Thursday, 14 March 2013

(10.00 am)

THE CORONER: Yes, good morning everybody, thank you. Are there any issues to raise before we begin with Mr Holland's evidence? Thank you. Could we have the jury in then, please.

Yes, Mr Holland, are you in court? Would you like to come forward, please. If you'd like to sit at the desk for the moment. If you could switch the microphones on please, that would help, and do help yourself to a glass of water.

A. You want them both on?

THE CORONER: Yes, you'll need them both on, because they help to convey the sound through the room.

(In the presence of the Jury)

THE CORONER: Members of the jury, good morning. If the sun is a problem for you, members of the jury, or indeed for anyone else in the room, then I hope that you'll say. Thank you very much. We have evidence this morning from Mr Holland, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England. Mr Holland, if you'd like to take the oath, please.

PETER HOLLAND (sworn)

THE CORONER: Thank you, Mr Holland. Do sit down. Thank you for coming. Mr Maxwell-Scott, who is standing, is

going to ask questions on my behalf initially and then there will be questions from others. We'll have a break mid-morning.

Questions by MR MAXWELL-SCOTT

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Good morning, Mr Holland. Can you give the court your full name please?

A. Peter Michael Holland.

Q. As the coroner has explained to the jury, you are currently the Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England; is that right?

A. That's correct.

Q. When did you take up that post?

A. On 28 January this year.

Q. Can I firstly ask you about your career in fire and rescue services before you took up that post. If you could give the jury a brief flavour of the career you've had and the posts and you've held.

A. Okay. I joined the fire service in Bristol in 1972, which became Avon in 1974. Then I moved up through the ranks and become a station officer in Cheshire Fire Service and then I moved to West Yorkshire Fire Service as what was then called an assistant divisional officer, and then divisional officer, then went to Staffordshire as a training officer, divisional commander, assistant chief fire officer, and then Lancashire as a deputy

chief fire officer, then Bedfordshire as a chief fire officer, and latterly, for the last 13 years prior to the end of September, last year the Chief Fire Officer of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Mr Holland, please don't speak too quickly, because the transcribers need to be able to keep a record of what you're saying.

A. I understand.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Just picking up a couple of features of that, you've served in fire and rescue services for approximately 40 years?

A. 40 years and one month.

Q. You spent 13 years as the most senior fire officer in the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Authority, the head of that fire and rescue service?

A. That's correct.

Q. Very recently you've taken up a post within the Department for Communities and Local Government as the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England?

A. That's correct.

Q. Can you then help us by telling us, in broad terms, the nature of your role as Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England?

A. Yes, I'm responsible to the minister for giving professional advice on matters related to fire and

rescue, and working with other government departments in relation to fire and rescue, and dealing with matters of national resilience as they relate to fire and rescue matters.

Q. At the time of the Lakanal House fire in 2009, it follows from what you've said earlier that you would have been serving as the chief fire officer in Lancashire; is that right?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. So you have no direct knowledge of or involvement in the facts of the fire that we're looking at in these inquests?

A. Yes. My only involvement was from 28 January of this year.

Q. You've been asked to come here and assist the court, particularly the coroner, with some matters of national policy and to discuss with us any ways in which it may be possible to reduce the risk of events like this tragedy occurring again. You have provided us with a witness statement, which I'll just put up on the screen to identify with you at page 748. Is that the first page of your statement?

A. That is the first page of my statement, yes.

Q. In your statement, you make the point that you're not responsible for providing advice to individual fire and

rescue authorities.

A. No, that was the case prior to 2012 for my predecessor.

Q. So the nature of the role of Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for England has recently changed; is that right?

A. Yes, it changed when I took the job on, yes. Sorry, can I -- that's not strictly correct. The job -- in terms of the operational guidance -- changed in 2012, whilst my predecessor was in post.

Q. Whilst we're on this point, if I could ask you about the nature of guidance and generic risk assessments. I'll put up on the screen so everyone can see it the one we've looked at briefly in these inquests which relates to high rise fires. This is at page 1493 in sections 1 to 8 of the advocates bundle. The first page is 1493. Just to identify with you, I'm sure that's a document that you're familiar with?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. That was a generic risk assessment produced in September 2008, and was that produced by the Office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser?

A. Yes, it was, yes.

Q. Under the new arrangement, will your office continue to produce documents of that nature, or will that task fall to someone else?

A. That task falls to an organisation called the

Operational Guidance Programme Board, and that is chaired by a serving chief fire officer -- it happens to be the chief fire officer of Hertfordshire at this time -- and I do sit on that board, but only in matters relating to national resilience issues.

Q. Are you represented on that board or is your office represented on that board?

A. I sit on that board.

Q. What about for matters other than national resilience issues?

A. I sit on there in relation to that -- to those matters.

Q. So if that board were to revise or reissue a generic risk assessment on high rise firefighting, to what extent would you or your office have input into that process?

A. I would have sight of it and I could make comment on it, but it's not for me to issue that guidance. It's to give my advice if I'm -- if I'm asked.

