58 At 01.48.23, CRO Christine Howson answered a 999 call from Zainab Deen. Zainab Deen said that she was in Flat 115 on floor 14 with her baby. There was smoke in all the rooms of the flat. It was coming through the windows and door. Zainab Deen had already closed the windows and blocked the door.¹⁰⁹ CRO Howson told her that her flat was “the safest place” and advised her to keep trying to stop the smoke from coming in. She said she would alert the firefighters who would come to Zainab Deen. I shall return to the circumstances in which Zainab Deen moved from her flat to Flat 113.

Floor 16

- 12.59 At 01.46.18, Sener Macit in Flat 133 spoke to CRO Adams, having been put through by an MPS call operator. He told her that he had tried to use the “fire escape” but that it had been pitch black with smoke. CRO Adams advised him to stay in his flat and to try to stop any smoke coming in.¹¹⁰

Floor 20

- 12.60 Farah Hamdan made another 999 call at 01.43.14, which was put through to a CRO at North West Fire Control.¹¹¹ Farah Hamdan gave her location as “175 Grenfell Tower” on floor 20. She reported that the fire had reached the floor below. Farah Hamdan told the CRO that her husband had wanted them to leave but that there was black smoke in the hallway, so they had closed the door and gone into the living room. (When she referred to “the hallway”, I think she probably meant the lobby.) Farah Hamdan said that by that time there had been smoke in the flat. The CRO advised her to block out the smoke and said that her location had been passed to “the crews”.
- 12.61 That Farah Hamdan and her family were unable to leave because of conditions in the lobby is reinforced by a message posted by Khadija Saye on her Facebook wall some minutes after Farah Hamdan’s 999 call. Khadija Saye was at home in Flat 173 with her mother, Mary Mendy, that night. The message, timed at 01.49, is the first indication that Khadija Saye and her mother had become aware of the fire. It reads:

“There’s a fire in my council block, can’t leave the flat. Please pray for me and my mum.”¹¹²

Floor 22

- 12.62 At 01.48.00, Sharon Lancaster, a CRO with Essex FRS, responded to a call from Nadia Choucair in Flat 193. Nadia Choucair reported that it was getting “very smoky inside the house”. CRO Lancaster told her that the fire service was at the scene and she would “go back through to London for you”.¹¹³ Nadia Choucair also sent two text messages to her friend Helen Gebremeskel, who was by that time in Flat 182. Both are timed at 01.48 and read “Stay in”

¹⁰⁸ Smith Day 64/67/12-69/2.

¹⁰⁹ [LFB00000331].

¹¹⁰ [INQ00000280] p. 5; [LFB00000326].

¹¹¹ [LFB00000444].

¹¹² Telfer second witness statement [IWS00001188] p. 1; Telfer Exhibit MT1 [IWS00001188] p. 3.

¹¹³ [LFB00000325].

and “Fire”. Nadia Choucair also left a telephone message which mentioned placing towels “underneath the door” and not leaving the flat. Helen Gebremeskel did not see those messages until some time after the fire.¹¹⁴

- 12.63 Anthony Disson was still in Flat 194 when, in a call timed at 01.50.03, he told CRO Duddy that “All the smoke’s coming in. I can’t see or nothing”. Smoke was even coming through open windows. CRO Duddy advised Anthony Disson to close all the windows and told him, “We’re gonna come up. We’ve got firefighters coming to the 22nd floor already. Okay?”¹¹⁵

Floor 23

- 12.64 At 01.48.18, Aisha Jabin, a CRO with North West Fire Control, made a call back to Debbie Lamprell, who was by now in Flat 201. The call lasted 40 minutes 23 seconds.¹¹⁶ Between around 01.48 and 01.58, Debbie Lamprell told CRO Jabin that:

- a. she was in a group of about 10 people in the bedroom of a flat on floor 23. It was a one-bedroom flat in the corner of the top floor;¹¹⁷
- b. there was thick black smoke in the bedroom that was coming through the windows and making it difficult for everyone to breathe;¹¹⁸
- c. she could not see because the smoke was too thick;¹¹⁹
- d. the fire was not in the flat, but it was “coming up”. At around 01.55 she said: “It’s burning through the windows”.¹²⁰

- 12.65 CRO Jabin assured Debbie Lamprell that the information had been passed to the firefighters and that they were on their way to her.¹²¹

- 12.66 In Periods 1 and 2 of this Narrative I have referred to the telephone call between CRO Sarah Russell and Jessica Urbano Ramirez, which began at 01.29.48 and lasted just over 54 minutes. In the course of that call Jessica Urbano Ramirez moved from the hallway of Flat 201 into the bedroom.¹²² Her conversation with CRO Russell overlapped in time with Debbie Lamprell’s call to CRO Jabin. Between 01.37 to 01.47, while in the bedroom, Jessica Urbano Ramirez told CRO Russell:

- a. that smoke was coming through the window;¹²³
- b. that she was in a group of about 11 people, including a two-year-old child;¹²⁴ and
- c. that she was stuffing her face into a pillow, but that she and others in the room were struggling to breathe.¹²⁵

¹¹⁴ Gebremeskel second witness statement [IWS00001141] pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁵ [LFB00000328].

¹¹⁶ [LFB00055500].

¹¹⁷ [LFB00055500] pp. 3, 4, 5, 7, 15.

¹¹⁸ [LFB00055500] pp. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13.

¹¹⁹ [LFB00055500] p. 3.

¹²⁰ [LFB00055500] pp. 3, 11.

¹²¹ [LFB00055500] pp. 6, 7, 9, 10.

¹²² [LFB00055504] pp. 16-17.

¹²³ [LFB00055504] p. 20.

¹²⁴ [LFB00055504] pp. 22, 37.

¹²⁵ [LFB00055504] pp. 21, 24, 25.

CRO Russell advised Jessica Urbano Ramirez to make sure the window was shut and the door blocked and said that firefighters would come to her.¹²⁶

- 12.67 The two-year-old child mentioned by Jessica Urbano Ramirez must have been Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin. Fadumo Ahmed said in her statement that she had seen Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin and her mother, Amal Ahmedin, in Flat 201.¹²⁷
- 12.68 At 01.46.02, OM Alexandra Norman rang Hesham Rahman in Flat 204. He told her that the fire had not reached his flat but was next door. When OM Norman told Hesham Rahman that the fire was on floor 4, he replied, “I think it’s gone upstairs”. OM Norman said: “Okay, you need to just stay where you are. The crews know where you are, okay? So, they will get to you as soon as they can”.¹²⁸

4 Events in the control room

- 12.69 Between 01.40 and 01.50, the LFB control room received 21 emergency calls from residents trapped in the building and members of the public. Of these, eight were FSG calls from residents (not including calls received by other control rooms during this period).¹²⁹ The LFB control room also received two calls from the MPS passing on calls from trapped residents and one similar call from Surrey Police.¹³⁰ It was during this period that OM Norman and AOM Debbie Real became aware that their “buddy” control room,¹³¹ North West Fire Control, was taking calls, including FSG calls, on their behalf. It was also during this period that two fire and rescue services which did not have formal “buddy” arrangements with the LFB (Essex and Kent) were contacted by BT in order to start taking calls on behalf of the LFB.¹³²
- 12.70 At 01.40.17, Denis Murphy in Flat 111 on floor 14 reported that his whole flat was full of smoke, which was coming in through his front door and windows. He said he could not move. He was reassured that the firefighters were in attendance and dealing with the fire. He was told to stop the smoke coming in and to get down low and that the firefighters would get to him as soon as possible.¹³³
- 12.71 At 01.42.00, AC Andrew Roe and DAC Adrian Fenton spoke by telephone and agreed that DAC Fenton would set up the Brigade Coordination Centre at Stratford so that he and his team could support the Brigade throughout the incident.¹³⁴ As a result, DAC Fenton started to make his way to the control room at Stratford.¹³⁵
- 12.72 At 01.43.13, CU8 contacted CRO Sharon Darby by radio to explain that they were setting up at the incident ground and to ask her whether she had any information to pass to them.¹³⁶ From this point on, CRO Darby passed all radio messages to CU8 rather than G271 or any other appliance.¹³⁷

¹²⁶ [LFB00055504] pp. 18, 19, 21, 22.

¹²⁷ Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] p. 4.

¹²⁸ [INQ00000370].

¹²⁹ Control Report pp. 40-52.

¹³⁰ Control Report pp. 47-48, 50.

¹³¹ That is, with whom the LFB had formal arrangements for dealing with overflow calls.

¹³² Control Report pp. 40-52.

¹³³ [LFB00000678].

¹³⁴ Fenton Day 24/49/14-24 and ORR v 0.7 pp. 95.

¹³⁵ Fenton Day 24/51/4-24.

¹³⁶ [LFB00003078]; [LFB00002726].

¹³⁷ Darby Day 33/160/3-13.

12.73 In the course of their conversation CRO Darby passed on FSG information to CU8. She told the crew that she had already passed some information to the incident ground (thinking of the messages she had passed to G261), but that she would pass it again to them. She passed on the following information:

- a. people stuck in flats on floor 10;
- b. seven people in Flat 205 on floor 23 with persons unable to leave;
- c. persons trapped in a flat on floor 12;
- d. smoke coming into flats on floor 14 and on floor 17 in Flat 142, with five people in the flat;
- e. smoke coming into Flat 95 on floor 12; and
- f. a caller inside a flat on floor 18 with thick smoke outside her flat.¹³⁸

In fact, those were not messages she had passed to G261. All of them, apart from the last, were new FSG messages which appear to have originated from service requests created by CROs in the incident log between 01.36.00 and 01.43.58.¹³⁹

12.74 At 01.44.19, CU8 confirmed the message from CRO Darby stating that:

“the only flat numbers you’ve given me are the 17th floor is flat 142 and that’s five people and the 12th floor is flat 95, no further information than that apart from heavy smoke logging.”¹⁴⁰

CRO Darby confirmed that that was correct.¹⁴¹ She did not remind WM Meyrick that she had also given him the message relating to Flat 205, including its number.

12.75 As CRO Darby was relaying messages to the incident ground, OM Norman took a call at 01.43.00 from Team Leader Paula Craig at North West Fire Control on the critical line phone.¹⁴² It was the first time that North West FRS had made contact with the control room since first taking calls on its behalf at 01.36.00. TL Craig reported that they had taken about 10 calls by that point. OM Norman said that it had been “chaos” in the control room.¹⁴³

12.76 TL Craig passed on two FSG messages, one relating to Flat 9, where there were two adults and three children, including one young man in a wheelchair, and one relating to Flat 175 on floor 20, where there were five people inside.¹⁴⁴ She did not pass on details of the conditions that the callers had reported and she was not asked for them. OM Norman did not record those messages in the incident log until 02.01.43, after she had passed the information to the incident ground at 01.47.44.¹⁴⁵ During the course of her conversation with TL Craig, OM Norman agreed that North West Fire Control would only pass over calls relating to trapped residents, rather than all 999 calls.¹⁴⁶ OM Norman did not recall making a similar agreement with any other fire and rescue service.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁸ [LFB00002726].

¹³⁹ SIL p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ [LFB00002192].

¹⁴¹ [LFB00002192].

¹⁴² Control Report p. 41. [LFB00000688]; Norman Day 42/120/22-25-121/1-5; Paula Craig witness statement [MET00008008] p. 7.

¹⁴³ [LFB00000688].

¹⁴⁴ [LFB00000688].

¹⁴⁵ SIL p. 21.

¹⁴⁶ [LFB00000688]; TL Craig witness statement [MET00008008] p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Norman Day 42/120/13-17.

- 12.77 At 01.43.00, BT tried to connect a call intended for the LFB to the Essex FRS as the lines were busy in London.¹⁴⁸ It appears that this was the first time that a fire and rescue service which did not have a formal arrangement with the LFB had started to take calls on its behalf (although the control room itself was unaware of that at the time). BT had already contacted Essex FRS some 10 to 15 minutes earlier using an unrecorded phone line to ask if it would help the LFB, as it was dealing with a large incident and there were too many calls for its own control room and its fallback brigade to answer.¹⁴⁹ CRO Katrina Marshall, who answered the call, accepted the request, even though Essex FRS did not have a formal arrangement with the LFB to do so. At the time, CRO Marshall was not given any further information about the incident, but she told her colleagues in the control room that they would be taking overflow calls.¹⁵⁰ When BT tried to connect the call at 01.43.00, from a location outside the tower, the caller cleared the line before they could be connected. However, it gave CRO Marshall an opportunity to ask the BT operator more about the incident.¹⁵¹ The BT operator said: “I think it’s Ladbroke Grove, there’s like a tower block on fire or something”.¹⁵² CRO Marshall entered the details on Essex’s incident log.¹⁵³
- 12.78 At 01.43.31, the radio workshops duty engineer contacted the control room. The radio engineer had been paged about the incident at 01.35.¹⁵⁴ He did not proceed to the incident at that time.¹⁵⁵
- 12.79 At 01.43.46, CRO Heidi Fox took a call from the MPS who told her that they had been receiving calls from people on floors 16 and 17 of the tower who were not sure what to do.¹⁵⁶ CRO Fox asked for the numbers of the flats, but the MPS did not have them.¹⁵⁷ The MPS offered to provide phone numbers but CRO Fox explained that they could not call people back. She asked the MPS operator to provide flat numbers next time.¹⁵⁸ She offered to relay the message over the control room radio and as a result created a service request at 01.45.42 for CRO Darby to pass to the incident ground.¹⁵⁹
- 12.80 At 01.44.43, CRO Duddy spoke with Roy Smith in Flat 95 on floor 12 when he called in for a second time.¹⁶⁰ The call lasted for 3 minutes and 33 seconds.¹⁶¹ CRO Duddy told him that he was well away from the fire, which was on floor 4. However, Roy Smith told him that falling embers had set fire to the kitchen of Flat 96 next door. Roy Smith said that he had blocked up all the airways but smoke was still coming in. CRO Duddy gave him fire survival guidance advice and told him to get clean air from the windows, but Roy Smith told him that there was smoke coming from the windows too. CRO Duddy tried to reassure him by telling him that:

“We’re coming to get you. We’ve got a lot of people to get out and we’re coming up. Okay? We’re clearing everybody out as we go.”¹⁶²

¹⁴⁸ [LFB00000491].

¹⁴⁹ Marshall witness statement [MET00012848] p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Marshall witness statement [MET00012848] p. 3; Lancaster Day 76/201/5-9.

¹⁵¹ [LFB00000491].

¹⁵² [LFB00000491].

¹⁵³ [LFB00003625] p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ ORR v 0.7 pp. 99, 76.

¹⁵⁵ End of Incident Report p. 161.

¹⁵⁶ [LFB00000497].

¹⁵⁷ [LFB00000497].

¹⁵⁸ [LFB00000497].

¹⁵⁹ SIL p. 19.

¹⁶⁰ [LFB00000324].

¹⁶¹ Control Report p. 46.

¹⁶² [LFB00000324] p. 6.

He continued to tell Roy Smith that he was well away from the main fire, which was downstairs,¹⁶³ despite the fact that Roy Smith had told him that there was a fire next door. In evidence CRO Duddy explained that he told Roy Smith that the fire was on floor 4 because he was relying on the information they had received from the incident ground and at that stage he had received no confirmation that the fire had spread.¹⁶⁴

- 12.81 As a result of that call, CRO Duddy created a service request in the incident log at 01.45.44, which he then updated at 01.46.49 while he was still on the call. It read:

“FURTHER FIRE STARTED ON 12TH FLOOR FLAT 96 – PEOPLE TRAPPED IN FLAT 95.”¹⁶⁵

- 12.82 The messages were passed on to CU8 by CRO Darby in a series of radio messages, the first of which was sent at 01.46.05.¹⁶⁶

- 12.83 At around 01.45.23, GM Patrick Goulbourne was contacted by the control room in order to alert him to the incident, as he had not responded to his pager.¹⁶⁷ He explained that he was not on duty but would attend the incident anyway.¹⁶⁸ He was told that there were many FSG calls in progress, but he did not gather any more information about them at that stage.¹⁶⁹ In evidence, GM Goulbourne explained that the “fairly distressed” tone in the CRO’s voice and the fact that the incident ground seemed to need assistance had prompted him to attend.¹⁷⁰

- 12.84 At 01.45.45, CRO Russell created a service request in the incident log as a result of information she had received during her continuing call with Jessica Urbano Ramirez, which had started at 01.29.48. It sought assistance for 11 people trapped in the bedroom of a flat on floor 23.¹⁷¹ It was the first service request that CRO Russell had created since starting the call, although CRO Russell thought that she had passed information about the call to others in the control room earlier.¹⁷² She remembered that it had taken a long time for her to gather enough information to pass on.¹⁷³ The message was passed to CU8 by CRO Darby at 01.46.39.¹⁷⁴

- 12.85 At 1.46.00, TL Craig at North West Fire Control contacted the control room again to relay another FSG message.¹⁷⁵ This time, she spoke to AOM Real and reported a new FSG call from “Flat 161 on floor 23” with ten people trapped in the bedroom.¹⁷⁶ (The caller was Debbie Lamprell, who had moved from her own flat, Flat 161, to Flat 201.) TL Craig said that she had about four CROs providing fire survival guidance advice and expressed concern that there were only seven persons on duty. She did not know where calls would be diverted to next.¹⁷⁷ Information about conditions in Flat 201, as reported by Debbie Lamprell, was not passed on by TL Craig nor did AOM Real ask for it. AOM Real did not record this information in the incident log contemporaneously, but she seems to have passed it on to OM Norman, since the latter passed it to the incident ground at 01.47.44 with other FSG messages and recorded it in the incident log at 02.01.43 after she had done so.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶³ [LFB00000324] p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ Duddy Day 42/219/10-25-220/1-5.

¹⁶⁵ SIL pp. 19-20.

¹⁶⁶ Radio message [LFB00002479].

¹⁶⁷ ORR v 0.7 p. 102 and Goulbourne Day 41/68/7-21.

¹⁶⁸ ORR v 0.7 p. 102.

¹⁶⁹ ORR v 0.7 p. 102 and Goulbourne Day 41/72/1-12.

¹⁷⁰ Goulbourne Day 41/72/3-12.

¹⁷¹ SIL p. 19.

¹⁷² Russell Day 76/44/3-45/7.

¹⁷³ Russell Day 76/46/6-11, 76/28/2-19.

¹⁷⁴ Radio message [LFB00002952].

¹⁷⁵ [LFB00000689].

¹⁷⁶ [LFB00000689].

¹⁷⁷ [LFB00000689].

¹⁷⁸ SIL p. 21.

- 12.86 When Debbie Lamprell made her 999 call she first reported that she was in Flat 161 on floor 23.¹⁷⁹ As a result, CRO Jabin entered those details into the North West FRS incident log.¹⁸⁰ It was those same details that TL Craig relayed to AOM Real at 01.46. However, during the 40-minute call, at around 01.52,¹⁸¹ Debbie Lamprell explained that she was not in Flat 161, rather that she lived in Flat 161 but she was now in someone else’s flat, Flat 201 on floor 23.¹⁸² CRO Jabin changed the details in the incident log, first to record that she was unsure of the flat number and then at 01.52.34 to record: “UNSURE OF FLAT NUMBER 23RD FLOOR FLAT 201”.¹⁸³ CRO Jabin created another entry in the log at 01.53.09 which said: “10 PEOPLE IN FLAT 201 23RD FLOOR” and it was at this point that CRO Jabin became “quite sure” that Debbie Lamprell was in Flat 201.¹⁸⁴ While CRO Jabin believed that the new information had been passed on to the LFB, the most recent information about Debbie Lamprell’s location does not appear to have been communicated to the control room.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the information does not appear in any admin line call with the control room, or on the incident log or in radio messages, nor on the whiteboards that were used later to record FSG information. It is worth pointing out here, looking ahead to Period 5, that the FSG message for Flat 161 caused a crew to be deployed to a flat when there was no one there. The ORR shows that FFs Terence Roots and Adam Johnson were deployed to Flat 161 at around 02.05 “to respond to a FSG call”¹⁸⁶ but when they got there they found nobody.¹⁸⁷
- 12.87 At 01.46.02, OM Norman called Hesham Rahman in Flat 204 on floor 23, to whom she had previously spoken when he had made an emergency call at 01.39.15.¹⁸⁸ The call was made by mistake as she selected the wrong number from a list on her screen. Instead of clearing the line, OM Norman spoke to Hesham Rahman, checked that he was all right and told him to call back if the situation got worse.¹⁸⁹ He reported that he did not have a fire in his flat but that he thought it had “gone upstairs”.¹⁹⁰
- 12.88 At 01.46.05, CRO Darby passed on to CU8 the following FSG messages:
- a. 11 people in a bedroom of a flat on floor 23;
 - b. a caller on floor 12 saying that another fire had started outside Flat 96;
 - c. further calls coming through the police from callers trapped on floors 16 and 17.¹⁹¹
- CRO Darby had to repeat the message for WM Meyrick and when she did so she also relayed the message that people were trapped in Flats 95 and 96.¹⁹² WM Meyrick then asked her for “the numbers” and asked her to repeat the message again.¹⁹³ It is unclear whether he was

¹⁷⁹ [LFB00055500] pp. 5-7.

¹⁸⁰ NWFC incident log for the call with Debbie Lamprell at 01.41.18 [LFB00003618] p. 3.

¹⁸¹ NWFC incident log for the call with Debbie Lamprell at 01.41.18 [LFB00003618] p. 4 and Jabin Day 43/85/1-5.

¹⁸² [LFB00055500] pp. 5-7, 14-16.

¹⁸³ NWFC incident log for the call with Debbie Lamprell at 01.41.18 [LFB00003618] p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Jabin Day 43/85/1-5.

¹⁸⁵ Jabin Day 43/83/6-18.

¹⁸⁶ ORR v 0.7 p. 133.

¹⁸⁷ ORR v 0.7 pp. 165-166.

¹⁸⁸ [INQ00000370].

¹⁸⁹ [INQ00000370].

¹⁹⁰ [INQ00000370].

¹⁹¹ [LFB00002479].

¹⁹² [LFB00002755]; [LFB00002952]; [LFB00002493].

¹⁹³ [LFB00002574].

asking for the number of people or the numbers of the flats involved. CRO Darby repeated the message, but without providing any further details.¹⁹⁴ The messages were confirmed as received at 01.47.28.¹⁹⁵

- 12.89** At 01.46.18, CRO Adams answered a call from the MPS control room which reported that they had a caller, Sener Macit, who was trapped on floor 16 and very distressed. It was the second time that the MPS had contacted the LFB. The MPS operator asked for advice about what to say, but then asked if she could arrange a conference call between Sener Macit and the control room. CRO Adams agreed and spoke to Sener Macit.¹⁹⁶ She heard from him that he was in Flat 133 and that there was smoke coming under his front door. He told her that they had tried to go to the fire escape but it was pitch black. She told him to stay put and advised him to stop the smoke coming in and to shut the windows. She told him they were dealing with a fire on floor 4.¹⁹⁷
- 12.90** After the call had ended, CRO Adams did not tell any of the supervisors that she had taken a call from the MPS as everyone had been too busy to pass on individual call information.¹⁹⁸ She said that it had not occurred to her at the time that it was important that the MPS were taking 999 calls from persons trapped in the building and did not know what advice to give.¹⁹⁹ She said in evidence that she had known by this point that the fire was not contained on floor 4.²⁰⁰ CRO Adams did not record the call, or indeed any of her other FSG calls, in the incident log by creating a service request, because, as she said, she was just trying to establish what was going on in the room.²⁰¹ However, she did pass the details of this call to the incident ground by way of an admin line call at 01.50.49.²⁰²
- 12.91** At 01.47.13, the control room was contacted for the first time by Kent FRS, with which the LFB did not have a formal overflow arrangement, which said that BT might pass overflow calls to them.²⁰³ CRO Howson took the call and provided details of the incident to the Kent CROs, who said they would collate the information received from callers and pass them on when it had quietened down.²⁰⁴ At that time, OM Norman did not know that Kent FRS was going to take overflow calls and she could not recall whether CRO Howson had told her about the call.²⁰⁵
- 12.92** At 01.47.44, OM Norman rang CU8 for a second time on the admin line. She passed on information relating to five further FSG calls and asked for the flats to be checked.²⁰⁶ She then made an entry in the incident log at 02.01.43.²⁰⁷ She told WM Meyrick that there were flats where people had smoke coming in and they were getting into difficulties.²⁰⁸ She then gave him the information relating to the following flats:
- a. Flat 161, with 10 people inside;
 - b. Flat 204 on floor 23, with one person inside;

¹⁹⁴ [LFB00002493].

¹⁹⁵ [LFB00002751].

¹⁹⁶ [LFB00000326].

¹⁹⁷ [LFB00000326]; [INQ00000280].

¹⁹⁸ Adams Day 80/49/12-15.

¹⁹⁹ Adams Day 80/49/16-23.

²⁰⁰ Adams Day 80/53/1-13.

²⁰¹ Adams Day 80/42/1-12.

²⁰² Control Report p. 52.

²⁰³ Control Report p. 50.

²⁰⁴ [INQ00000369].

²⁰⁵ Norman Day 42/119/2-10.

²⁰⁶ [INQ00000208].

²⁰⁷ SIL p. 21.

²⁰⁸ [INQ00000208] p. 2.

- c. Flat 14, with one person inside;
- d. Flat 9, with two adults and three children inside, one of them being in a wheelchair; and
- e. Flat 175 on floor 20 with five people inside.²⁰⁹

She explained that she could not give him the floor number for Flat 14 because the caller had disappeared and that she could not provide any more details about Flat 9 because the information had come from another fire and rescue service.²¹⁰

- 12.93 At 01.47.49, CRO Gotts spoke to Lina Hamide, who was with Meron Woldeselassie Araya in Flat 74 on floor 10.²¹¹ She told CRO Gotts that they were going to go outside. CRO Gotts said: “It’s up to you ... I can’t advise you to do that” and gave them advice to block out the smoke and to get fresh air. When they asked for further advice, CRO Gotts said: “I, obviously, don’t know the best thing to do from here” and told them that she would pass their location to the firefighters.
- 12.94 At 01.48.00, the Essex FRS control room took a third call relating to Grenfell Tower.²¹² CRO Sharon Lancaster answered the call from a female resident, Nadia Choucair, in Flat 193 on floor 22.²¹³ This was the first call that Essex FRS had received from a trapped resident. Nadia Choucair reported that it was getting very smoky inside the flat and CRO Lancaster confirmed that she would contact the LFB.²¹⁴ Claire Bannister, a new CRO who was listening in on the call, entered the details in the Essex FRS incident log and CRO Lancaster’s colleague, CRO Marshall, attempted to call the LFB to pass on the information.²¹⁵ CRO Lancaster explained that both she and CRO Marshall had attempted to contact the LFB continuously on two lines, an admin line and an emergency call line, but had been unable to get through.²¹⁶ As a result, they contacted the Essex FRS National Inter-agency Liaison Officer (NILO), GM Nigel Dilley, who tried in various ways to contact the LFB. After they had contacted GM Dilley, CRO Lancaster and CRO Marshall continued to try to reach the LFB.²¹⁷ At 02.18.55, approximately 30 minutes later, CRO Marshall got through to the LFB control room. She spoke to CRO Adams and gave her the details of all of the calls they had received by that time.²¹⁸
- 12.95 At 01.48.23, CRO Fox took a call from Surrey Police Contact Centre reporting details of a trapped resident, Denis Murphy, in Flat 111 on floor 14. Denis Murphy’s brother had spoken to Surrey Police and told them that Denis Murphy was struggling to breathe. He was trapped in his bathroom and smoke was filling the room.²¹⁹ CRO Fox created a service request at 01.51.13 and CRO Darby passed the information to the incident ground at 01.53.05.²²⁰
- 12.96 At the same time CRO Howson took a call from Zainab Deen, who was with her son in Flat 115 on floor 14.²²¹ As she was obtaining information from Zainab Deen, she said: “Listen, the fire is not on the 14th floor”. Zainab Deen said that all the rooms in her flat had smoke in them and that smoke was coming in from the door and the window. CRO Howson advised her to

²⁰⁹ [INQ00000208] pp. 2-4.

²¹⁰ [INQ00000208].

²¹¹ [LFB00000330].

²¹² Control Report p. 51.

²¹³ [LFB00000325].

²¹⁴ [LFB00000325].

²¹⁵ Lancaster Day 76/206/17-208/23.

²¹⁶ Lancaster Day 76/208/2-20 and Lancaster witness statement [MET00018755] p. 2.

²¹⁷ Lancaster Day 76/208/21-23.

²¹⁸ [LFB00000347].

²¹⁹ [LFB00000327].

²²⁰ SIL p. 20; [LFB00002305 and LFB00002324].

²²¹ [LFB00000331].

block the door and windows to stop the smoke coming in, which Zainab Deen had already done. She also told her to stay low, stay calm and to stay put. CRO Howson reassured Zainab Deen by saying:

“All right. It’s a very scary situation, but we are there.”²²²

She also said:

“It’s all being dealt with, it’s smoke . . . We’ve got 25 fire engines there, we’ve got 100 fireman [sic] and they’re coming now making sure that everyone is safe.”²²³

- 12.97 CRO Howson assured Zainab Deen once again that the fire was on floor 4 but that there was a lot of smoke.²²⁴ The call lasted nearly five minutes and at 01.54.07, CRO Howson created a service request which she then updated and which read:

“RT4 CALLER IN FLAT 115 ON 14TH FLOOR WITH YOUNG BABY HEAVILY SMOKE LOGGED.”²²⁵

CRO Darby passed this message to CU8 less than a minute later.²²⁶

- 12.98 At 01.48.32, the Thames Water called the control room to confirm that they were attending the incident and would be there within the hour.²²⁷
- 12.99 Throughout this time, emergency calls continued to come in from members of the public reporting the fire. At 01.48.44, CRO Duddy took a call from a member of the public outside Grenfell Tower who reported that the fire had got right to the top.²²⁸
- 12.100 At 01.49, SOM Adam Crinion was paged to attend the incident.²²⁹ A few minutes later he called the control room and spoke to AOM Peter May, who told him that they were “totally snowed under”. A few minutes later, he responded to the message and made his way to the control room.²³⁰

5 The actions of the MPS, the LAS, RBKC and the TMO

- 12.101 At 01.41.42 the LAS declared a Significant Incident.²³¹ The decision was made by the LAS Area Commander, David Laird, and was the result of information he had received from the LFB about the nature of the 999 calls and the fact that persons had been reported trapped in the building.²³² Under the LAS Incident Response Procedures Manual a significant incident triggers a predetermined response of four ambulances, two IROs and two Operational Commanders. At this time, unusually, the LAS was not aware that the MPS had already declared a Major Incident.²³³
- 12.102 At 01.42.14 all police responders were instructed to switch radio channels to MetCC Pan London.²³⁴

²²² [LFB00000331] pp. 5-6.

²²³ [LFB00000331] p. 6.

²²⁴ [LFB00000331] p. 7.

²²⁵ SIL p. 20.

²²⁶ Radio message [LFB00002056].

²²⁷ [INQ00000197].

²²⁸ Control Report p. 52.

²²⁹ Control Report p. 52.

²³⁰ Control Report p. 53.

²³¹ CAD 247 p. 3. A Significant Incident in the LAS is defined at paragraph 1.1 of the LAS Incident Response Procedures [LAS00000008] p. 21.

²³² Woodrow Day 72/86/3-87/8.

²³³ Woodrow Day 72/89/3-10.

²³⁴ Winch witness statement [METS00020664] p. 7 and CAD 482 p. 8.

- 12.103 At 01.42.57 MetCC sent a message saying that they were receiving numerous calls from people inside the tower reporting that they were trapped.²³⁵
- 12.104 At 01.45.25 the first report came from the NPAS helicopter at the scene (NPAS 44), saying that the fire was very large and would require LFB and MPS officers “in significant numbers”, and recommending that it be managed from “GT”. GT was the shorthand for the MPS special operations room at Lambeth, under the command of Chief Inspector Duane Barrett (who was on duty anyway that night and was there throughout the incident). The following image was taken from the helicopter at 01.43.38:



Figure 12.8

- 12.105 At about the same time Detective Superintendent Paul Warnett arrived at the incident.²³⁶ He said that at that stage there were only about 15 or 20 police officers at the scene. Their role was to facilitate the movement of the LFB to the tower while keeping members of the public at a safe distance. That became his priority. The scene was, he said, “complete chaos”.²³⁷
- 12.106 At 01.45.02 the first LAS responder arrived at the scene (the first of the four HARTs that had been despatched at 01.34.04).
- 12.107 Laurence Ioannou, the LAS IRO, arrived on scene at 01.49. He could not find who was in charge for the LFB in order to speak to them. However, he had a brief conversation with a firefighter who was wearing a white LFB incident commander tabard and helmet, who said: “It’s not as bad as it looks. We believe it is an external fire and has not penetrated internally”.²³⁸ The officer is likely to have been SM Walton.

²³⁵ CAD 482 p. 8.

²³⁶ Warnett witness statement [MET0000080605] p. 2.

²³⁷ Warnett witness statement [MET0000080605] p. 2.

²³⁸ Ioannou witness statement [MET00010862] pp. 3, 5.

Chapter 13

Period 4: 01.50-02.00

1 External fire spread

- 13.1 During this period, the external flame front travelled diagonally across the north face of the tower from east to west.¹
- 13.2 By 01.57 the flames had continued to spread southwards across the east face and the base of the architectural crown at column C5 was burning.² The firefighters' actions, including the application of water from a turntable ladder,³ appear to have arrested the external fire spread at the lower floors on the east face below floor 17.⁴ At 02.00 there were flames on the crown to the south side of column C5, as can be seen from this image:⁵

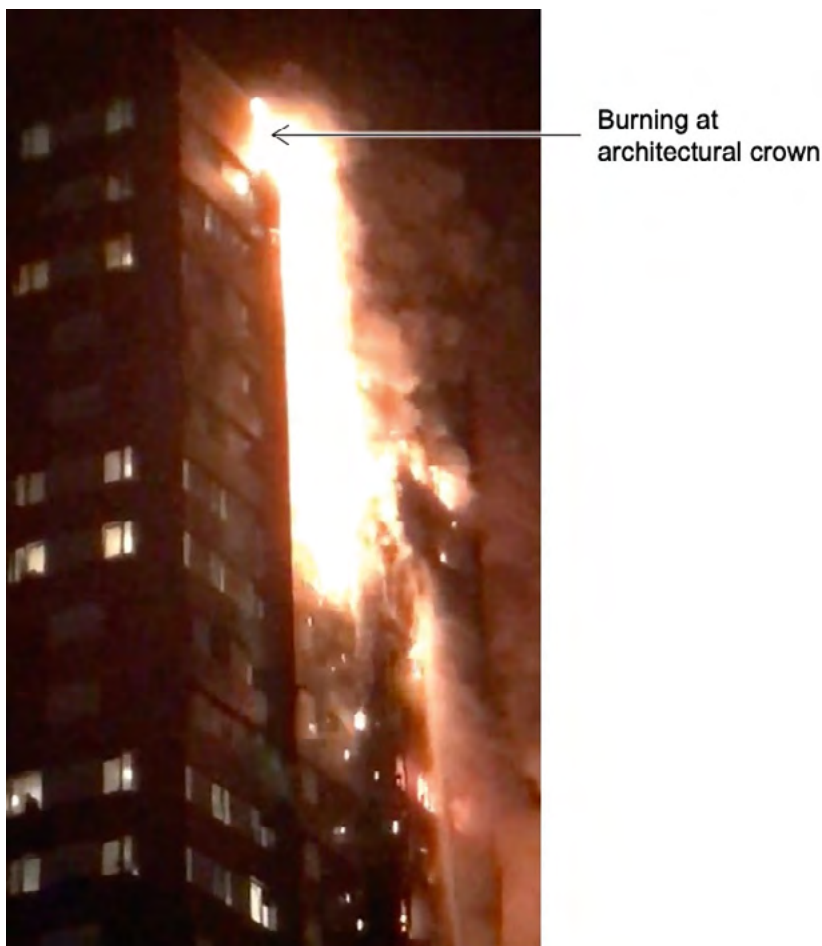


Figure 13.1

¹ Professor Bisby composite video for north face [LBYS0000004].

² Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 205 sections 996-997.

