

ICL INQUIRY STATEMENT

WILLIAM McDONAGH

1. I am Assistant Firemaster (Director of Operations) with Strathclyde Fire Brigade. I have held this position for 5 months. My relevant qualifications are a Master in Arts Degree in Management from Coventry University Business School and Post Graduate Diploma in "Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management" from Leicester University (Scarman Department for Public Order). I am also a Member of the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management.

2. I have served 27 years in the Fire Service and the duties of my present role are to advise the Firemaster on all matters relating to formulation of policy in the following areas:-
 - Operational Procedures and Equipment;
 - Command and Control;
 - Information Technology;
 - Data Services.

3. At 1224 hours on 11 May 2004 (11/05/04) I was attending a Management Team meeting at Brigade Headquarters, I received a call from Control informing me of an explosion and reported casualties at Grovepark Street, Maryhill, Glasgow. I informed Control that I would proceed, I then returned to the Management Team meeting, briefed the Deputy Firemaster and proceeded by car to the incident.

4. I arrived at Grovepark Street at 1305 hours and immediately made contact with Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) MCLEAN at the Brigade Command and Control Unit. The SDO at that time was in charge of the incident; I received a briefing from Mr MCLEAN and walked with him around the ground to carry out a site survey. Following this briefing and survey I took command of the incident ground at

1317 hours. At this time we had an unknown number of persons missing and five (5) areas where crews were in contact with individuals who were trapped and rescue attempts were in progress. I divided the incident into sectors and placed an Officer-in-Charge of each, I also gave instructions to set up an equipment holding area, a vehicle and personnel holding area and the construction of a "Trell" tent to be utilised by the Police as a temporary Mortuary. During this period I also gave instruction to mobilise a further Mobile Incident Unit to the scene and requested the attendance of the Mines Rescue Service.

5. At 1327 hours I gave the command to make pumps fourteen (14) as I anticipated we would require more personnel for what was a very complex incident. At 1335 hours I requested assistance and advice from the Leader of the Trossachs Dog Search and Rescue Team.
6. At approximately 1549 hours the information came to us in the Command and Control Unit that twenty four (24) casualties had been removed to hospital and we believed that there could be as many as sixteen (16) persons still trapped under the rubble. The rescue attempt continued with Fire Personnel removing debris by hand. At this time SAR teams were in contact with five (5) casualties who were trapped. At this time asbestos dust was identified and our Brigade asbestos procedures were put into operation.
7. A Fire Fighter suffering from what we suspect to be heat exhaustion was removed to hospital by ambulance at 1813 hours for precautionary check up. At 2313 hours the Firemaster handed over change of the incident to Deputy Firemaster. At this time the search was continuing with seven (7) persons rescued by the Fire Brigade personnel, a total of thirty-seven (37) known casualties and six (6) fatalities. At this time I left the incident ground for the night.
8. At 1800 hours on 12 May 2004 (12.05.2004) I returned to the incident and following a briefing by Assistant Firemaster MACGILLIVRAY I took

command at 1816 hours. At approximately 2005 hours I was informed that the casualty total now stood at forty-seven (47) of which seven (7) were fatalities.

9. At 2233 hours a further casualty was located within the basement area, we were unable to remove immediately due to a large concrete beam and rubble but suspected the casualty was a fatality, I awaited the attendance of the Medical Team. The Doctor confirmed this person was dead. I was relieved by Assistant Firemaster ADIE at 2347 hours and I did not return to the incident.

Role of Fire and Rescue Services in Major Disasters

10. The Fire Services Act 1947 and its predecessor the new Fire (Scotland) Act and supporting orders, set out clear duties for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services. The primary role of the Fire and Rescue Service was and still is, to fight fire, to save life and to render a humanitarian service.
11. On arrival at any incident where there is fire or it is reasonable to believe there is fire, the Fire and Rescue Service will take the lead role. Where it is evident that there is no sign of fire then the role of the Fire and Rescue Services is to assist the police in rescuing persons trapped and returning the scene to normality as soon as possible.
12. The incident at Grovepark Street, Maryhill, fell into the category of assisting the police, as no fire was evident, albeit an explosion had occurred or had seemed to have occurred and the scene which faced the responding Fire and Rescue Service was one of structural collapse of a factory with an unknown quantity of people trapped within.
13. The Scottish CBRN capabilities programme linked with the Civil Contingencies Act and wider partnership programmes have led the service to develop a range of skills in relation to urban search and

rescue which proved to be beneficial at the Stockline Plastics incident. In particular the skills of tunnelling and shoring.

14. At the scene of the Stockline incident, I was faced with a situation where my fire fighters were in voice contact with a number of people who were trapped under a considerable weight of fallen masonry, timber and machinery. It was evident to me that I would require as many search and rescue teams as quickly as possible, in order to afford the trapped workers as best a chance of rescue as I could manage.
15. I divided the incident ground into sectors and I placed a senior fire officer in charge of each as tactical commander. I then divided my skilled search and rescue personnel between these sectors and instructed them to start tunnelling where they knew they had a trapped person. I then detailed another officer to gain intelligence as to where we were likely to find other missing members of the work force.
16. The accepted UK leaders in tunnelling and shoring are the Mines Rescue teams, spread throughout the UK. I was approached on site by a representative of the coal industry who intimated to me that he would support their dispatch should I require them. I immediately requested that he do so and they arrived on site some time later that afternoon. I also requested assistance from the Trossachs Search and Rescue Dog Team. They have dogs that are specifically trained to search for persons trapped under rubble.
17. Knowing these resources were under instructions to attend, I then turned again to the challenge facing my crews on site. My priorities were to rescue as quickly as possible the people who were trapped but in contact with my fire fighters; to establish how many people were actually missing; to determine as best I could where they might be under the rubble; to provide the police commander on site a temporary mortuary; to establish a marshalling area for personnel, equipment

and vehicles; and to ensure adequate relief crews and feeding stations. I then contacted gold command at Police Headquarters, Pitt Street, Glasgow to inform them of my anticipated strategic needs so they could assist in their provision.

18. I confirm that the contents of this statement are true.

Witness signature _____

Date _____