Q. What I'm proposing to do by way of my questions this morning is to focus primarily on one substantial topic, which is what is meant by the phrase "Stay put", the different aspects of that. Then once we've covered that topic there will be a small number of much shorter topics that I'll take you through. If we focus first on this phrase "Stay put". I'm going to ask you about four

aspects of it, and if you think there are others then by all means please say so.

The first aspect I'm going to ask you about is a design aspect, the extent to which some buildings are designed for a "Stay put" strategy rather than a complete evacuation strategy.

Secondly, I'm going to ask you about the phrase "Stay put" in the context of the sort of advice that might be given to citizens in leaflets or the like generically, before any fire has arisen, the sort of advice that might be given about what to do in the event of a fire.

Thirdly, I'm going to ask you about the phrase "Stay put" in the context in which incident commanders have to decide on tactics when dealing with an actual fire.

Fourthly, I'm going to ask you about the phrase "Stay put" in the context in which brigade control operators have to give advice to people who call 999.

A. I understand.

Q. If there are any other aspects of the phrase, then please do say so either now or when seems most appropriate.

A. Okay, thank you.

Q. If I ask you then firstly about "Stay put" as a design concept. In order to do this, what I'd like to do is

look with you at some passages in the Local Government Association 2011 publication on fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats, which the court has looked at on a couple of occasions already in these inquests. If I put the first page of that up on the screen.

If we look in it, there's a foreword that starts at page 2, and then on page 3, in the final paragraph, we're told that the guide:

"... is intended to meet the needs of housing providers and enforcing authorities for guidance tailored to purpose-built blocks of flats."

Then on page 9, we can see a list of stakeholders. We're told that the Local Government Group, now known as the Local Government Association, entrust the responsibility for this guide to a sector-led group of stakeholders, and included within that list we can see the Chief Fire Officers' Association, we can see the Department for Communities and Local Government and, lower down, we can see the Office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser. Obviously it's a time before you took up your current post.

Can you help the members of the jury, whilst we're on this page, with what the Chief Fire Officers' Association is?

A. What the Chief Fire Officers' Association is. It has about 400 members. They're chief fire officers, deputy fire officers, assistant chief fire officers, area managers, which is the level below that, and they're equivalent to our non-operational members of staff who are operating in a senior role in fire and rescue services.

THE CORONER: What is the purpose of the association?

A. To represent their interests at a national level in relation to influencing policy matters around fire and rescue matters generally.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Would you have been a member of that association as Chief Fire Officer for Lancashire?

A. Yes, I was a member. Indeed, I was the president in 2009/2010.

Q. So having seen something about the purpose of this document, and the stakeholders who were given responsibility for it, if we turn on to page 18. Part A has the title "Safe as houses? Fires in flats and their impact" and then there are certain key points. I'll just pick out the following:

"People living in flats experience more fires than people living in houses. However, a fire in a flat is no more dangerous than a fire in a house ... high rise

does not mean high risk."

Then lower down the page:

"Very few people die as a result of a fire in a neighbour's flat or the common parts. Nearly all fire deaths occur in the flat in which fire starts."

And under that:

"In blocks of flats, each flat is designed to be a fire-resisting box. It is important to maintain the integrity of this compartment, particularly when building work and alterations take place."

Would you agree with those general propositions?

A. I would agree with all those propositions, yes.

Q. Then going over the page to page 19, we see some statistical background to paragraph 10.1. We're told:

"Generally, people are safer from fire in their homes than at any time in recent history. In 1979, 865 people in the UK died from fires in dwellings. Nearly 30 years later, the number of deaths had fallen to 353, a reduction of 60 per cent and the lowest figure since official records began in 1960."

If we then go to page 20, I draw attention to paragraph 11.4:

"In addition, because, in a block of flats, each individual flat is totally enclosed in fire-resisting construction, the vast majority of fires are contained

within the flat ... where they start. It is certainly rare for anyone outside the flat where a fire starts to die as a result of a fire in a flat."

Is that a reference to what's sometimes called the compartmentation principle?

A. Yes. Would you like me to explain compartmentation?

Q. Yes, please.

A. As it says, it's like a fire-resisting box. You can have varying levels of construction protection, from half an hour, two hours, in some cases four hours in certain buildings, and the theory is that the fire will not spread outside that box for that period of time, into another flat or room outside of that -- the flat that's involved.

Q. So each flat is regarded as a box or compartment, and the principle is that for a certain period of time the construction prevents the fire from spreading from one flat into another flat?

A. Yes, that's absolutely correct.

Q. We then see at paragraph 12 the question posed:

"Is 'Stay put' safe?"

12.1 says:

"This is the basis for the 'Stay put' principle (discussed later in this guide)."

Just pausing there, we just note that it's described

here as a principle, and it's stated as follows:

"When a fire occurs within one dwelling (or, less likely, in the common parts), it is normally safe for other residents to remain within their own flat."