³ The video evidence shows the turntable ladder applying water from approximately 01.43 – refer to [LBYS0000003] at 08.22 in the video compilation.

⁴ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 205 section 999.

⁵ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 209 Fig. 127.

- 13.3 By 01.52 to 01.53 a number of “Flat 1s” in the centre of the east face of the building had become affected by the external flame front as it spread south across that facade. In particular, Flats 151, 161, 171, 181, 191 and 201 between floors 18 and 23 had become involved in the fire.⁶

2 Events on the incident ground

Deployment of Paddington A216 EDBA crew – contd

- 13.4 After CM Philip Wigley’s brief exchange with WM Louisa De Silvo outside the entrance to the tower, his crew proceeded to entry control at the bridgehead, where they informed WM Brien O’Keeffe of their brief. It was decided that they would go up to the roof without going under air, in order to conserve supplies, about which WM O’Keeffe expressed some concern.⁷ Between them the crew were carrying the line equipment and lengths of hose, as well as the EDBA cylinders.⁸
- 13.5 When the crew reached floor 4 conditions worsened to the point where they decided that they needed to go back down to entry control and go under air.⁹ The BA Telemetry data records tally out times for the crew between 01.56.09 and 01.57.16.¹⁰ FF Martin Gillam led the way from the front, writing floor numbers on the walls where they were not apparent.¹¹
- 13.6 At some point higher up the stairwell,¹² the crew came across FF Steven Mills and FF Geoffrey Campbell, also from Paddington, who were on their way down. FFs Mills and Campbell told FF Gillam that they had been sent to floor 20 to rescue a woman and that they could not get there because they had only SDBA.¹³ As noted below, their specific briefing had been to go to Flat 175. FF Gillam did not recall whether the firefighters had also given him that information.¹⁴

Deployment of FFs Desmond Murphy and Charles Cornelius

- 13.7 There were a number of other significant BA deployments during this period. FF Cornelius and FF Murphy tallied out at 01.51.00 and 01.51.24 respectively,¹⁵ having been briefed to rescue a man, now known to be Denis Murphy, from Flat 111 on floor 14.¹⁶
- 13.8 When the crew reached floor 14, they made their way to Flat 111 where they found Denis Murphy. FF Murphy recalled that Denis Murphy was bent over and coughing, with soot on his face. The flat was quite heavily smoke-logged.¹⁷ As soon as they saw him, they brought him out into the lobby where the air was much clearer than in the flat.¹⁸
- 13.9 FF Cornelius said that they would definitely not have been able to escort Denis Murphy down the stairs given the smoke conditions in the stairwell. FF Cornelius then conducted a search of the flat to ensure that there was no one else inside and came back out into the lobby. At

⁶ Dr Lane supplemental report [BLAS0000012] p. 6 Fig. 12.2.

⁷ Gillam Day 27/62/19-63/1.

⁸ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 7.

⁹ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ BA Telemetry Schedule.

¹¹ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 9.

¹² FF Gillam recalled this as being around floors 11 or 12, as does FF Andrew Harris. FF Campbell recalled it as being around floor 10. Refer to Gillam Day 27/66/11-22; Harris witness statement [MET00007884] p. 8; Campbell witness statement [MET00010788] p. 11.

¹³ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 9.

¹⁴ Gillam Day 27/97/1-8.

¹⁵ BA Telemetry Schedule.

¹⁶ Murphy witness statement [MET00010820] p. 4.

¹⁷ Murphy Day 38/42/24-25.

¹⁸ Cornelius Day 38/79/8-10.

this point, the door to Flat 112 opened. There were two men inside, now known to be Omar Alhaj Ali and Mohammad Alhajali, who were brothers. FF Murphy saw that the air inside Flat 112 was clear and asked the two men to take Denis Murphy inside and shut the door while he and FF Cornelius continued to search the rest of the floor.¹⁹ The crew carried out a systematic search of the rest of the floor, knocking on the doors of all the other flats and trying to establish who was still inside.²⁰ They gathered eight people together,²¹ six adults and two children.²² The crew tried repeatedly to contact the bridgehead on their handheld radios to say that they would not be able to bring the people down, but they received no answer and heard no radio traffic.²³

- 13.10 It was around this time that the second crew (FFs Harvey Sanders and Nicke Merrion) arrived on floor 14. FF Murphy said that FFs Sanders and Merrion arrived after he and FF Cornelius had moved all the residents into Flat 113, but that is unlikely to be correct, as FF Merrion recalled going into Flat 112 where Omar Alhaj Ali and Mohammad Alhajali were still waiting.²⁴

Deployment of FFs Sanders and Merrion

- 13.11 FFs Sanders and Merrion were deployed at around the same time as FFs Murphy and Cornelius.²⁵ They were also briefed to go to floor 14. FF Sanders said that they had been sent specifically to Flat 111.²⁶ FF Merrion could not recall whether the brief had been for Flat 111 or Flat 112, but did recall that he had been instructed to advise the occupants to remain in their flat. He was not given any details of who the occupants were.²⁷
- 13.12 When the crew reached floor 14, FF Murphy and FF Cornelius were already there; they told FFs Sanders and Merrion that they had already checked some flats.²⁸ The first flat that FF Merrion went into was Flat 112, where he recalled having seen two men,²⁹ Mohammad Alhajali and Omar Alhaj Ali. He entered and removed his mask in order to speak to the men in the hallway. They were keen to leave, but FF Merrion was concerned about the smoke in the stairwell and told them that it was safer to stay where they were. He then went back into the lobby to speak to the other firefighters.³⁰
- 13.13 FF Sanders went directly to Flat 113 where a man, woman and child were present, now known to be Oluwaseun Talabi, Rosemary Oyewole and their daughter. FF Sanders entered the flat, which was much less smoky than the stairwell, and closed the door behind him. FF Sanders explained that the fire was not yet out, but that it was safer for the residents to remain where they were. He told the family that they should call the control room if anything changed and that crews would be sent back for them, if they needed it. FF Sanders said that when he gave this advice he had believed that they would put the fire out and that everyone would be safe. FF Sanders then left the flat.³¹

¹⁹ Murphy Day 38/44/8-45/7.

²⁰ Cornelius Day 38/80/9-10.

²¹ Both FF Murphy and FF Cornelius gave evidence that the total number of residents they gathered together was eight: Cornelius witness statement [MET00012663] p. 10 and Day 38/47.

²² Murphy Day 38/49/25.

²³ Cornelius Day 38/81/1-8.

²⁴ Merrion Day 38/14/5-10.

²⁵ At around 01.51, BA Telemetry Schedule.

²⁶ Sanders witness statement [MET00012482] p. 4.

²⁷ Merrion Day 38/5-6.

²⁸ Merrion witness statement [MET000086060] pp. 6-7.

²⁹ Merrion Day 38/14/5-10.

³⁰ Merrion witness statement [MET000086060] p. 7.

³¹ Sanders witness statement [MET00012482] p. 6.

Deployment of FFs Campbell and Mills

- 13.14 FFs Campbell and Mills were briefed to go to Flat 175 on floor 20;³² they tallied out at 01.51.46 and 01.51.56 respectively.³³ That was the flat where the Belkadi family lived.
- 13.15 Once the crew had reached floor 15, they decided that they would not be able to reach floor 20 as that would require EDDBA.³⁴ FF Campbell tried to radio down to the bridgehead to inform them of the change of plan, but received no acknowledgement.³⁵ The crew started to make their way down and, as addressed above, at some point came across CM Wigley's crew, who were on their way up to the roof. FF Mills recalled having told CM Wigley that they had been tasked with going to get a woman in Flat 175.³⁶ FF Gillam recalled having been told that it was a female on floor 20, but not that he had been told the flat number.

Deployment of CM Secrett and FFs Badillo and Dorgu – contd

- 13.16 Meanwhile, on floor 20, CM Secrett and FF Badillo had left Flat 176 and gone back into the lobby. It was around this time that CM Secrett's warning whistle started to sound, so the crew made their way back to the stairwell and started their descent. The crew's "end of wear time" is recorded as 01.57.³⁷ FF Dorgu recalled having told entry control what they had done and what conditions were like, although neither of the other two remembered it.³⁸
- 13.17 No information about Jessica Urbano Ramirez's 999 call to the control room reached the crew throughout the time they were under air. CM Secrett said that there was no means by which any such message could have got to them.³⁹

Deployment of CM Tillotson's crew – contd

- 13.18 On floor 9, CM Tillotson and FF Bettinson had been rejoined by CM Gallagher, FFs Wolfenden and Felton. They all entered Flat 65, where they spoke to Sharon Laci.⁴⁰ The conditions on floor 9 had deteriorated quickly and CM Tillotson was concerned that the crew would be unable to bring Sharon Laci and her daughter out. He therefore decided that he, CM Gallagher and FF Felton would go and collect two additional BA sets from the bridgehead for them to wear.⁴¹ FF Felton recalled that that had happened at about the time that the crew ought to have been making their way back out of the building.⁴²
- 13.19 FFs Wolfenden and Bettinson remained in Flat 65, blocking the front door with a duvet and removing their masks to conserve air. FF Bettinson recalled having closed the living room window to stop smoke entering the flat.⁴³ The rest of the crew returned to the floor 2 mezzanine, where they quickly collected two fresh BA sets and went back to the stairwell.⁴⁴

³² Mills witness statement [MET000080584] p. 4.

³³ BA Telemetry Schedule.

³⁴ Mills witness statement [MET000080584] pp. 5-6.

³⁵ Campbell witness statement [MET00010788] p. 10.

³⁶ Mills witness statement [MET000080584] pp. 5-6.

³⁷ Updated BA Telemetry Schedule [LFB00023326].

³⁸ Dorgu Day 19/184/1-10.

³⁹ Secrett Day 17/101/3-8.

⁴⁰ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] p. 8.

⁴¹ Tillotson witness statement [MET000080603] p. 8.

⁴² Gallagher Day 39/20/21-25, 39/21/1-4.

⁴³ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] pp. 8-9.

⁴⁴ Gallagher Day 39/21-23.

Handover between WM Michael Dowden and SM Andrew Walton

- 13.20 Meanwhile, outside the building, SM Walton made his way to the bottom of the tower and met WM Dowden on the grass mound on the east side.⁴⁵ At around the same time, WM Stuart Beale also arrived at the south east corner of the tower and approached WM Dowden, who, as he recalled it, had been standing with SM Walton, WM Paul Sadler and possibly also WM Glynn Williams (who had gone into the tower at 01.55).⁴⁶
- 13.21 WM Beale said that he spoke to WM Dowden possibly just before the handover to SM Walton. WM Dowden did not ultimately give WM Beale any orders because as soon as WM Beale had presented himself, SM Walton arrived and WM Dowden proceeded to inform SM Walton what had happened up to that point.⁴⁷ WM Beale did not see the end of the handover, and was called away soon after by the crew of Soho's ALP (A245) who were setting up on the east side of the tower.⁴⁸ WM Beale said that it was in this way, "by default", that he became sector commander for the east side of the tower.⁴⁹ Since A245 arrived at the scene at 01.52, this exchange probably continued beyond that time.
- 13.22 In his evidence SM Walton said that he had asked WM Dowden for a "really quick and dirty handover", and in order to speed up the process, he started by telling WM Dowden what he already knew about the incident.⁵⁰ In oral evidence he explained that there were two things that he wanted to know from WM Dowden: first, whether people were really trapped in the building based on current conditions, or whether they only thought that they were trapped; secondly, whether the fire was getting back into the building.⁵¹
- 13.23 He said that, if people were genuinely trapped, evacuation was not an option due to the risk of death if they left their flats, and the firefighters would need to rescue them.⁵² SM Walton said that the number of FSG calls being received had suggested to him that people would need rescuing and that nobody could escape unaided,⁵³ but there was no indication from those calls that people were reporting smoke or fire inside their flats.⁵⁴ In order to establish that, he needed to know what the smoke and fire conditions were like in the lobbies and in the stairwell, which was the information that he had asked WM Dowden to provide.⁵⁵ It seems likely that at that time he assumed that the fire was confined to the exterior of the building, because he was probably the person with whom Laurence Ioannou, the LAS senior officer, had had a conversation to that effect at around 01.49. It is possible that SM Walton also told Mr Ioannou that the fire might be breaking back into the flats, in which case there would be multiple casualties to deal with.⁵⁶
- 13.24 SM Walton said that if the fire was getting back into the building, they were in big trouble, because that was "a game changer".⁵⁷ He said that WM Dowden had BA crews going into the tower to try to determine whether that had in fact happened.⁵⁸

⁴⁵ Walton Day 46/120/19-121/1.

⁴⁶ Beale Day 34/44/6-45/6.

⁴⁷ Beale Day 34/46-47.

⁴⁸ Beale Day 34/47/21-24.

⁴⁹ Beale Day 34/50/16-51/25.

⁵⁰ Walton Day 46/121/16-122/20.

⁵¹ Walton Day 46/131/13-132/4.

⁵² Walton Day 46/125/25-126/13.

⁵³ Walton Day 46/124/11-19.

⁵⁴ Walton Day 46/128/12-15.

⁵⁵ Walton Day 46/124/20-25.

⁵⁶ Walton witness statement [MET00010828] p. 27.

⁵⁷ Walton Day 46/130/25-131/8.

⁵⁸ Walton Day 46/131/13-132/11.

- 13.25 SM Walton thought that if people were genuinely trapped or the fire was re-entering the building, he was facing a Major Incident and that everyone in the tower would need to be evacuated.⁵⁹ However, WM Dowden did not have information about any of the operations inside the tower⁶⁰ and there was too much traffic on the radio to get a message to the bridgehead. SM Walton therefore asked WM Dowden, as his first task, to go to the bridgehead to get the information that he needed.⁶¹
- 13.26 SM Walton recalled WM Dowden telling him very briefly that it was cladding that was on fire; until then, he had assumed that it was balconies.⁶² His initial belief had been that the cladding could not be involved, because he did not think that it was permissible to clad a building in flammable material.⁶³
- 13.27 Having established that the fire was in the cladding, SM Walton and WM Dowden discussed how to tackle it. SM Walton said that he had already seen the turntable ladder applying water to the outside of the building and that WM Dowden had told him that he had sent an FRU crew to the roof to apply water from above. SM Walton agreed it was “worth a go”.⁶⁴ However, attempts to fight the fire externally were evidently having no effect and SM Walton felt that they needed to change tack and try to stop the fire getting back into the building.⁶⁵
- 13.28 There was no discussion about withdrawing the “stay put” advice. In the view of SM Walton, evacuation was not an option if the building had failed to the extent that there was no viable means of escape. He was increasingly coming to the conclusion that that is what had happened; he just needed information from the BA crews to confirm it.⁶⁶ SM Walton’s objective was for crews to be sent to every flat from which an FSG call had been made to find out whether the occupants were really trapped and, if they were, to work out what needed to be done in order to bring them out.⁶⁷
- 13.29 The handover did not include a discussion about responding to FSG calls either, because SM Walton was aware that another officer had already been assigned to that role and WM Dowden did not have the necessary information.⁶⁸ SM Walton intended to liaise with that officer after the handover from WM Dowden.⁶⁹ There was no discussion about the need for EDBA, though SM Walton said that it had been in the back of his mind.⁷⁰

Arrival of Soho’s ALP, A245

- 13.30 At around 01.52.53, while the handover from WM Dowden to SM Walton was taking place, Soho’s ALP, A245, arrived crewed by CM Christopher Frost and FF Jason King.⁷¹

⁵⁹ Walton Day 46/131/13-132/4.

⁶⁰ Walton Day 46/135/25-136/76.

⁶¹ Walton Day 46/132/12-133/9.

⁶² Walton Day 46/142/24-143/10.

⁶³ Walton Day 46/116/6-117/12.

⁶⁴ Walton Day 46/143/12-144/25.

⁶⁵ Walton Day 46/145/12-146/10.

⁶⁶ Walton Day 46/146/11-25.

⁶⁷ Walton Day 46/137/3-138/2.

⁶⁸ Walton Day 46/123/1-17.

⁶⁹ Walton Day 46/128/16-20.

⁷⁰ Walton Day 46/138/3-17.

⁷¹ ORR v 0.7 based on GPS data, p. 111.

- 13.31 On arrival CM Frost left the appliance to book in while FF King walked around the tower looking for somewhere to site the ALP. The only remaining option, due to the location of the playground and Paddington's turntable ladder, was on the east side on the grass and behind the trees. That is where they eventually positioned the ALP, about seven metres from the tower. SM Walton recalled seeing the ALP setting up as he was talking to WM Dowden.⁷²
- 13.32 FF King recalled that it took about seven minutes from arrival for the ALP to be set up.⁷³ FF Alan Sime, one of Chelsea's FRU crew who was yet to be given instructions and was waiting outside the tower with the rest of his crew, went over to assist CM Frost and FF King. FF Sime (an EDDBA wearer from the Chelsea FRU) helped lay out the hose in order to connect to a water supply and when that had been done, he entered the ALP's cage⁷⁴ with CM Frost. According to FF King, he had operated the controls from ground level while CM Frost and FF Sime had gone into the cage. That is consistent with the evidence of CM Frost, who said that he had gone into the ALP cage with another firefighter whom he did not know but who must have been FF Sime.⁷⁵
- 13.33 FF King recalled that they had tested the water pressure on the monitor at ground level and that it had seemed good enough. However, the pressure gradually decreased as the cage went up, to the point at which there was no flow of water by the time it had reached a height of around 15 metres.⁷⁶ WM Beale's evidence was that for optimum pressure, the monitor requires 2,240 litres of water per minute at 11.5 bars,⁷⁷ whereas the ALP was receiving only 381 litres per minute.⁷⁸
- 13.34 The firefighters also realised when they started to operate the ALP that it was stuck in the slower of the two available speeds, meaning that CM Frost, who was quite close to the tower, was being "pelted with debris" and could not take any action to move himself out of danger. On seeing that, WM Beale instructed the crew by radio to move the cage of the ALP down and away from the tower.⁷⁹
- 13.35 The built-in radio communications system on the ALP was also not working, meaning that the firefighters had to shout or use hand gestures in order to communicate with each other.⁸⁰

Arrival of SM Michael Mulholland

- 13.36 Meanwhile, SM Mulholland had arrived at the incident ground at 01.51.36.⁸¹ He was the first ORT officer to attend.⁸² He recalled that on seeing the building for the first time his initial thought had been that almost all the tower blocks in London are concrete and concrete does not catch fire. As he got closer, however, he realised that it was something on the outside of the building that was alight, but he did not know what.⁸³

⁷² Walton witness statement [MET00010828] p. 24.

⁷³ King Day 36/120/19-22.

⁷⁴ Sime witness statement [MET00010896] p. 4.

⁷⁵ King Day 36/120/23-121/10.

⁷⁶ King Day 36/121/11-24.

⁷⁷ Beale Day 34/64/23-65/2.

⁷⁸ King Day 36/121-122.

⁷⁹ Beale Day 34/78/6-12, 34/79/17-25.

⁸⁰ King Day 36/124/5-16; Beale Day 34/80/10-14.

⁸¹ SIL p. 13.

⁸² ORR v 0.7 p. 110.

⁸³ Mulholland Day 33/19/6-20/2.

SM Walton briefly in command; the arrival of DAC Andrew O’Loughlin and the second handover of incident command

- 13.37 DAC O’Loughlin arrived at the incident ground at around 01.55.⁸⁴ The FSG calls that he had heard while on his way had suggested to him that at least smoke must be getting into individual flats and that there was a risk that fire was also getting in,⁸⁵ either through open windows or by some other means.⁸⁶ He was not expecting the fire to have penetrated flats where the windows were closed and sealed, but stated that this was something that he needed to establish.⁸⁷ He was not expecting smoke to have penetrated from individual flats into the communal areas, but it would be necessary to establish with the incident commander the conditions in the lobbies and stairs.⁸⁸
- 13.38 From his first view of the tower on arrival he could not see whether the fire had penetrated any flats.⁸⁹ Nor did he know whether the fire could be contained or controlled in any way. He said that the LFB was unable to put out an external fire above floors 12 or 13 using its aerial appliances and that he would therefore need to rely on the fire burning out above that level. In oral evidence DAC O’Loughlin said that he had been expecting the cladding on Grenfell Tower to do that, once the fire had reached the top of the building.⁹⁰ However, he later said that until they were able to put out the fires within individual flats, he expected them to keep burning.⁹¹
- 13.39 Meanwhile, SM Walton, who was positioned at the south-east corner of the tower after having taken over command from WM Dowden, said he had given a JESIP command briefing to the LAS officer who had arrived at the incident ground. He had also sent WM Dowden to the tower to retrieve the information about BA deployments that he had asked for. He then looked around for someone to send to the command unit to identify a rendezvous point (RVP), which was needed for a METHANE message and the declaration of a Major Incident. As he was doing that, and as WM Dowden was walking back to the tower, SM Walton saw DAC O’Loughlin. DAC O’Loughlin estimated that this would have been around 01.58 or 01.59.⁹² Before they spoke, DAC O’Loughlin looked up at the tower and realised that the cladding was on fire.⁹³
- 13.40 SM Walton confirmed that he was the incident commander and had just taken over from WM Dowden. DAC O’Loughlin called WM Dowden over so that he (WM Dowden) and SM Walton could deliver a briefing together.⁹⁴ WM Mark Kentfield, who had accompanied DAC O’Loughlin to the base of the tower, was also there and was present during the handover.⁹⁵ SM Walton described it as a handover that he and WM Dowden had delivered jointly;⁹⁶ DAC O’Loughlin said that it had come predominantly from WM Dowden.⁹⁷

⁸⁴ O’Loughlin witness statement [MET00012563] p. 6; Day 47/82/20-83/1. DAC O’Loughlin did not book in with the control room and there is no recorded status 3 time for him.

⁸⁵ O’Loughlin Day 47/48/9-18, 47/50/8-25.

⁸⁶ O’Loughlin Day 47/52/7-53/1.

⁸⁷ O’Loughlin Day 47/52/7-53/1.

⁸⁸ O’Loughlin Day 47/54/16-56/23.

⁸⁹ O’Loughlin Day 47/71/5-24.

⁹⁰ O’Loughlin Day 47/72/7-75/24.

⁹¹ O’Loughlin Day 47/179/8-20.

⁹² O’Loughlin Day 47/82/14-83/1.

⁹³ O’Loughlin Day 47/83/13-23.

⁹⁴ Walton Day 46/150/25-155/11.

⁹⁵ O’Loughlin Day 47/97/16-98/1.

⁹⁶ Walton Day 46/154/22-155/13.

⁹⁷ O’Loughlin Day 47/96/25-97/2.

- 13.41 SM Walton recalled telling DAC O’Loughlin that the initial fire had been extinguished but that the fire was spreading on the outside of the building. He agreed that this might have suggested that the fire was only on the outside of the building.⁹⁸ DAC O’Loughlin asked WM Dowden what conditions were like on the inside, but WM Dowden could not tell him, since by that point he had not been inside the tower for some time.⁹⁹ For the same reason, WM Dowden was also unable to tell DAC O’Loughlin whether crews had been sent any higher than floors 5 or 6.¹⁰⁰
- 13.42 SM Walton said that he had told DAC O’Loughlin that a Station Manager was in charge of dealing with FSG calls,¹⁰¹ although DAC O’Loughlin’s understanding was that an officer had been given that task which he was carrying out from a pump, possibly G271.¹⁰² Nonetheless, DAC O’Loughlin understood that FSG calls were being dealt with, which is what he needed to hear, but he did not ask SM Walton or WM Dowden for any details, such as flat numbers, floor numbers, or the number of calls.¹⁰³ Similarly, there was no discussion about giving priority to those who, for one reason or another, might be particularly vulnerable.¹⁰⁴
- 13.43 Very early in the briefing, DAC O’Loughlin stopped the conversation and asked WM Kentfield to send a series of messages making the number of pumps up to 40, the number of FRUs up to six and four aerials.¹⁰⁵ He said that he had also considered declaring a Major Incident but had wanted to give it more thought before doing so.¹⁰⁶ The deployment of EDBA crews was not discussed in the course of the handover¹⁰⁷ but DAC O’Loughlin said that he had wanted more available to respond to FSG calls from the higher floors.¹⁰⁸ Those make-up messages were not in fact sent.
- 13.44 There was no discussion about “stay put” during the briefing and DAC O’Loughlin said that he had considered that there was no point in changing the policy for those whose flats were unaffected by the fire and smoke.¹⁰⁹ He had expected that anyone who was affected would be told to leave and that those who were not affected would be safer remaining where they were.¹¹⁰ He said that his strategy from the outset had been to evacuate the entire building, but that he had thought that it might be necessary to tell some residents to stay put until they could be evacuated safely. He had intended to give priority to rescuing the occupants who had made FSG calls and those in flats on the north-east section of the tower, before clearing the other areas systematically floor by floor.¹¹¹
- 13.45 DAC O’Loughlin asked WM Dowden how many people were still in the building, but WM Dowden did not know. DAC O’Loughlin estimated that there were between 100 and 200.¹¹² He did not ask WM Dowden for any building plans, nor did he ask whether there was a premises information box.¹¹³

⁹⁸ Walton Day 46/156/24-157/10.

⁹⁹ O’Loughlin Day 47/94/23-95/3.

¹⁰⁰ O’Loughlin Day 47/131/20-132/18.

¹⁰¹ Walton Day 46/160/7-20.

¹⁰² O’Loughlin Day 47/104/7-105/14.

¹⁰³ O’Loughlin Day 47/106/13-24.

¹⁰⁴ O’Loughlin Day 47/119/5-120/12.

¹⁰⁵ O’Loughlin Day 47/106/2-10, 47/141/15-21, 47/144/3-8.

¹⁰⁶ O’Loughlin Day 47/153/4-17.

¹⁰⁷ O’Loughlin Day 47/143/2-23.

¹⁰⁸ O’Loughlin Day 47/134/12-135/25.

¹⁰⁹ O’Loughlin Day 47/137/6-16; Walton Day 46/161/1-5.

¹¹⁰ O’Loughlin Day 47/138/1-12.

¹¹¹ O’Loughlin Day 47/160/18-162/22.

¹¹² O’Loughlin Day 47/121/21-122/20.

¹¹³ O’Loughlin Day 47/140/8-19.

13.46 DAC O’Loughlin estimated that the briefing had lasted four to five minutes;¹¹⁴ SM Walton thought it had lasted about 90 seconds and not more than two minutes.¹¹⁵ In my view neither estimate is likely to be very accurate. I think that it probably lasted for between two and three minutes, because DAC O’Loughlin said that he had first seen SM Walton at around 01.58 or 01.59 and SM Walton subsequently entered the tower at 02.02. Once the briefing was over, DAC O’Loughlin directed SM Walton to take on the role of Fire Sector Commander and, together with WM Dowden, to establish what firefighting had been carried out and what the conditions were inside the building.¹¹⁶ At that point, at around 02.02, WM Dowden and SM Walton went into to the tower¹¹⁷ and DAC O’Loughlin returned to CU8 accompanied by WM Kentfield.

Deployment of FFs Katie Foster and Gregory Lawson

- 13.47 Back inside the tower, FFs Foster and Lawson tallied out at 01.53.45 and 01.53.50 respectively,¹¹⁸ having been briefed to go to floor 18. The crew did not recall having been given any specific flat number or any details about how many residents were there.¹¹⁹
- 13.48 The crew reached floor 18 and carried out a sweep of the flats. There was no answer at the first flat they went to (now known to be Flat 151) and the door was locked.¹²⁰ The door of the second flat (now known to be Flat 152) was opened by a woman now known to be Rabia Yahya. The firefighters went inside and found the air clean. There were three children present. The firefighters told the woman to put towels under the door to stop smoke coming in and left to check the next flat.¹²¹
- 13.49 The door to the third flat (now known to be Flat 153) was opened by a man who told the firefighters that there were five people inside. The firefighters did not enter the flat, but gave him the same advice as they had given to the woman in Flat 152.¹²²
- 13.50 The door of the next flat (now known to be Flat 154) was open. The firefighters carried out a search inside, where it was pitch black and full of smoke, and found no one.¹²³ The door of the fifth flat that the firefighters went to (now known to be Flat 155) was also open with similar conditions inside.¹²⁴ Outside the final flat that the firefighters went to (now known to be Flat 156), FF Foster recalled unbearable heat¹²⁵ indicating that there was a fire inside. The crew did not force entry.¹²⁶
- 13.51 FFs Foster and Lawson decided that they could not try to get the nine people out of the building due to the conditions. They tried to pass the information back to the bridgehead by radio but were unable to do so. They were low on air and needed to make their way back down. They could not recall returning to any of the flats to tell the residents that this was what they were doing.¹²⁷

¹¹⁴ O’Loughlin Day 47/110/6-12.

¹¹⁵ Walton Day 46/155/18-22.

¹¹⁶ O’Loughlin Day 47/116/6-12.

¹¹⁷ ORR v 0.7 p. 128.

¹¹⁸ BA Telemetry [LFB00003115].

¹¹⁹ Foster Day 39/101/14-20, 39/133/10-21.

¹²⁰ Foster Day 39/105/19-21.

¹²¹ Foster Day 39/106/1-107/22.

¹²² Foster Day 39/110/11-21.

¹²³ Foster Day 39/112/20-113/15.

¹²⁴ Foster Day 39/113/16-25.

¹²⁵ Foster witness statement [MET00010084] p. 8 and Foster Day 39/114/4-16.

¹²⁶ Foster witness statement [MET00010084] p. 8.

¹²⁷ Foster Day 39/114/18-116/13; Lawson Day 39/143/23-145/12.

WM De Silvo's arrival at the bridgehead

- 13.52 The CCTV recording in the ground floor lobby shows WM De Silvo entering the building at around 01.50.¹²⁸ From there she went up to the bridgehead on floor 2. WM O'Keeffe was already in charge there;¹²⁹ FFs O'Beirne and Alex De St Aubin were acting as entry control officers.¹³⁰ WM De Silvo did not recall who had briefed her,¹³¹ but WM O'Keeffe said that he had asked her to get a grip on the BA procedures and the handling of FSG calls.¹³² She also recalled that SM Walton had been there, but she cannot have been right about that, because he entered the tower at around 02.02, some time after her.
- 13.53 WM De Silvo's task was to keep a record of the FSG information received by the bridgehead.¹³³ For that purpose she was given a FIB which already contained a handful of entries in a list.¹³⁴ Her recollection was that at that initial stage, when the bridgehead was on floor 2, the FSG information had been coming by radio and on Control Information Forms¹³⁵ and perhaps on slips of paper as well.¹³⁶ That is broadly consistent with the evidence of WM Watson, who said that when he was managing the BA staging post from the ground floor (until around 02.00) he was not handling any FSG information, which was going directly to the bridgehead.¹³⁷ WM De Silvo did not know how FSG information had been reaching the bridgehead before she arrived.¹³⁸ She remembered having been in radio communication with WM Sadler (whose involvement is described in more detail in Period 5) at a later stage, but she did not know who had been sending her the earlier radio messages.¹³⁹ She continued to record information on the FIB while the bridgehead remained on floor 2 and said that she had not recorded any information on the wall.¹⁴⁰ However, a photograph of the wall on floor 2 where the bridgehead had been located shows that someone had written some FSG information on it. That was probably FF O'Beirne, whom WM O'Keeffe remembered having asked to do it:

¹²⁸ ORR v 0.7 p. 109.

¹²⁹ De Silvo Day 29/197/16-18.

¹³⁰ De Silvo Day 29/199/2-7.

¹³¹ De Silvo Day 29/199/21-200/11.

¹³² O'Keeffe Day 18/99/5-8.

¹³³ De Silvo Day 29/203/20-25.

¹³⁴ De Silvo Day 29/199/17-22, 29/202/9-12.

¹³⁵ De Silvo Day 29/211/4-23.

¹³⁶ De Silvo Day 29/217/5-218/3.

¹³⁷ Watson Day 28/45/7-12.

¹³⁸ De Silvo Day 29/200/6-11.

¹³⁹ De Silvo Day 29/212/6-19.

¹⁴⁰ De Silvo Day 29/215/17-216/9.

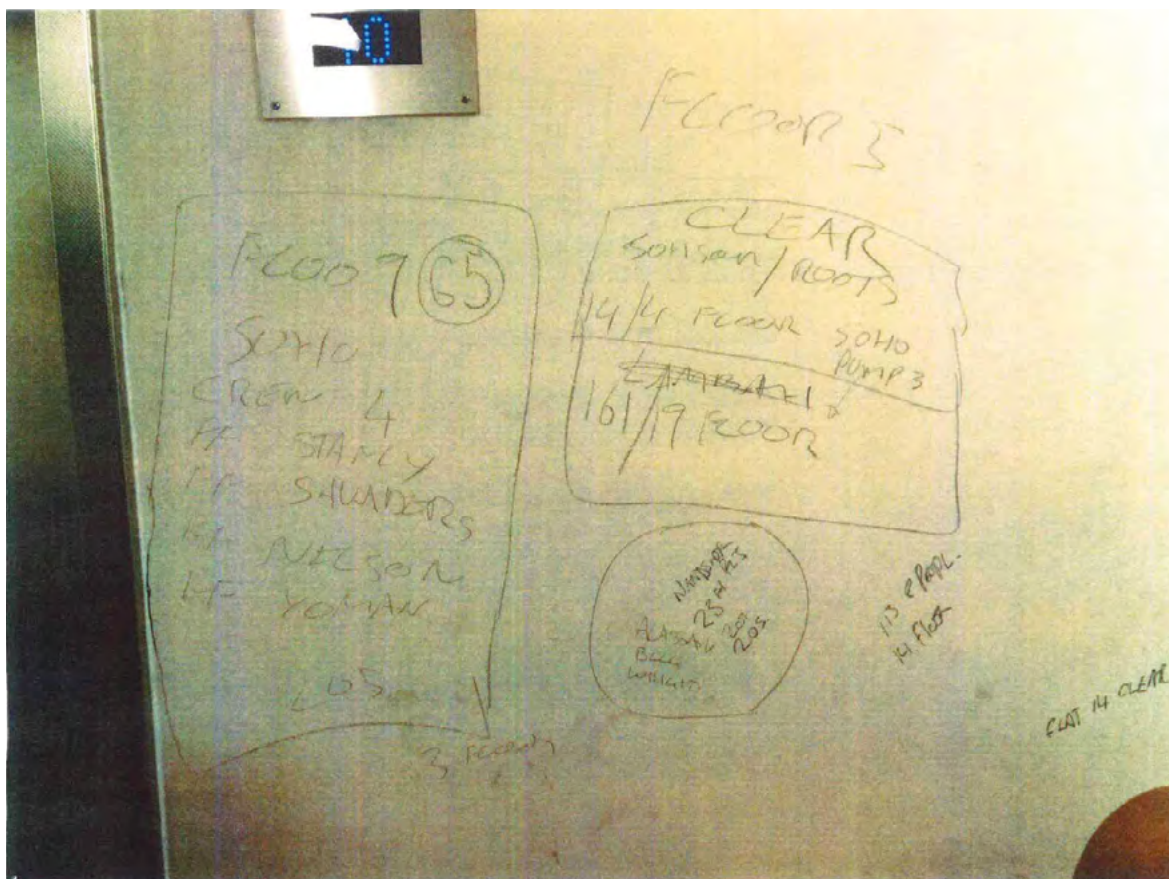


Figure 13.2

- 13.54 At about that time WM Watson moved the BA staging post from the ground floor lobby to the mezzanine on floor 2,¹⁴¹ with the bridgehead on the other side of the door. At that stage he was not yet carrying out any role in relation to FSG calls,¹⁴² but he recalled having seen CM Charles Batterbee go past him on the mezzanine and into the bridgehead carrying pieces of paper in his hand.¹⁴³
- 13.55 WM De Silvo attempted to ensure that priority was given to rescuing more vulnerable residents, but if the information available was limited to floor and flat numbers, she directed BA crews to those flats, which was all that she could do.¹⁴⁴ She said that there had been difficulties using channel 6 of the fireground radio to communicate with BA crews through BARIÉ sets, due to the level of feedback and the crews' inability to hear anything.¹⁴⁵ She had difficulty debriefing crews on their return to the bridgehead. If they had come across casualties, they needed to take them straight out into safe air,¹⁴⁶ and in many cases crews had

¹⁴¹ Watson Day 28/47/10-13: this time stamp is taken from the "end of wear time" for CM Matthew Sephton, at 01.57.00; WM Watson recalled CM Sephton drawing a plan of the floor layout on the wall of the floor 2 balcony when WM Watson's staging post was based there: Watson witness statement [MET00008044] p. 4. WM Watson estimated that the staging post had moved up there from the ground floor around five minutes prior to CM Sephton's "end of wear time": Watson Day 28/46/11-17.