Would you recognise that as an orthodox statement of a "Stay put" principle?

A. Yes, very much so.

Q. It includes within it the phrase that it is "normally safe", not that it is always safe, for other residents to remain within their own flat?

A. Yes.

Q. Then it goes on to say:

"This principle is undoubtedly successful in an overwhelming number of fires in blocks of flats. In 2009 to 2010, of over 8,000 fires in these blocks, only 22 fires necessitated evacuation of more than five people with the assistance of the fire and rescue service."

If we go then to page 22, this is part B, "Fire safety -- how blocks of flats different from other residences". If I draw out some of the key points here. The second one:

"Most blocks of flats are designed on the 'Stay put' principle. Although this relies on there being effective compartmentation, it is a principle that

should be adopted wherever possible."

Then if I take to you numbers 5, 6 and 7:

"However, it should not automatically be assumed that constructional standards will be inadequate in the absence of evidence to that effect ... proposals to upgrade fire protection in an existing block should aim to ensure, or restore, a satisfactory standard of compartmentation in order to maintain the 'Stay put' policy ... More generally, application of current benchmark standards to an existing block of flats is not normally appropriate."

If we then look on in the document to see where those key points have come from. If we look at page 24, paragraph 16.9 is about the design of communal means of escape in purpose-built block of flats, and they're based on certain assumptions, including, 2:

"That there is a high degree of fire separation between flats and the common parts and, therefore, the likelihood of fire and smoke spread beyond the flat of origin is low."

And 3:

"The materials used in the construction of the building or the protection afforded to them are such that fire is unlikely to spread through the fabric of the building."

So those are design assumptions; is that right?

A. Yes, that's quite right.

Q. Then if we look, finally, before we get into the discussion, at pages 27 and 28. Section 18 is headed "Evacuation strategy". Paragraph 18.2 says:

"Compartmentation requires a higher standard of fire resistance than that normally considered necessary simply to protect the escape routes. This is to ensure that a fire should be contained within the flat of fire origin. Accordingly, those in flats remote from the fire are safe to stay where they are."

Just pausing there and picking out two points, the first one is that a greater degree of fire resistance is required to protect flats from fire entering them from another flat than it is to protect escape routes; is that right?

A. That's correct. Normally on an escape route you would have 30 minutes' fire protection, and the actual compartment -- the compartmentation on floors and walls between flats will be higher than that, an hour or two hours, in some cases.

Q. Then the second point is that it says:

"Accordingly, those flats remote from the fire are safe to stay where they are."

I draw attention to the word "Remote". It's not

saying that all flats other than the fire flat are safe to stay in; it's saying flats remote from the fire flat are safe to stay in.

A. Yes.

Q. You agree?

A. I do agree.

Q. That paragraph leads into the next one, about "Stay put", and says:

"This is the essence of the 'Stay put' principle. It has underpinned fire safety design standards from even before the 1960s."

It goes on to say:

"In the majority of existing blocks, it remains entirely valid."

Then at 18.4:

"Inevitably, fires do occur in which, for operational reasons, the fire and rescue service decides to evacuate others in the building. Fires have been known to spread beyond the flat of origin to involve other flats or to spread across the top of blocks through the roof voids. In these cases, total evacuation of the block has sometimes been necessary. Fortunately, these fires are rare. They are usually the fault of failings in the construction."

In the heading "Evacuation strategy", do you

understand this as being focussed upon a consideration, on the one hand, of the option of total evacuation of a building, and on the other hand, of a "Stay put" principle whereby compartmentation should work and those in flats remote from the fire flat will be safe to stay where they are?

A. Yes, that's quite correct, and to carry out a total evacuation would need a fire alarm in the building to alert everybody in any event.

Q. Then finally in this document we have a heading "'Stay put' policy", 19.1, and we're told that it involves the following approach. If the fire starts in your flat, you get out of it, then at point 3:

"All other residents not directly affected by the fire will be expected to stay put and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service."

Then over onto page 28, at 19.2:

"It is not implied that those not directly involved who wish to leave the building should be prevented from doing so. Nor does this preclude those evacuating a flat that is on fire from alerting their neighbours so that they can also escape if they feel threatened."

19.3:

"The alternative to a 'Stay put' policy is one

involving simultaneous evacuation."

19.4:

"Simultaneous evacuation involves evacuating the residents of a number of flats together. It requires a means to alert all of these residents to the need to evacuate."

Then your point, that you need some kind of such to do that, such as fire alarm, and:

"Purpose-built blocks of flats are not normally provided with such systems."

A. That's correct.

Q. Then if we look at 19.6 and 19.7, we're told:

"Some enforcing authorities and fire risk assessors have been adopting a precautionary approach whereby unless it can be proven that the standard of construction is adequate to stay put, the assumption should be that it is not. As a consequence, simultaneous evacuation has sometimes been adopted, and fire alarm systems fitted retrospective, in blocks of flats designed to support a 'Stay put' strategy.

"This is considered unduly pessimistic. Indeed, such an approach is not justified by experience or statistical evidence from fires in blocks of flats."

A. Would you like me to comment on that?

Q. I would. Is that a debate that you recognise as having

taken place?

A. Yes, I do, and I think the issue in relation to the quality of the fire risk assessments that are carried out is questionable, and work has been undertaken through an organisation called the Competency Council to improve the standard and competence of fire risk assessors and the quality of the fire risk assessments that they carry out. Because if a high quality fire risk assessment is carried out, they should check that the compartmentation is still in place, and therefore you would not have a problem with unusual fire spread.

Q. In order to carry out such a high quality fire risk assessment, they would need to have a view on how many minutes the fire-resisting properties should be and on whether the materials in place would be capable of providing that level of fire resistance; is that right?

A. Yes, they should check the fire resistance of the means of escape, the corridors that people would have to travel to escape from the building, and also check the construction within flats if they can get in there, which is a -- that is a problem, because they're private flats and access clearly can be quite difficult.

THE CORONER: That would need someone who had really quite substantial building knowledge and experience, assuming that someone could get inside a flat, actually to carry

out the sort of inspection that you've just been talking about?

A. And that's just what the Competency Council have worked up, is ensuring that the people who are carrying out those fire risk assessments do carry out those very things.

THE CORONER: Under which organisation does the Competency Council fall?

A. There are several organisations -- professional organisations involved in that who have fire risk assessment schemes in place. Off the top of my head, there's six or seven recognised bodies who've -- who produced this work over the last four years.

THE CORONER: But the council itself, is that an independent body?

A. No, it's not; it's a collective of the independent organisations.

THE CORONER: I see.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: The paragraphs we've been looking at in 19.6 and 19.7 seem to suggest that some form of debate had been taking place, with one view being that one shouldn't trust the compartmentation of, for example, old buildings, and should err on the side of installing retrospective measures that would favour an evacuation strategy rather than a "Stay put" strategy; and on the

other hand -- the other argument being, I think, the one you've just been making, that the better way of dealing with this is to improve fire risk assessments so that one can have as much confidence as possible that the compartmentation is as good as it was designed to be?

A. That's quite correct. If I might add.

Q. Please do.

A. In pretty well every fire disaster that's occurred anywhere in the world, one of the common failures is that of what I would describe as fire safety management -- that's the management of the fire precautions in the building -- and I believe this is another example where the fire precautions were not maintained adequately within that building, and had that -- had the compartmentation been maintained properly, we wouldn't be sat here today.

THE CORONER: Well, there are a number of issues that we need to address on that, Mr Holland.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: I've been asking you firstly about the phrase "Stay put" in the context of design, and what I suggest for your comment is that "Stay put" can be regarded as a design principle, whereby a building is designed not for a mass evacuation strategy but for a strategy where normally persons occupying flats other than the fire flat will stay where they are,

particularly if they are in flats remote from the fire flat?

A. Yes.

Q. So we can regard it safely as a design principle in those terms; is that right?

A. That's exactly what it is, yes.

Q. What I then want to do is go on to consider to what extent "Stay put" is anything more than that. The second topic that I had was relating to generic advice that might be issued by fire and rescue services or your office or DCLG about what people should do in the event of a fire.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. What is your view on the extent to which it's right to give general advice in leaflets like that, to the effect that mass evacuation is not the right approach in a purpose-built block of flats?

A. Do you mean who should give that advice, or ...?

Q. Well, to the extent that anyone is going to give advice in general terms, on websites or in leaflets, about what to do in the event of a fire in a purpose-built block of flats, what that advice in broad terms should be?

A. The first thing is that the person responsible for that building should ensure that any occupiers of that building are made fully aware of that principle. That

is the most important thing, and I would -- the way to do that, I would imagine -- the best way would be through their tenancy agreement and making sure that when somebody moves into the property they are made fully aware of what they would need to do if a fire breaks out in the building, and in their property, particularly.

And then, advice that is -- was centrally issued, which is contained within my statement, needs to mention what the position is in terms of how to respond in case there's a fire in the premises. That's generic --

THE CORONER: Yes, there are a number of aspects to this, aren't there: whether advice should be given, if so, what advice, and who should give it?

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: So we've covered part of that.

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: So the role of fire and rescue services in providing advice, what sort of advice should they be giving and how should they be doing it?

A. Well, when fire services do home fire safety visits that is an area that they should be giving that advice and talking to the occupiers about what to do, and I'm sure that home fire safety visits will have been carried out in this building --

THE CORONER: Well, I'm not focusing at the moment about Lakanal House. I'm just trying to understand in broad terms. One way of getting advice across, you say, is a home fire safety visit.

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: We're looking at a very large number of dwellings across the country.

A. Yes, and advice contained in leaflets that have gone out from central government in the past relating to advice on what to do in case of a fire.

THE CORONER: Sent to whom?