¹⁴² Watson Day 28/51/18-52/17: WM Watson's FSG role started after WM Williams arrived in the ground floor lobby, around 15-20 minutes after WM Watson had set up his staging post on the floor 2 balcony.

¹⁴³ Watson Day 28/55/5-19.

¹⁴⁴ De Silvo Day 29/220/5-15.

¹⁴⁵ De Silvo Day 29/231/21-233/13.

¹⁴⁶ De Silvo Day 29/224/13-18.

returned exhausted and had been unable to provide any useful information.¹⁴⁷ She said that when information had been obtained from a returning crew it had been recorded, but there had been no system for passing it back to the incident commander.¹⁴⁸

AC Roe forwards SM Gareth Cook's email and attached photographs

- 13.56 At 01.56, AC Roe, who was on his way to the incident, forwarded SM Cook's email attaching the five photographs of the burning building to DAC O'Loughlin, DAC Richard Mills, DAC Adrian Fenton, GM Keeley Foster, who was Commissioner Dany Cotton's Staff Officer, and Director of Operations Tom George.¹⁴⁹ He said that he had wanted someone to discuss them with the Commissioner.¹⁵⁰

Arrival of WM Matt Leaver

- 13.57 WM Matt Leaver, the first fire investigator to arrive at the incident, arrived at 01.57.07.¹⁵¹ Almost as soon as he reached the incident ground it became clear to him that the firefighters did not have the capability to fight the fire.¹⁵²

Arrival of GM Richard Welch

- 13.58 GM Welch booked status 3 at 01.57.21¹⁵³ On arrival, he went straight to CU8. He caught a glimpse of the tower on his way, but was unable to see whether the fire had penetrated the flats.¹⁵⁴ GM Welch said that very shortly after he reached CU8 (which as he recalled had then been manned by only one officer), SM Mulholland, GM Matt Cook and GM Stephen West joined him. (GM Cook and GM West were both members of the ORT and had just arrived at the incident.)¹⁵⁵
- 13.59 Despite GM Welch's recollection, I am satisfied that WM Daniel Meyrick and WM Antony Peckham remained on CU8 throughout this period, collecting and recording FSG information that was coming in from the control room. At this time WM Kentfield and WM Norman Harrison were still on the incident ground; they returned to CU8 at around 02.00.

Arrival of SM Daniel Egan

- 13.60 At 01.58.39, just after GM Welch had arrived, SM Egan also booked status 3.¹⁵⁶ He had been mobilised as a Senior Fire Safety Officer, but had realised on hearing the radio messages on his way to the incident ground that there would be a need for more operational resources and that he was unlikely to be deployed in that capacity.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁷ De Silvo Day 29/227/7-229/2.

¹⁴⁸ De Silvo Day 29/225/3-19.

¹⁴⁹ [MET00016929].

¹⁵⁰ Roe Day 48/207/21-208/15.

¹⁵¹ ORR v 0.7 p. 119.

¹⁵² Leaver Day 40/101/9-13, 40/131/20-132/7.

¹⁵³ SIL p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ Welch Day 44/27/6-19.

¹⁵⁵ Welch Day 44/28/13-19; SM Mulholland thought that he was the first to arrive at CU8, with GM Welch arriving shortly thereafter: Mulholland Day 33/27/25-28/5.

¹⁵⁶ SIL p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ Egan witness statement [MET00007515] pp. 1-2; Day 15/75/6-15.

- 13.61 His first thought on seeing the tower was that they needed to get everyone out. However, he did not share that thought with anyone else at the time because it seemed so obvious.¹⁵⁸ It was clear to him that the fire was moving from one side to the other, indicating that it must have jumped through the lobbies and that compartmentation had broken down.¹⁵⁹ In his view the firefighters were not going to be able to put it out.¹⁶⁰

SM Brett Loft finishes his FSG role

- 13.62 At the end of this period, at around 02.00, SM Loft ceased to be in charge of handling FSG information.¹⁶¹ His recollection was that GM Welch had approached him while he was still at the base of the tower and had asked him to return to the command unit in order to hand over that responsibility to the command unit staff and take over BA Main Control with SM Daniel Kipling.¹⁶² He went back to CU8 and handed over the paperwork to one of the officers there, although he did not recall who that had been.¹⁶³ As will be discussed in Period 5, his evidence on this point was not consistent with GM Welch’s recollection of the circumstances in which he was given the task of managing BA Main Control.

3 Conditions and movements inside the tower

The evidence of the firefighters

- 13.63 At the beginning of this period, when Paddington’s FRU crew first entered the stairwell without air, FF Gillam described the smoke as “grey and wispy”, not very hot and not very thick.¹⁶⁴ By the time they reached floor 4, however, the smoke was thick and grey and they could not breathe. Visibility was quite low.¹⁶⁵ Having returned to the bridgehead and tallied out under air at 01.57.02, CM Wigley recalled that the conditions had been bad around the fire floor and a few floors above, though the density of the smoke reduced as they had climbed higher to the point at which they probably could have removed their masks.¹⁶⁶
- 13.64 FF Merrion, who tallied out at 01.51.13, recalled smoke in the stairwell from at least floor 4 up to floor 14, where he entered the lobby. He did not think that residents on floor 14 would have been able to leave under those conditions.¹⁶⁷ The smoke in the stairwell was white,¹⁶⁸ thick and acrid¹⁶⁹ and, as FF Cornelius said: “you could not see your hand in front of your face”.¹⁷⁰ Conditions in the lobby on floor 14 were much clearer,¹⁷¹ but inside Flat 111 there was thick smoke, very dark grey and black.¹⁷²

¹⁵⁸ Egan Day 15/79/11-80/4.

¹⁵⁹ Egan Day 15/86/9-17.

¹⁶⁰ Egan Day 15/81/1-16.

¹⁶¹ Loft Day 37/157/14-21.

¹⁶² Loft Day 37/178/16-21.

¹⁶³ Loft Day 37/180/18-182/21.

¹⁶⁴ Gillam Day 27/63/21-25.

¹⁶⁵ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] pp. 7-8. FF Gillam confirmed in oral evidence that the crew did not enter the floor 4 lobby at any time and remained within the stairwell: Day 27/64/1-4.

¹⁶⁶ Wigley witness statement [MET00010927] p. 7.

¹⁶⁷ Merrion Day 38/11/8-14/20.

¹⁶⁸ Merrion witness statement [MET000086060] p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Murphy Day 38/38/14-20.

¹⁷⁰ Cornelius Day 38/79/22-23.

¹⁷¹ Merrion witness statement [MET000086060] p. 7; Cornelius Day 38/78/9-12.

¹⁷² Murphy Day 38/43/19-44/7.

- 13.65 FF Bettinson returned to the lobby on floor 9 at about that time. He described a rapid deterioration in conditions, with thick black smoke filling the area within 10 to 15 seconds so that he could no longer see his hand in front of his face. Flat 65, which the crew entered as the conditions in the lobby started to worsen, was, however, clear.¹⁷³
- 13.66 CM Secrett and FFs Badillo and Dorgu, who had gone to floor 20, described the stairwell as being completely filled with smoke that grew thicker and hotter as they descended.¹⁷⁴ CM Secrett said that it would not have been possible to go down the stairs without breathing apparatus and survive.¹⁷⁵
- 13.67 FF Foster described thick, black smoke with very poor visibility in the lobby on floor 18, but inside the flat that she and FF Lawson had entered the air was clear.¹⁷⁶

The evidence of the occupants

- 13.68 No occupants of the tower left the building during this period and there was a slight reduction in the number of calls received from those who remained inside.

Flat 65, floor 9

- 13.69 Sharon Laci lived in Flat 65 with her seven-year-old daughter.¹⁷⁷ On the night of the fire she had been woken by a loud bang. Thinking it was someone having a party, she went back to sleep. At around 01.30, she was woken again by heavy banging on the front door. There was no smoke in the flat when she opened her front door, but when she had done so she saw smoke filling the lobby. It was thick and black in colour and made her cough. She could not see anything. A smoke alarm in the flat hallway was activated. She shouted until she saw two firefighters wearing breathing apparatus, who then entered her flat. Other firefighters followed.¹⁷⁸
- 13.70 FFs Bettinson and Wolfenden were the first two firefighters to enter Flat 65.¹⁷⁹ They had tallied out at 01.41.55 and 01.40.35¹⁸⁰ respectively, indicating that they would have been on floor 9 rather later than Sharon Laci remembered. It was agreed that their colleagues, CMs Tillotson and Gallagher, would descend to collect spare BA sets.¹⁸¹ Sharon Laci got ready to leave while they waited for them to return. Dark grey smoke had entered the flat hallway from the lobby and the firefighters present blocked the front door.¹⁸²

Floor 12

- 13.71 At around 01.56 Karen Aboud and her two sons left Flat 92 to make their way out of the tower. Unfortunately, the conditions they encountered forced them to go back. On their return, Karen Aboud's elder son made a 999 call at 01.57.45¹⁸³ and Karen Aboud made another 999 call at 02.06.55.¹⁸⁴ Coincidentally, CRO Angie Gotts answered both calls. She was told that they had tried to go down but could not do so because of the amount of smoke. Karen Aboud's

¹⁷³ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] p. 8; Day 26/219/7-14.

¹⁷⁴ Badillo witness statement [MET00010080] pp. 7-8.

¹⁷⁵ Secrett Day 17/110/3-21.

¹⁷⁶ Foster Day 39/111/9-12, 39/106/10-14.

¹⁷⁷ Laci first witness statement [IWS00000818] p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ Laci first witness statement [IWS00000818] p. 6.

¹⁷⁹ Wolfenden first witness statement [MET00010831] p. 6.

¹⁸⁰ LFB Telemetry Data [LFB00003115].

¹⁸¹ Bettinson first witness statement [MET00007879] p. 8.

¹⁸² Laci first witness statement [IWS00000818] p. 7.

¹⁸³ [LFB00000335].

¹⁸⁴ [INQ00000371].

elder son said: “we couldn’t breathe”. Karen Aboud said that the lobby had been filled with thick white smoke which made it difficult to see. They had been able to reach the stairwell but the smoke was worse there. The stairwell was dark and it looked unsafe to go down, so they ran back to their flat.¹⁸⁵

13.72 Also on floor 12, Roy Smith and his family were still in Flat 95. Roy Smith had made his second 999 call at 01.44.33. He made his third and last call at 01.54.14. He said that conditions in his flat had worsened since his previous call. The smoke that had been present at the time of the second call had got darker. It had a horrible plastic smell. In spite of having wet towels over their faces, the whole family were coughing. Roy Smith noticed that the wall between his daughter’s bedroom and the adjacent flat (Flat 96) was hot to the touch, “like a radiator”. That made him think that the fire had spread from the kitchen of Flat 96.¹⁸⁶

13.73 Roy Smith’s last 999 call lasted for 40 minutes and 50 seconds. He spoke to CRO Peter Duddy. Early on in the call, Roy Smith told CRO Duddy:

- a. that he could hear the fire on the wall next door;¹⁸⁷ it had been making a roaring sound;¹⁸⁸
- b. that his whole flat was “black”;
- c. that the lobby was black and that he had heard people in the lobby screaming. He told CRO Duddy that these people “must have come out and then realised and gone back”;¹⁸⁹ and that
- d. the fire was “burning our windows”.¹⁹⁰

When he gave evidence, he said that when he had referred to fire at the windows, he was referring to burning on the outside of the windows.¹⁹¹

13.74 From the beginning of the call Roy Smith repeatedly asked CRO Duddy to send firefighters to help and was repeatedly told that they would get to him as soon as they could.¹⁹² When he suggested making for the stairs, CRO Duddy warned him of the risk that they might contain smoke. CRO Duddy then told him that he was as “safe as you can be” in the flat. Asked about these two exchanges, Roy Smith said his understanding of the advice he was being given at that point was that he should stay in his flat. That was his only chance of survival, because he had left it too late to leave.¹⁹³ I return to this call later in this Narrative.

Floor 19

13.75 At 01.56.20, CRO Christine Howson answered a 999 call from Nicholas Burton, who reported that there was a lot of smoke in the lobby and some smoke in his hallway which had come in when he opened his front door.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁵ Aboud second witness statement [IWS00000130] p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Smith [IWS00000771] p. 2; Smith Exhibit RS1 [IWS00000931] p. 2; Smith Day 64/69/3-72/12.

¹⁸⁷ [LFB0005503] p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ Smith Day 64/73/9.

¹⁸⁹ [LFB0005503] p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ [LFB0005503] p. 3.

¹⁹¹ Smith Day 64/77/18-79/11.

¹⁹² [LFB0005503] pp. 3, 4, 7, 10, 14, 23, 28, 32, 36.

¹⁹³ Smith Day 64/82/17-83/25.

¹⁹⁴ [LFB00000334].

- 13.76 That was the first 999 call made by Nicholas Burton. It is likely that he had opened his front door at around 01.30. He had not opened it again and smoke was not coming into his flat at the time he made his call.¹⁹⁵
- 13.77 CRO Howson told Nicholas Burton that firefighters would be “coming door to door to make sure everyone’s safe” and advised him to remain in his flat. He was reassured by that advice.¹⁹⁶

Floor 23

- 13.78 At 01.54.23, CRO Heidi Fox took a call from Mariem Elgwahry.¹⁹⁷ She said that she was one of seven people in Flat 205. When CRO Fox asked if they could get out, Mariem Elgwahry said that they were “stuck”. The flat was already full of smoke and the fire was approaching it; they could see flames outside the window. CRO Fox told Mariem Elgwahry that the firefighters were “trying to send people up” and that she would make them aware of her location and the urgency of the situation.

Flat 205, Floor 23

- 13.79 The Neda family took those who sought shelter in their flat into the living room.¹⁹⁸ Smoke slowly began to enter the flat beneath the front door. It was black in colour. Initially the smoke was light but as more came in it darkened. Within 10 to 15 minutes after the Elgwahrys, Sakina Afrasehabi and Fatemeh Afrasiabi had come into Flat 205, Farhad Neda noticed black marks around people’s noses. There was a mix of smells in the air, chemicals, wood and a metallic sourness. The hallway became completely black. The family opened windows on the west and north side of the flat to try to get some air.¹⁹⁹
- 13.80 When they saw smoke coming into the flat, the Nedas filled buckets with water from the kitchen sink. They threw water on the carpets and soaked towels to cover their mouths. Farhad Neda did not notice any problems with water pressure, although it was not something to which he paid particular attention.²⁰⁰ His mother recalled that they had managed to fill only a bucket before the water stopped. She estimated that this had happened about 20 minutes after the family had got back into the flat.²⁰¹
- 13.81 Farhad Neda was in contact with friends outside the tower, who were able to speak to firefighters and pass advice back to him. He also spoke directly with a firefighter, who gave him advice. The collective advice was to cover their faces with wet towels, wet the carpets, put wet towels against the door and remain in the flat until firefighters came.²⁰²
- 13.82 Solmaz Sattar, the niece of Fatemeh Afrasiabi, had several telephone conversations with her aunt during the course of the night. In one call, which occurred after Solmaz Sattar had reached the tower, her aunt said that she and her sister Sakina Afrasehabi were now in Flat 205. She must have made that call after 01.30, when they reached Flat 205. Fatemeh Afrasiabi told her niece that there was smoke but no fire in Flat 205. Solmaz Sattar passed the information she received from her aunt to a police officer and a firefighter standing nearby. The firefighter advised that those in Flat 205 should remain there and that they should make

¹⁹⁵ Burton Day 68/39/12-42/1.

¹⁹⁶ Burton Day 68/42/9-43/3.

¹⁹⁷ [LFB00000333].

¹⁹⁸ Farhad Neda Day 61/52/8-12.

¹⁹⁹ Farhad Neda Day 61/53/8-58/5; Flora (Shakila) Neda Day 61/138/3-61/141/14.

²⁰⁰ Farhad Neda Day 61/65/7-66/11.

²⁰¹ Flora (Shakila) Neda Day 61/141/20-61/143/4.

²⁰² Farhad Neda first witness statement [IWS00000886] p. 6; Flora (Shakila) Neda first witness statement [IWS00000887] p. 9.

everything wet, including themselves. Solmaz Sattar gave this information to her aunt, who told her they had made things wet. Later, Fatemeh Afrasiabi told her niece that the water supply had stopped.²⁰³

4 Events in the control room

- 13.83 During this period, the control room received eight more emergency calls: two from members of the public and six from, or on behalf of, trapped residents.²⁰⁴ Other calls came in from the Metropolitan Police, the London Ambulance Service and LFB senior officers. CROs Sarah Russell and Pam Jones were already engaged on long FSG calls at the start of this period, leaving only five CROs available to take those calls. CRO Aisha Jabin, in North West Fire Control, was also still on the phone speaking with Debbie Lamprell in Flat 201.
- 13.84 At 01.50.09, AOM Debbie Real called the MPS to tell them that it had become a 25 pump fire and that the control room was taking several calls from people trapped in flats.²⁰⁵ AOM Real was not aware that the MPS had already taken calls from residents trapped in flats or that LFB CROs had already spoken to the MPS about them.²⁰⁶
- 13.85 Also at 01.50.09, CRO Yvonne Adams made an admin line call to CU8 to pass on further FSG messages that she and CRO Jones (who was sitting next to her) had received.²⁰⁷ Just before she made the call, she had tried to pass these messages to OM Alexandra Norman, who was on the phone to CU8 (the call having started at 01.47.44) but when CRO Adams called across to OM Norman she had already put down the phone.²⁰⁸ OM Norman had not asked CRO Adams to pass on calls in that way;²⁰⁹ she used her initiative, as it seemed the quickest way of getting information to the incident ground when the radio was obviously very busy.²¹⁰ She said that she had believed that the landline, rather than the radio, was being used to pass on information about FSG calls at that time.²¹¹
- 13.86 In the admin line call, CRO Adams passed on information about Flat 133 on floor 16 and Flat 182 on floor 21. In relation to the call from the flat on floor 21, she told CU8 that the occupants had not been able to stop smoke coming under the front door. They had gone into their living room and they sounded “panicked”.²¹² In relation to Flat 133, she said: “my caller wasn’t too bad”.²¹³ During the call, WM Meyrick asked CRO Adams to give him some idea of the priority between the calls, because there were so many of them.²¹⁴ He asked her if the smoke seemed heaviest on floor 21; she said: “That’s the caller we’ve got at the moment”.²¹⁵ As I understand that answer, she meant “yes”. CRO Adams then asked WM Meyrick whether he wanted priorities based on the density of the smoke; he said he did.²¹⁶ She said that they would pass on calls on this basis.²¹⁷

²⁰³ Sattar first witness statement [IWS00000769] p. 4.

²⁰⁴ Control Report pp. 52-60.

²⁰⁵ Control Report p. 52.

²⁰⁶ Real Day 43/42/21-43/5.

²⁰⁷ Adams Day 80/57/1-14, 80/59/10-17.

²⁰⁸ Adams Day 80/57/1-14.

²⁰⁹ Norman Day 42/129/19-25.

²¹⁰ Adams Day 80/57/11-17.

²¹¹ Adams Day 80/57/11-17.

²¹² [INQ00000203].

²¹³ [INQ00000203].

²¹⁴ [INQ00000203].

²¹⁵ [INQ00000203].

²¹⁶ [INQ00000203].

²¹⁷ [INQ00000203].

- 13.87 It is likely that there was a degree of confusion between CRO Adams and WM Meyrick about what was wanted. CRO Adams explained in her oral evidence that she thought that he wanted her to decide in what order crews should respond to calls on the basis of the density of the smoke reported by callers.²¹⁸ However, WM Meyrick said in his evidence that he had not intended the control room to prioritise calls in that sense at all; he just wanted an idea of the conditions in different flats so that he and his colleagues on CU8 could determine the order in which they would send firefighters to them.²¹⁹ In the event, however, CRO Adams did not pass on WM Meyrick’s request for prioritisation to anyone else in the control room, including the supervisors. She said she had found it difficult to share the information when there was so much going on in the control room.²²⁰ WM Meyrick said that despite his request, he had never received enough information to allow him to set priorities.²²¹
- 13.88 At 01.51.13, CRO Fox created a service request relating to the call she had taken from Surrey Police at 01.48 about Denis Murphy in Flat 111 on floor 14.²²² She set out the full details of the call in the service request so that it could be passed over to the incident ground by CRO Sharon Darby.
- 13.89 At 01.51.16, as a result of speaking to Meron Woldeselassie Araya and Lina Hamide in Flat 74 on floor 10 at 01.47.49, CRO Gotts created a service request which read:
- “PEOPLE ON 10 TH FLOOR ARE ASKING TO LEAVE FLATS – CAN YOU CHECK THEM”.²²³
- 13.90 However, she did not obtain the flat number or the number of persons inside. She explained in evidence that her failure to do so was due to “the speed of knowing how many calls [were] waiting and just the pressure of work, really”.²²⁴ Meron Woldeselassie Araya had told her that there was smoke coming in to the flat and smoke in the corridor but that too was not included in the service request.²²⁵
- 13.91 Both service requests were passed to the incident ground by CRO Darby by radio at 01.53.05.²²⁶
- 13.92 At 01.51.42, CRO Fox took a call from MetCC who passed on a request from the National Police Air Support (NPAS) helicopter asking the LFB to monitor a particular radio channel so that the helicopter could speak directly to the LFB.²²⁷ CRO Fox confirmed that she would pass the message on over the radio.²²⁸ She created a service request at 01.55.01, which CRO Darby passed to the incident ground 30 seconds later.²²⁹
- 13.93 At 01.52.56, the LAS contacted the control room and told CRO Gotts that it was declaring a “significant incident”.²³⁰
- 13.94 At 01.54.04, it was recorded on the incident log that DAC Fenton was on his way to the control room as Duty DAC.²³¹

²¹⁸ Adams Day 80/65/3-21.

²¹⁹ Meyrick Day 20/74/11-19.

²²⁰ Adams Day 80/65/22-66/13.

²²¹ Meyrick Day 20/75/12-20.

²²² SIL p. 20 and [LFB00000327].

²²³ SIL p. 20.

²²⁴ Gotts Day 43/180/3-6.

²²⁵ [LFB00000330]; Exhibit LH/5 [IWS00001177] p. 12.

²²⁶ [LFB00002305].

²²⁷ [INQ00000368] and Control Report p. 52.

²²⁸ [INQ00000368].

²²⁹ SIL p. 20 and [LFB00002351].

²³⁰ Control Report p. 54 and refer to section 1.1 of the LAS Incident Response Procedures [LAS00000008] p. 21.

²³¹ SIL p. 20.

- 13.95 At 01.54.14, CRO Duddy received a call from Roy Smith in Flat 95 on floor 12. This was the third call from Roy Smith, who had already called at 01.38.37 and 01.44.43.²³² On the previous occasion he had also spoken to CRO Duddy, who had told him to call back if conditions got worse.²³³ Roy Smith began the call by saying “it’s getting worse”, to which CRO Duddy replied that he had already told crews exactly where he was.²³⁴ Roy Smith asked for the firefighters to come for him now and said that he could hear fire on the wall of the kitchen next door and that the whole of his flat was black.²³⁵ CRO Duddy asked him if he could get to another flat, but Roy Smith explained that he could not as it was “black out there” and he had heard people screaming on the landing. CRO Duddy then asked him about a banging sound that he had heard in the background and Roy Smith explained that there had been something like an explosion and the fire was now burning his windows.²³⁶
- 13.96 At 01.55.18 and 01.55.35, CRO Duddy created and then revised a service request to relay some details of his call from Roy Smith to CRO Darby. It said:
- “CALLER IN FLAT 95 FLOOR 12 HAS FLAMES COMING IN WINDOW.”
- He did not say how many people were in the flat or mention the smoke or fire conditions. CRO Darby passed the message to the incident ground at 01.56.23.²³⁷
- 13.97 CRO Duddy decided that he would stay on the line with Roy Smith for the duration of the call, which lasted approximately 40 minutes. During the course of the call, CRO Duddy constantly reassured Roy Smith that the firefighters knew where he was and that they were coming to him as soon as they could.²³⁸
- 13.98 At 01.54.23, CRO Gotts answered a call from Mariem Elgwahry in Flat 205 on floor 23.²³⁹ Mariem Elgwahry had already called twice before at 01.30.00 and 01.38.16, when CROs Duddy and Fox respectively had spoken to her.²⁴⁰ In this latest call she explained to CRO Gotts that the “fire’s starting to rise”, that the flat was already full of smoke and that she and the other six people with her were trapped and had “nowhere to go”.²⁴¹ CRO Gotts tried to reassure her by explaining that the control room was telling the incident ground again and again where people were and that the incident commander was trying to send firefighters up. Mariem Elgwahry then reported that the fire was “coming up to the floor” and that they could see the flames; she thought it was going to come through the window “in a second”.²⁴² CRO Gotts said that she would “reinforce” the urgency of the message to crews.²⁴³ CRO Gotts said that when she had ended the call, she had gone to check that the message about Flat 205 had been sent.²⁴⁴ Although she had not created a service request, a radio message was sent at 01.57.34 saying that:

“...the caller in flat 205 on the 23rd floor reports that the fire is coming right up to their flat.”²⁴⁵

²³² 01.38.37 [LFB00000318]; 01.44.43 [LFB00000324].

²³³ [LFB00000324] pp. 7-8.

²³⁴ [LFB00055503] p. 1.

²³⁵ [LFB00055503] p. 2.

²³⁶ [LFB00055503] pp. 2-3.

²³⁷ Radio message [LFB00002057].

²³⁸ [LFB00055503].

²³⁹ [LFB00000333].

²⁴⁰ 01.30 [LFB00000310]; 01.38 [LFB00000317].

²⁴¹ [LFB00000333] p. 2.

²⁴² [LFB00000333] p. 2.

²⁴³ [LFB00000333].

²⁴⁴ Gotts Day 43/186/6-20.

²⁴⁵ [LFB00002719].

It appears that CRO Gotts passed the message to CRO Darby to relay to the incident ground either orally or on a piece of paper.

- 13.99 At approximately 01.55, SM Jason Oliff arrived in the control room.²⁴⁶ He had been assigned the role of Officer of the Day. He spoke to OM Norman who asked him to contact DAC Lee Drawbridge as he was on recall, meaning he was off duty but could be recalled to a specific role during a Major Incident.²⁴⁷
- 13.100 At 01.56.20, Nicholas Burton called the control room from Flat 165 on floor 19.²⁴⁸ He explained that he could not go outside because there was too much smoke. CRO Howson, who answered the call, told him to stay where he was. He did not have any smoke in his flat at that time. CRO Howson told him that:
- “I’ll let them [the firefighters] know where you are. They will be coming door to door to make sure everyone’s safe. The fire is actually on the 4th floor, OK?”²⁴⁹
- She advised him to block the doors and windows and asked him to call back if anything changed.²⁵⁰
- 13.101 Between 01.57 and 02.02, SM Oliff tried to call DAC Drawbridge on his mobile nine times but could not get hold of him.²⁵¹
- 13.102 At 01.57.21, SOM Smith who was on her way to the control room called again by telephone to ask for the latest position.²⁵² She spoke to AOM Peter May, who explained that they were “snowed under”. SOM Smith asked if anyone had been on the calls for a long time, which would indicate that they were FSG calls, and AOM May confirmed that one of the CROs was on a long call but that it was difficult to get a handle on it.²⁵³
- 13.103 By this point, there were three CROs in the LFB control room who were on long FSG calls. CRO Russell had started a call with Jessica Urbano Ramirez in Flat 201 on floor 23 at 01.30 which lasted for 55 minutes until 02.25.²⁵⁴ CRO Jones had started a call with a member of the El Wahabi family in Flat 182 on floor 21 at 01.38.38, which lasted approximately 59 minutes, until 02.49.²⁵⁵ CRO Duddy had started a call only three minutes earlier, at 01.54.14, with Roy Smith in Flat 95 on floor 12, which lasted for 40 minutes until 02.24.²⁵⁶
- 13.104 As a result of the information she had received from Jessica Urbano Ramirez, CRO Russell created a service request at 01.58.48 alerting the incident ground to the presence of 11 people and a baby in Flat 201. Although she had previously created a service request in relation to 11 people in a flat on floor 23, she had not then known the number of the flat, nor had she been told about the baby. The message did not appear as an “updated” service request, because the service request created at 01.45.45 had already been completed by CRO Darby.²⁵⁷ CRO Darby passed the additional information to CU8 less than 20 seconds later.²⁵⁸

²⁴⁶ Oliff Day 23/54/9-12.

²⁴⁷ Oliff Day 23/55/10-23, 23/57/11-22.

²⁴⁸ [LFB00000334].

²⁴⁹ [LFB00000334] p. 2.

²⁵⁰ [LFB00000334] p. 3.

²⁵¹ Oliff telephone bill [MET00016910] and Oliff Day 23/55/10-23, 23/58/3-14.

²⁵² [INQ00000189].

²⁵³ [INQ00000189] and Smith Day 22/34/6-24.

²⁵⁴ [LFB00055504].

²⁵⁵ [LFB00055498].

²⁵⁶ [LFB00055505].

²⁵⁷ SIL p. 20 at 01.47.47.

²⁵⁸ Radio message [LFB00002786].

- 13.105 At 01.59.52, CRO Fox created a service request in relation to “a person with two children” trapped in Flat 203 on floor 23, as a result of a 999 call CRO Fox had received from a family member of Rania Ibrahim.²⁵⁹ CRO Darby passed the information to CU8 by radio a few seconds later.²⁶⁰
- 13.106 During this period, only North West Fire Control was asked to take calls on behalf of the LFB. It took two emergency calls, one that probably came from someone in the tower (although the line dropped out before any information could be obtained) and one from a member of the public reporting the fire.²⁶¹

5 Actions of the MPS, the LAS, RBKC and the TMO

- 13.107 At 01.52 the LAS told the LFB by telephone that it had declared a significant incident.²⁶² It appears that the MPS was also informed at about the same time.²⁶³
- 13.108 At 01.53.48, very shortly after his arrival, Detective Superintendent Paul Warnett put in place the Civil Contingencies Act command structure appointing himself MPS Gold Commander and Inspector Nicholas Thatcher Silver Commander.²⁶⁴ At this point, neither of them knew how many pumps the LFB had attending or whether the LFB had itself declared a Major Incident.²⁶⁵ In fact, as matters transpired, there was no contact between either the Gold or Silver MPS Commander and the LFB until Inspector Thatcher attended CU8 and spoke with DAC O’Loughlin at 02.39 around 40 minutes later.²⁶⁶
- 13.109 By 01.59 Ioannou of the LAS had set up a triage point and a casualty clearing area at the Kensington Leisure Centre.²⁶⁷ He confirmed that there was a significant incident and gave the METHANE message over his radio.

²⁵⁹ [LFB00000509]; SIL p. 21 for service request.

²⁶⁰ Radio message [LFB00001984].

²⁶¹ Control Report pp. 52-54.

²⁶² Woodrow witness statement [LAS000000009] p. 9.

²⁶³ CAD 247 p. 4; Woodrow Day 72/96/16-20.

²⁶⁴ CAD 482 pp. 8-9.

²⁶⁵ Thatcher Day 71(Mon)/61/24-62/4, 64/10-21.

²⁶⁶ Body-worn footage [INQ00000521]; Thatcher Day 71(Mon)/73/2-24.

²⁶⁷ Ioannou witness statement [MET00010862] p. 5. He says it was within 10 minutes of arriving and the 01.59 time mark is derived from that evidence.

Chapter 14

Period 5: 02.00-02.20

1 External fire spread

14.1 At 02.06 there were flames on the architectural crown to the south side of column C5 on the east face.¹ There were also flames immediately below the architectural crown at roof level between columns B5 and C5 (the two internal columns on the east face).² The following image was taken at 02.06 by the NPAS helicopter:³

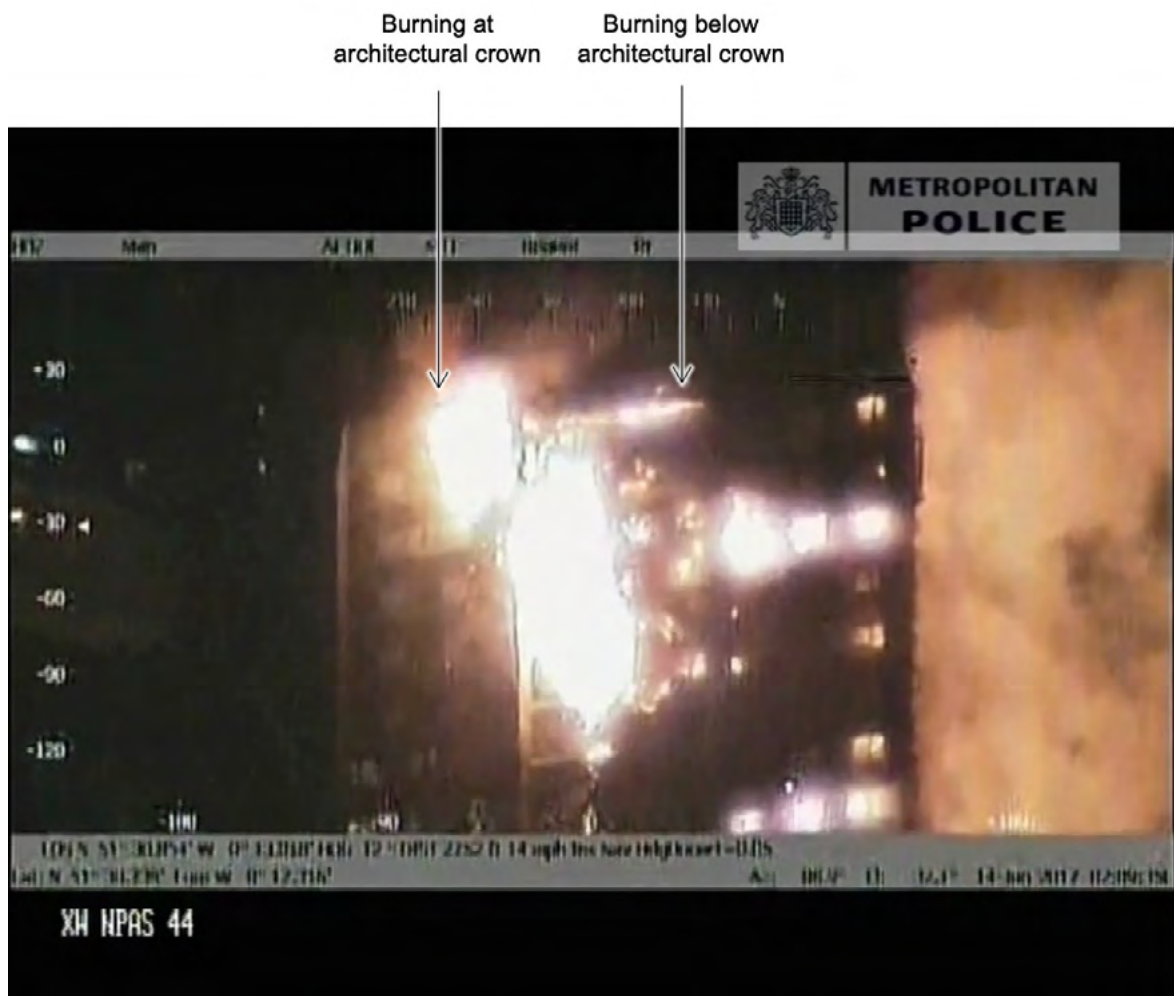


Figure 14.1

14.2 At 02.16 the furthest extent of the fire spread on the north face was at the location of the crown, with the fire front stretched diagonally across the face of the building,⁴ as can be seen in this image:⁵

¹ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 205 section 1002.

² Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 205 sections 1001-1003.

³ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 210 Fig. 128.

⁴ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 213 sections 1014-1016.

⁵ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000001] p. 216 Fig. 133.



Figure 14.2

- 14.3 By 02.09 to 02.10 a further “Flat 1” and several “Flat 2s” (flats in the south-east corner) had become affected by the spread of fire across the east face. They included Flat 141 on floor 17 and Flats 172, 182, 192 and 202 on floors 20 to 23. In addition, Flats 185, 195 and 205 on floors 21 to 23 in the north-west corner of the tower had also become affected by the external flame front as it moved west across the north face.
- 14.4 Between 02.01 and 02.14 smoke was emerging from Flat 94 on floor 12 on the west face of the tower.⁶ At 02.03 smoke could also be seen emerging from Flats 174 and 175 on floor 20.⁷

⁶ Professor Bisby supplemental report [LBYS0000005] 01.19, 01.44 and 01.52 minutes into the compilation of the west face and refer also to Professor Torero supplemental report [JTOS0000001] p. 89 Fig. 52.

⁷ Professor Torero supplemental report [JTOS0000001] p. 89.

2 Events on the incident ground

SM Andrew Walton and WM Michael Dowden enter the ground floor lobby – smoke control system

- 14.5 At the base of the tower, following the second handover of incident command, SM Walton made his way to the main entrance, having been briefed to take over the fire sector by DAC Andrew O’Loughlin. It is likely that at that point he saw SM Brett Loft for the first time since their earlier mobilisation from Fulham and that he stopped to ask SM Loft whether he had a good communication link with the bridgehead to pass FSG information. SM Loft confirmed that he did. SM Walton told SM Loft who the incident commander was so that they could discuss the current situation in relation to FSG calls.⁸
- 14.6 CCTV images show SM Walton entering the tower at around 02.02 accompanied by WM Dowden and WM Glynn Williams.⁹ As he crossed the ground floor lobby, SM Walton recognised the layout and recalled that he had been inside the building before for a demonstration of the smoke control system. His evidence was that he had seen the panel on the wall and had asked WM Dowden whether it related to the smoke control system and whether it was working.¹⁰ WM Dowden could not recall if SM Walton had asked him that,¹¹ but did recall going up to the panel, noting that the door was open, and taking the keys that were hanging from it.¹² He then saw that the smoke vent point was on automatic, which is the setting that causes the system to operate automatically when smoke is detected in one of the lobbies. He considered changing the setting to manual, in order “to try and clear the stairwell of any smoke”, but ultimately decided not to do so, because that should be a decision for the responsible person or one of the LFB’s trained fire safety officers. He did not take any steps to find out who was the safety officer on duty.¹³
- 14.7 WM Dowden then returned the keys to the panel and recalled having told SM Walton that he was not going to activate the system manually.¹⁴ WM Dowden gave him to understand that the system was not working.¹⁵ WM Dowden said in his evidence that he did not recall having tried to “actuate” the panel.¹⁶ SM Walton himself did not approach the panel¹⁷ and simply assumed that WM Dowden, who had his back to him, had attempted to operate the system. However, from where he was standing, he could not see what WM Dowden had done.¹⁸ He did not try to find out who the responsible person was either, as he was concentrating on taking over as fire sector commander. He said that he had assumed that the incident commander “would be going through those sort of processes”.¹⁹
- 14.8 As a result of this exchange, SM Walton decided that the LFB could not rely on any of the systems in the building. He still needed to confirm the nature of conditions inside the building, but by then he had already concluded that the design of the building had failed. He thought it

⁸ Walton supplemental witness statement [LFB00023365] paragraph 33.

⁹ ORR v 0.7 p. 128. SM Walton could not recall whether he entered with WM Dowden or whether they went in separately, and he did not mention WM Williams: Walton Rule 9 statement [LFB00023365] paragraph 33.

¹⁰ Walton supplemental witness statement [LFB00023365] paragraph 40.

¹¹ Dowden Day 10/135/9-18.

¹² Dowden witness statement [MET00010915] pp. 9-10.

¹³ Dowden Day 10/132-133/1-25.

¹⁴ Dowden Day 10/134/5-12.

¹⁵ Walton supplemental witness statement [LFB00023365] paragraph 42; Dowden Day 10/135/20-25.

¹⁶ Dowden Day 10/136/6-10.

¹⁷ Walton supplemental witness statement [LFB00023365] paragraph 41.

¹⁸ Walton Day 46/168/5-11.

¹⁹ Walton Day 46/169/13-25.

likely that the escape routes had been compromised and were unlikely to be passable without BA. If fire and smoke had penetrated the interior of the building, it might be spreading to several compartments on several levels. SM Walton concluded that:

“everyone who was in the building could now effectively be considered as trapped . . . and that they required rescue by firefighters in BA . . . if they were going to get out.”²⁰

SM Walton’s brief command of the fire sector

14.9 Immediately after that, SM Walton made his way from the ground floor lobby to the bridgehead on floor 2. CCTV images show him entering the stair lobby with WM Williams at around 02.02.²¹ He then entered the bridgehead and spoke to WM Brien O’Keeffe, who confirmed that he was in charge. SM Walton said that he asked WM O’Keeffe the questions that he had already discussed with WM Dowden. As he put it:

“I want to know about the FSGs, are we getting BA to them? Are they trapped or do they think they’re trapped? If they’re trapped, what do we need to bring them out? I want to know are we getting BA to this [east] face? ... I want to know if this fire which is going up the outside of the building is getting back in. If it’s getting back in, can we stop it? If we’re going to stop it, what do we need? Once you’ve got that, I want to know how many BA are in, where are they, what are their priorities, where do we know is searched...”²²

14.10 SM Walton told WM O’Keeffe that he would return in a couple of minutes, when he would want answers to his questions, and then moved on to speak to WM Louisa De Silvo.²³ Ultimately, he did not get the information he wanted from WM O’Keeffe, because he was then given the task of managing BA resources when GM Richard Welch arrived (considered in more detail below).²⁴

14.11 SM Walton’s recollection of his conversation with WM O’Keeffe is not consistent with that of WM O’Keeffe. WM O’Keeffe recalled that when SM Walton had arrived at the bridgehead he had appeared agitated and that they had had “a robust discussion”, during which WM O’Keeffe recalled “firmly telling him” that he was in charge of the bridgehead and that they would not be moving downstairs (which is what, as he recalled, SM Walton had wanted).²⁵ WM O’Keeffe said that he had told SM Walton that there were numerous FSG calls and that he had assumed that SM Walton would obtain the details from someone else. SM Walton then left²⁶ and WM O’Keeffe did not see him again.²⁷

14.12 Although nothing of any importance turned on this difference of recollection, on balance I think that WM O’Keeffe’s account of that exchange is more reliable, first, because it is supported by the evidence of SM Gareth Cook, who said that, when he had arrived at the bridgehead with GM Welch, WM O’Keeffe and SM Walton were having “some sort of disagreement”;²⁸ and secondly, because I think it unlikely that SM Walton would have sought to divert WM O’Keeffe’s attention away from the bridgehead to obtaining the kind of strategic information he described. WM O’Keeffe struck me as a robust and confident character, who, having been put in charge of the bridgehead, would not take kindly to having his judgement questioned, even by a more senior officer.

²⁰ Walton supplemental witness statement [LFB00023365] paragraph 43.

²¹ ORR v 0.7 p. 128.

²² Walton Day 46/179/11-180/12.

²³ Walton Day 46/180/16-20.

²⁴ Walton Day 46/184/15-19.

²⁵ O’Keeffe Day 18/175/7-176/8.

²⁶ O’Keeffe Day 18/176/16-177/1.

²⁷ O’Keeffe witness statement [MET00013967] p. 12 and Day 18/178/20-22.

²⁸ Cook witness statement [MET00007882] p. 6.

- 14.13 WM Williams said that on entering the tower he had gone to the bridgehead, where he saw the FSG information recorded on WM De Silvo's FIB. He thought that there were about 10 FSG calls recorded on the FIB. He had been expecting the list to be longer, given that the right side of the building was alight.²⁹ The relatively small number of FSG calls led him to think that the fire had not penetrated the inside of the building.³⁰

Arrival of GM Matthew Cook

- 14.14 At around 02.00, GM Cook, who had arrived a few minutes earlier and was rigging up at his car, received a call from AC Andrew Roe who was still on his way to the incident. GM Cook in his statement said that AC Roe had instructed him to speak to the incident commander to find out whether the LFB was facing a Major Incident, and if so, to ensure that the necessary protocols were followed to alert all emergency responders.³¹
- 14.15 AC Roe described this conversation as a "situational update", on the basis of which he felt almost certain that it was a Major Incident, though he could not take the decision remotely.³²
- 14.16 GM Stephen West arrived at the incident at around the same time as GM Cook,³³ parked behind him, and then went with him to CU8 to check in.

GM Welch on CU8 and the sequence of events

- 14.17 GM Welch said that an officer on CU8 (probably WM Meyrick) had told him that he was the first GM in attendance.³⁴ He also said that he had asked the officer who was in charge and had been told that it was SM Loft.³⁵ WM Meyrick, for his part, said that he did not recall SM Loft's involvement in the incident and had not been told that SM Loft was incident commander.³⁶
- 14.18 WM Meyrick remembered GM Welch arriving on CU8 and asking him to send messages declaring a Major Incident, declaring him incident commander and making pumps 40.³⁷ In oral evidence, GM Welch said that he had asked the officer to send those messages and a message requesting four command units³⁸ before he had received any kind of handover from SM Loft,³⁹ and indeed before he had spoken to SM Loft at all.⁴⁰ It was GM Welch's evidence that soon after he had asked for those messages to be sent, SM Loft had arrived at CU8.⁴¹
- 14.19 SM Michael Mulholland was also on CU8 at that time. His recollection was that he had arrived just before GM Welch and that there had been only one officer on the command unit when he entered it. He said that he had gone over to the CSS in order to look at the list of officers attending the incident and that, about 30 seconds to a minute thereafter, GM Welch had entered with SM Loft. SM Mulholland did not then look at the list of attending officers.⁴² He did not know what SM Loft's role was,⁴³ but said that it had been clear to him

²⁹ Williams Day 31/35/19-36/14.

³⁰ Williams Day 31/37/8-19.

³¹ Cook witness statement [MET00007948] p. 3.

³² Roe Day 48/219-220.

³³ According to the SIL (p. 13) he was status 3 at 02.00.41.

³⁴ Welch Day 44/32.

³⁵ Welch Day 44/29.

³⁶ Meyrick Day 20/92, 141.

³⁷ Meyrick Day 20/77-79.

³⁸ Welch Day 44/36.

³⁹ Welch Day 44/34.

⁴⁰ Welch Day 44/36.

⁴¹ Welch Day 44/36-37.

⁴² Mulholland Day 33/25-26.

⁴³ Mulholland Day 33/28-29.

that WM Dowden was the incident commander at the time. SM Mulholland recalled that GM Welch had sent a message that he was taking over command while the three of them (SM Mulholland, GM Welch, and SM Loft) were gathered in the command unit.⁴⁴ By contrast, SM Loft's evidence, as already noted, is that he was approached by GM Welch while he was still at his post on the south side of the tower managing FSG calls. That was at around 02.00. SM Loft said that GM Welch had told him to return to CU8, which he then did.⁴⁵

- 14.20 I can well understand how recollections of events that took place in hectic and very demanding circumstances can vary, but in this case both GM Welch and SM Mulholland recall that SM Loft was present on CU8 with GM Welch. They were both clear and consistent witnesses and in the light of the evidence as a whole I think their evidence is to be preferred.

GM Welch on CU8: the four radio messages

- 14.21 It was GM Welch's evidence that when he had asked for the four messages to be sent, just before SM Loft's arrival at CU8, he had not at that point stood back and taken a look at the tower. He acted on the basis of what he had seen while he was walking up to the tower and what he had heard over the radio.⁴⁶ The available records indicate that the messages were not transmitted simultaneously and not from the same command unit. The first message to be sent was "make pumps 40". It was sent at 02.03 from CU7.⁴⁷ The second message declaring GM Welch incident commander was sent just 30 seconds later, also from CU7.⁴⁸ The third message, requesting four command units, was sent two minutes later at 02.05 from CU8.⁴⁹ The fourth message, declaring a Major Incident, was sent a minute after that at 02.06, also from CU8.⁵⁰
- 14.22 The audio recordings of these transmissions were played to GM Welch at the hearing, but he was unable to explain why the first two had been sent from CU7 and the second two from CU8 and could not identify who was speaking in any of them.⁵¹ The recordings are sufficiently clear, however, to enable me to be satisfied that the voice that can be heard in the messages sent from CU7 is not the same as that which can be heard in the messages sent from CU8. It is equally clear, however, that the same officer on each command unit sent both messages from their respective units.

GM Welch on CU8: "make pumps 40"

- 14.23 GM Welch said that he had increased the number of appliances in attendance because he had realised that it was clearly going to be a large firefighting operation, as the majority, if not all, of the east side of the building was alight. He did not recall whether the north side was also alight at that time and felt that the reference in the PRC notes to the tower being "fully engulfed in fire" had been intended to refer to the one side that he could see at that time, rather than the entire building.⁵²
- 14.24 GM Welch also confirmed, as is recorded in the PRC notes, that when he had asked for the make-up message to be sent, he still thought that the fire was on the external face of the building only.⁵³ He did not recall having heard any messages about the fire being within the

⁴⁴ Mulholland Day 33/32.

⁴⁵ Loft Day 37/178.

⁴⁶ Welch Day 44/46.

⁴⁷ Radio transcript [LFB00002631].

⁴⁸ Radio transcript [LFB00002730].

⁴⁹ Radio transcript [LFB00003063].

⁵⁰ Radio transcript [LFB00003015].

⁵¹ Welch Day 44/39-44.

⁵² Welch Day 44/46-48.

⁵³ Welch Day 44/55.

higher floors of the building and had not thought to establish what conditions were like inside the building.⁵⁴ He did not seek to find out from the bridgehead whether crews were in fact rescuing occupants successfully at that point, nor whether they were experiencing difficulties getting to the higher floors. He said that he had based his decision on “planning for a worst-case scenario”.⁵⁵ He was satisfied that 40 pumps would be enough as the crews were intended primarily for use in search and rescue operations and, if it were possible, external firefighting.⁵⁶ GM Welch later said that he had even thought that he was asking for more resources than he might need.⁵⁷

- 14.25 GM Welch said that he was aware that more EDBA resources would be on their way, because, as he understood it, declaring a 40-pump fire automatically resulted in sending a certain number of FRUs as part of the predetermined mobilisation response.⁵⁸ However, he did not know exactly how many FRUs were involved in the pre-determined attendance linked to a request to make pumps 40,⁵⁹ and did not establish how many FRUs had already been called for.⁶⁰ On the other hand, he was aware that some EDBA crews were already present and that a decision could be made about asking for more, once he had been able to gather further information from inside the tower.⁶¹
- 14.26 GM Welch did not in fact ask for more FRUs to attend when he was on CU8, but a request was later made by DAC O’Loughlin at 02.11.02 to make FRUs 6. At that stage, nothing was done to monitor the number of EDBA wearers that might be required.⁶²

GM Welch declares himself incident commander

- 14.27 GM Welch said that he had made the decision to assume command of the incident before receiving handover advice from SM Loft because he had recognised that it was a Major Incident. He had felt that the most important thing was to implement the procedure and to get more resources on the way. He would still be able to receive a handover from SM Loft while waiting for them to arrive.⁶³ He was clear that he had not met SM Loft outside the tower before he went to the command unit, contrary to SM Loft’s recollection.⁶⁴

GM Welch’s declaration of a Major Incident

- 14.28 Once GM Cook was on CU8, both he and GM Welch agreed that this was a Major Incident, which was then immediately declared.⁶⁵ SM Mulholland was also involved in that discussion.⁶⁶ GM Welch said that the declaration was made on the basis that the LFB was going to require assistance from many other agencies.⁶⁷

⁵⁴ Welch Day 44/56.

⁵⁵ Welch Day 44/57-58.

⁵⁶ Welch Day 44/49-50.

⁵⁷ Welch Day 44/81.

⁵⁸ Welch Day 44/50. PN412 suggests that this view is not correct as there is a trigger for one FRU when a fire is declared 13 pumps and over: [LFB00001531] p. 19.

⁵⁹ Welch Day 44/51.

⁶⁰ Welch Day 44/53.

⁶¹ Welch Day 44/52, 54.

⁶² Welch Day 44/50-51.

⁶³ Welch Day 44/36-38.

⁶⁴ Welch Day 44/69.

⁶⁵ Cook witness statement [MET00007948] p. 4; Welch Day 44/47.

⁶⁶ Mulholland Day 33/34.

⁶⁷ Welch Day 44/47.

- 14.29 GM Welch then asked GM West to send a METHANE message from CU8. He confirmed in oral evidence that he had been aware that it had not been sent during the short period in which he had been incident commander, but did not know whether it had been sent later on.⁶⁸ There is in fact no record of any METHANE message having been sent at any point during the incident.

GM Welch receives a handover from SM Loft

- 14.30 GM Welch said in evidence that when SM Loft stepped onto CU8, after GM Welch had requested that the four radio messages be sent, he asked him to “Tell me what you know”.⁶⁹ He accepted that he should have asked for “a formal handover”, since that might have prompted SM Loft to explain that he was not in fact the incident commander.⁷⁰ Nor did GM Welch actually ask SM Loft if he was the incident commander. He had no recollection of SM Loft having told him that he had until then been in charge of managing FSG calls.⁷¹
- 14.31 GM Welch said that SM Loft had told him very little by way of a handover, because he knew very little.⁷² He recalled SM Loft having told him that they were dealing with numerous FSG calls, that the fire was on the outside of the building, and that they were trying to fight it externally. On the other hand, he was not told that the only way out of the tower was by a single staircase.⁷³ GM Welch did not seek more information about the internal layout of the building, either by asking for plans or by seeking to establish whether there was a premises information box.⁷⁴ SM Loft’s evidence was that the only discussion with GM Welch had taken place at the foot of the tower and had involved GM Welch asking whether there were BA crews above the fire floor.⁷⁵ By contrast, GM Welch had no recollection of any of that being part of their discussion, which, as he recalled it, had in any event taken place on CU8.⁷⁶ GM Welch said that he had been left with the impression that SM Loft had not been there very long⁷⁷ and he accepted that he (GM Welch) had assumed command on the basis of very limited information.⁷⁸ In any event, SM Loft had little information to give GM Welch, who assumed command on that basis.
- 14.32 SM Loft was unable to provide GM Welch with any details about the position in relation to FSG calls.⁷⁹ He did not tell him that there were people trapped in their flats by fire, heat or smoke, nor did he have any information about conditions inside the tower.⁸⁰ GM Welch accepted that he had not attempted to find out from the officer in command of CU8 what information he had received from the control room. When he was asked what steps were being taken on the incident ground to record how individual FSG calls had been resolved so that the information could be passed back to the control room,⁸¹ GM Welch agreed that he had assumed that, because FSG calls were being received, crews were dealing with them effectively. In oral evidence, he said:⁸²

⁶⁸ Welch Day 44/60.

⁶⁹ Welch Day 44/31.

⁷⁰ Welch Day 44/66/24-67/3. SM Loft said that GM Welch did not use the words “I’m taking over command” (Loft Day 37/180).

⁷¹ Welch Day 44/66-68.

⁷² Welch Day 44/31, 33.

⁷³ Welch Day 44/75.

⁷⁴ Welch Day 44/74.

⁷⁵ Loft Day 37/175, 179.

⁷⁶ Welch Day 44/83-84.

⁷⁷ Welch Day 44/71.

⁷⁸ Welch Day 44/75.

⁷⁹ Welch Day 44/81.

⁸⁰ Welch Day 44/73.

⁸¹ As is required under PN790, at paragraphs 9.1-9.3.

⁸² Welch Day 44/92.

“I knew that we were receiving them. I had absolute faith in the officers on the incident ground that they would be addressing that and trying to reach those people. If they weren’t, the first thing they would do is let us know they were unable to do that.”⁸³

- 14.33 The PRC notes record that GM Welch thought FSG calls would be dealt with quite quickly.⁸⁴ GM Welch agreed that that was likely to be an accurate record.⁸⁵
- 14.34 GM Welch said that he had no reason to think that the “stay put” advice might have been changed at that point and did not give any thought to whether it should be. Nor did he consider whether a total or partial evacuation might be required. He said that he had had no reason to think that the building’s compartmentation was failing.⁸⁶
- 14.35 GM Welch recalled SM Walton coming on to CU8 shortly after the handover of command from SM Loft. They had a very brief discussion, during which GM Welch instructed SM Walton to identify a suitable RVP. GM Welch did not recall having had any discussion with SM Walton about who was incident commander at that time.⁸⁷

GM Welch on CU8: briefing SM Loft for BA Main Control and arrival of SM Daniel Kipling

- 14.36 Having purported to assume command, GM Welch’s first action was to instruct SM Loft to establish BA Main Control. GM Welch did not specifically discuss with him the importance of marshalling EDBA wearers, or ensuring that, on arrival, they were sent promptly to the tower.⁸⁸
- 14.37 SM Kipling, who had arrived a little earlier at 02.00.52,⁸⁹ had by that time made his way to CU8 where, as he recalled it, GM Welch was in command. SM Kipling told the Inquiry that when he entered CU8, GM Welch asked him to set up BA Main Control from another command unit. He was provided with no information about how much BA was being used at that time, and there was no specific discussion about the need for EDBA resources.⁹⁰ SM Kipling recalled having seen SM Loft standing outside CU8.⁹¹ SM Kipling thought that it was he who requested that SM Loft be assigned to him to assist with BA Main Control.⁹² GM Welch had no recollection of SM Kipling’s involvement.⁹³
- 14.38 SM Kipling said that after he had received his instructions he had gone with SM Loft to CU7 in order to set up BA Main Control.⁹⁴ He also took SM Nicholas Saunders, FF James Power and FF Gary Moore to assist with the operation.⁹⁵ They boarded CU7, which SM Loft recalled being completely switched off.⁹⁶ SM Kipling asked FF Moore and FF Power to go to the bridgehead to obtain as much information as possible about who was in charge there, the names of the individuals managing entry control, how many crews were being committed and how quickly they were going through the available resources.⁹⁷

⁸³ Welch Day 44/91.

⁸⁴ [LFB00003117] p. 17.

⁸⁵ Welch Day 44/86.

⁸⁶ Welch Day 44/72-73.

⁸⁷ Welch Day 44/62-63.

⁸⁸ Welch Day 44/94-95.

⁸⁹ SIL p. 13.

⁹⁰ Kipling Day 36/147-148.

⁹¹ Kipling Day 36/147.

⁹² Kipling Day 36/155.

⁹³ Welch Day 44/94.

⁹⁴ Kipling Day 36/155; Kipling witness statement [MET00012557] p. 6.

⁹⁵ Kipling witness statement [MET00012557] p. 7.

⁹⁶ Loft Day 37/182.

⁹⁷ Kipling 36/156.

WM Norman Harrison returns to CU8

- 14.39 It was around that time that WM Harrison returned to CU8. He had been to the tower with WM Mark Kentfield and had viewed the state of the fire from the north-east corner. He recalled that there had been two Station Managers and one Group Manager (whom he believed to be GM Welch) on the command unit when he returned. WM Harrison's recollection was that he stood blocking the command unit steps facing the inside of the command unit and that he said that he thought the advice being given to callers trapped in the building needed to be changed.⁹⁸ He said that his tone of voice when he said that had been "quite loud, very direct and unequivocal"⁹⁹ and that he had directed his comment to the senior officers on the command unit.¹⁰⁰ He also said that in his view it was impossible for them not to have heard it.¹⁰¹ He did not say anything about what he had seen on the north-east corner of the tower, nor did he say anything specific about the fire being inside the flats or the involvement of the cladding.¹⁰²
- 14.40 WM Harrison said that, although none of the senior officers had responded, someone was standing outside the command unit who had responded to his observation. WM Harrison identified him as WM Patrick Delaney from CU2 (Islington), who had arrived at the incident ground at 01.58.45.¹⁰³ It was WM Harrison's evidence that WM Delaney had pointed out that there was only a single staircase in the building, which would be smoky. In response, WM Harrison asked whether the firefighters could use second set bags, but he said that no one had responded to that.¹⁰⁴
- 14.41 WM Delaney provided a witness statement to the Inquiry in which he recalled having had a brief conversation with WM Harrison about the "stay put" policy. He said that he was not aware at that point that WM Harrison had been inside the building and so did not know how narrow the staircase was. WM Delaney told WM Harrison that he thought that "stay put" was the best advice to give residents at that time.¹⁰⁵
- 14.42 GM Welch had no recollection of WM Harrison coming onto CU8 during his time there or of his observation about the need for a mass evacuation.¹⁰⁶

Briefing of SM Daniel Egan

- 14.43 SM Egan had arrived at 01.58.39 before making his way to CU8. He presented himself to GM Welch, explained that he was a Fire Safety Officer and asked what GM Welch wanted him to do.¹⁰⁷ He did not share with anyone else his view that the tower needed to be evacuated because, as he said:

"I'm going to make an assumption that the officer in charge has got this under control... They would've considered it already."¹⁰⁸

⁹⁸ Harrison Day 45/108-110.

⁹⁹ Harrison Day 45/113.

¹⁰⁰ Harrison Day 45/110.

¹⁰¹ Harrison Day 45/117.

¹⁰² Harrison Day 45/109.

¹⁰³ SIL p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Harrison Day 45/111-112.

¹⁰⁵ Delaney witness statement [LFB00024415].

¹⁰⁶ Welch 44/97-98.

¹⁰⁷ Egan Day 15/88.

¹⁰⁸ Egan Day 15/94.

- 14.44 GM Welch recalled briefing someone to take over the management of FSG calls while he was on CU8 but did not remember either SM Egan himself or any details of the briefing.¹⁰⁹
- 14.45 SM Egan’s evidence was that GM Welch had told him to take charge of FSG calls and that WM Harrison, who by that time was back on CU8, had a list of the calls that had been received.¹¹⁰ SM Egan recalled seeing WM Harrison writing the FSG information onto a board on the command unit, but it did not include any information about deployments that had been made in response to the calls.¹¹¹ There was also a wad of paper on which FSG calls had been recorded. From what he had seen, SM Egan estimated that around 20 to 30 calls had been received by that time.¹¹²
- 14.46 GM Welch told SM Egan to set up CU7 as the FSG command unit¹¹³ in order to have a command unit dedicated to handling FSG calls. GM Welch was not aware that FSG calls were being sent to CU8.¹¹⁴ They did not discuss the advice given to callers by the control room, conditions inside the tower or whether search and rescue operations were currently going on.¹¹⁵ SM Egan was not told that SM Loft had previously been managing FSG calls and so he received no handover from him.¹¹⁶
- 14.47 Having been briefed, SM Egan left CU8 with WM Harrison. WM Harrison recalled that they had taken with them the 30 or so pieces of paper that had FSG information recorded on them,¹¹⁷ as well as the plaque showing floor and flat numbers that had been removed from the ground floor lobby by WM Kentfield and brought back to CU8 not long before.¹¹⁸ WM Meyrick thought that he remained on CU8 for a little longer before leaving to join them.¹¹⁹

DAC O’Loughlin on CU8: handover from GM Welch

- 14.48 At about that time, DAC O’Loughlin was making his way from the south-east corner of the tower to CU8, having taken over incident command from WM Dowden and SM Walton a few minutes earlier. He passed CU7 on the way which he recalled was not yet operating. WM Kentfield had initially been with him but they had become separated on the way.¹²⁰
- 14.49 As he made his way to CU8, DAC O’Loughlin used the time to consider how he intended to manage the incident. He considered how he would implement the structures of command that would be required.¹²¹ He thought that FSG calls were the priority,¹²² since the occupants of those flats were directly experiencing smoke, fire or heat. The second priority were the flats that clearly could become directly affected on the north-east corner of the building.¹²³ DAC O’Loughlin clarified later in his evidence that at this time, and until much later in the incident, he had been working on the “expectation” that FSG calls were coming only from flats

¹⁰⁹ Welch Day 44/95-97.

¹¹⁰ Egan Day 15/97.

¹¹¹ Egan Day 15/99-100; note that this is not consistent with the evidence of WM Peckham and WM Harrison who did not recall using whiteboards to record information on CU8, as noted in Period 6.

¹¹² Egan Day 15/105.

¹¹³ Egan Day 15/107.

¹¹⁴ Welch Day 44/95-96.

¹¹⁵ Egan Day 15/98-99.

¹¹⁶ Egan Day 15/127.

¹¹⁷ Harrison Day 45/119.

¹¹⁸ Harrison Day 45/123; CCTV images show WM Kentfield leaving the lobby with the floor plaque at around 02.07 [INQ00000360].

¹¹⁹ Meyrick Day 20/78.

¹²⁰ O’Loughlin witness statement [MET00012563] p. 11.

¹²¹ O’Loughlin Day 47/157-158.

¹²² O’Loughlin Day 47/159.

¹²³ O’Loughlin Day 47/162-163.

on the north-east corner of the building, because that was where the fire was spreading.¹²⁴ It was only after he had become operations commander (after he had been relieved of incident command by AC Roe) that he had realised that calls had been coming from other parts of the building.¹²⁵

- 14.50 The only officers on board CU8 when DAC O’Loughlin arrived were GM Welch and WM Meyrick. WM Meyrick was using the main scheme radio, taking calls and trying to operate the fireground radio.¹²⁶ WM Meyrick was recording FSG information on sheets of paper. DAC O’Loughlin did not ask him how many there were in total.¹²⁷ He was surprised to see GM Welch wearing the incident commander’s tabard and told him that he had taken over command.¹²⁸ A radio message was sent confirming that change of command at 02.11¹²⁹ immediately after a request to increase the number of FRUs to six.¹³⁰
- 14.51 GM Welch told DAC O’Loughlin that he had made pumps 40 and had declared a Major Incident. DAC O’Loughlin was happy with that.¹³¹ He thought that he had seen someone, he did not know who, drafting a METHANE message on one of the whiteboards on CU8. Although GM Welch asked for a METHANE message to be sent out, it was not sent, as has been mentioned above.¹³² GM Welch was also not aware that the MPS had declared a Major Incident at 01.30.¹³³
- 14.52 DAC O’Loughlin instructed GM Welch to relieve SM Walton as fire sector commander.¹³⁴ He then told GM Welch that in his view the fire was affecting most of the building from floors 3 or 4 up to roof level and seemed to be on the outside. He thought that that was consistent with GM Welch’s assessment,¹³⁵ but GM Welch’s contribution to the discussion was very limited because he thought that DAC O’Loughlin was far better informed about the situation than he was. He therefore confined himself to the need to increase resources and declare a Major Incident.¹³⁶
- 14.53 DAC O’Loughlin was asked if he had told GM Welch that fire had penetrated into some flats. He said that he had not seen that, but that he had heard FSG calls while on his way to the incident which had suggested that that was happening. In answer to a question whether he had mentioned this to GM Welch, DAC O’Loughlin said: “[w]e had the conversation about that, so yes”.¹³⁷ However, GM Welch did not recall any discussion with DAC O’Loughlin about fire penetrating individual flats or breach of compartmentation more generally.¹³⁸ He said that he would have expected the fire to have penetrated in some way, but that at that stage it had not affected their tactics. GM Welch understood that, if compartmentation had been breached, the breach was limited.¹³⁹

¹²⁴ O’Loughlin Day 47/224-225.

¹²⁵ O’Loughlin Day 47/224-225.

¹²⁶ O’Loughlin Day 47/173.

¹²⁷ O’Loughlin Day 47/163.

¹²⁸ O’Loughlin witness statement [MET00012563] pp. 12-13.

¹²⁹ Radio transcript [LFB00002285]. This is not on the SIL.

¹³⁰ Radio transcript [LFB00003100]. Refer to SIL at 02.11.46 at p. 21.

¹³¹ O’Loughlin witness statement [MET00012563] p. 13.

¹³² Welch Day 44/59/18-60/20.

¹³³ O’Loughlin Day 47/186.

¹³⁴ Sectorisation is explained in Chapter 7 of this report. The fire sector is the operational sector where the main firefighting and rescue operations are taking place.

¹³⁵ O’Loughlin Day 47/187.

¹³⁶ Welch Day 44/101-102.

¹³⁷ O’Loughlin Day 47/188/4-15.

¹³⁸ Welch Day 44/107/17-109/18.

¹³⁹ Welch Day 44/119/1-21.

- 14.54 DAC O’Loughlin told GM Welch that steps were being taken to respond to FSG calls, but that he had no information about numbers or priorities. He was unable to obtain it from WM Meyrick, as he was extremely busy,¹⁴⁰ and he did not make direct contact with the control room.¹⁴¹ He knew, however, that there was system in place for dealing with FSG calls, even though he did not know exactly what it was.¹⁴² His plan was to set up a more robust system by establishing an FSG command unit that would provide support to GM Welch in identifying which flats were involved and which should be given priority.¹⁴³
- 14.55 When he took over as incident commander, DAC O’Loughlin had no information about the conditions in the lobbies outside the flats from which FSG calls had been made¹⁴⁴ and he was unable to obtain that information from the bridgehead as the radios were unable to cope with the amount of traffic.¹⁴⁵ It was suggested to him that he needed to have that information in order to send BA crews into the building to rescue occupants, but he explained that he had expected GM Welch to establish through the bridgehead what the conditions were when he took over as fire sector commander. He also said that he had expected there to be smoke in the stairwell, but that, since EDBA crews could go up a smoke-filled staircase, this did not pose any difficulty. He did not think it was necessary, therefore, to have a detailed knowledge of the conditions in the stairwell before committing crews.¹⁴⁶ He understood that the fire doors should have prevented smoke from entering the lobbies and appears to have expected them to have done so.¹⁴⁷
- 14.56 Finally, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am satisfied that in the course of the briefing DAC O’Loughlin and GM Welch did not discuss the possibility of withdrawing the “stay put” advice and evacuating all the remaining occupants immediately.
- 14.57 Having received his briefing, GM Welch left CU8 for the tower, accompanied by GM Matthew Cook, SM Mulholland and SM Gareth Cook.¹⁴⁸

GM Welch and SM Cook enter lobby – GM Welch takes command of bridgehead

- 14.58 As they walked towards the tower, GM Matthew Cook left the group and went to CU7.¹⁴⁹ A little later SM Mulholland left the remaining two to carry out a “360” tour of the outside of the building.¹⁵⁰ As he looked at the tower, approaching it from the south-east,¹⁵¹ GM Welch did not recall having thought that there were fires in individual flats, though when he gave evidence he said that he would have expected the fire to get into the flats.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁰ O’Loughlin Day 47/188.

¹⁴¹ O’Loughlin Day 47/192.

¹⁴² O’Loughlin Day 47/189/1-190/18.

¹⁴³ O’Loughlin Day 47/191/23-191/18.

¹⁴⁴ O’Loughlin Day 47/164/2-19.

¹⁴⁵ O’Loughlin Day 47/169/3-14.

¹⁴⁶ O’Loughlin Day 47/165/8-21.

¹⁴⁷ O’Loughlin Day 47/198.

¹⁴⁸ Welch witness statement [MET00007525] p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Welch witness statement [MET00007525] p. 5; Matthew Cook witness statement [MET00007948] pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁰ Mulholland witness statement [MET00007865] p. 5.

¹⁵¹ Welch Day 44/122/3-8.

¹⁵² Welch Day 44/123/16-24.