A. These are sent to fire and rescue services to distribute within their areas. Some services would have those -- would carry those on their websites.

THE CORONER: Do you have any experience of how effective that dissemination has been?

A. Yes, I'm -- I can't provide evidence to say how effective that dissemination has been, no, but people do, in the main, understand that they have to stay put in their flat if they're in a flat where that is the case. Where services, after incidents have occurred, have had difficulties, they would reinforce that message within those -- within the building that that's occurred.

THE CORONER: So that's leaflets. You mentioned a website?

A. Yes.
THE CORONER: Can you just talk us through that.
A. Well, services would have information on their websites using the documentation -- the leaflets sent out from central government.
THE CORONER: Who would you expect to access that website?
A. People who are concerned about their safety within the building they occupy, whether that be a house or a block of flats.
THE CORONER: I can understand anyone who's involved with the fire and rescue services would expect people to have that, if not at the front of their minds, certainly well in minds, just as part of the risks that are inherent in living.
A. Yes.
THE CORONER: But that doesn't apply to the rest of the population. It's not something which is at the front of people's minds. It's something that a lot of people don't even think about, so they wouldn't necessarily just go to a website thinking, "Gosh, this is something I need to find out for myself." It wouldn't occur to them, would it?
A. No, I understand. Fire and rescue services are very proactive in engaging with members of the public, and particularly areas which are most vulnerable, areas

where there's been high incidents of fire previously, and they would target those areas -- and that's why I mention the home fire safety visits first, because they would target those areas to go along and advise people what to do in case of fire. And they would be aware -- when they go into a building where there is a "Stay put" policy, ie there's no general fire alarm available, they would know to give advice accordingly. And adverts on the sides of fire engines, on fire and rescue service vehicles, with freephone telephone numbers, contact telephone numbers, to arrange for free home fire safety checks. The fire and rescue service have been very proactive, and that's why the numbers of people being injured and killed in fires has reduced in the way it has.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: If I pick this topic up in your statement at page 764. Under the heading "Get out -- stay out", you make, I think, the point that the general guidance given to householders is indeed that: "Get out -- stay out -- call 999."

A. Yes, that's right, because the vast majority of householders are not in a building that has a "Stay put" policy.

Q. Indeed. So any advice to stay put would, in effect, be

an exception to the "Get out -- stay out" advice?

A. Yes, it would.

Q. That being so, I wanted to explore with you the extent to which you think it desirable generically to give that advice to persons who live in flats, or whether you think that it's preferable to give the sort of more tailored advice that you've described, where a landlord could give advice based upon the specific block of flats the residents live in, or a firefighter could give advice on a home safety visit specific to the block of flats which the resident lives in.

A. The generic advice is sound, in that if people are told to get out, they would be escaping from the building, they would be safe.

Q. I agree with you about that. We may be slightly at cross purposes.

A. Sure.

Q. What I understood you to be saying a little earlier is that perhaps the best way of giving people who live in blocks of flats advice is to give it on a local level, specific to their individual block of flats.

A. Yes. The "Stay put" policy applies to exceptional buildings. The norm is that people would be told to get out and stay out of their premises. Where there is a "Stay put" policy in place, the residents of those

buildings should know that and should be told that when they move into those premises, as I said earlier.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: I'm terribly sorry to interrupt. I think we're having a few sun-based issues over here.

THE CORONER: Sorry, would you like the curtain closed? Mr Clark, would you mind doing that.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: We've also managed to turn our monitor off. I think one of the leads has come loose.

THE CORONER: Do you want someone in to have a look at that?

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Please.

THE CORONER: We'll take a five-minute break and see if we can find someone to sort out the monitor for you. Do leave your papers behind. They should be safe on the desk. We'll take five minutes, thank you.

Mr Holland, we'll have a five-minute break.

A. Would you like me to stay here?

THE CORONER: No, you're welcome to go, but because you're part way through your evidence the strict rule is you must not talk to anyone about your evidence.

A. I understand.

THE CORONER: We'll resume in about five minutes, I hope.

(10.45 am)

(A short break)

(10.50 am)

(In the presence of the Jury)

THE CORONER: I think it's fixed. Is it on again? Good.

Thank you, yes.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Mr Holland, we were talking about advice that is given in general terms to people about what to do in the event of a fire at a time before any fire has occurred. We talked about the general principle of "Get out -- stay out" and the fact that any advice to stay put in areas of blocks of flats would be an exception to that general principle.

If we look over at 765 in your statement, you quote from a passage in the Department of Communities and Local Government's fire prevention handbook from 2005, a passage that we've previously looked at in these inquests with the manager from the London Fire Brigade's brigade control room. It says this:

"High rise flats are built of fire-resisting construction and most fires won't spread further than one or two rooms. Walls, ceilings and doors will hold back flames and smoke, so if there is a fire elsewhere in the building, you are usually safest in your flat unless you are affected by heat or smoke."

Is there anywhere a more recent statement of the department's view on the issues covered in that paragraph?

A. Not that I'm aware of. I don't think any other

documents have been issued since that time, no.

Q. So firstly, would you regard that as the correct generic advice? If the fire is elsewhere in a block of flats, you are usually safest in your flat unless you are affected by either heat or smoke?

A. Yes, I would.

Q. What I'm interested in is whether you think it desirable for that sort of advice to be given generically, given that it's an exception to the general "Get out -- stay out" advice and therefore might serve to slightly confuse matters, or whether you think it might be better simply to give "Get out -- stay out" advice on a generic level and leave the explanation of this "Stay put" advice to local situations, where the advice can be given on a block-of-flats-by-block-of-flats basis?

A. I think the difficulty comes in -- in a "Stay put" building which is designed that way, with a single staircase, there is only one way for firefighters to access and tackle that fire, and if an evacuation's taking place at the same time as firefighters are actually trying to tackle the fire, that does make it much more difficult for a speedy attack to be made on that fire. I think the generic advice of "Get out -- stay out" is sound, and I think this advice also is. If you are affected by heat or smoke, you should leave the

building.

THE CORONER: But there's a clear tension between those two, isn't there? On one hand, the advice is "Get out -- stay out" and on the other hand it's "Stay put".

A. "Unless".

THE CORONER: "Unless", yes.

A. Unless you are affected by heat and smoke.

THE CORONER: Yes, but you have two different default positions, don't you? The first default position that we've look at is "Get out -- stay out" and the second default position is "Stay put, unless there are factors which indicate you should get out". Isn't there a tension between those two?

A. Perhaps if the guidance was specific for those buildings where there is a "Stay put" policy in place, which advised people -- so you have the generic advice, which is "Get out -- stay out", and then it advises people: "If you are in a block of flats where there is a 'Stay put' policy in place, only evacuate if you are affected by heat or smoke."

THE CORONER: So does that mean that you would expect a building owner to say to someone occupying a flat: "I know you might read somewhere that the advice is get out and stay out, but actually I want you to disregard that because what I want you to do is to stay put"?

A. If a building owner did that in a large block of flats, as I say, that would create a difficulty, certainly for the fire service, if there was a mass evacuation.

THE CORONER: I can understand the reasons why you're saying it but can't you see that there are two completely opposite pieces of advice, and I'm trying to understand what advice you would be expecting to be given to people living in a high rise block.

A. Right. If it's a "Stay put" policy in place, they would be told to stay put unless the building -- the flat they're in is being affected by heat or smoke, and that is the advice that the local fire service would give if they were asked to do a home fire safety check, as I mentioned, and that is the advice that should be given by the owner of that building, and that's -- the fire risk assessor who's carrying out the fire risk assessment on that building should also reinforce that situation.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Just picking up on the coroner's point, I think it follows from what you're saying that not all high rise blocks of flats are designed on the "Stay put" principle?

A. That's correct.

Q. Some of them are designed on an evacuation principle?

A. And they're the ones that would have a general fire

alarm in the building where once that goes off people would be expected to evacuate.

Q. It may be that we're looking at this quotation on the screen at paragraph 99 of your statement out of context, but that statement, taken alone, would not be the right advice to give to people living in a block of flats designed on an evacuation principle, would it?

A. No, it wouldn't. Some of it would clearly hold true. Where there is fire-resisting construction, most fires won't spread further than one or two rooms, but it's not taking into account if the alarm is sounding you should evacuate.

Q. So to the extent that it's right to give the advice quoted there generically rather than on an individual block-of-flats-by-block-of-flats basis, one would ideally qualify it, would one not, by saying, "If you live in a high rise block of flats built to the 'Stay put' principle, then ..." and then give that advice?

A. Yes. I mean, that could be the case. Yes, I accept that.

Q. So we've looked, then, at the phrase "Stay put" in the context of how buildings are designed and whether they are designed for mass evacuation or not. We've looked at the sort of advice that might be given to residents about what to do in the event of a fire before any such

fire occurs. What I want to do now is to turn and focus on the concept of "Stay put" in the workings of the fire and rescue service, firstly in relation to the role of incident commanders who arrive having to deal with a fire. To what extent, in your view, does the phrase "Stay put" apply to the decision-making process for incident commanders?

A. Well, the incident commander attending a building which has a "Stay put" policy in place will have to make a decision whether they require any further evacuation around where the fire is occurring, and will commit crews accordingly, dependent upon whether he feels people are in jeopardy around that flat that's on fire. But in general terms they shouldn't need to evacuate the flats around the flat involved. Clearly if there are issues of unusual fire behaviour, that's something that he or she would have to factor in.

Q. So if we break that down, if the building is built on the "Stay put" principle, the incident commander would not be expected to evacuate the whole building?

A. No, they wouldn't.

Q. And it would be very unusual to do so?

A. It is unusual to do a -- certainly a mass evacuation. You might evacuate the people either side and above the flat involved because of smoke percolation and comfort.