- 14.59 CCTV images show GM Welch coming through the main entrance of the tower with SM Gareth Cook at around 02.10.¹⁵³ He said that within seconds of his entering the building he had thought that the bridgehead needed to be moved higher in order to reduce the distance BA crews had to travel under air. He did not think that crews would be able to reach the upper floors and return safely wearing SDBA or even EDDBA.¹⁵⁴
- 14.60 It was SM Walton's evidence that when GM Welch arrived inside the tower GM Welch had briefed SM Walton to take over the management of the BA resources on the floor 2 balcony. SM Walton recalled that that had taken place in the floor 2 corridor adjacent to the staircase within five minutes of his arriving at the bridgehead.¹⁵⁵ His recollection was that GM Welch told him to take WM Williams to assist him and that he had then asked WM Williams to speak to whoever was then responsible for marshalling BA crews in order to establish what the state of BA resources was.¹⁵⁶ However, SM Walton's recollection differed from that of WM Williams,¹⁵⁷ who said that he had been instructed by GM Welch to start recording FSG calls on the wall of the ground floor lobby.¹⁵⁸ SM Walton also said that he had provided GM Welch with a handover briefing and had told him what information he had asked WM O'Keeffe to obtain.¹⁵⁹ He said that he had not discussed the possibility that the fire was re-entering the building with GM Welch.¹⁶⁰
- 14.61 GM Welch, on the other hand, had no recollection of that exchange with SM Walton, though he said that he had no reason to doubt what SM Walton had said.¹⁶¹ He recalled having given someone the role of BA resources officer, but could not remember having any particular discussions or giving any instructions about EDDBA wearers at that time.¹⁶²
- 14.62 When GM Welch and SM Gareth Cook arrived at the bridgehead, they immediately started to assist with taking casualties from the returning BA crews. GM Welch explained that in the circumstances it was not a task that could have been delegated to a more junior officer, as would normally be the case, because the only firefighters not wearing BA were senior officers. Although he estimated that he continued to assist with casualties for around 45 minutes,¹⁶³ that is probably not correct, given that he was involved in the management of the bridgehead once it had been moved to floor 3 at around 02.17. GM Welch received a formal handover of the bridgehead command from WM O'Keeffe,¹⁶⁴ but there was no discussion about how FSG information was reaching the bridgehead,¹⁶⁵ or whether, and if so how, information about the results of FSG deployments was being communicated to the command unit.¹⁶⁶ He said that he had had no reason to think that this was not being done¹⁶⁷ and if information gathered at the bridgehead from returning crews had not been communicated to the command unit,

¹⁵³ [INQ00000354].

¹⁵⁴ Welch Day 44/132/21-133/18.

¹⁵⁵ Walton Day 46/190/1-6, 46/190/14-18.

¹⁵⁶ Walton witness statement [MET00010828] pp. 32-33. SM Walton incorrectly refers to CM Glynn Williams in his statement, rather than WM Glynn Williams.

¹⁵⁷ Williams Day 31/42/1-14.

¹⁵⁸ Williams Day 31/43/20-25.

¹⁵⁹ Walton Day 46/190/19-191/7, 46/184/4-7.

¹⁶⁰ Walton Day 46/192/18-24.

¹⁶¹ Welch Day 44/126/18-127/2.

¹⁶² Welch Day 44/127/15-25.

¹⁶³ Welch Day 44/130/7-131/4.

¹⁶⁴ Welch Day 44/138/14-19.

¹⁶⁵ Welch Day 44/141/3-17.

¹⁶⁶ Welch Day 44/145/20-25.

¹⁶⁷ Welch Day 44/150/2-11.

the bridgehead would have heard about it.¹⁶⁸ GM Welch was satisfied that crews were being debriefed thoroughly and he was content with the information that was being collected, although he did not see it in every case.¹⁶⁹

- 14.63 WM O’Keeffe’s recollection of GM Welch’s arrival at the bridgehead was broadly consistent with that of SM Walton’s, namely that it occurred within about five minutes of SM Walton’s arrival.¹⁷⁰ WM O’Keeffe said that GM Welch informed him that he was taking over as fire sector commander, which caused WM O’Keeffe some confusion as that was his role at the time. It had led him to understand that GM Welch had taken over the entire incident.¹⁷¹ WM O’Keeffe also had a clear recollection of telling GM Welch that SDBA crews “were either in danger of getting killed themselves or couldn’t reach the upper floors”. On hearing this, GM Welch asked WM O’Keeffe what he needed. WM O’Keeffe told him that they needed EDDBA, “all of it ... otherwise we’re not going to reach these people”. He said that GM Welch agreed and returned back down the stairs.¹⁷²
- 14.64 GM Welch remembered the conversation with WM O’Keeffe. Although he could not be sure of its timing, he remembered having asked for additional EDDBA wearers in response to it.¹⁷³ He said that the SIL record of the message for “make FRUs 10”, apparently from DAC O’Loughlin, had been sent in response to his own request.¹⁷⁴ Although his evidence was not consistent with that of DAC O’Loughlin, who said that the order for 10 FRUs had come from him,¹⁷⁵ it is unnecessary to resolve this disagreement. The important point is that the message was sent.

WM Paul Sadler briefed by WM Kentfield and establishes FSG point

- 14.65 Outside the tower WM Sadler was waiting underneath the covered area on the south-east corner. At about this time he was approached by an officer who informed him that his assistance was required in establishing an “FSG point” in that location.¹⁷⁶ WM Sadler did not know the identity of the officer,¹⁷⁷ but it was probably WM Kentfield, who instructed him to collate FSG information and transmit it to the bridgehead. WM Kentfield gave this instruction to WM Sadler because he had been told by WM Meyrick (either by radio or on returning to CU8, he could not recall which) that CU8 was receiving many FSG calls and considered that it was necessary to delegate that task to someone else.¹⁷⁸
- 14.66 WM Sadler understood that the function of this “FSG point” was to act as a means of controlling FSG information at the base of the tower and communicating it to those inside the building.¹⁷⁹ He recalled WM Kentfield telling him that CU7 was his point of contact on channel 3 of the fire ground radio and he asked two firefighters from his own watch to run back to the command unit and confirm this.¹⁸⁰ Those firefighters (whose identity cannot be determined) reported back to him shortly afterwards that CU7 was not yet set up, but that the personnel

¹⁶⁸ Welch Day 44/152/1-4.

¹⁶⁹ Welch Day 44/146/20-25.

¹⁷⁰ O’Keeffe Day 18/178/1-4; as above, also refer to Walton Day 46/190/4-6.

¹⁷¹ O’Keeffe Day 18/86/15-22.

¹⁷² O’Keeffe Day 18/83/7-21.

¹⁷³ Welch Day 44/133/19-134/3.

¹⁷⁴ This message was sent at 02.15.08 and recorded on the SIL (to which GM Welch was taken in his oral evidence) at 02.16.58: refer to Welch Day 44/136/12-17 and, for the messages: SIL p. 22 and radio transcript [LFB00002441].

¹⁷⁵ O’Loughlin Day 48/107/12-14.

¹⁷⁶ Sadler Day 29/26/20-27/15.

¹⁷⁷ Sadler Day 29/29/15-30/3.

¹⁷⁸ Kentfield witness statement [MET00023051] pp. 13-14.

¹⁷⁹ Sadler Day 29/33/4-7.

¹⁸⁰ Sadler Day 29/35/7-16.

on CU8 had confirmed that CU7 would be the point of contact for FSG calls on channel 3.¹⁸¹ WM Sadler was not told as part of his briefing what system existed for managing FSG calls that had already come in¹⁸² and he did not know who SM Loft was.¹⁸³

- 14.67 WM Sadler set himself up on the south-east corner of the tower, using the bonnet of a parked car to manage the papers and boards that he had then started to use.¹⁸⁴ The car was partly under the walkway.
- 14.68 WM Sadler recognised that all fresh BA wearers should go into the building in order to be deployed. He therefore sought assistance from firefighters who had already been committed and were resting outside the tower. He thought that they had been the first crews to attend.¹⁸⁵ The two he chose were CM Charles Batterbee and FF Mark Brodrick.¹⁸⁶ In the first instance, CM Batterbee went to obtain a pad of control information forms¹⁸⁷ and an FIB.¹⁸⁸ WM Sadler instructed CM Batterbee to go to the bridgehead and record all the FSG information held there in order to check that it was the same as that held at the car bonnet.¹⁸⁹
- 14.69 WM Sadler was able to speak to CU7 using channel 3 on his fireground radio.¹⁹⁰ His recollection was that he had not communicated with anyone on CU8.¹⁹¹ He also received FSG information on control information forms that were brought to him by runners,¹⁹² recorded it and sent a runner into the tower with the top (white) copy. A second runner took the yellow copy to CU7 and he retained the blue and green copies at the car bonnet.¹⁹³ He said he had done that so that he could amend the forms if further information about those FSG calls was received.¹⁹⁴ If new information was received, WM Sadler communicated it by radio directly to WM De Silvo at the bridgehead.¹⁹⁵ He also tried to send the amended blue or green copies to the bridgehead, although he could only recall one occasion on which he had been able to do that.¹⁹⁶ Finally, WM Sadler said that he also used the radio to transmit FSG information to WM De Silvo when communicating a priority call.¹⁹⁷
- 14.70 WM Sadler said that in the early stages he had given each FSG call that he transcribed a number, which he marked at the top of the control information form. He confirmed that the control information form reproduced below, which is marked with a number 1 in a circle at the top of the page and with the time of 02.13, was the first FSG sheet he had completed while stationed at the car bonnet:¹⁹⁸

¹⁸¹ Sadler Day 29/41/22-42/7.

¹⁸² Sadler Day 29/35/3-7.

¹⁸³ Sadler Day 29/30/4-6.

¹⁸⁴ Sadler Day 29/37/5-38/18.

¹⁸⁵ Sadler Day 29/50/16-20.

¹⁸⁶ Batterbee witness statement [MET00012871] pp. 10-11; Brodrick witness statement [MET00016789] p. 8, recalling that it was a command unit officer from Fulham called Mark (likely to be WM Kentfield) who asked him to assist WM Sadler.

¹⁸⁷ Batterbee witness statement [MET00012871] p. 11.

¹⁸⁸ Sadler Day 29/51/3-7.

¹⁸⁹ Batterbee Day 12/135/10-136/5.

¹⁹⁰ Sadler Day 29/44/18-22.

¹⁹¹ Sadler Day 29/45/7-10.

¹⁹² Sadler Day 29/52/16-20.

¹⁹³ Sadler Day 29/56/14-18.

¹⁹⁴ Sadler Day 29/56/19-25.

¹⁹⁵ Sadler Day 29/106/21-107/19.

¹⁹⁶ Sadler Day 29/57/2-11, 79/13-23.

¹⁹⁷ Sadler Day 29/96/11-97/1.

¹⁹⁸ Sadler Day 29/60/20-61/17.

White copy Yellow copy Blue copy Open copy

Pam Sadler .F.S.G. OUTSIDE ①

LFB
LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Control Information

Premise number:	205 12 floor
Number of persons within location:	NOT KNOWN
Location within premises and access point:	
Condition within premises (Heavy smoke/Fire etc):	Fire FIRE AT THE DOOR THROUGH WINDOW
Proximity to fire (if known):	/
Advice to caller from Control:	/
Time call received by Control:	Time updated: 02:13.
Additional information:	

Figure 14.3

- 14.71 Early in this process WM Sadler was given a piece of paper on which someone had written a list of flats and floors from which FSG calls had been received.¹⁹⁹ He described it as an “envelope”, but in fact it was an A4-size piece of paper. He thought that it had been given to him by the same officer who had instructed him to set up the FSG point at the car bonnet.²⁰⁰ Immediately on being given the list WM Sadler photographed it.²⁰¹ When he gave evidence WM Sadler confirmed that, according to his mobile telephone, the photograph had been taken at 02.19.²⁰² FF Brodrick helped WM Sadler transcribe the information from this photograph on to control information forms.²⁰³
- 14.72 In his oral evidence WM Sadler originally said that he had started to transcribe FSG information onto the control information forms only after he had been given the A4 sheet,²⁰⁴ but having seen the time notation of 02.13 on the first control information form, he thought that in fact he might have started processing FSG calls before the A4 sheet was provided to him. I think that must be the case, given that the photograph was taken at 02.19. Furthermore, since

¹⁹⁹ Sadler witness statement [MET00012481] p. 3.

²⁰⁰ Sadler Day 29/39/22-40/2.

²⁰¹ Sadler Day 29/67/16-17.

²⁰² Sadler Day 29/64/22-24.

²⁰³ Brodrick witness statement [MET00016789] p. 8.

²⁰⁴ Sadler Day 29/65/9-20.

CU7 was probably not up and running as early as 02.13,²⁰⁵ WM Sadler was probably in radio contact with WM Meyrick, who was still on CU8 at that time. The fact that there were two separate streams of FSG information coming in by radio messages and the A4 sheet would also explain why the information recorded by WM Sadler on his first few control information forms is not quite the same as that on the sheet of paper, although there is a degree of overlap.²⁰⁶

14.73 At about the same time, CM Batterbee went to the bridgehead, which he recalled as being on floor 2.²⁰⁷ He copied the information that was recorded on an FIB into his own notebook,²⁰⁸ a copy of which was exhibited to his witness statement:



Figure 14.4

²⁰⁵ Refer to the narrative set out below relating to the arrival of GM Goodall.

²⁰⁶ For example, control information form number 1 records (incorrectly) Flat 205 as being on Floor 12, whereas the A4 sheet refers only to Flat 205; control information form number 3 refers to Flat 74 which does not appear on the A4 sheet at all: [LFB00001922] p. 33, [LFB00001968] p. 47 and [MET00016967].

²⁰⁷ Batterbee Day 12/136/24-25. Refer also to ORR v 0.7 p. 165 which records CCTV of Batterbee entering the tower at 02.17.45.

²⁰⁸ Batterbee Day 12/137/18-138/8.

- 14.74 CM Batterbee explained that the ticks were to indicate flats to which crews had been deployed, as reported to him by WM De Silvo.²⁰⁹ After visiting the bridgehead he returned to WM Sadler's FSG point, which he believed had still been located at the car bonnet, and started to cross-refer the information recorded on his notepad to the information that WM Sadler had recorded on an FIB.²¹⁰
- 14.75 WM Sadler estimated that he had remained at the car bonnet for 10 or 20 minutes²¹¹ before moving further back underneath the covered walkway to get away from the falling debris.²¹²

Arrival of GM Thomas Goodall

- 14.76 Soon after DAC O'Loughlin had taken over as incident commander, GM Goodall arrived on CU8, having booked status 3 at 02.04.41.²¹³ He estimated that he had reached CU8 between 02.10 to 02.15.²¹⁴ GM Goodall was briefed by DAC O'Loughlin to take charge of FSG calls. GM Goodall recalled this as a briefing to take over from SM Egan,²¹⁵ but DAC O'Loughlin said that he did not know who had been managing FSG calls up to that point and did not know SM Egan.²¹⁶ He left it to GM Goodall to find out from whom he was taking over.²¹⁷
- 14.77 As he did not have the information to provide, DAC O'Loughlin gave no detailed briefing to GM Goodall about FSG calls. He told GM Goodall to contact the control room to find out how many FSG calls had been received and which ones were the priorities.²¹⁸ GM Goodall did not speak to the control room and was probably unaware that that was an express requirement of PN790.²¹⁹ There was no discussion of the "stay put" strategy²²⁰ and DAC O'Loughlin did not tell GM Goodall that in his view the priority flats were those located on the north-east corner.²²¹
- 14.78 GM Goodall then left CU8 for CU7. His recollection was that he had been with SM Egan when he did so, though he was not sure about that.²²² Given that SM Egan had been briefed by GM Welch before DAC O'Loughlin had taken over, it is more likely that SM Egan had already left CU8, albeit only a little while earlier. WM Antony Peckham, on the other hand, recalled GM Goodall being on CU8 and leaving for CU7 with him.²²³ It may also have been at this point that WM Meyrick left CU8 to go to CU7.
- 14.79 GM Goodall then arrived at CU7. He did not recall whether SM Egan had entered CU7 with him. SM Kipling was starting to set up BA Main Control on CU7, but it was agreed that GM Goodall would take the command unit for FSG calls instead. SM Kipling left to operate BA Main Control from the area outside the leisure centre.²²⁴ SM Egan went directly to the incident ground and returned some time later, by which point CU7 was operating and had started to handle FSG calls.

²⁰⁹ Batterbee Day 12/139/7-9.

²¹⁰ Batterbee Day 12/139/13-140/8.

²¹¹ Sadler Day 29/60/5-7.

²¹² Sadler Day 29/111/1-7.

²¹³ SIL p. 13.

²¹⁴ Goodall Day 35/17/24-25.

²¹⁵ Goodall Day 35/20/8-19.

²¹⁶ O'Loughlin Day 47/205/1-8.

²¹⁷ O'Loughlin Day 47/206/10-13.

²¹⁸ O'Loughlin Day 47/207/20-208/2.

²¹⁹ Goodall Day 35/68/22-69/15; refer also to PN790 [LFB00001257] paragraph 7.7.

²²⁰ O'Loughlin Day 47/210/22-25.

²²¹ Goodall Day 35/55/25-56/7.

²²² Goodall Day 35/20/2-7.

²²³ Peckham Day 30/149/14-20.

²²⁴ Goodall Day 35/2020-21/5; Goodall witness statement [MET000083296] p. 7.

Deployments of CM Craig Eden and FF Tom Welch, and of FF Vincent Williams and FF Agnel Fernandes

- 14.80 Early in this period CM Eden and FF Welch were briefed by WM O’Keeffe to go to floor 20.²²⁵ At about the same time, FF Williams and FF Fernandes were briefed by WM De Silvo to go to Flat 175 on floor 20.²²⁶ The two teams tallied out within a minute of each other, CM Eden and FF Welch at 01.59.42 and 01.59.49, and FF Williams and FF Fernandes at 02.00.23 and 02.00.39.²²⁷
- 14.81 CM Eden and FF Welch reached floor 20 but realised that they did not have much air left and decided that they would locate the riser and charge a hose that could then be used by the next crew. FF Welch said that he had not been informed that there were people who needed rescuing and that he had assumed that the building had been evacuated.²²⁸
- 14.82 Shortly afterwards, FF Williams and FF Fernandes also reached floor 20. They located Flat 175 and FF Williams went in and spoke to the family inside. He told them that they needed to leave, but they made no move to do so. He recalled having spoken by radio to the bridgehead to ask for assistance but having been unable to hear the response. He then took the youngest girl by the hand, thinking that the rest of the family would follow them down.²²⁹ As they began their descent, FF Fernandes went down first, backwards, so that he could guide FF Williams with his hand on the child’s back.²³⁰ This was the second eldest daughter of Farah Hamdan and Omar Belkadi. She was carried out of the tower at 02.25.²³¹
- 14.83 CM Eden heard a man shouting for help and a woman screaming not to forget her baby. FF Fernandes heard something similar. The woman must have been Farah Hamdan. CM Eden and FF Welch tried to help a male casualty down the stairs, after FF Williams and FF Fernandes had called for their help. That is likely to have been Omar Belkadi, who at some point collapsed. It was decided that CM Eden would go down alone to the bridgehead to ask for assistance while FF Welch stayed with Omar Belkadi.²³² The evidence of FF Welch was that another crew of two BA wearers, whose identity is unknown, then tried to assist him, though he had to leave them with Omar Belkadi and run back to the bridgehead as his air was running very low.²³³ Neither CM Eden nor FF Welch said whether they had provided any kind of debrief to the bridgehead on their return.

Deployment of FF Lawson and FF Foster – contd

- 14.84 Further up the building, FF Foster and FF Lawson, who had been deployed at 01.53, were beginning their descent from floor 18. Both firefighters recalled having heard sounds of screaming on their way down, causing them to turn back momentarily, but the screaming stopped before they were able to locate the source.²³⁴ I return to this topic in the next section of this Period.

²²⁵ T. Welch witness statement [MET000080606] p. 5 and Eden witness statement [MET00008019] p. 7.

²²⁶ Fernandes witness statement [MET000083292] p. 3 and Williams witness statement [MET00010829] p. 5.

²²⁷ BA Telemetry Schedule [LFB00003115].

²²⁸ T. Welch witness statement [MET000080606] p. 7.

²²⁹ Williams witness statement [MET00010829] p. 9.

²³⁰ Fernandes Day 39/181/11-20, 39/183/2-10.

²³¹ Annex A.

²³² T. Welch witness statement [MET000080606] pp. 8-10 and Eden witness statement [MET00008019] pp. 11-13.

²³³ T. Welch witness statement [MET000080606] pp. 10-11.

²³⁴ FF Foster recalled this as happening at about floor 12: Foster Day 39/116/19-25; FF Lawson thought that they were at about floor 6 or 7: Lawson witness statement [MET00010815] p. 5.

Deployment of Paddington A216 crew – contd

- 14.85 At about this time, higher up the building, the Paddington EDBA crew had met FFs Steven Mills and Geoffrey Campbell. They were on their way down, having been unable to reach floor 20. The Paddington crew continued to make their way upwards, still at this time intending to reach the roof in accordance with their brief,²³⁵ but at about floor 15 or 16 it became obvious that there was no realistic prospect of getting there. FF Martin Gillam recalled that it had been his idea to go to floor 20 instead to try and rescue the woman that FF Mills and FF Campbell had told them about.²³⁶ They reached floor 20 but did not see anyone. FF Duane Harris opened the door into the lobby which he found fully smoke-logged.²³⁷
- 14.86 FF Dean Roberts continued up to the next floor and found a woman lying on her back against the wall on the half-landing in the stairwell between floors 20 and 21.²³⁸ She was Fadumo Ahmed, who lived in Flat 164 on floor 19 but had come from Flat 201 on floor 23.
- 14.87 FF Gillam removed his own mask temporarily and gave it to Fadumo Ahmed to help her breathe.²³⁹ While all that had been going on, FF Roberts had gone up to floor 21 and opened the door to the lobby. It was pitch black with smoke from floor to ceiling.²⁴⁰ FF Roberts tried to contact the bridgehead on his fireground radio to tell them that he had found a casualty, but there was no traffic and he received no response.²⁴¹ FF Gillam's evidence was that Fadumo Ahmed had told him that there was no one left on her floor, but that none of the crew had asked her from which floor she had come.²⁴²

Deployments of FFs Desmond Murphy and Charles Cornelius and FFs Harvey Sanders and Nicke Merrion

- 14.88 Meanwhile, the two separate BA crews (FFs Murphy and Cornelius and FFs Sanders and Merrion) had met up in the lobby on floor 14. At the suggestion of FF Murphy they decided to move all the residents on that floor into Flat 113, which at that time was furthest from the fire.²⁴³ FF Murphy attempted to radio down to the bridgehead to tell them what they had done, but was unable to make contact on either the BARIE or handheld sets.²⁴⁴
- 14.89 FF Murphy recalled that he and FF Cornelius had already moved the residents into Flat 113 by the time FF Sanders and FF Merrion reached floor 14.²⁴⁵ That is unlikely to be correct, however, because both FF Merrion and FF Sanders remembered having assisted with that task.²⁴⁶ FF Sanders said that he had gone into Flat 113 and had spoken to the family inside. When he went back out into the lobby he told one of the other firefighters that conditions in the flat were fairly clear and as a result they decided to move all the other residents into it.²⁴⁷ I think that that is more likely to have been what had happened.

²³⁵ Gillam Day 27/67/24-68/22.

²³⁶ Gillam Day 27/68/19-69/19.

²³⁷ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 10.

²³⁸ Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 10 and Day 27/74/14-18.

²³⁹ Gillam Day 27/79/3-12.

²⁴⁰ Roberts witness statement [MET00007890] p. 6.

²⁴¹ Roberts Day 27/124/10-24.

²⁴² Gillam witness statement [MET00008025] p. 10 and Day 27/74/14-21.

²⁴³ Murphy Day 38/46/24-47/21; this was also consistent with FF Cornelius' recollection: Cornelius Day 38/82/12-16.

²⁴⁴ Murphy Day 38/47/22-25.

²⁴⁵ Murphy Day 38/47/14-21.

²⁴⁶ Merrion witness statement [MET000086060] pp. 7-8 and Sanders witness statement [MET00012482] p. 67.

²⁴⁷ Sanders witness statement [MET00012482] p. 6.

- 14.90 Once the other residents had been moved into Flat 113, FF Murphy said that he had counted six adults and two children in that flat. He spoke to them from the door as they were entering the flat and explained to them that the crew were low on air and needed to go and change their cylinders. Despite their wish to leave, he told the residents to remain in the flat with the door shut and reassured them that other crews would be coming up. He described conditions within Flat 113 at that time as clear.²⁴⁸ FF Murphy said that he would not have countenanced taking any of the residents down the stairwell, which in his view was not safe due to the amount of smoke.²⁴⁹
- 14.91 Both crews then left floor 14 and started to make their way back down the stairs. It is not clear whether they went together or separately, although all the firefighters were clear that the residents had all been moved into the same flat by the time they left.²⁵⁰

Arrival of SM Peter Wolfenden

- 14.92 Meanwhile, outside the tower, SM Wolfenden had arrived at around 02.12.²⁵¹ He saw the fire from the west side and recalled that the edge of the north face was burning from about floor 3 to the top of the building.²⁵² He did not see any signs of the fire having penetrated internally into the flats²⁵³ and told the Inquiry that he did not have any thoughts at that time about whether compartmentation had been breached. Part of him expected the fire to burn itself out once it had reached the top of the building.²⁵⁴ He assumed that each individual flat would be self-contained and did not expect the fire to spread inside the building.²⁵⁵
- 14.93 Following his arrival SM Wolfenden spent some time standing below the west and north faces of the tower. He ordered that ground monitors be set up on the north side in an attempt to limit the spread of the fire.²⁵⁶

On board CU8: DAC O’Loughlin’s strategy and make-up messages; the arrival of GM Dave O’Neill and the request for a dangerous structure engineer; the arrival of GM Patrick Goulbourne

- 14.94 DAC O’Loughlin was by now based on CU8. That was communicated to the control room, who confirmed receipt of the message at 02.11.59.²⁵⁷ DAC O’Loughlin then discovered that the make-up messages he had asked WM Kentfield to send had not been transmitted.²⁵⁸ Messages were then sent to make FRUs 6 at 02.11.02,²⁵⁹ make command units 6 at 02.14.32,²⁶⁰ and make FRUs 10 at 02.15.08.²⁶¹

²⁴⁸ Murphy Day 38/49/17-50/23; Alhaj Ali witness statement [IWS00000781] p. 7 and Alhaj Ali Day 59/41/18-42/17.

²⁴⁹ Murphy Day 38/60/17-23.

²⁵⁰ Murphy Day 38/48/22-24; Cornelius Day 38/84/14-19; Merrion witness statement [MET000086060] p. 8; Sanders witness statement [MET00012482] p. 7. FF Cornelius also said that the other crew remained on floor 14 when he and FF Murphy left: Cornelius witness statement [MET00012663] pp. 9-10. If this is correct, FF Merrion and FF Sanders are likely to have left not long after FF Murphy and FF Cornelius, given that all the firefighters’ “end of wear times” are within a few minutes of each other.

²⁵¹ SIL p. 13.

²⁵² Wolfenden Day 40/148/8-12.

²⁵³ Wolfenden Day 40/148/4-6, 11-12.

²⁵⁴ Wolfenden Day 40/147/24-148/1.

²⁵⁵ Wolfenden Day 40/149/1-5.

²⁵⁶ Wolfenden witness statement [MET00017428] pp. 7-8.

²⁵⁷ Radio transcript [LFB00002285].

²⁵⁸ O’Loughlin Day 47/146/1-147/18.

²⁵⁹ Radio transcript [LFB00003100].

²⁶⁰ Radio transcript [LFB00002980].

²⁶¹ Radio transcript [LFB00002441].

14.95 On taking over incident command DAC O’Loughlin had not considered ordering a full or partial evacuation of the building; nor had he considered revoking the “stay put” advice. He told the Inquiry:

“Again, I would be revoking it for people who were in unaffected parts of the building. So not only would I be risking exposing them to any potential smoke in the staircase from the original fire, they’d also then be hindering the firefighters getting into the building to get to the floors where the fire survival guidance calls are coming. So at that point, the primary focus was still to get firefighters to the fire survival guidance calls and to the top floors where the smoke may end up smoke-logging at the upper floors. So that was always the primary focus of it all.”

He also said that he had had no means of communicating with people in the tower, many of whom might be asleep.²⁶²

14.96 DAC O’Loughlin then recalled briefing the senior officers who had recently arrived. GM Goulbourne boarded CU8 shortly before GM O’Neill,²⁶³ the two having arrived at the incident ground at about the same time (02.12).²⁶⁴ DAC O’Loughlin asked GM Goulbourne to support GM Welch in the fire sector²⁶⁵ and said that the briefing that he was able to deliver to GM Goulbourne was, effectively limited to, “Go and assist Richard. He’s got a lot to do”.²⁶⁶ GM Goulbourne’s recollection was that when he arrived at CU8, it was he who suggested to DAC O’Loughlin that he go to assist GM Welch on the bridgehead.²⁶⁷ He confirmed that his briefing had not involved any discussion about the nature of the fire, the floors to which BA crews were being committed, whether EDDBA were being committed, or the FSG calls that were being received.²⁶⁸ After that short briefing, GM Goulbourne left CU8 for the tower.

14.97 DAC O’Loughlin then gave GM O’Neill the role of sector commander for safety. The PRC notes indicated that at the time of this briefing DAC O’Loughlin was “concerned about [a] full or partial collapse of the building”.²⁶⁹ In his oral evidence DAC O’Loughlin explained that he had not been concerned about a total collapse at that stage and that his briefing of GM O’Neill was in relation to the risk of a partial collapse of the north-east side of the building only.²⁷⁰ When in the course of giving evidence he was asked whether it had occurred to him that people on that side of the building should be told to leave their flats. He said that he was concerned about the risk of “chunks of building being pulled out of the north-east side in addition to a fire on the north-east side”. He was trying to establish how much that would weaken the north-east corner of the building and whether it would give rise to a risk of partial collapse.²⁷¹

14.98 GM O’Neill’s recollection of the briefing was much simpler: he said that DAC O’Loughlin had told him to “put some structure around this” and to tell him “what effect this might be having on the building”. GM O’Neill said that he understood from this what was required of him and he left CU8 for the tower.²⁷²

²⁶² O’Loughlin Day 47/211/6-25.

²⁶³ O’Loughlin witness statement [MET00012563] p. 15; O’Neill witness statement [MET00010758] p. 3; Goulbourne Day 41/87/20-25. There is no recorded arrival time for GM Goulbourne but in oral evidence he estimated that this would have been around 02.14, and that he would have been on CU8 at around 02.20: Goulbourne Day 41/80/11-16, 41/88/3-8.

²⁶⁴ SIL p. 13 (recorded arrival time for GM O’Neill).

²⁶⁵ O’Loughlin witness statement [MET00012563] p. 15.

²⁶⁶ O’Loughlin Day 47/214/25-215/3.

²⁶⁷ Goulbourne Day 41/93/22-25. The divergence of recollections on this point is immaterial.

²⁶⁸ Goulbourne Day 41/94/14-95/19.

²⁶⁹ O’Loughlin Day 47/217/5-25 and the PRC notes [LFB00003117] p. 20.

²⁷⁰ O’Loughlin Day 47/217/14-218/16; O’Loughlin Day 47/217/14-218/16-16; O’Loughlin Day 47/219/8-10; O’Loughlin Day 47/220/6-8.

²⁷¹ O’Loughlin Day 47/221/2-25.

²⁷² O’Neill witness statement [MET00010758] p. 3.

- 14.99 It was about that time that a request was made for a Dangerous Structures Engineer (DSE) to attend and also representatives of the gas and electricity suppliers and a Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO). It was sent from CU8 by radio at 02.16.58.

Start of the system inside the tower for handling FSG calls

- 14.100 Inside the tower, at around this time (and before 02.15), WM Williams was on the mezzanine on floor 2 being briefed by GM Welch, having been taken there by SM Walton who had said that he had a job for him. WM Williams recalled that GM Welch had pointed down to the wall of the ground floor lobby and said that he wanted him to “set up FSG” there.²⁷³ WM Williams’ understanding of that instruction was “that FSG had been implemented and we needed to start collating information to prioritise rescues”.²⁷⁴ He believed that it needed to be done using the wall in the lobby because there was not enough space to carry out the work at the bridgehead itself.²⁷⁵ WM Williams also recalled GM Welch telling him to “prioritise the calls”,²⁷⁶ although he had not explained what he meant by that or how it should be carried out.²⁷⁷ Later in his evidence he said that he had understood it to mean that he should take into account the vulnerability of the caller rather than merely handing the information over to the bridgehead.²⁷⁸ There had been no discussion about how many FSG calls had been received or how they had previously been managed. Nor had anything been said about how many crews had been committed in response to them or how information about FSG calls was being passed to the bridgehead.²⁷⁹ GM Welch had no recollection of briefing WM Williams in relation to this role at all,²⁸⁰ but WM Williams was an impressive witness and I accept what he said.
- 14.101 Having received his instructions, WM Williams asked WM Watson if the bridgehead was moving down to the ground floor. He assumed that would be so, as it is normal to manage FSG calls at a place close to where BA crews are being committed in order to ensure clear communication. On being told by WM Watson that the bridgehead was not moving, he considered how to maintain a clear line of communication between the two of them.²⁸¹
- 14.102 WM Williams decided that he would receive information on control information forms rather than by radio or any other method.²⁸² He did not try to make radio contact with the command unit at this time; in fact, he did not know which command unit had been assigned to handle FSG calls.²⁸³ (He was also unaware, and remained unaware throughout the incident, that WM Sadler had established a post for handling FSG calls outside the tower.)²⁸⁴ WM Williams decided to rely on runners to transmit information to him from the command unit. He remembered having given that task to a firefighter, whose name he did not remember, as he came down from the mezzanine on floor 2.²⁸⁵ It was that firefighter who brought WM Williams his first batch of control information forms, but several more runners were brought in to help shortly thereafter.²⁸⁶

²⁷³ Williams Day 31/43/21-25.

²⁷⁴ Williams Day 31/45/1-6.

²⁷⁵ Williams Day 31/51/2-52/3.

²⁷⁶ Williams witness statement [MET00008045] p. 7.

²⁷⁷ Williams Day 31/56/4-9.

²⁷⁸ Williams Day 31/57/12-18.

²⁷⁹ Williams Day 31/45/7-22.

²⁸⁰ Welch Day 44/144/4-15.

²⁸¹ Williams Day 31/53-54/14-10.

²⁸² Williams Day 31/55/3-16.

²⁸³ Williams Day 31/62/3-12.

²⁸⁴ Williams Day 31/70/9-14.

²⁸⁵ Williams Day 31/64/12-65/6.

²⁸⁶ Williams Day 31/67/22-68/7.

- 14.103 In his oral evidence WM Williams recalled that once his runner had returned with the first batch of slips he had started to write on the wall of the lobby, noting the time at which he started recording FSG information as 02.15.²⁸⁷ He had then started shouting the information up to WM Watson on the mezzanine balcony, who recorded it, repeated it back to WM Williams and then, when he had passed it to a BA crew, confirmed that he had done so.²⁸⁸ WM Watson said that that was the first time he had known anything about the FSG calls being received²⁸⁹ and that he did not know how information had previously been passed to the bridgehead.²⁹⁰ At first, he began to record the information he was receiving from WM Williams on the wall of the mezzanine, but he soon realised that that was too time-consuming, so he changed to using his notepad instead.²⁹¹ He wrote the information on individual sheets from his notepad and handed these slips of paper to the BA crews before they entered the bridgehead.²⁹² WM Watson himself made no record of which FSG calls he had given to which crews since (as he understood it) WM Williams was performing that task.²⁹³ He did not at any stage check that the information recorded at the bridgehead was consistent with the information he had on the mezzanine and²⁹⁴ he did not attempt any kind of prioritisation.²⁹⁵ He said that it was a matter of pot luck to which flat on which floor any particular crew had been sent.²⁹⁶ He remembered deploying crews to floors 21 and 23, and telling a crew who had questioned whether they would be able to reach that high, that: “You can only do what you can do, because that’s all we’ve got at the moment”.²⁹⁷ He said that at that stage there had been few, if any, EDBA wearers available.²⁹⁸
- 14.104 When WM Watson had confirmed that he had passed the information received from WM Williams to a BA crew, WM Williams would write “BA” on the wall next to his note of that FSG call,²⁹⁹ as can be seen in the photograph below, taken much later on in the incident.

²⁸⁷ Williams Day 31/68/24-69/3.

²⁸⁸ Williams Day 31/81/20-82/11; Watson Day 28/70/16-19.

²⁸⁹ Watson Day 28/69/19-23.

²⁹⁰ Watson Day 28/54/20-55/5.

²⁹¹ Watson Day 28/74/11-17.

²⁹² Watson Day 28/72/1-3.

²⁹³ Watson Day 28/78/13-20.

²⁹⁴ Watson Day 28/81/19-25.

²⁹⁵ Watson Day 28/80/22-81/1.

²⁹⁶ Watson Day 28/79/3-7.

²⁹⁷ Watson Day 28/123/10-19. WM Watson recalled that it was the crew tasked with floor 21 with whom he had this exchange, though this is more likely to be the crew tasked with floor 23 (FF Wright, FF Alassad and FF Bell). FF Wright specifically recalled having been tasked by WM Watson prior to the crew’s tally out at around 02.10 – refer to his witness statement [MET000083339] p. 2. FF Bell similarly recalls being tasked by a “Paul Watkins”, likely to be a reference to WM Watson; refer to his statement [MET00012995] p. 3.

²⁹⁸ Watson Day 28/122/10-13.

²⁹⁹ Williams Day 31/82/6-11, 31/106/2-23.

described floor 5 as a “no-goer” and floor 4 as having “a lot of black rolling smoke” in the lobby. Floor 3 however “looked OK”, so he recommended to GM Welch that the bridgehead be re-established there.³⁰⁸

- 14.107 SM Cook had originally gone into the tower and up to the bridgehead with GM Welch at around 02.10. He recalled that very shortly after his arrival at the bridgehead GM Welch had asked him to leave the building again in order to establish whether there were any other ways in or out.³⁰⁹ Once he was back outside, SM Cook took the two photographs reproduced below, which have time stamps of 02.15 and 02.17 respectively:

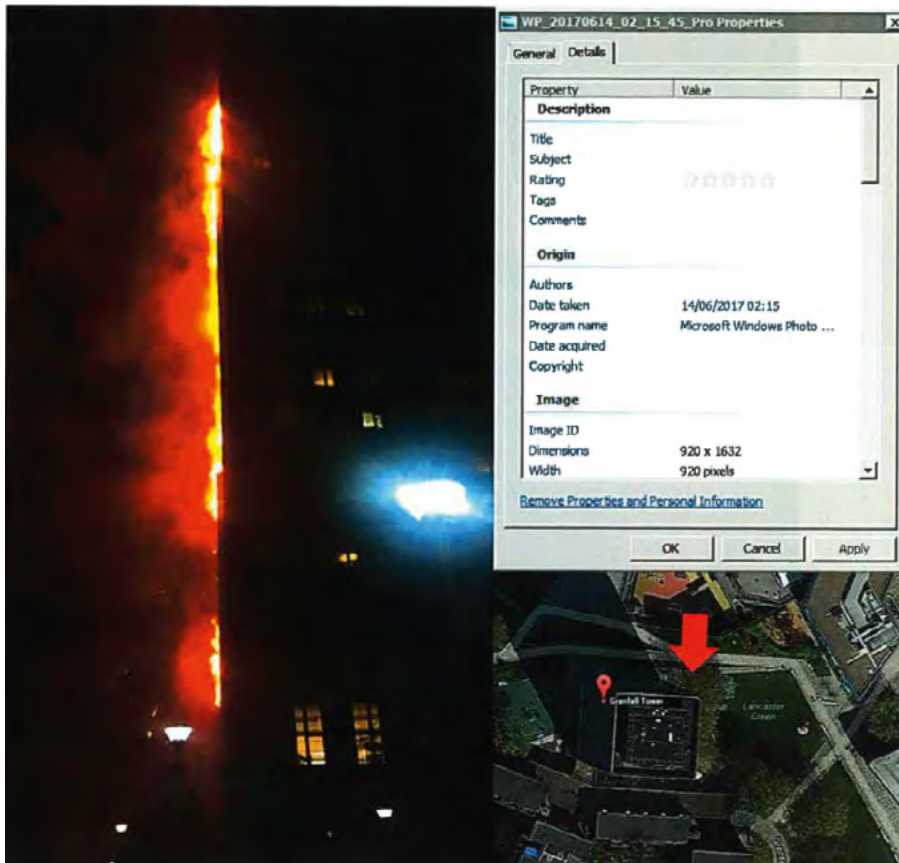


Figure 14.6

³⁰⁸ O’Keeffe Day 18/179/20-180/10.

³⁰⁹ Cook Day 28/187/4-10, 28/191/9-14.

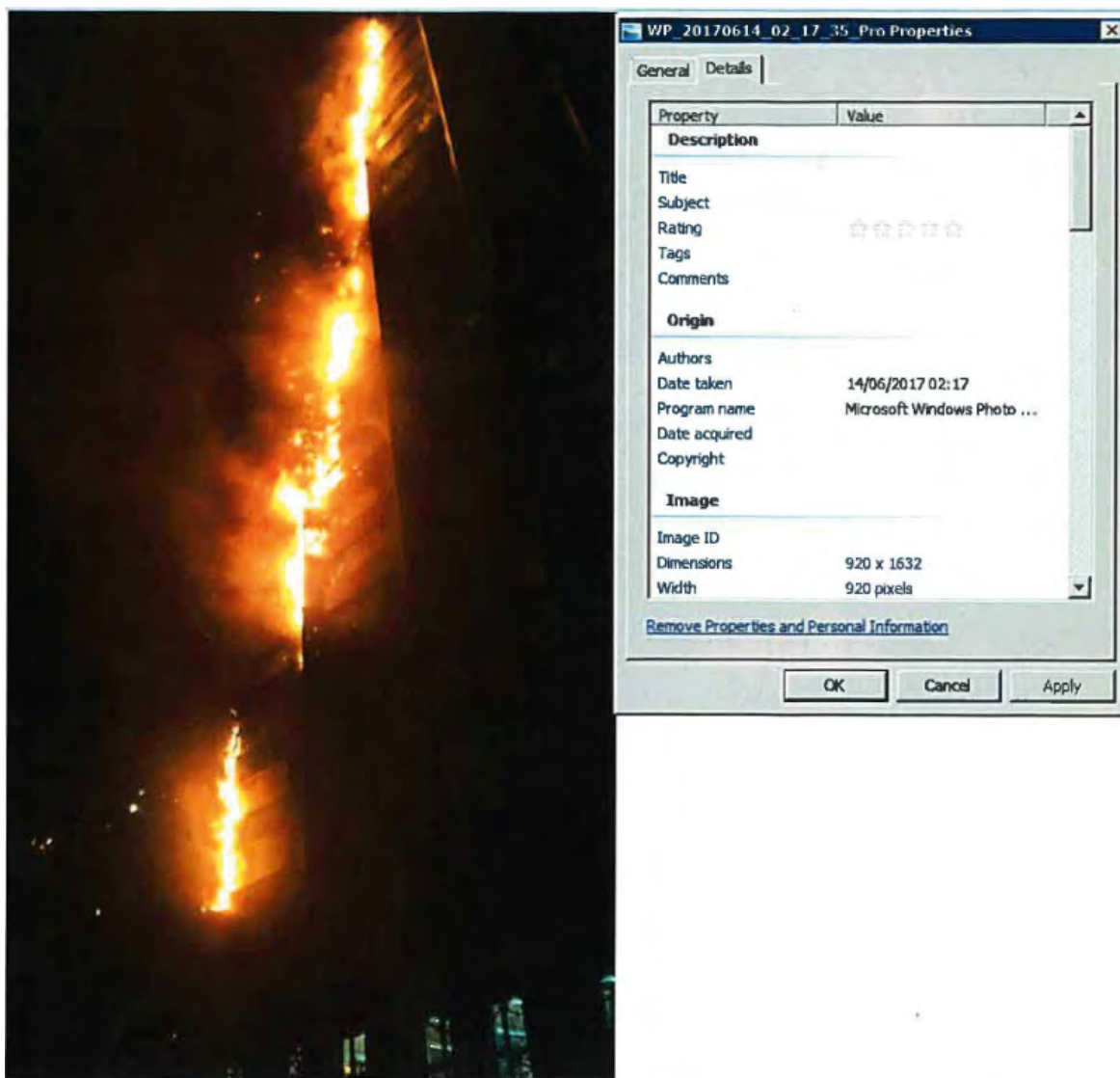


Figure 14.7

- 14.108 SM Cook said that after taking these photographs he had gone straight back into the building, where he had discovered that the bridgehead had moved to floor 3.³¹⁰ That was broadly consistent with WM De Silvo's recollection: she agreed that the move had taken place at around 02.15.³¹¹ She said that, as well as the handful of FSG calls that had already been recorded on the FIB when she first arrived at the bridgehead on floor 2, by the time of the move to floor 3 she had added no more than 10 to that list, all of which she had taken up with her.³¹²

³¹⁰ Cook Day 28/196/10-16, 28/197/11-198/3.

³¹¹ De Silvo Day 29/213/1-13.

³¹² De Silvo Day 29/215/17-24.

Deployment of FFs Murphy and Cornelius and FFs Merrion and Sanders to floor 14

- 14.109 At around that time the two crews that had originally gone to floor 14 arrived back at the bridgehead, having moved all the residents into Flat 113. FFs Merrion and Sanders had “end of wear times” of 02.15.34 and 02.15.48 respectively. FFs Murphy and Cornelius had “end of wear times” of 02.19.54 and 02.18.35.³¹³ FF Murphy specifically recalled that by that time the bridgehead had moved to floor 3.³¹⁴
- 14.110 FF Merrion said that he and FF Sanders had told the officers at the bridgehead that everyone on floor 14 had been put in the same flat. He believed that he had also told them how many people were there, but at the time of giving evidence he could not recall how many there had been.³¹⁵ FF Murphy was able to remember with precision that he had told WM O’Keeffe that he and FF Cornelius had swept floor 14 and had found six adults and two children, whom they had put in Flat 113 in “safe air”, but that they needed to send crews back up there with second BA sets, as the air was not safe for them to be brought down.³¹⁶ FF Cornelius also recalled having given a separate debriefing to WM O’Keeffe that was effectively the same as that given by FF Murphy, which he had overheard. He said that they had both been pretty desperate to explain the situation.³¹⁷ A photograph of the bridgehead on floor 3 shows a sketch of a floor plan on one of the walls with the words “113 8 people” on the left-hand side. That suggests that the firefighters’ recollection of the debriefing they had given was correct and that the information was recorded at the bridgehead while it was on floor 3, although the fact that there were two children in the flat, despite it being included in the debrief, was not recorded on the floor 3 bridgehead wall.³¹⁸
- 14.111 At some point between 02.03 and 02.37 (probably at around 02.20) FFs Cook and Brian Flanagan visited Flat 113 and noted that it contained eight people, including two children. FF Flanagan spoke to the occupants.³¹⁹ There is no evidence that the firefighters reported that information to the bridgehead when they returned and tallied in.

Deployment of CM Tillotson’s crew – contd

- 14.112 On floor 9, FFs Bettinson and Wolfenden remained in Flat 65 with Sharon Laci and her daughter while CMs Gallagher and Tillotson and FF Felton returned to the bridgehead to bring back spare BA sets for them. FF Bettinson said that they had waited there for around 15-20 minutes.³²⁰
- 14.113 While that was happening, a further BA crew consisting of CM Gregory Yeoman, FF Anthony Nelson, FFs Jonathan Saunders and Laurence Stavely had been briefed to go to Flat 65.³²¹ They had all tallied out by 02.04.43³²² and went up to floor 9. FF Bettinson recalled having

³¹³ BA Telemetry Schedule.

³¹⁴ Murphy Day 38/53/5-8.

³¹⁵ Merrion Day 38/21/7-23.

³¹⁶ Murphy Day 38/52/18-53/3.

³¹⁷ Cornelius Day 38/88/9-12.

³¹⁸ Exhibit of Matthew Sephton [MET00016948].

³¹⁹ Cook witness statement [MET00012855] pp. 3-4; Flanagan witness statement [MET00007765] pp. 6-8. The BA Telemetry data for their deployment is incomplete but shows that they were under air from between 2.07.46 to 02.36.01 (FF Cook) and 02.03.12 to 02.35.23 (FF Flanagan). They visited Flat 113 on their descent from floor 20.

³²⁰ Bettinson Day 26/221/12-14.

³²¹ Yeoman witness statement [MET00007862] p. 4 and Nelson witness statement [MET00007785] p. 2.

³²² BA Telemetry Schedule.

heard a knock on the door while he was inside the flat and telling the crew outside that he and FF Wolfenden were waiting for the rest of their own crew to return with BA sets to bring the occupants down. CM Yeoman's crew then continued on to check the next flat.³²³

- 14.114 After that, CM Tillotson and CM Gallagher returned to Flat 65 with the fresh BA sets.³²⁴ The crew decided that Sharon Laci should wear one of the new sets, with her daughter using a spare mask that was fitted to FF Bettinson's cylinder, sharing his air. CM Tillotson was very low on air by this point, so he fixed his mask to the other new BA set before the crew returned back down the stairs.³²⁵ CCTV images show Sharon Laci, still wearing BA, being escorted by a firefighter from the stairwell into the ground floor lobby at around 02.19.³²⁶

Deployment of FFs James Cuthbert and Graeme Shaw – contd

- 14.115 On floor 5, the crew banged on the door of Flat 23, where Rebin Sabir and Milad Kareem were. FF Cuthbert recalled that one of them had been on the telephone to the control room and had told the crew that they had been instructed to stay in the flat, although the Inquiry has seen no record of any such call and these occupants have not said in their evidence that they made any 999 calls. The firefighters were concerned about the smoke and heat in the lobby and thought that the men would die if they tried to leave the building at that time, so FF Cuthbert told them to remain in the flat while he and FF Shaw returned to Entry Control.³²⁷

Other deployments during this period

FFs Terence Roots and Adam Johnson

- 14.116 FFs Roots and Johnson were initially briefed to go to Flat 14 on floor 4.³²⁸ They tallied out at around 02.02.³²⁹ They reached Flat 14, which was empty, and went back down to the bridgehead, where they were instructed to go to Flat 161 on floor 19. A photograph of the bridgehead on floor 2 shows that the briefings were recorded next to their names.³³⁰ FF Roots expressed some concern that they might not have sufficient air to reach that floor, given that they had already been to floor 4.³³¹ However, the crew were able to reach floor 19, where they did a sweep of Flat 161, but found no one inside. They then helped two people from Flat 165 (Nicholas and Pily Burton) to leave the building.³³²

FFs John Wright, Zade Alassad and Scott Bell

- 14.117 FFs Wright, Alassad and Bell were briefed to go to two flats on floor 23; they tallied out at 02.08.45, 02.10.24 and 02.10.25. The flat numbers were written on a piece of paper that was handed to the crew by WM Watson, but by the time they gave evidence none of the firefighters could remember what they had been.³³³ FF Bell was shown a photograph of the wall on floor 2 where the bridgehead had then been located, on which the crew's names had been marked alongside the numbers 201 and 205.³³⁴ He agreed that they were likely to

³²³ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] p. 9.

³²⁴ FF Felton had to return to the bridgehead before the three made it back to floor 9, as he was low on air.

³²⁵ Bettinson witness statement [MET00007879] p. 10.

³²⁶ ORR v 0.7 p. 170.

³²⁷ Cuthbert witness statement [MET00012878] p. 6.

³²⁸ Roots witness statement [MET00012876] p. 4.

³²⁹ BA Telemetry Schedule. Note that there is no tally out time for FF Johnson.

³³⁰ [MET00013071].

³³¹ Roots witness statement [MET00012876] p. 4.

³³² Roots witness statement [MET00012876] pp. 4-6; Johnson Day 45/18/15-17.

³³³ Bell Day 40/44/22-25; Wright witness statement [MET000083339] p. 2.

³³⁴ [MET00013074].

have been the flats to which they had been deployed.³³⁵ The firefighters started their ascent, but stopped in the area of floor 10 where they met another crew who were bringing down casualties. FFs Bell and Wright then together carried down an unconscious male casualty (now known to be Mohamednur Tuccu, as has been addressed in more detail in Period 1).³³⁶ FF Alassad helped to bring down a female casualty (now known to be Khadija Khalloufi, as also addressed in Period 1).³³⁷ On their return to the bridgehead FF Bell told someone that they had not reached floor 23, but he could not remember to whom he had spoken or what that person had done with the information.³³⁸

External firefighting and rescues: repositioning of Paddington’s turntable ladder, A213; ladder and ground monitor on walkway; creation of “improvised” hose system on Soho’s ALP, A245

- 14.118 Outside the tower Paddington’s turntable ladder, A213, was being operated by CM Daniel Harriman and FF Christopher Reynolds on the east side of the building. At some time between around 02.10 and 02.25 (the precise time cannot now be reliably determined),³³⁹ the turntable ladder was moved to the south side, where it was stationed partially under the covered walkway to protect it from falling debris. FF Reynolds recalled that at that time he had seen someone at a window on floor 4 or floor 5, just above the main entrance, who needed rescuing. That is likely to have been Rebin Sabir or Milad Kareem in Flat 23 on floor 5. FF Reynolds and CM Harriman tried to reach them using the turntable ladder, but could not extend it far enough.³⁴⁰ They were eventually rescued through the window using a ladder that WM Steven Collins had set up on the walkway.³⁴¹ These occupants left the building between 02.19 and 02.21, as considered in more detail in section (3) below.
- 14.119 WM Collins’ evidence was that at around the same time, he had set up a ground monitor on the walkway in order to apply water to the south face of the building, where residents could be seen at the windows at about floor 9, above the walkway and to the right-hand side of the entrance. He had asked CM Harriman to extend the turntable ladder to “do some rescues”. CM Harriman extended the turntable ladder but could not get it close enough to the building due to the distance at which it had been parked in order to avoid the falling debris. He was able to communicate with a man at one of the windows, whom he told to stay put until the crews reached him. The turntable ladder was then parked back underneath the walkway to protect it from the falling debris, while CM Collins continued to operate the ground monitor against the side of the building.³⁴²
- 14.120 On the east side of the building, Soho’s ALP, A245, was still being operated by CM Christopher Frost and FF Jason King, overseen by WM Stuart Beale. Having experienced significant lack of water pressure, FF King described having improvised a system for delivering water by fixing a high-pressure hose on to the cage of the ALP and operating it remotely from the bottom of the ladder. FF King estimated that they had rigged up the system about half an hour after having tried to work the ground monitor in the usual way (the ALP having started operating at around 02.00). With the system in operation the ALP was able to reach up to about floor

³³⁵ Bell Day 40/45/20-46/5.

³³⁶ Bell witness statement [MET00012995] pp. 4-5.

³³⁷ Alassad witness statement [MET00012991] pp. 4-5.

³³⁸ Bell Day 40/55/7-25.

³³⁹ This approximate time is based on FF Reynold’s evidence that the turntable ladder moved to the south side 30-40 minutes after being operational: Reynolds witness statement [MET00010894] p. 5. As noted in Period 2, A213 arrived at 01.32.07 and was operational about 10-15 minutes thereafter.

³⁴⁰ Reynolds witness statement [MET00010894] p. 5.

³⁴¹ Collins witness statement [MET00010086] p. 6.

³⁴² Collins witness statement [MET00010086] p. 7 and Harriman witness statement [MET00007867] p. 3.

10.³⁴³ WM Beale's evidence was that the arrangement was effective. They had been able to limit the spread of fire over the areas to which they had applied the jet, including around a window in the region of floors 11 to 13 where a man had been seen. The system had remained in operation for five hours.³⁴⁴

BA Main Control: SM Kipling and SM Loft

- 14.121 By around 02.15 to 02.20 SM Kipling and SM Loft had left CU7, where they had briefly started to set up BA Main Control before GM Goodall arrived. As they approached the tower, SM Kipling directed SM Loft to remain underneath the covered walkway and to communicate with the bridgehead,³⁴⁵ which he did using channel 1 of his fireground radio.³⁴⁶ SM Kipling then went to find a place within sight of SM Loft by the leisure centre where he could hold the incoming BA crews.³⁴⁷ He sent a message to CU8 confirming that he had established BA Main Control and sent some other firefighters round the incident ground with instructions to send any unoccupied BA wearers back to him.³⁴⁸ He then communicated with SM Loft every five minutes by mobile phone. SM Loft passed on to him requests from the bridgehead for BA crews.³⁴⁹
- 14.122 SM Kipling kept a record of how many crews he had committed and whether they were EDBA or SDBA wearers.³⁵⁰ He also established a line of communication with CU8, using SM Saunders as a runner.³⁵¹ SM Saunders told the command unit when Main Control was going to run out of BA wearers and how many more were needed. SM Kipling said that this system worked well and that at no point did they run out of resources.³⁵²
- 14.123 SM Kipling said that from the moment that BA Main Control had been set up, they had always had at least 10 EDBA wearers ready and waiting to go in as required,³⁵³ though it did not surprise him that there had apparently been delays between the arrival of some EDBA crews and their subsequent deployment.³⁵⁴ He said that it was for the bridgehead to determine what resources they wanted and when, and that he was never short of BA wearers to send in when they were requested.³⁵⁵ I accept what he said about that.

3 Conditions in the tower and movement of occupants

Flat occupancy in the tower at around 02.00

- 14.124 By around 02.00, 129 people remained in the tower. With the exceptions of Flat 9 on floor 3 and Flat 23 on floor 5, which were shortly to be evacuated, all the flats on floors 1 to 8 were empty. With the exception of floor 13, people remained in flats from floors 9 to 23.

³⁴³ King Day 36/127/3-128/1.

³⁴⁴ Beale Day 34/77/9-24.

³⁴⁵ Kipling witness statement [MET00012557] pp. 7-8 and Day 36/159/15-20.

³⁴⁶ Loft Day 37/189/6-14.

³⁴⁷ Kipling Day 36/162/1-12.

³⁴⁸ Kipling Day 36/165/1-9.

³⁴⁹ Kipling Day 36/168/9-24.

³⁵⁰ Kipling Day 36/169/12-20.

³⁵¹ Kipling witness statement [MET00012557] p. 9.

³⁵² Kipling Day 36/171/7-172/18.

³⁵³ Kipling Day 36/187/1-12.

³⁵⁴ Kipling Day 36/188/1-11.

³⁵⁵ Kipling Day 36/190/14-24; Loft Day 37/200/9-16, 37/204/12-18.

Floor 23

The progress of the fire on floor 23

14.125 Twenty-nine people were sheltering in five flats on floor 23 as follows:

Flat 201: Fadumo Ahmed, Amal Ahmedin, Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin, Raymond (Moses) Bernard, Berkti Haftom, Biruk Haftom, Amna Idris, Hamid Kani, Debbie Lamprell, Jessica Urbano Ramirez;

Flat 202: Marco Gottardi, Gloria Trevisan, Ernie Vital and Majorie Vital;

Flat 203: Gary Maunders, Rania Ibrahim and Fethia Hassan, Hania Hassan, Isra Ibrahim, Fathia Ahmed Elsanousi and Abufras Ibrahim;

Flat 204: Hesham Rahman; and

Flat 205: Flora (Shakila) Neda, Saber Neda, Shekeb (Farhad) Neda, Eslah Elgwahry and Mariem Elgwahry and Sakina Afrasehabi and Fatemeh Afrasiabi.

Flat 201

14.126 Fadumo Ahmed was one of a number of people who had moved to floor 23 from lower floors. She joined others in the hallway of Flat 201, where she and Amal Ahmedin had tried without success to douse flames appearing at the living room window.³⁵⁶

14.127 The group of 10 people now in the flat included Debbie Lamprell and Jessica Urbano Ramirez, both of whom were still speaking to CROs at 02.01. Jessica Urbano Ramirez's call with CRO Sarah Russell had begun at 01.29.48³⁵⁷ and ended at 02.24.44. Debbie Lamprell's call with CRO Aisha Jabin had begun at 01.41.18³⁵⁸ and ended at 02.21.41. When the call with Debbie Lamprell began, the group had moved into the single bedroom in Flat 201. Although their calls overlap and they were in the same room, no interaction between Jessica Urbano Ramirez and Debbie Lamprell is detectable from the transcripts.

Fadumo Ahmed

14.128 Fadumo Ahmed was the only occupant who between 01.50 and 02.20 successfully crossed the lobbies and reached the stairs without the assistance of firefighters. Having tried to put out flames in the living room, she had returned to stand near the front door. She then decided to leave. Fire had broken into the living room and thick smoke was coming into the flat from the lobby. Fadumo Ahmed ran from Flat 201 straight into the stairwell. The lobby was full of black smoke and there was no visibility.³⁵⁹

14.129 When she reached the stairwell, Fadumo Ahmed made for the gate to the roof, but found it locked. She began banging on the gate. Her family were calling her and, when she was able to answer, encouraging her to come down. Fadumo Ahmed was discouraged from doing so by the smoke that she could see coming up the stairs towards her. She "knew that the fire must have been stronger downstairs". The smoke was dark and smelled like gas. It became so thick that she could no longer see the stairs.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] pp. 4-5.

³⁵⁷ [LFB00055504].

³⁵⁸ [LFB00055500].

³⁵⁹ Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] p. 5.

³⁶⁰ Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] p. 5.

- 14.130 Fadumo Ahmed decided to walk down. The stairwell was dark and the smoke thickened as she went down. Breathing was difficult; the smoke made her cough and feel dizzy. Somewhere between floors 20 and 21 she sat down. After what seemed like half an hour a firefighter found her and helped her down the stairs.³⁶¹
- 14.131 FFs Gillam,³⁶² Roberts,³⁶³ Russell Gonzalez³⁶⁴ and Harris³⁶⁵ met Fadumo Ahmed in the stairwell between floors 21 and 22. FF Gillam spoke to her and described her as initially conscious and coherent. He helped her down the stairs, but she lost consciousness between floors 17 and 18.³⁶⁶ She was carried out of the tower at 02.25.³⁶⁷
- 14.132 It is not possible to identify the precise time at which Fadumo Ahmed left Flat 201. Amal Ahmedin and her daughter, Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin, were found in the lobby.³⁶⁸ It is not possible to say whether Amal Ahmedin and her daughter followed Fadumo Ahmed out of the flat or left later. Fadumo Ahmed said she had been in the hallway of Flat 201 rather than the bedroom. She knew Amal Ahmedin and did not say that she had followed her out of the flat. Both Debbie Lamprell and Jessica Urbano Ramirez mentioned a baby in the bedroom, which must have been Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin.³⁶⁹ At around 02.00, during her call with CRO Russell, Jessica Urbano Ramirez said: “Don’t leave” to someone in the room.³⁷⁰ When asked by CRO Russell if someone was leaving, Jessica Urbano Ramirez said that she had been mistaken. It is possible, however, that she had been referring to the departure of Amal Ahmedin and Amaya Tuccu Ahmedin.

Jessica Urbano Ramirez

- 14.133 Throughout the call with CRO Russell, Jessica Urbano Ramirez repeatedly said that she was having difficulty breathing, which CRO Russell acknowledged.³⁷¹ Others in the room were having the same problem.³⁷² Jessica Urbano Ramirez told CRO Russell that there was a lot of smoke in the bedroom.³⁷³
- 14.134 At around 02.06³⁷⁴ Jessica Urbano Ramirez told CRO Russell that “there is a fire in here” and later confirmed that flames were coming through the bedroom window.³⁷⁵ CRO Russell tried to persuade her to move to another room. She suggested that Jessica Urbano Ramirez should speak to others in the room. She told CRO Russell that people had tried to leave and had been unable to do so because of the smoke, and that she could not pass the telephone to the person who had tried to leave as he could not talk and was too far away. There was no one next to her.³⁷⁶

³⁶¹ Fadumo Ahmed first witness statement [IWS00000729] pp. 5-6.

³⁶² Gillam Day 27/73/19-74/5; Gillam first witness statement [MET00008025] pp. 10-12.

³⁶³ Roberts first witness statement [MET00007890] pp. 4-5.

³⁶⁴ Gonzalez first witness statement [MET00012861] p. 7.

³⁶⁵ Harris first witness statement [MET00007884] p. 8.

³⁶⁶ Gillam Day 27/74/2-78/21; Gillam first witness statement [MET00008025] p. 12.

³⁶⁷ Annex A.

³⁶⁸ DVI plan [MET00012528] p. 3.

³⁶⁹ [LFB00055504] p. 26; [LFB00055504] p. 37.

³⁷⁰ [LFB00055504] p. 52.

³⁷¹ [LFB00055504] pp. 10, 11, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 41, 47, 59, 60, 61, 63, 70, 71.

³⁷² [LFB00055504] pp. 22, 23, 30, 34, 44.

³⁷³ [LFB00055504] p. 49.

³⁷⁴ [LFB00055504] p. 62.

³⁷⁵ [LFB00055504] pp. 62-63.

³⁷⁶ [LFB00055504] pp. 71-72.

14.135 A few minutes before the call ended, Jessica Urbano Ramirez stopped responding.³⁷⁷ CRO Russell could hear the sound of breathing for some time after that and ended the call only when the line went silent.³⁷⁸ That was the last known contact with Jessica Urbano Ramirez.

Debbie Lamprell

14.136 Debbie Lamprell was already in the bedroom of Flat 201 when she began her call with CRO Jabin.³⁷⁹ She told CRO Jabin that she did not know where her friend was. That was a reference to Gary Maunders, who had moved to Flat 203. The group in the bedroom included a baby, a schoolchild and an elderly man.³⁸⁰

14.137 Like Jessica Urbano Ramirez, Debbie Lamprell said she had difficulty breathing.³⁸¹ Early in the call, she had told CRO Jabin that thick black smoke was coming through the window.³⁸² Later she said it was becoming thicker and was making her eyes burn.³⁸³ The smoke was making others in the bedroom sick.³⁸⁴

14.138 At around 02.01,³⁸⁵ Debbie Lamprell told CRO Jabin that the windows were cracking. Soon after, at 02.06, she said that she could feel the heat and then that the flat was on fire.³⁸⁶ CRO Jabin reported to her team leader that she had been told that the fire was getting into the flat and was told to advise Debbie Lamprell to leave, which she did.³⁸⁷

14.139 Debbie Lamprell tried to leave the bedroom. She could be heard telling someone to move out of the way of the door. She told CRO Jabin: "I don't know who's blocked the door..." When asked if the door was locked, Debbie Lamprell said: "No, they won't move from the door".³⁸⁸ CRO Jabin said that Debbie Lamprell had told her that people on the other side of the room were trying to get out and that's why she couldn't get out.³⁸⁹

14.140 Debbie Lamprell became less responsive towards the end of the call. At the end of it she confirmed that she was still on the floor of the bedroom. The call then went silent.³⁹⁰ That was the last known contact with Debbie Lamprell.

Flat 202

14.141 Gloria Trevisan and her boyfriend Marco Gottardi had arrived in London in March 2017. They moved to Flat 202 in April 2017.³⁹¹ On the night of the fire, Gloria Trevisan spoke to her parents, Emanuela Disaró and Loris Trevisan, in Italy. I referred earlier to the call she made at 01.34.³⁹²

³⁷⁷ [LFB00055504] p. 81.

³⁷⁸ Russell first witness statement [MET00007698] p. 6.

³⁷⁹ [LFB00055500] p. 2.

³⁸⁰ [LFB00055500] p. 29.

³⁸¹ [LFB00055500] pp. 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 23, 34, 36, 37.

³⁸² [LFB00055500] pp. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9.

³⁸³ [LFB00055500] pp. 19, 21.

³⁸⁴ [LFB00055500] p. 24.

³⁸⁵ [LFB00055500] pp. 26-28.

³⁸⁶ [LFB00055500] pp. 26-27, 30.

³⁸⁷ Jabin first witness statement [MET00008028] p. 4 and Day 43/76/1-43/79/2-10; [LFB00055500] p. 31.

³⁸⁸ [LFB00055500] pp. 31-34.

³⁸⁹ Jabin Day 43/78/5-9.

³⁹⁰ [LFB00055500] pp. 42-43; Jabin first witness statement [MET00008028] p. 5.

³⁹¹ Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] p. 3.

³⁹² Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] pp. 4-5 and second witness statement [IWS00001227] p. 3.

- 14.142 At 02.13 Gloria Trevisan made a video call to her parents, which lasted 7 minutes and 28 seconds.³⁹³ She told her mother that they could see that the fire was large and did not know what to do. It had reached floor 23. Black smoke was coming into the flat through the living room windows. The smoke was everywhere. Emanuela Disaró could not see her daughter which she thought was either because of smoke or that there was no light. She heard her daughter coughing and Gloria Trevisan told her mother that she was having difficulty breathing. Her mother advised her to breathe through a wet towel.³⁹⁴
- 14.143 During the call, Emanuela Disaró heard Marco Gottardi speaking to another man in the background. She thought he was one of the two people who had come into Flat 202 earlier. She heard Marco Gottardi ask if there was anyone in another apartment and then say that he would go out to ask. Then Emanuela Disaró heard Marco Gottardi say in English “I tried but there’s too much smoke.”³⁹⁵
- 14.144 It is clear that Marco Gottardi had at least been considering moving to another flat on floor 23. It is not possible to say how far he was able to venture from Flat 202, if at all. It appears likely that the extent of the smoke in the lobby on floor 23 led him to think that it was no longer possible to leave Flat 202. Gloria Trevisan spoke again to her parents later in the night and I shall return to that call later in this Narrative.

Flat 203

- 14.145 Flat 203 was in the south-west corner of the tower and so furthest away from the place where the fire had started. Isra Ibrahim made two 999 calls between 02.00 and 02.20 which illustrate the progress of the fire.
- 14.146 The first 999 call was made at 02.05.25.³⁹⁶ She told CRO Christine Howson that there were five adults and two children in Flat 203. They were in the living room and kitchen area. Smoke was coming into the flat, but they were keeping the doors closed. No smoke was coming through the windows. Isra Ibrahim said she had smoke around her nose. CRO Howson told Isra Ibrahim that firefighters would come to all the flats to check on their occupants. She advised her that it was not safe to go into the communal areas as there was a lot of smoke coming up from the fire on floor 4. She advised her to remain in the flat.
- 14.147 At 02.21.32, Isra Ibrahim spoke to CRO Angie Gotts.³⁹⁷ She reported that the occupants of the flat were stuck and the flat next door was on fire. Isra Ibrahim asked what those in the flat should do. CRO Gotts advised them to try to block the doors and to stay away from the side of the flat on fire. Isra Ibrahim asked if someone could come to the flat now. CRO Gotts explained that firefighters were on the lower floors but were coming up to floor 23.

Flat 204

- 14.148 Hesham Rahman had earlier reported a little smoke entering his flat in a 999 call timed at 01.39.³⁹⁸ On that occasion he had spoken to OM Alexandra Norman. She called him back at 01.46. During that call Hesham Rahman said that the fire had not reached his flat but was

³⁹³ Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] p. 7 and second witness statement [IWS00001227] p. 4.

³⁹⁴ Disaró first witness statement [IWS00000543] pp. 7-8 and second witness statement [IWS00001227] p. 5.

³⁹⁵ Disaró second witness statement [IWS00001227] p. 5.

³⁹⁶ [LFB00000340].

³⁹⁷ [LFB00000663].

³⁹⁸ [LFB00000329] p. 3.

“next door”. Hesham Rahman made no 999 calls between 02.00 and 02.20. He made one at 02.36.07, in which he said that smoke was coming into the flat but the fire itself had not reached it.³⁹⁹

Flat 205

- 14.149 While in Flat 205, Mariem Elgwahry was in contact with her brother, Ahmed Elgwahry, and a close friend, Lucy Ho. At around 02.00, Lucy Ho called Mariem Elgwahry and tried to persuade her to leave.⁴⁰⁰ Mariem Elgwahry told Lucy Ho that the emergency services knew where they were and would come for them. Lucy Ho again told her to leave. After speaking to Mariem Elgwahry for five minutes, Lucy Ho went to find a fireman who told her to speak to a police officer. She told the officer that her friend, her mother and four others were in Flat 205. Lucy Ho then tried to call Mariem Elgwahry back but there was no answer.⁴⁰¹
- 14.150 At around 02.13, after he had arrived at the tower, Ahmed Elgwahry called Mariem Elgwahry again. A police officer took Ahmed Elgwahry to a command unit. There a firefighter advised Mariem Elgwahry to lie low and breathe through the drain in the bathroom and block the smoke with wet towels. The firefighter then told her to call 999.⁴⁰² It has not been possible to identify the firefighter with any degree of confidence.