Q. That's the bit that I'm more interested in. Does it follow from your answers that the incident commander should be alert to the possible need to evacuate people from flats near where the fire started?
A. Yes, they would. The reality of the situation when you arrive at an incident is you would be checking to see if anybody needed rescuing. Evacuation implies that you might be taking people away from places that you're not sure how much jeopardy they're in but the scenario of arriving where there are people who -- who need rescuing is slightly different from evacuation, if that makes sense. I hope it does.
Q. Does it follow that an incident commander should be alert to the possibility that the fire is behaving in a way inconsistent with the compartmentation principle?
A. Yes. Yes, it does, yes.
Q. The compartmentation principle depends on the integrity of the building having survived in some cases for many, many years?
A. Yes.
Q. And as you've said, it is desirable that fire risk assessments ensure, so far as possible, that problems with compartmentation are picked up and addressed, but there must, must there not, always be a risk that the compartmentation is not as good as it was designed to

be?
A. That does happen, yes, it does, but it's an infrequent rather than a regular occurrence.
Q. Indeed, but it's enough of a recognised risk, would you agree, for it to be something that incident commanders should be aware of as a possibility?
A. Yes, they would be aware of the potential for a failure in compartmentation.
Q. And looking for signs -- visual signs -- that it is happening?
A. Yes, they would, yes.
Q. And at that point considering whether there is a need not to evacuate the whole building, but to evacuate residents in some particular parts of the building?
A. As I say, people who are -- if compartmentation fails, it's likely to be the people immediately above or adjacent to the flat involved, if there is a failure.
Q. Does it follow from what you're saying that it would be wrong to use the phrase "Stay put" to describe, in effect, a policy whereby everybody who's not in the flat where the fire started is expected to remain in their flat and wait to be rescued?
A. Yeah, it's a judgment call from the incident commander to decide upon which people should remain in the premises. As far as they're concerned, the "Stay put"

policy would apply. People would still be in their flats so they would be -- should be aware of that, and would -- so they would expect people to be in their flats in those areas, and would therefore have to consider rescuing them or evacuating them, depending on the circumstances.

Q. If we just look at what you say in your statement on this. At paragraph 102, you say:

"Whilst a simultaneous evacuation is normally unnecessary, there will be some occasions where operational conditions are such that the firefighters decide to evacuate the building."

By which you mean decide to evacuate some of the residents of the building?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Then in 103 you say:

"In residential buildings designed on a 'Stay put' strategy, only the occupants of the dwelling of fire origin are expected to evacuate. All other occupants should be safe to remain in place, unless directly affected by heat or smoke or firefighters deem is necessary to evacuate other residents at a later stage."

A. Yes.

Q. That is something that, on a case-by-case basis, will need to be considered and maybe judged the right course

of action?
A. Yes.
Q. Then fourthly I was going to ask you about the concept of "Stay put" in the context of advice that might be given to persons who telephone 999 and speak to a brigade control operator. To what extent does the "Stay put" phrase have any applicability to the advice that's given in a telephone call like that?
A. The control operator would not know that the building had a "Stay put" policy in place. They wouldn't have that information to hand, from my experience, so they would need to explore with the caller whether there's -- if they are trapped, is there another way that you could possibly get out of that flat -- room.
Q. Does it follow from what you're saying that you would expect brigade control to deal with a call from somebody in a block of flats in exactly the same way that they would deal with a call from somebody living in their own home, their own house?
A. Yes.
Q. And give the general "Get out -- stay out" advice?
A. Yes, unless the person's safe in that -- the person believes they're safe in that flat. I mean, they're only armed with the information the caller is giving them, and if they feel they're in such jeopardy, they

should tell them to get out of the flat involved.
Q. You wouldn't expect brigade control to have a separate set of advice for people who live in blocks of flats with a "Stay put" policy?
A. It's possible. The difficulty of that is knowing whether that block of flats has a "Stay put" policy or not, and I -- unless the service control has that information specific to that building readily to hand, they would have to tell them to get out, in my experience.
Q. The safer -- and indeed simpler -- course of action would be to give the same sort of advice that you would give to somebody living in their own house?
A. Yes.
Q. So the phrase "Stay put", in your view, has very limited, if any, relevance to the advice that's given by brigade control operators to people who call 999?
A. Yes, in my experience, that's correct.
Q. And that is what you think is the right approach?
A. Yes, because I don't see that there's any way that the control operator could have the information readily to hand on that specific building.
Q. Are there any other aspects of the phrase "Stay put" that we haven't touched upon that you think we ought to have discussed?