Floor 22

Smoke conditions on floor 22

- 14.151 Three 999 calls made between 02.00 and 02.20 are indicative of the progress of the fire on floor 22. At that time, Flats 192, 193 and 194 were still occupied.
- 14.152 On speaking to CRO Howson at 02.00.33,⁴⁰³ Anthony Disson in Flat 194 immediately said: “The flat’s worse. It’s black in here. I can’t see a thing. I’m on the 22nd floor”. He added that smoke was coming through the letterbox. CRO Howson reassured him that firefighters were coming for him.
- 14.153 At about the same time, at 02.03.47, CRO Gotts took a call from Flat 192 and was told that there was smoke in the “corridor” and that the fire could be seen approaching the flat.⁴⁰⁴ That call lasted 2 minutes and 36 seconds,⁴⁰⁵ ending at 02.06.13. Four minutes later, at 02.10.31, CRO Howson took another 999 call from Flat 192 and was told repeatedly that the fire was “in the kitchen”. The smoke was making everyone in the flat cough. CRO Howson’s advice was that the caller had to decide whether to leave. When she asked whether the stairs were near, CRO Howson was told: “We’re trapped”.⁴⁰⁶
- 14.154 The next 999 call from Flat 192 was again answered by CRO Howson at 02.18.06. During this call, she was told again that the fire was in the kitchen and that because of the volume of smoke, it might now have reached the living room. The family wanted to move from the flat and CRO Howson advised them to go to the stairwell or somewhere where the smoke was less heavy.⁴⁰⁷

³⁹⁹ [LFBO0000368] p. 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Lucy Ho first witness statement [IWS00000655] p. 8.

⁴⁰¹ Lucy Ho first witness statement [IWS00000655] p. 8.

⁴⁰² Ahmed Elgwahry first witness statement [IWS00000988] p. 6.

⁴⁰³ [LFBO0000337].

⁴⁰⁴ [LFBO0000339].

⁴⁰⁵ ORR v 0.7 p. 131.

⁴⁰⁶ [LFBO0000345].

⁴⁰⁷ [LFBO0000351].

14.155 There is no evidence about conditions in Flat 193 during this period. Nadia Choucair had rung 999 at 01.48 (Period 4) and reported smoke coming into the flat. Naomi Li's recollection was that even at 02.37 there had been no smoke in the living room, although she had not gone into the kitchen or hallway.⁴⁰⁸

Floor 21

The progress of the fire on floor 21

14.156 Flats 181, 182 and 183 were still occupied at 02.01. Ligaya Moore was alone in Flat 181. There is no evidence that she had any contact with the emergency services, another occupant of the tower or anyone outside it on 14 June 2017.

Flat 182

14.157 At 02.01, CRO Pam Jones was still speaking to the El Wahabi family in a call that had begun at 01.38.38.⁴⁰⁹ She spoke to different members of the family during the call. At an early stage, when she was speaking to Abdulaziz El Wahabi, he had told her that he could see smoke in the lobby through the front door spyhole and that, as advised, he was putting blankets down to block the smoke coming underneath the front door. He said that the family had made the mistake of opening the door and trying to go down the stairs, but had had to come back.⁴¹⁰

14.158 As the call continued the family told CRO Jones that blankets were not preventing smoke from coming underneath the front door, that they were all in their living room⁴¹¹ and, a little later, that flames were visible from the living room window. The flames were on the left-hand side (which would have been from the direction of Flat 186).⁴¹²

14.159 The El Wahabi family were in contact with friends and family outside the tower, one of whom, as CRO Jones was informed, had told them that the fire had reached the flat next door to the kitchen of Flat 182 (i.e. Flat 181).⁴¹³ Smoke began to enter the living room and the family had to close the living room windows. By this point they were able to see the approaching fire from that room.⁴¹⁴

14.160 After 02.00, two significant events occurred. First, as the flames came near to the living room, CRO Jones advised the family to move elsewhere in the flat and secondly, at around 02.05, the fire reached the kitchen of Flat 182.⁴¹⁵ The bedroom in which the El Wahabi family sheltered was opposite their front door.⁴¹⁶ It was the bedroom of Abdulaziz and Faouzia El Wahabi.⁴¹⁷

⁴⁰⁸ Li Day 62/185-188.

⁴⁰⁹ ORR v 0.7 pp. 88-89.

⁴¹⁰ [LFB00055498] pp. 4, 8, 9.

⁴¹¹ [LFB00055498] pp. 15, 16.

⁴¹² [LFB00055498] p. 25.

⁴¹³ [LFB00055498] pp. 31-32.

⁴¹⁴ [LFB00055498] pp. 33, 35, 37.

⁴¹⁵ [LFB00055498] pp. 42-46.

⁴¹⁶ [LFB00055498] pp. 44, 51.

⁴¹⁷ Hanan Wahabi first witness statement [IWS00000074] pp. 3, 22.

- 14.161 The family then reported to CRO Jones that the fire was in the kitchen.⁴¹⁸ The bedroom faced south, and as CRO Jones confirmed, remained smoke-free. She advised the family to keep the bedroom door shut and open the window for air.⁴¹⁹ At around 02.15, Faouzia El Wahabi spoke to relatives on the telephone. She told them in that call that the fire had reached the kitchen.⁴²⁰
- 14.162 Throughout the call, members of the El Wahabi family were in contact with friends and family outside,⁴²¹ who were telling them to leave their flat. The El Wahabis responded by saying that they had been advised to remain.⁴²² The advice given by CRO Jones was directed to staying in the flat. At approximately 02.34⁴²³ she advised the family to leave. I return to this call later in the Narrative.

Flat 183

- 14.163 Marcio Gomes estimated that he had first looked out from the window of Flat 183 some 15 or 20 minutes after Helen Gebremeskel and her daughter had come in to his flat at around 01.30.⁴²⁴ Spurred by the activity outside, Marcio Gomes started to fill the bath with water and soak sheets and towels. Shortly after, he noticed that smoke was coming round the side and underneath the bottom of the front door. He used wet towels to block it out. The smoke was dark grey in colour and made him gag. The smell of the smoke was new to him; he could only describe it as a chemical smell.⁴²⁵
- 14.164 Marcio Gomes was also in contact with Miguel Alves, who was by now outside the tower. In the second of two calls with Miguel Alves he overheard a policeman or firefighter advise him that Marcio Gomes should stay in his flat. This call happened before Marcio Gomes made his first 999 call at 02.21.⁴²⁶ Miguel Alves was uncertain about the time of the call but recalled having spoken to a policeman and passing on the advice to Marcio Gomes. He said that Marcio Gomes had told him that he had tried a few times to come out, but was not able to do so, because his wife was pregnant and the smoke was very thick.⁴²⁷
- 14.165 Marcio Gomes, Andreia Perestrelo and Helen Gebremeskel agreed that they should try to leave. Helen Gebremeskel opened the front door but closed it immediately when thick black smoke came in from the lobby.⁴²⁸ Marcio Gomes then made his first 999 call, timed at 02.21.04.⁴²⁹ He told CRO Heidi Fox that he could not get out and was with his pregnant wife, daughters and his neighbours. CRO Fox advised him that the firefighters were going to the flats “at the moment”. She assured him that she would tell the firefighters where they were. He assumed that they would reach his flat within 10 to 15 minutes. Smoke was still coming through the front door at that time.⁴³⁰

⁴¹⁸ [LFB00055498] pp. 46, 47, 52, 54, 55, 61, 63.

⁴¹⁹ [LFB00055498] pp. 49, 53.

⁴²⁰ Hanan Wahabi Day 70/173/15-70/177/24 and first witness statement [IWS00000074] p. 16.

⁴²¹ [LFB00055498] pp. 10, 82.

⁴²² Hanan Wahabi Day 70/173/15-70/177/24; Zakariya Chebiouni first witness statement [IWS00001076] pp. 6, 7; Chellat first witness statement [IWS00001006] p. 2; Chaer-Yemlahi first witness statement [IWS00000956] pp. 3, 4; Walid Wahbi first witness statement [IWS00000113] p. 7.

⁴²³ [LFB00055498] pp. 91-95; ORR v 0.7 p. 89.

⁴²⁴ Gomes Day 71(Fri)/50/24-51/21.

⁴²⁵ Gomes Day 71(Fri)/54/22-55/21.

⁴²⁶ Gomes Day 71(Fri)/70-72 and first witness statement [IWS00001078] p. 22.

⁴²⁷ Miguel Alves Day 53/30/12-53/33/24 and first witness statement [IWS00000538] pp. 7-8.

⁴²⁸ Gomes first witness statement [IWS00001078] p. 24.

⁴²⁹ [LFB00000348].

⁴³⁰ Gomes Day 71(Fri)/59-22/71/61/23.

Conditions on floor 20 and the evacuation of Flat 175

- 14.166 At 02.00, three flats on floor 20 remained occupied. Farah Hamdan, her husband Omar Belkadi and their three daughters were still in Flat 175. Khadija Saye and her mother Mary Mendy were in Flat 173. Alexandra Atala and her mother, Vicky King, were in Flat 172.
- 14.167 At 02.11, CRO Fox answered a 999 call from Farah Hamdan in Flat 175.⁴³¹ This was the third 999 call made by Farah Hamdan. Farah Hamdan reported that smoke was coming into the flat. She was concerned as there was now a lot of smoke and she had young children. Farah Hamdan said she had already put sheets under the front door. CRO Fox confirmed that she was passing the information on and advised Farah Hamdan to keep trying to prevent any smoke from coming in with damp towels and sheets and to call back if the situation worsened.
- 14.168 Farah Hamdan was also in contact with her sister, Samira Hamdan. She had first called Samira Hamdan at around 01.00 to tell her of a fire in the tower. Samira Hamdan lived nearby and as she saw the spread of the fire she decided to go to the tower. There, she tried to call her sister, but was unable to reach her. She was able to speak to Farah Hamdan again at some time after 02.00. In that call Farah Hamdan said a 999 operator had advised them to stay in the flat and wait for help. About 10 minutes after this conversation, Samira Hamdan spoke to her sister again. Farah Hamdan told her that she had been advised to remain in the flat and to put damp towels at the bottom of her door. This was the last contact that Samira Hamdan had with her sister that night.⁴³²
- 14.169 At 02.17.13, there was another emergency call from Flat 175. At its start, the caller said: “No, Malak, it’s not safe” and then asked for the fire brigade. The BT operator put the call through to the LFB but there was no further response from the caller.⁴³³
- 14.170 By about that time, CM Eden,⁴³⁴ FFs Fernandes,⁴³⁵ Williams⁴³⁶ and Welch⁴³⁷ had reached floor 20. FF Williams carried the second eldest daughter of Farah Hamdan and Omar Belkadi out of the tower. As mentioned above, CM Eden and FF Welch tried to assist Omar Belkadi.
- 14.171 These firefighters described the lobby of floor 20 as hot, full of thick black smoke and with no visibility. They said they had banged on doors and shouted through letterboxes, but had obtained no response.⁴³⁸ Khadija Saye had put a post on Facebook at 01.49. Her next post was at 02.41.⁴³⁹
- 14.172 Farah Hamdan, Omar Belkadi and their baby daughter, Leena, were found dead in the stairs between floor 19 and 20 after the fire.⁴⁴⁰ It is likely that it was FF Nikki Upton who found Malak Belkadi, still alive, and carried her out down the stairs. Malak Belkadi was taken out of the tower at 03.07.⁴⁴¹ Samira Hamdan found both Malak Belkadi and her sister at St Mary’s Hospital,⁴⁴² but, sadly, Malak Belkadi died the following day. Her sister was the only member of this family to survive the fire.

⁴³¹ [LFB00000342].

⁴³² Samira Hamdan first witness statement [IWS00001180] pp. 3-7.

⁴³³ [COR00000402].

⁴³⁴ Eden witness statement [MET00008019] pp. 7-13.

⁴³⁵ Fernandes witness statement [MET000083292] pp. 3-5 and Day 39/175/7-39/181/24.

⁴³⁶ Vincent Williams witness statement [MET00010829] pp. 5-12.

⁴³⁷ Tom Welch witness statement [MET000080606] pp. 5-12.

⁴³⁸ Tom Welch witness statement [MET000080606] p. 8; Eden witness statement [MET00008019] pp. 9-10; Vincent Williams witness statement [MET00010829] pp. 6-7; Fernandes Day 39/176/19-177/4.

⁴³⁹ Telfer second witness statement [IWS00001188] and Exhibit MT/1 [IWS00001188] pp. 3, 18.

⁴⁴⁰ DVI PLAN [MET00012528] pp. 11-12.

⁴⁴¹ Hoyle witness statement [COR00000955].

⁴⁴² Hamdan first witness statement [IWS00001180] pp. 13-14.

Conditions on floor 19 and the evacuation of Flat 165

- 14.173 Having made a 999 call shortly before 02.00, Nicholas Burton and his wife Pily had remained in Flat 165. Prompted by a further call from his friend, Simon Jolly, Nicholas Burton was trying to find the safest place in the flat to wait, eventually settling on the bathroom. When he moved his wife there, he closed all the internal doors.⁴⁴³ As he was moving around the flat, he saw, from a north-facing bedroom window, the glow of the fire itself.⁴⁴⁴ That and the call from Simon Jolly led Nicholas Burton to make a second 999 call.⁴⁴⁵
- 14.174 CRO Yvonne Adams answered the call at 02.13.03.⁴⁴⁶ Nicholas Burton told her that he was trapped on floor 19 and that no one had come to the flat. He explained that, even though Simon Jolly was telling him to leave, he had expected firefighters to carry out a floor by floor search and come to his flat.⁴⁴⁷ During the call, he told CRO Adams that he could see “flames next door getting very close to our windows now...” That was a reference to seeing “a wall of fire” coming from the north-east side of the tower at what appeared to be a higher level.⁴⁴⁸
- 14.175 At the time of the call, the only smoke in Flat 165 was that which had entered from the lobby when Nicholas Burton had opened the front door. It had had no effect on either him or his wife.⁴⁴⁹ The conversation with CRO Adams had left Nicholas Burton confident that firefighters would come to the flat and he reassured his wife that they were on their way.⁴⁵⁰ They waited in the bathroom, which was near the front door.⁴⁵¹
- 14.176 While in the bathroom, Nicholas Burton heard a noise at the front door. He thought that he would not have heard that noise had he been in a room further away from the front door. He went to the door and began banging on it. Firefighters outside the door told him to get wet towels and get ready to come out. He did so.⁴⁵²
- 14.177 When the front door was opened, thick black smoke came into the hallway of the flat. It had a very strong smell. It was the same as the smoke Nicholas Burton had encountered when he had opened the front door earlier that night. The lobby was pitch black. Nicholas Burton and his wife were pulled into the lobby. He was not able to see the firefighters or where he was going. They led him across the lobby and into the stairwell. As he crossed the lobby, Nicholas Burton was aware of a whirring sound, which he had also heard earlier that night.⁴⁵³
- 14.178 The stairwell was also pitch black and full of thick smoke. Nicholas Burton struggled to breathe and was assisted all the way down by a firefighter. The lobby had, he said, felt hot, but the stairwell was much hotter. The temperature difference was not immediate. It became hotter as he went down the stairs. At one point the handrail became so hot that he could not hold on to it. He could not say where that had been, save that it was below floor 19. Nicholas Burton said that he had no recollection of coming down the lower part of the stairs until he reached the level of the boxing club, when he saw firefighters carrying his wife.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴³ Burton Day 68/46/13-49/24, 68/56/21.

⁴⁴⁴ Burton Day 68/50/18-51/11.

⁴⁴⁵ Burton Day 68/52/1.

⁴⁴⁶ [LFB00000344].

⁴⁴⁷ Burton Day 68/52/6-54/13.

⁴⁴⁸ Burton Day 68/54/14-55/19.

⁴⁴⁹ Burton Day 68/55/20-57/12.

⁴⁵⁰ Burton Day 68/57/22-59/11.

⁴⁵¹ Burton first witness statement [iWS00000064] p. 9; Burton Exhibit NTB/1 [iWS00000063].

⁴⁵² Burton Day 68/59-25-63/21.

⁴⁵³ Burton Day 68/63/22-68/25.

⁴⁵⁴ Burton Day 68/70/20-78/21 and first witness statement [iWS00000064] pp. 11-12.

14.179 Nicholas Burton followed behind his wife as she was carried out of the tower.⁴⁵⁵ They left the tower at 02.32.⁴⁵⁶

Firefighters reach floor 18

14.180 At 02.00, the two adjacent flats on the south side of floor 18 were the only flats on that floor still occupied. Rabia Yahya and her children were in Flat 152. Yehualashet Enyew had moved to Flat 153 to join Paulos Tekle and Genet Shawo and their two sons.

14.181 Rabia Yahya had not looked into the lobby after she had spoken to Sayeda Ahmed. She estimated that at around 02.00 two firefighters had come to her home. They were FFs Katie Foster and Gregory Lawson. There had been no smoke in the flat at that time, although from her windows she could see sparks outside. When she opened the door to FFs Foster and Lawson, Rabia Yahya saw that there was dark, thick smoke in the lobby. The lobby looked black, but she could not tell whether that was because of smoke or because the lights were no longer working. The smoke smelled strongly of burning plastic. Rabia Yahya recalled that the firefighters had come into the living room but had stayed for no more than five minutes. She also recalled that her children had been with her when she spoke to them and that she had told them she was pregnant.⁴⁵⁷

14.182 Rabia Yahya said that the firefighters had told her that they were going to check on the neighbouring flats and would get everyone out together. She assumed that they meant they would be bringing her out, although they did not say that explicitly. They advised Rabia Yahya to put damp blankets against the front door.⁴⁵⁸ She found that she could not soak any blankets as there was very little water pressure in the flat, something she had not experienced before.⁴⁵⁹

14.183 Rabia Yahya waited for FFs Foster and Lawson to return, but she was clear in her recollection that they had not done so.⁴⁶⁰

14.184 After leaving Flat 152, FFs Foster and Lawson went to Flat 153. Those who were in Flat 153 agree that, at around 02.00, it was Yehualashet Enyew who answered the door to a single firefighter.⁴⁶¹ The firefighter confirmed to Yehualashet Enyew that it was safe to stay in the flat and advised him to keep safe.⁴⁶²

14.185 Paulos Tekle was sitting on the ledge of a lounge window when FFs Lawson and Foster reached Flat 153. He had climbed out in the hope that a helicopter might be able to rescue them and to see if it might be possible to jump from the window with one of his sons.⁴⁶³ When he heard a knock on the front door, he climbed back into the flat and ran to the door. Yehualashet Enyew was ahead of him and opened the door. When Paulos Tekle reached it, he opened it further and spoke to a male firefighter who was not wearing a mask. Paulos Tekle estimated that his conversation with this firefighter lasted three minutes. He had a good conversation with the firefighter who told him that he was safe in the flat, that the fire was not on his side and that he should block up the door. Paulos Tekle gave the firefighter the number of occupants in the flat and specifically mentioned children. Save that it was dark, Paulos Tekle

⁴⁵⁵ Burton first witness statement [IWS00000064] p. 13.

⁴⁵⁶ Annex A.

⁴⁵⁷ Yahya Day 63/144/11-148/2.

⁴⁵⁸ Yahya Day 63/148/4-18.

⁴⁵⁹ Yahya Day 63/150/7-151/6.

⁴⁶⁰ Yahya Day 63/149/16-150/5.

⁴⁶¹ Enyew first witness statement [MET00007347] p. 2; Tekle Day 63/43/3-15; Shawo first witness statement [IWS00001050] p. 9.

⁴⁶² Enyew first witness statement [MET00007347] p. 2.

⁴⁶³ Tekle Day 63/36/2-40/18.

had little recollection of the conditions in the lobby. When he went to the door, he thought they were about to be rescued. He had been desperate to leave and did not tell the firefighter that it was safe in the flat. He thought it was possible that Yehualashet Enyew might have had a conversation with the firefighter before he reached the door.⁴⁶⁴

- 14.186 Genet Shawo, Paulos Tekle’s partner, remembers him telling a male firefighter that there were three adults and two children in the flat and asking what they should do. The firefighter told them that they were safe in the flat, to stay there and to block out the smoke. After the firefighter had left, they covered the letterbox with a plastic bag and covered the door with a blanket. They sat down to wait. Although friends were calling on them to leave, they stayed because they believed they would be rescued.⁴⁶⁵
- 14.187 Between 02.00 and 02.30, Paulos Tekle received calls from his friend Abraham Abebe, who had by now left the tower. Abraham Abebe told Paulos Tekle to leave. Paulos Tekle said they had been told to stay inside the flat.⁴⁶⁶

Conditions on floor 16

- 14.188 At 01.49, Sener Macit’s brother-in-law, Abdullah, sent him a WhatsApp message with two photographs showing the tower ablaze. Abdullah then telephoned, telling the Macits to leave.⁴⁶⁷ Sener Macit then made a second 999 call. Sue Pimblett, a CRO with North West Fire Control, answered this call at 02.10.33.⁴⁶⁸ It lasted 27 minutes and 32 seconds, ending at 02.38.02.
- 14.189 Sener Macit was in his living room when he made the 999 call. He told CRO Pimblett that despite having already tried to block the doors with wet clothes, the level of smoke in the flat was getting worse. It was now in the hallway. The smoke was getting into his eyes and he could see the marks of black smoke on his wife’s face.⁴⁶⁹ At this time the smoke was coming into the flat underneath the front door and around its sides.⁴⁷⁰ On the advice of the CRO, Sener Macit checked the front door and found it was hot to the touch but not hot enough to burn his hand.⁴⁷¹
- 14.190 At this time, Sener Macit could see smoke travelling up past the living room window but did not see any flames.⁴⁷² For much of the call, the CRO’s advice was, in effect, to remain in the flat, to block doors to stop smoke coming in, to keep low and to put a wet towel over the nose and mouth. Sener Macit followed that advice.⁴⁷³ It changed in due course and I return to this call later in this Narrative.

Conditions on floor 15

- 14.191 Rebecca Ross was at home in Flat 122 with her father, Steven Power, on the night of the fire. She first became aware of the fire at 01.30 when her father woke her up. Although Rebecca Ross thought they should leave, her father did not think it necessary.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁴ Tekle Day 63/41/24-51/3.

⁴⁶⁵ Shawo first witness statement [IWS00001050] pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶⁶ Tekle first witness statement [IWS00001051] p. 8.

⁴⁶⁷ Sener Macit first witness statement [IWS00000069] pp. 14-15.

⁴⁶⁸ [LFB00055499]; Pimblett witness statement [MET00008034] p. 7.

⁴⁶⁹ [LFB00055499] pp. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11.

⁴⁷⁰ Sener Macit Day 65/147/2-148/12, 65/149/7-150/9.

⁴⁷¹ [LFB00055499] p. 8; Sener Macit Day 65/150/10-65/151/11.

⁴⁷² Sener Macit Day 65/153/5-22.

⁴⁷³ Sener Macit Day 65/154/1-11.

⁴⁷⁴ Ross first witness statement [IWS00001036] pp. 7-8.

- 14.192 At 01.47, Rebecca Ross made a short video recording from her living room showing the fire on the exterior of the tower.⁴⁷⁵ At 01.56, she made a second recording of a jet of water going past the living room window and no visible sign of a fire. At the time, Rebecca Ross thought the fire had been extinguished.⁴⁷⁶ She then saw a photograph of the tower on fire on Twitter.⁴⁷⁷ It showed the extent of the fire. Friends and family were calling Rebecca Ross and her father to tell them to leave. She again tried to persuade her father that they should do so.⁴⁷⁸
- 14.193 It appears from Rebecca Ross's written account that no smoke entered Flat 122 before 02.00. At about that time she opened her front door out of curiosity. There was a cloud of thick grey smoke in the lobby but it was still possible to see the lighting. Rebecca Ross kept the front door open for a matter of seconds. The smoke alarms in the flat were not activated, nor did the smoke have any effect on her. She then placed wet towels against the front door to prevent any smoke coming in.⁴⁷⁹ I return to the circumstances in which Rebecca Ross left her home later in this Narrative.
- 14.194 Christos Fairbairn was alone in Flat 124. He was awake that night playing computer games. He recalled hearing banging on the front door. A little while later the smoke alarm in the hallway sounded. Christos Fairbairn attempted to leave but was unable to do so due to the smoke. He returned and called 999 at 03.00.⁴⁸⁰ I return to this later in this Narrative. Christos Fairbairn does not appear to have been aware of the fire between 02.00 to 02.20.⁴⁸¹

The movement of flat occupants to Flat 113 on floor 14

- 14.195 The following flats on floor 14 were still occupied at 02.00: Flat 111 (Denis Murphy), Flat 112 (Mohammad Alhajali and his brother Omar Alhaj Ali), Flat 113 (Rosemary Oyewole, Oluwaseun Talabi and their daughter) and Flat 115 (Zainab Deen and Jeremiah Deen). By 02.00, Denis Murphy,⁴⁸² Zainab Deen⁴⁸³ and Rosemary Oyewole⁴⁸⁴ had made six 999 calls. The evidence indicates that the conditions in the lobby were such that none of the occupants on floor 14 had felt able to leave their flats and use the stairs.
- 14.196 In Flat 112, Omar Alhaj Ali noticed that the smell of smoke in the flat was getting stronger. It was coming from the front door.⁴⁸⁵ At around 02.00, he and his brother opened the front door to see if it had become easier to leave. There was smoke everywhere in the lobby with limited visibility.
- 14.197 Shortly after, a firefighter wearing breathing apparatus knocked at Flat 112. As set out in Period 4, it is likely that this firefighter was FF Merrion.⁴⁸⁶ At that time, save for some smoke in the hallway by the front door, the flat was clear. It was Omar Alhaj Ali's evidence that the brothers pleaded with this firefighter to take them out and asked if he had masks they could use. The firefighter said he did not have spare masks and told the brothers to stay in the flat

⁴⁷⁵ Ross first witness statement [IWS00001036] pp. 8, 22; Ross Exhibit RSR/02 [IWS00001044].

⁴⁷⁶ Ross first witness statement [IWS00001036] p. 9; Exhibit RSR/03 [IWS00001041].

⁴⁷⁷ Ross first witness statement [IWS00001036] p. 9-10; Ross Exhibit RSR/04 [IWS00001045].

⁴⁷⁸ Ross first witness statement [IWS00001036] p. 10.

⁴⁷⁹ Ross first witness statement [IWS00001036] pp. 10-11.

⁴⁸⁰ Fairbairn first witness statement [IWS00001025] pp. 3-4.

⁴⁸¹ Fairbairn first witness statement [IWS00001025] p. 2.

⁴⁸² [LFB00000308]; [LFB00000322].

⁴⁸³ [INQ00000270]; [LFB00000321]; [LFB00000331].

⁴⁸⁴ [LFB00000678].

⁴⁸⁵ Alhaj Ali Day 59/23/2-4 and first witness statement [IWS00000781] p. 7.

⁴⁸⁶ FF Murphy had been instructed with FF Cornelius to respond to an FSG on floor 14 to find a male in Flat 111. FF Murphy tallied out at 01.51.24 and FF Cornelius at 01.51.00. FF Sanders and FF Merrion were deployed separately to floor 14. FF Sanders tallied out at 01.50.57 and FF Merrion at 01.51.13. LFB Telemetry Data [LFB00023326].

and that he would return. Omar Alhaj Ali took the firefighter to an east-facing window in the kitchen and living room area from which he had earlier seen the fire. Omar Alhaj Ali could see that the fire was now above floor 14. In response, the firefighter said: “OK” and then left.⁴⁸⁷

- 14.198 FFs Murphy and Cornelius were also deployed separately to Flat 111 to conduct a search and rescue operation.⁴⁸⁸ It was the first flat they reached on beginning a search of floor 14. They found it smoke-logged with dark grey or black smoke. Denis Murphy was conscious but bent over and coughing with soot on his face. When FF Murphy stepped back into the lobby, the door to Flat 112 opened and two men appeared. Noticing that the air in Flat 112 was clear, FF Murphy asked if he could move Denis Murphy there.⁴⁸⁹
- 14.199 Omar Alhaj Ali remembered that Denis Murphy was coughing and having difficulty breathing when he reached Flat 112. When the flat door was opened, Omar Alhaj Ali saw a group of firefighters in the lobby. The conditions there appeared to have improved. The firefighter who brought Denis Murphy into Flat 112 advised them to stay in the flat and said that he would return.⁴⁹⁰
- 14.200 In Flat 113, Rosemary Oyewole and her partner, Oluwaseun Talabi, had been able to reduce the thick black smoke that had been coming around the edges of their front door and through the letterbox by leaving windows open and using damp blankets. No smoke had come through the windows at that stage.⁴⁹¹ Standing at the front door Rosemary Oyewole heard a voice and radio feedback and banged on the door. A firefighter then came into the flat. He told Rosemary Oyewole and Oluwaseun Talabi to stay in the flat and that firefighters would return.⁴⁹² The firefighter is likely to have been FF Sanders, who had been deployed with FF Merrion to Flat 111 but had gone to Flat 113.⁴⁹³
- 14.201 One or more of the firefighters then on floor 14 (it is not clear exactly which) decided to move all the occupants to Flat 113, which they considered to be the safest of the flats.⁴⁹⁴
- 14.202 Two firefighters came to Flat 113. Rosemary Oyewole and Oluwaseun Talabi agreed to their request to bring their neighbours into the flat. Soon after, firefighters brought Omar Alhaj Ali, his brother Mohammad Alhajali, Zainab Deen and her son into Flat 113 as one group, followed by Denis Murphy alone, his face still covered in soot. At the time there was no smoke in Flat 113. Rosemary Oyewole had a view of the lobby from her flat door at this time. It was very smoky, such that those entering Flat 113 seemed like shapes emerging from nowhere.⁴⁹⁵ Omar Alhaj Ali said it had taken seconds to run from Flat 112 to 113. He thought the smoke in the lobby was not as thick as it had been earlier and he had been able to see the stairwell door. He could see a number of firefighters in the lobby.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁸⁷ Alhaj Ali Day 59/27/9-59/31/11 and first witness statement [IWS00000781] pp. 7-8.

⁴⁸⁸ Murphy Day 38/37/6-25.

⁴⁸⁹ Murphy Day 38/41/22-45/7.

⁴⁹⁰ Alhaj Ali Day 59/32/7-36/2.

⁴⁹¹ Oyewole Day 58/29/2-32/7.

⁴⁹² Oyewole first witness statement [IWS00000852] p. 8 and Day 58/33/8-37/14.

⁴⁹³ Harvey Sanders witness statement [MET00012482] pp. 4-6.

⁴⁹⁴ Merrion first witness statement [MET000086060] p. 8 and Day 38/16/9-12.

⁴⁹⁵ Talabi first witness statement [IWS00000851] p. 11 and Day 59/125/20-25; Oyewole first witness statement [IWS00000852] p. 9; and Day 58/39/16-44/20.

⁴⁹⁶ Alhaj Ali Day 59/32/7-36/2.

- 14.203 FFs Murphy and Cornelius were involved in transferring people to Flat 113 as well as checking all the flats on floor 14. FF Murphy recalled that when they found Zainab Deen in Flat 115, she had been frightened and had asked them not to leave her and her son alone.⁴⁹⁷ As she was being moved, FF Cornelius was kicking and banging on the door of Flat 116. There was no response from that flat or from Flat 114.⁴⁹⁸
- 14.204 In her witness statement Nida Mangoba recalled that she may have left the front door of Flat 116 open on leaving.⁴⁹⁹ The evidence of FFs Murphy and Cornelius that the front door was closed when they reached it means that (unless their recollection is wrong) either Nida Mangoba’s recollection was itself wrong or the door closed some time after she left. I am not able to say which of those is correct.
- 14.205 Once in Flat 113, Omar Alhaj Ali had immediately insisted on taking Rosemary Oyewole to the kitchen, which faced west, to show her smoke coming from the back of the building. It was coming from the right, i.e. from the north.⁵⁰⁰ When, after all her neighbours had arrived in Flat 113, two firefighters came into the flat and Rosemary Oyewole took one to the kitchen to show him the smoke. The firefighter just acknowledged what he was being shown.⁵⁰¹ Omar Alhaj Ali recalled that he had been with Rosemary Oyewole and the firefighter at the kitchen window. He had been able to see the fire on his right and about two floors below.⁵⁰²
- 14.206 FF Murphy said that before he had left Flat 113 he had told those who were there that the firefighters were now low on air but that, if they remained in the flat in “safe air”, other firefighters would come to them.⁵⁰³ Rosemary Oyewole recalled having been told that they should all stay in a bedroom. Initially, everyone had been in different parts of the flat but after that they had all moved into her bedroom.⁵⁰⁴ The door of this bedroom faced the front door of Flat 113.⁵⁰⁵ I return to the further events that occurred in Flat 113 later in this Narrative.

Conditions on floor 11

- 14.207 In Flat 82, Natasha Elcock made her fourth 999 call at 02.02.47. The flat was still relatively clear of smoke at that time. She told CRO Fox that her smoke alarm had not been activated but that some smoke had come into the flat when her partner had opened the door because they thought the firefighters had arrived.⁵⁰⁶ Thick black smoke came into the flat and then dispersed.⁵⁰⁷
- 14.208 During that call Natasha Elcock told CRO Fox that the fire was spreading above her flat, but that information had come from people outside the tower who had been calling her rather than from anything she had seen for herself.⁵⁰⁸ CRO Fox told Natasha Elcock that firefighters were “going along and getting people out of flats”. When she gave evidence, Natasha Elcock said she had understood that to mean that the fire brigade knew where people were and were sending crews to get them.⁵⁰⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Murphy Day 38/49/1-16.

⁴⁹⁸ Murphy Day 38/49/1-16; Cornelius witness statement [MET00012663] p. 10.

⁴⁹⁹ Mangoba second witness statement [IWS00001145] p. 1.

⁵⁰⁰ Oyewole Day 58/45/12-24 and first witness statement [IWS00000852] p. 10.

⁵⁰¹ Oyewole Day 58/50/8-15.

⁵⁰² Alhaj Ali Day 59/44/15-45/15.

⁵⁰³ Murphy Day 38/49/19-50/21.

⁵⁰⁴ Oyewole Day 58/47-24-51/5; Talabi Day 59/1295-59/132/11; Alhaj Ali Day 59/53/1-56/19.

⁵⁰⁵ Oyewole Day 58/9/5.

⁵⁰⁶ [LFB00000338].

⁵⁰⁷ Elcock Day 70/55/6-59/1.

⁵⁰⁸ Elcock Day 70/59/6-25.

⁵⁰⁹ Elcock Day 70/55/11-56/6.

- 14.209 Having made the call at 02.02.47, Natasha Elcock called 999 again at 02.13.00.⁵¹⁰ It was the fifth time she had spoken to an emergency operator. On this occasion the call was transferred to Essex FRS, something of which she was not aware. She immediately asked the operator when someone was coming to get her and her family out. The CRO responded that there was a “stay put” policy in place and took her details to pass on to the LFB. During this call, Natasha Elcock reported that the fire looked as if it was spreading. When she gave oral evidence, she said that at that time her information about the progress of the fire had been coming from people outside with whom she was in contact.⁵¹¹
- 14.210 Elpidio Bonifacio and his wife had lived in Flat 83 for 36 years. He is partially sighted and registered as blind.⁵¹² On 14 June 2017, he was asleep alone in the flat when he was woken by a call from his wife at around 01.00 or shortly thereafter. She told him there was a fire and to put wet towels around the doors. He opened the front door and was able to smell smoke. The lobby felt hotter than usual. He was not confident that he could navigate his way out because the internal layout of the tower had been changed when it was refurbished.⁵¹³
- 14.211 At approximately 02.00, Elpidio Bonifacio received a call from his son, Gordon Bonifacio, who told him that he had spoken to firefighters, who said they would come and rescue him. From his living room window, Elpidio Bonifacio shouted for help and was able to attract the attention of firefighters and local residents on the ground. He packed a bag with important documents and waited to be rescued.⁵¹⁴

Conditions on floor 10

- 14.212 In the 20 minutes that followed 02.00, it appears that those still on floor 10 remained protected from smoke and fire in their homes. No significant amount of smoke came into Flat 74 until nearly an hour after 02.00.⁵¹⁵ Antonio Roncolato in Flat 72 did not see any smoke coming round his closed front door or flat windows before 02.30.⁵¹⁶ In Flat 73, Ann Chance had followed the advice given to her in a 999 call at 01.41.21 to block the entry of any smoke. She did not express any further concerns about smoke coming into the flat until after 02.28, when she made further 999 calls.⁵¹⁷

Evacuation from the lower floors

- 14.213 As well as the evacuation of Flats 165 and 175, firefighters evacuated residents from three flats between 02.01 and 02.20.

Flat 23, floor 5

- 14.214 At 02.00, Milad Kareem and Rebin Sabir were both still in Flat 23. As they waited, Milad Kareem noticed that the smell of smoke was getting stronger in the flat and that smoke was “slowly creeping into the flat, trying to force its way through the keyhole, under the door and through the sides of the front door”.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁰ [LFB00000343].

⁵¹¹ [LFB00000343]; Elcock Day 70/60/2-63/14.

⁵¹² Bonifacio first witness statement [IWS00001085] p. 1.

⁵¹³ Bonifacio first witness statement [IWS00001085] pp. 4-5.

⁵¹⁴ Bonifacio first witness statement [IWS00001085] pp. 5-6.

⁵¹⁵ Hamide first witness statement [IWS00001175] p. 5.

⁵¹⁶ Antonio Roncolato Day 52/43/13-44/24.

⁵¹⁷ [LFB00000356]; Chance first witness statement [IWS00000783] pp. 4-5.

⁵¹⁸ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 6.

- 14.215 FFs Shaw and Cuthbert were deployed by WM O’Keeffe to undertake search and rescue operations on floor 5. They found the lobby on floor 5 to be smokellogged. They found two men in what must have been Flat 23 and advised them to stay put because of conditions in the lobby. By comparison, FF Shaw described the conditions in this flat as clear, with clean air.⁵¹⁹ The two firefighters reached Flat 23 at some time between 01.45 to 02.10.⁵²⁰
- 14.216 Milad Kareem recalled that the two firefighters, both wearing masks, who came into the flat had told them to stay there as they did not have any oxygen masks with them and the smoke made it too dangerous for them to use the stairs. On leaving, the firefighters told them they would find another way to get them out.⁵²¹ A lot of smoke came into the flat when the firefighters opened the door to leave. It was not thick smoke and did not affect visibility.⁵²²
- 14.217 FF Shaw’s recollection was that the two men in Flat 23 had said that they had been advised in an FSG call to stay put. FF Cuthbert said that one of the two men had been on a call to the control room when they had arrived.⁵²³ Neither Milad Kareem nor Rebin Sabir said that they had made a 999 call and there is no other record of one. The two firefighters may have confused this with Milad Kareem’s evidence that he had spoken to a firefighter on the ground, who had told him to stay put.⁵²⁴
- 14.218 Both Milad Kareem and Rebin Sabir said they had been desperate to leave but believed that there was no way out. They saw firefighters putting a ladder up against the building, but it was too short to reach the flat.⁵²⁵ The firefighters involved were FF Thomas Abell and WMs Collins and Nathan Ashe.⁵²⁶ Having unlocked a gate, firefighters were then able to reach Flat 23 using a ladder positioned on the bridge between the tower and Grenfell Walk.⁵²⁷
- 14.219 FF Abell climbed up the ladder and helped Milad Kareem down.⁵²⁸ Milad Kareem recalled that while he was sitting on the window ledge:

“I could see heavy flames, black smoke and pieces of the building falling from the building. The corner of the building on the north-east side was burnt completely.”⁵²⁹

- 14.220 Rebin Sabir filmed Milad Kareem’s descent in a short video which was taken at 02.19.⁵³⁰ He then recorded himself walking around the flat, which appears to be relatively smoke-free. He opened the front door and recorded the conditions in the lobby. He recalled:

“On opening the front door this time, I could see the smoke was only 20% of what it had been the first time we opened the door.”

The video shows white smoke in the lobby but the floor is visible.

⁵¹⁹ Shaw first witness statement [MET00012798] pp. 4-5; Cuthbert first witness statement [MET00012878] pp. 4-7.

⁵²⁰ FF Cuthbert tallied out at 01.44.58 and out at 02.09.51; FF Shaw tallied out at 01.45.13 and in at 02.10.05: LFB Telemetry Data [LFB00003115].

⁵²¹ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 6.

⁵²² Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 6.

⁵²³ Shaw first witness statement [MET00012798] p. 4; Cuthbert first witness statement [MET00012878] p. 5.

⁵²⁴ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 4.

⁵²⁵ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 6; Sabir first witness statement [IWS00001224] p. 8.

⁵²⁶ Collins first witness statement [MET00010086] p. 6; Abell first witness statement [MET000080558] pp. 6-7; Ashe first witness statement [MET00012653] p. 6.

⁵²⁷ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 8; Collins first witness statement [MET00010086] p. 6.

⁵²⁸ Abell first witness statement [MET000080558] p. 7.

⁵²⁹ Kareem first witness statement [IWS00001077] p. 9.

⁵³⁰ Sabir first witness statement [IWS00001224] p. 10; Exhibit RS/1 [MWP00000027].



Figure 14.8



Figure 14.9

14.221 Rebin Sabir then returned to the window. His video ends with a firefighter at the top of the ladder asking if he is ready to go down. Rebin Sabir left through the window at approximately 02.21.⁵³¹

⁵³¹ Annex A; Sabir first witness statement [IWS00001224] p. 10; Exhibit RS/1 [MWP00000027].

Flat 9, floor 3

- 14.222 Of the four flats on floor 3, only Flat 9 was still occupied after 01.30. Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis moved into Flat 9 in July 2016 with her three children aged nine, seven and five years. She is registered as disabled and uses an electric wheelchair on a daily basis. That and her mobility scooter were stored in the lobby outside her flat.⁵³² Her only access to the ground floor was by the lift.⁵³³
- 14.223 Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis was separated from her husband, David Lewis, but on the evening of 13 June he had arranged to stay to help care for their son. At a few minutes before 01.00, he noticed orange sparks floating in the air outside the bedroom window (which faced north), in which the family was sleeping. He associated these with fireworks. He then saw large pieces of debris falling to the ground.⁵³⁴
- 14.224 Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis thought it was around 01.15 when David Lewis woke her.⁵³⁵ She could see objects falling outside her bedroom window.⁵³⁶ She also heard explosions outside, which sounded like fireworks.⁵³⁷ She recalled having made a 999 call at 01.27. The call was put through to North West Fire Control at 01.36.23 and lasted 30 minutes and 20 seconds.⁵³⁸ Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis told the CRO, Helen Oulton,⁵³⁹ that she could feel heat in the room and that there was smoke coming into the room. CRO Oulton advised Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis to block her doors to prevent the entry of smoke, which she did. The CRO was also aware that the occupants of the flat included a wheelchair user and three children, one of whom was ill.⁵⁴⁰
- 14.225 Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis explained that the heat she had reported to the emergency operator had been in the bedroom where the family had been sleeping. It had been in a corner of the ceiling near the window. The ceiling had looked normal.⁵⁴¹ No flames had been coming into the room and smoke had come in only when the window had been opened. It had a smell like burning plastic.⁵⁴² During the call, Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis could still hear what sounded like fireworks outside. Objects were still falling outside the window but she could not tell what they were.⁵⁴³
- 14.226 The CRO offered to remain on the call with Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis until firefighters arrived at Flat 9.⁵⁴⁴ Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis's recollection was that the firefighters arrived very shortly after the call had ended at around 02.06.⁵⁴⁵
- 14.227 David Lewis and their three children were evacuated first. They left the tower at 02.07. Firefighters then returned for Mariko Toyoshima-Lewis. She left the tower at 02.10.

⁵³² Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/5/1-7/3.

⁵³³ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/7/12-8/9.

⁵³⁴ Lewis first witness statement [IWS00000297] p. 2 and first witness statement [IWS00000304] pp. 3-4.

⁵³⁵ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/16/14-17/2.

⁵³⁶ Toyoshima-Lewis first witness statement [IWS00000304] p. 4.

⁵³⁷ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/23/3-12.

⁵³⁸ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/23/17-24/1; [LFB00000506].

⁵³⁹ Oulton first witness statement [MET000080595] p. 4.

⁵⁴⁰ [LFB00000506] pp. 3-4, 8, 10; Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/28/10-29/11.

⁵⁴¹ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/14/16-15/18, Day 57/20/4-21/9, Day 57/29/20-30/15.

⁵⁴² Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/30/16-31/23.

⁵⁴³ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/37/19-39/18.

⁵⁴⁴ [LFB00000506] pp. 15-17, 32.

⁵⁴⁵ Toyoshima-Lewis Day 57/46/19-48/12.

4 Events in the control room

- 14.228 By the start of this period there were only four CROs to take new calls as CROs Russell, Jones and Peter Duddy were engaged on long FSG calls and would remain so throughout the period. During this time the control room received 25 emergency calls, 11 of which were FSG calls. Additionally, the MPS, North West FRS, Essex FRS and Kent FRS all contacted the control room either to pass on emergency calls from the tower or to obtain details of the incident to establish call-taking arrangements.
- 14.229 At 02.00.11, the control room received another 999 call from Meron Woldeselassie Araya and Lina Hamide in Flat 74 on floor 10. They had called 12 minutes earlier at 01.47.49. CRO Fox took the call and asked if they had any smoke coming into their property. Meron Woldeselassie Araya confirmed that smoke was coming in. CRO Fox told her that the firefighters were aware of them and that she would send messages by radio to communicate the information. CRO Fox established that there were two persons in the flat and advised the caller to block the windows and doors, which Meron Woldeselassie Araya had already done. CRO Fox created a service request at 02.02.36 containing the information from the call and CRO Sharon Darby passed it to the incident ground three minutes later.
- 14.230 At 02.00.34, CRO Adams rang CU8 for a second time using the admin line phone to pass on further FSG messages. She explained that, because the supervisors were so busy, she had decided to go round the CROs and take the flat numbers and other information relating to their calls in order to pass it all on to CU8. She did not think that OM Norman, AOM Debbie Real or CRO Darby had been aware of what she was doing. She had thought that it was the quickest way of getting information to the incident ground and that it was better for information to be duplicated than not to be received at all.
- 14.231 In the course of her conversation with WM Meyrick, CRO Adams passed on messages relating to:
- a. Flat 182 on floor 21 (containing two adults and three children);
 - b. Flat 201 on floor 23 (containing 11 adults and one child);
 - c. Flat 92 on floor 12;
 - d. Flat 165 on floor 19; and
 - e. Flat 194 on floor 22 (containing a pensioner).
- 14.232 CRO Darby had already passed on a message about 11 adults and a baby in Flat 201 a minute earlier, but CRO Adams did not know that.
- 14.233 CRO Adams also gave WM Meyrick information about conditions in some of the flats. She said that she had not been able to give details of the smoke conditions in the flats because she had been trying to gather information quickly from her fellow CROs, who were still on calls, and wanted to get it to the incident ground as quickly as possible. She said that the occupants of Flat 182 had reported that the fire was next door and that smoke was “just pouring in”. She told him that there was just a bit of smoke coming into Flat 92. As a result, WM Meyrick got the impression that conditions were most severe between floors 21 and 23. CRO Adams confirmed that they were the most worrying. As she ended the call, she told him that she expected to be speaking to him again before long, because things were not sounding good.
- 14.234 CRO Adams had intended to continue passing on FSG messages in that way, but before she could do so SM Jason Oliff took over the role of communicating with CU8.

- 14.235 Between 02.01.14 and 02.02.58, CROs Gotts and Howson received three calls from members of the public telling them that they could see people at the top of the tower waving and signalling for help.⁵⁴⁶ In the call that CRO Howson took at 02.02.56, the caller told her that they could see people outside and on the top of the building calling for help.⁵⁴⁷ As a result, CRO Howson created a service request at 02.05.05 which said:
- “REPORTS OF PEOPLE ON THE ROOF OF THE BUILDING.”⁵⁴⁸
- 14.236 CRO Darby passed that message to the incident ground at 02.05.32.⁵⁴⁹
- 14.237 At 02.02.47, Natasha Elcock in Flat 82 on floor 11 called the control room for the fourth time to ask how long it would be until the firefighters were able to get them out.⁵⁵⁰ CRO Fox reassured her that they were passing messages to the crews and told her that “they’re going along and they’re getting the people out of the flats”.⁵⁵¹ Natasha Elcock reported that she was concerned that the fire was spreading above her flat.⁵⁵² CRO Fox provided her with FSG advice and ended the call.
- 14.238 At 02.03.44, the control room received a message that GM Welch had become incident commander.⁵⁵³ That was the first message informing the control room of a change of command since WM Dowden had become incident commander on his arrival at the scene over an hour earlier.
- 14.239 At 02.04.00, CRO Katrina Marshall in the Essex FRS control room entered details in the incident log after she had had a conversation with the NILO for Essex FRS, GM Nigel Dilley about his attempt to contact the LFB.⁵⁵⁴ GM Dilley informed her that he could not get hold of the LFB using the direct line and that they should advise callers to stay put until they had obtained further information from the LFB. He asked her to continue to try to contact the LFB. By this point, GM Dilley had already tried to contact the NILO for the LFB, GM Mark Hazelton, on a dedicated channel on the Airwave radio, but he had received no response.⁵⁵⁵
- 14.240 At 02.05.00, the control room received a radio message requesting four command units.⁵⁵⁶ Those units and the appliances required to respond to the message to make pumps 40 were deployed at 02.05.50.⁵⁵⁷
- 14.241 At 02.05.25, CRO Howson took a call from Isra Ibrahim in Flat 203 on floor 23 reporting that there were five adults and two children inside the flat.⁵⁵⁸ That was the second call alerting the control room to the presence of people inside the flat; the first call had been made at 01.57.16 by a family member of Rania Ibrahim. Isra Ibrahim reported that smoke was coming in to the flat and CRO Howson reassured her by saying “The fire is actually on the fourth floor

⁵⁴⁶ Control Report pp. 61-62.

⁵⁴⁷ [LFB00000513].

⁵⁴⁸ SIL p. 21.

⁵⁴⁹ [LFB00003029].

⁵⁵⁰ [LFB00000338].

⁵⁵¹ [LFB00000338] p. 2.

⁵⁵² [LFB00000338] p. 4.

⁵⁵³ [LFB00002730].

⁵⁵⁴ Essex FRS incident log [LFB00003625].

⁵⁵⁵ Dilley Day 76/164/5-19.

⁵⁵⁶ [LFB00003063].

⁵⁵⁷ ORR v 0.7 p. 134.

⁵⁵⁸ [LFB00000340].

but it's creating obviously a lot of smoke".⁵⁵⁹ As the call progressed, CRO Howson provided further reassurance that the fire was on floor 4 and that firefighters were coming to all flats to ensure that the occupants were safe. She continued to give "stay put" advice.⁵⁶⁰

14.242 Shortly after CRO Howson gave that advice, she ended the call. It is unclear how the message was passed to the incident ground, if it ever was, since there is no record of it in the radio messages or on the SIL.

14.243 At 02.06.00, SM Oliff made the first of a number of calls from his personal mobile phone to the mobile phone of WM Meyrick on CU8, none of which were recorded.⁵⁶¹ The first call lasted 15 minutes and 58 seconds. SM Oliff remained in almost continuous contact with WM Meyrick until around 06.42.⁵⁶² At first, SM Oliff was asked by OM Norman to pass on to the incident ground messages that were being received from the NPAS helicopter.⁵⁶³ However, SM Oliff's role soon developed into one of passing FSG messages instead.

14.244 At 02.06.03, GM Welch declared a Major Incident and this was recorded in the incident log at 02.06.58.⁵⁶⁴ CRO Darby recalled having shouted out the message to the control room.⁵⁶⁵ It took AOM Real just over 30 minutes to inform the LAS (at 02.37.26) and the MPS (at 02.38.06) that the LFB had declared a Major Incident.⁵⁶⁶ It also took her around 35 minutes to contact RBKC (at 02.42.38).⁵⁶⁷ AOM Real attributed the delay to the fact that at the time she had still been dealing with messages arising from the request to make pumps 40.⁵⁶⁸

14.245 At 02.06.06, CRO Fox created a service request in response to the call she had taken from Natasha Elcock at 02.02.25. It stated:

"FURTHER CALL X 2 ADULTS AND 1 CHILD TRAPPED INSIDE FLAT 82 ON FLOOR 11."⁵⁶⁹

14.246 At 02.06.55, CRO Gotts spoke to Karen Aboud in Flat 92 on floor 12, who advised her that she had tried to leave but could not do so. CRO Gotts told her that she would let the firefighters know and that they would come up to her flat.⁵⁷⁰ It is unclear if this message was passed to CU8 as it does not appear in a radio message or admin line call after this time.

14.247 At 02.09.25, CRO Darby passed on the message about Flat 82 on floor 11 to CU8 by radio. She also passed messages about three other flats, as follows:

"We've got a caller in flat 192 on the 22nd floor unable to leave. We've got a fire in the corridor on floor 12. Caller trapped in flat 95. And a caller has attempted to leave from the 22nd floor but they've had to go back."⁵⁷¹

14.248 The message concerning the person trapped in Flat 95 resulted from a service request created by CRO Duddy a few seconds earlier at 02.09.08.⁵⁷² However, the information about the caller in Flat 192 on floor 22 and the caller who had attempted to leave from floor 22 do not appear

⁵⁵⁹ [LFB00000340] p. 3.

⁵⁶⁰ [LFB00000340] pp. 3-4.

⁵⁶¹ JAO/7 Exhibit [MET00016910] p. 3; Oliff Day 23/96/8-13.

⁵⁶² JAO/7 Exhibit [MET00016910] p. 3; Oliff Day 23/96/8-13.

⁵⁶³ Oliff witness statement [MET00012791] p. 4 and Day 23/69/1-70/9.

⁵⁶⁴ [LFB000003015] and SIL p. 21 at 02.06.38.

⁵⁶⁵ Darby Day 33/187/5-22.

⁵⁶⁶ Control Report pp. 92-93.

⁵⁶⁷ Control Report p. 97.

⁵⁶⁸ Real Day 43/42/10-20.

⁵⁶⁹ SIL p. 21.

⁵⁷⁰ [INQ00000371].

⁵⁷¹ [LFB000002190].

⁵⁷² SIL p. 21.

on the SIL as service requests. CRO Gotts (at 02.03.47) had taken a call with Hashim Kedir in Flat 192 and it is possible that the message originated from this call, which CRO Gotts likely passed to CRO Darby either in person or on paper.⁵⁷³

- 14.249 Also at 02.09.25, CRO Gotts took a call from the MPS control room, which reported that it had received a call from a woman who was trapped with her son in Flat 115. (They were Zainab and Jeremiah Deen.) The caller had said that she did not know where the exits were before the line had cut out.⁵⁷⁴ CRO Gotts told the MPS operator that she would pass on the message. The MPS call operator then told CRO Gotts that her supervisor had said that the MPS were getting “loads of calls” from persons trapped in the building, and that her supervisor wanted the LFB to tell them what instructions they should give to callers, since the LFB were too busy on the radio to confirm such instructions. CRO Gotts told the MPS operator that the advice was to block up doors in order to stop the smoke entering. When asked if the LFB were directing people to fire exits, she told the MPS operator that she did not know where the fire exits were and that the people she had spoken to had told her they had to go back to their flats because of the smoke. When asked for confirmation if the LFB were advising callers to stay put, CRO Gotts then said:

“Well, it’s, it’s not - we’re not, we’re not there knowing how the fire is going, we generally do tell people to stay in their properties, but with fire it’s a bit unpredictable. So if they think they can leave ... but, I mean, we, we don’t generally tell people to leave, but if they think they can then ...”⁵⁷⁵

- 14.250 Just before they ended the call, the MPS operator asked CRO Gotts to try to get one of her supervisors to ring one of the MPS control room supervisors. CRO Gotts agreed to try, but said that it was “going absolutely crazy” in the LFB control room.⁵⁷⁶ CRO Gotts explained in evidence that by that stage, she still had not known that there was only one way out of the building down the staircase.⁵⁷⁷ She could not remember asking a supervisor what advice to give the MPS, although she would usually have done so,⁵⁷⁸ and there is no evidence of any conversation having taken place between the LFB and MPS supervisors.

- 14.251 At 02.10.31, CRO Howson took a call from Hashim Kedir in Flat 192 on floor 22; it was his third call to the control room.⁵⁷⁹ He reported repeatedly that there was a fire and smoke in the kitchen. CRO Howson advised him that the firefighters were dealing with a fire on floor 4. After Hashim Kedir had repeated that the fire was in his kitchen, CRO Howson said:

“All right. Well, listen, I mean, at the moment we’re advising people to stay in their flats, but if you’ve got a fire in your flat, it’s your decision; you may have to try and get out, OK? How near are you to the stairwell?”

- 14.252 CRO Howson tried to find out how near Hashim Kedir was to the stairs and further details about his children but the call ended.⁵⁸⁰ She did not create a service request and no radio message relating to the call appears to have been sent to the incident ground. In evidence, CRO Howson explained why she had continued to advise the caller that the fire was on floor 4. She said:

“Because that’s where the original fire was, you know, and everything -- the fire, it just ... it didn’t do what other fires do. It just -- it shouldn’t have happened, you know, the fire shouldn’t have been there. And I think I still couldn’t get my head round what was happening on the building, within

⁵⁷³ [LFB00000339].

⁵⁷⁴ [LFB00000341].

⁵⁷⁵ [LFB00000341] p. 4.

⁵⁷⁶ [LFB00000341] p. 4.

⁵⁷⁷ Gotts Day 43/194/16-25.

⁵⁷⁸ Gotts Day 43/195/15-22.

⁵⁷⁹ [LFB00000345].

⁵⁸⁰ [LFB00000345].

the building, and I was still working, trying to keep people safe, to be rescued, and I still felt at that point that was the safest place for them. I was just trying to keep them away from the worse of it and keep them safe in their flats.”⁵⁸¹

- 14.253 At 02.10.33, North West Fire Control took a call from Sener Macit in Flat 133 on floor 16.⁵⁸² It lasted for 27 minutes and 32 seconds. At the start of the call, Sener Macit explained that there was smoke coming from the corridor. He was advised to block out the smoke and was told that the firefighters were trying to get to people as soon as possible.⁵⁸³ There is no record of a call between North West Fire Control and the LFB control room passing the information to the LFB but during the 999 call with Sener Macit, the North West Fire Control CRO told him that they were in contact with the LFB.⁵⁸⁴
- 14.254 At 02.11.48, an informative message was sent from CU8 to CRO Darby reporting that DAC O’Loughlin was now incident commander.⁵⁸⁵ It was not recorded in the incident log.
- 14.255 Between 02.12.09 and 02.12.50, BT contacted North West Fire Control three times attempting to pass on three different calls intended for the LFB.⁵⁸⁶ At 02.12.50, the North West Fire Control CRO called Zainab Deen in Flat 115 on floor 14 and reassured her that firefighters would be with her.⁵⁸⁷
- 14.256 At 02.13.03, CRO Adams received a call from Nicholas Burton in Flat 165 on floor 19. He told her that there was smoke in his whole flat “but not bad smoke”. She asked him to confirm that he had blocked his doors and reassured him that the firefighters were trying to get to everyone. However, she told him that there were a lot of people trapped and that he should call back if it got worse.⁵⁸⁸
- 14.257 At 02.13.00, CRO Marshall in the Essex FRS control room took a call from Natasha Elcock in Flat 82 on floor 11.⁵⁸⁹ She said that she understood that there was a “stay put” policy in place until they heard otherwise and that she would pass the details over to the LFB. Natasha Elcock gave her name and said: “It looks like it’s spreading quite rapidly; that’s why I’m just getting a bit concerned”. CRO Marshall did not find out how many people were in the flat. She logged the details of the call in the Essex FRS incident log.⁵⁹⁰
- 14.258 At 02.14.00, CRO Sharon Lancaster in the Essex FRS control room asked CRO Claire Bannister to put in the incident log some information about the tower which she had found on the internet.⁵⁹¹ She explained that she had tried to obtain further information about the tower from the internet because it was not on their ground. Since they had been unable to get through to the LFB, she thought that any information would be useful.⁵⁹² She said that she had decided to enter the most relevant information in the incident log.⁵⁹³ The entry read as follows:

⁵⁸¹ Howson Day 80/155/1-17.

⁵⁸² [LFB00055499].

⁵⁸³ [LFB00055499] p. 6.

⁵⁸⁴ [LFB00055499] p. 4.

⁵⁸⁵ [LFB00002285].

⁵⁸⁶ Control Report p. 71.

⁵⁸⁷ Control Report p. 71 and [MET00017520].

⁵⁸⁸ [LFB00000344].

⁵⁸⁹ [LFB00000343] and Marshall witness statement [MET00012848] p. 4.

⁵⁹⁰ Essex FRS incident log [LFB00003625] p. 3.

⁵⁹¹ Lancaster Day 76/212/14-24, 76/214/20-25.

⁵⁹² Lancaster Day 76/212/2-20, 76/214/1-8.

⁵⁹³ Lancaster Day 76/213/19-25.

“ON THE GRENFELL TOWER REGENERATION THERE IS AN EMERGENCY FIRE ARRANGEMENT PARAGRAPH THEIR POLICY STATES TO STAY PUT UNLESS OTHERWISE ADVISED, GRENFELL WAS DESIGNED TO RIGOROUS FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS. EACH FRONT DOOR FOR EACH FLAT CAN WITHSTAND A FIRE FOR UP TO 30 MINUTES.”⁵⁹⁴

- 14.259 At 02.14.12, SOM Joanne Smith called the control room in response to a paging notification and told AOM Peter May that she was “round the corner”.⁵⁹⁵
- 14.260 At 02.14.32 and 02.15.08, DAC O’Loughlin sent radio messages asking for six command units and 10 FRUs.⁵⁹⁶ AOM Real mobilised the command units and four FRUs a minute later at 02.16.23 and additional FRUs at 02.21.03.⁵⁹⁷
- 14.261 At approximately 02.15.00, SOM Smith arrived in the control room.⁵⁹⁸ Her arrival was logged in the incident log by AOM Real at 02.22.33.⁵⁹⁹ When she entered the control room, SOM Smith noticed that everyone was extremely busy.⁶⁰⁰ She saw and heard that SM Oliff was passing FSG call information to a command unit on the incident ground.⁶⁰¹ She did not see any whiteboard system in operation and remembered that it had been set up later when DAC Adrian Fenton arrived.⁶⁰² She then spoke with OM Norman and AOM May and asked what she could do to help and which CROs had been on the telephone to single calls for the longest.⁶⁰³
- 14.262 It is likely that SM Oliff had already started to pass FSG calls to the incident ground at some point during his first telephone call to WM Meyrick on CU8, which he had started at 02.06.00 and which concluded at 02.21.58.⁶⁰⁴ SM Oliff received messages from control room staff, mainly on pieces of paper which were passed to him by individual CROs or by OM Norman and SOM Smith who had collected them from the CROs.⁶⁰⁵ He then passed the information to CU8 by telephone. He did not have access to the incident log and therefore could not see the messages typed by the CROs.⁶⁰⁶ When SM Oliff embarked on that task, he had not been told how many FSG calls had already been received; nor was he told about CRO Adams’s earlier call with WM Meyrick during which the need to prioritise calls on the basis of the density of the smoke affecting the caller had been raised.⁶⁰⁷ He did not attempt to prioritise calls as he understood that that would be done on the incident ground.⁶⁰⁸
- 14.263 SM Oliff said that there had probably been some overlap between the information being passed by radio by CRO Darby and the information he was passing by mobile telephone. He was not told by anyone to speak to CRO Darby about communication of messages and he did not do so.⁶⁰⁹ For her part, CRO Darby did not speak to SM Oliff and did not tell him which FSG messages she had passed to the incident ground over the radio.⁶¹⁰ It would seem that SM Oliff did not record the information he passed to WM Meyrick at this time. It seems likely

⁵⁹⁴ Essex FRS incident log [LFB00003625] p. 3.

⁵⁹⁵ Admin line call [INQ00000192].

⁵⁹⁶ ORR v 0.7 pp. 158-159.

⁵⁹⁷ ORR v 0.7 pp. 160, 175.

⁵⁹⁸ Smith Day 22/37/1-3 and Control debrief notes [LFB00003113] p. 5.

⁵⁹⁹ SIL p. 22.

⁶⁰⁰ Smith Day 22/37/21.

⁶⁰¹ Smith Day 22/38-39.

⁶⁰² Smith Day 22/40/10-41/3.

⁶⁰³ Smith witness statement [MET00007766] p. 3.

⁶⁰⁴ Oliff Day 23/97/14-25.

⁶⁰⁵ Duddy Day 42/197/13-198/10; Norman Day 42/134/3-12. Examples of pieces of paper collected from the control room: [MET00017094].

⁶⁰⁶ Smith Day 22/71/8-12.

⁶⁰⁷ Oliff Day 23/120-24-121/3, 23/109/24-110/4.

⁶⁰⁸ Oliff Day 23/110/11-20.

⁶⁰⁹ Oliff Day 23/98/10-99/2 and Darby Day 34/7/2-15.

⁶¹⁰ Darby Day 34/14/19-22.

that the whiteboards of which SM Oliff spoke were not being used at that stage to record the information he had received from the CROs. That happened later at around 02.25 when DAC Fenton arrived. As a result, it is possible that any of the 999 calls received during this time period, whether passed by radio or not, could have been passed by SM Oliff to CU8.

- 14.264 At 02.15.07, CRO Gotts took a 999 call from the elder son of Karen Aboud in Flat 92 on floor 12.⁶¹¹ It was the fourth time that they had called the control room. He said that there was “too much smoke” and that there were “fireballs falling down on us” past the window.⁶¹² CRO Gotts advised him to block up the smoke and to stay by the window for fresh air. She reassured him that the firefighters would come and that they knew they were on floor 12.⁶¹³ CRO Gotts did not create a service request in relation to this call and no radio message was sent to the incident ground. It is possible that it was passed to CU8 by SM Oliff.
- 14.265 At 02.16.58, CU8 sent a radio message requesting, for the first time, the attendance of a DSE, representatives of the gas and electricity suppliers and a LALO.⁶¹⁴ The message was logged as a service request by CRO Darby in the incident log at 02.17.44.⁶¹⁵ CRO Gotts made the first call to RBKC for a dangerous structure engineer and a LALO at 03.17.21, an hour later.⁶¹⁶ The service request was then only marked as completed at 03.31.04, again by CRO Gotts.
- 14.266 At 02.18.06, CRO Howson received another call lasting for 6 minutes and 39 seconds, from Hashim Kedir who was with his wife and three children in Flat 192 on floor 22.⁶¹⁷ It was his fourth call. He said that there was smoke coming into their flat and that their kitchen was on fire. As a result, CRO Howson advised them to make their way to the stairwell, to take blankets and towels to cover their mouths and to try to get to the place where there was the least smoke. Hashim Kedir did not leave the flat and told CRO Howson so. Towards the end of the call Hashim Kedir asked when the firefighters were coming. CRO Howson replied:
- “They’re making their way now. They’re just – but – it’s slow progress, I’m afraid, but they will get to you as soon as they can.”⁶¹⁸
- 14.267 CRO Howson did not create a service request after she had taken the call. In evidence she accepted that she had not had any positive information to confirm that crews would be able to reach floor 22; she had simply assumed that family would be rescued.⁶¹⁹
- 14.268 At 02.18.47, CRO Fox received a call from Kent FRS control room who asked for the reference number of the incident. She reminded them that if they took any calls, they should take a flat and floor number and pass the information to London.⁶²⁰
- 14.269 At 02.18.55, the Essex FRS control room made the first contact with the LFB since they had first attempted to do so at around 01.48.⁶²¹ CRO Marshall spoke with CRO Adams and relayed the message from Natasha Elcock in Flat 82 on floor 11 and Nadia Choucair in a flat on floor 22. CRO Adams asked her for information about the occupants of Flat 82, but CRO Marshall said that they had not obtained that information.⁶²² CRO Adams also asked

⁶¹¹ [LFB00000346].

⁶¹² [LFB00000346].

⁶¹³ [LFB00000346].

⁶¹⁴ Radio message [LFB00002423].

⁶¹⁵ SIL p. 22.

⁶¹⁶ [INQ00000211].

⁶¹⁷ [LFB00000351].

⁶¹⁸ [LFB00000351] p. 9.

⁶¹⁹ Howson Day 80/159/1-9.

⁶²⁰ Control Report p. 76.

⁶²¹ [LFB00000347].

⁶²² [LFB00000347].

for details about conditions in Flat 82 and was told that the caller had not said that there was smoke entering her flat.⁶²³ CRO Adams also asked for the flat number for the caller on floor 22, but CRO Marshall said that they had not obtained it. That was in fact incorrect, as in the 999 call she made at 01.48.00 Nadia Choucair had told CRO Lancaster that she was in Flat 193, but that piece of information had not been logged on the Essex FRS incident log.⁶²⁴ After her call, at 02.21.00, CRO Marshall entered a note on the Essex FRS incident log stating:

“HAVE SPOKEN TO LFB THEY WANT TO KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE FLAT NUMBER FLOOR NUMBER AND IF FIRE IS AFFECTING THEIR FLAT.”⁶²⁵

- 14.270 It is unclear whether the messages relayed to the control room by Essex FRS were passed on to the incident ground, and if so how. There is no record that the messages were passed on at that time, although it is possible that SM Oliff did so.

5 The actions of the MPS, the LAS, RBKC and the TMO

- 14.271 During this period CAD 482 recorded numerous messages from the incident ground and the NPAS helicopter about the spread of fire and the actions of those still in the building. For example, at 02.07.25 there was a message that “flats [sic] from 115 are trapped, unable to get out”, and at 02.09.32 the NPAS helicopter reported that “residents on the top 6 floors of the west and south west aspect all leaning out of open windows, they will be in danger of the fire inside”.
- 14.272 At 02.03 the MPS called the RBKC using the out-of-hours service (General Dynamic Information Technology). The Borough Duty Officer, Nickolas Layton, received a notification of the incident.⁶²⁶
- 14.273 At 02.04.43 Laurence Ioannou (LAS) sent a message that the casualty clearing centre was the Kensington Leisure Centre.⁶²⁷
- 14.274 At 02.10.02 MetCC recorded that they had contacted RBKC (Katherine Anscombe) who would be contacting their duty officer who would liaise with the MPS, and that they had a dedicated operative named “Errin” for any further police contact.⁶²⁸ Inspector Nicholas Thatcher had no contact with anyone called “Errin” and there is no evidence that any other police officer did so.⁶²⁹
- 14.275 Meanwhile, also at 02.10, Chief Inspector Duane Barrett had rung Commander Neil Jerome at his home in Kent from the GT special operations centre in Lambeth. Commander Jerome was the chief officer for London on call that night. His role was to make significant decisions or authorisations requiring a pan-London response. Chief Inspector Barrett gave Commander Jerome sufficient information about the fire to enable him to start thinking about what was needed, ahead of a further call at 02.30. Commander Jerome had no remote access to the CAD.⁶³⁰ He did not know, and Chief Inspector Barrett did not tell him at that stage, that the MPS had declared a Major Incident some 44 minutes previously.

⁶²³ [LFB00000347].

⁶²⁴ Essex FRS incident log [LFB000003625] p. 5.

⁶²⁵ Essex FRS incident log [LFB000003625] p. 3.

⁶²⁶ David Kerry’s emergency log sheet entry 1 [RBK00028849].

⁶²⁷ CAD 247 p. 5.

⁶²⁸ CAD 482 p. 11; [MET00023294].

⁶²⁹ Thatcher Day 71(Mon)/147/2-3. “Errin” (or more likely Erin) was in fact an RBKC employee; she dealt with the request for a Dangerous Structures Engineer later at 03.48.57 [INQ00000212] p. 3.

⁶³⁰ Jerome Day 71(Mon)/169/21-171/4.

14.276 At 02.15 Hash Chamchoun, Head of Supported Needs for the TMO, arrived at the incident.⁶³¹ This was the first TMO presence at the scene. He had been contacted at around 01.30 by Robert Black, the CEO of the TMO, who had informed him of the fire. Hash Chamchoun had volunteered to attend.⁶³² He left home at 01.45 and estimated his time of arrival as around 02.15, taking into account the time it took to pass through the two police cordons. He identified himself at the command unit upon arrival and offered to assist.⁶³³ He explained that he would be outside the unit if they needed him. He described the scene as “horrific chaos”. He subsequently met the two LALOs, Nickolas Layton and later Michael Rumble. No requests for information were made by the LFB or either of the LALOs to him.⁶³⁴

⁶³¹ Chamchoun Day 75/149/13-18.

⁶³² Chamchoun witness statement [TMO10048962] paragraph 3 and Day 75/144/10-145/1, 148/7-8.

⁶³³ Chamchoun Day 75/151/1-18.

⁶³⁴ Chamchoun Day 75/151/19-25, 152/18-21, 75/155/7-8.

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