A. I don't think so.
Q. Obviously we've looked primarily, in terms of documents, at a document from 2011 put out by the Local Government Association, which I suggest -- and tell me if you agree or not -- is focussed on the design aspect of the "Stay put" principle.
A. Yes, it is, yes.
Q. Where would one look for a definitive national statement now on the concept of "Stay put" and what, if anything, is meant by it?
A. I'm not sure.
Q. Before the fire at Lakanal House in July 2009, to what extent was there any definitive statement on what was meant by the phrase "Stay put"?
A. It would be in the Building Regulations, and that's how the building is constructed in the first place.
Q. Does it follow from that that its use was primarily in relation to principles of design?
A. Yes, it would, yes.
Q. Are you able to assist with to what extent that phrase had spilled over into being used by fire and rescue services?
A. In the context of the practical application when services are doing the section 72D/risk inspections of premises, that they would need to understand whether

there was a "Stay put" policy in place. That is that is one of the factors they would have to discover. That would be a critical part of gathering that information around a specific building, and that's important information for the operational commanders who attend that building, that they should know that that building is -- has a "Stay put" policy in place, thereby it's likely that people will still be in flats adjacent to the one that's on fire.

Q. So they would have been thinking about it primarily in that design sense: is this building designed for "Stay put" or evacuation?

A. Yes, they would.

Q. And then they would be thinking about what impact that would have on their tactics in the event of a fire?

A. Yes, and the crews who would be carrying out those risk inspections would -- should be expected to know their area and know that those buildings have a "Stay put" policy from experience of previous incidents, and a record should be kept on that 72D information file, wherever that's kept, to that effect, and also the personnel who are carrying out the home fire safety visits should also know that information.

Q. If it were desirable for some organisation on a national level to provide clarification and guidance on what is

and is not meant by the phrase "Stay put," which organisation or organisations would be best placed to do that, in your view?

A. Well, it would be people involved in housing policy guidance and the Building Regulations.

Q. What about if that advice was meant to reach fire and rescue services?

A. That information would be passed through -- through to fire and rescue services from the central department, if it was necessary.

Q. Your office, in other words?

A. Well, I work within the Department for Communities and Local Government, but if it's a housing or Building Regulations matter, that's a different part of the department.

Q. So the housing and building aspect of it is one part of DCLG?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. And the fire and rescue service aspect of the same phrase of "Stay put" is, in effect, another part of DCLG?

A. Yes, and we work closely together.

Q. Of course. Unless you had any other points you wanted to make about "Stay put" I was going to finish that topic and then cover the other short topics that I have

for you.

A. Okay, thank you.

Q. If I ask you to have a look at GRA3.2 on high rise firefighting. We have this in our bundle starting at page 1493. If you turn in it to page 1498, which is page 6 in the internal pagination. We can see a passage there under the heading "Falling objects and burning debris", which ends by saying:

"Burning debris may fall from the building; conceivably as a consequence of firefighting action and can cause secondary fires."

Can I ask how you interpret that reference to "secondary fires", and in particular whether you consider that included the possibility of a secondary fire starting within the same building but in a different part of it?

A. Whilst it's certainly unusual for the fire to -- the debris to fall down and ignite rooms down below -- flats down below, it's certainly a factor, because the debris is coming down, it depends in which direction the wind is blowing and what might happening to those burning embers and where they would end up. That would be something that an incident commander would take into account.

Q. So you would regard that possibility, which you say is

rare in practice, of burning debris falling and starting a secondary fire within the same building, as being captured within the phrasing that we see in this risk assessment?

A. Yes, I would.

Q. If I then ask you about the use of information gained on familiarisation or 72D visits. If we look in your statement at page 756. You say at paragraph 42:

"Gathering of operational knowledge has little value unless it can be stored, disseminated, accessed and updated when most needed, ie at incidents when the use can save valuable time and inform critical command decisions."

And that's your view?

A. Absolutely it's my view, yes.

Q. We've heard evidence about the limitations in practice of keeping such information in a paper-based format, and we will be hearing some evidence tomorrow about the fact that the London Fire Brigade now have mobile data terminals. I think you made the point in your statement that other fire and risk authorities do as well?

A. Can I clarify that? All fire and risk authorities now have that equipment which was provided by central government.

Q. Can you give us a picture of how big a difference that

has made to knowledge storage and the ability to reuse it at the fire ground?

A. I think you've hit the nail on the head. It's about the -- it's about knowledge management. Where risk information is updated, it can be altered on every fire engine in that fire and rescue service and those that might attend a fire in those premises, ie close to the border. So here in London, if you're on the north end, it could be Hertfordshire or Buckinghamshire, for example, who you would pass that information through to, and they would be able to access it should they go over the border into London to tackle an incident.

So that -- it makes it really easy. It's a question, once you've downloaded the information into the central system, of pushing a button and it downloads to every fire engine that you want it to download to.

THE CORONER: Is it in common format across the country?

A. No, it -- well, in fact it won't be in common format. There is guidance which I have in the appendix here, in the provision of operational risk information, and that is advising a common format, but individual services might have slightly different ways of recording that. But it will be broadly similar.

Q. So whereas in the past, fire stations had to choose how many records to hold on the paper file in fire engine

and which buildings on their ground ought to be in those paper records, those sort of practical limitations don't apply in the same way now, because one can hold much more information and access it easily using the mobile data terminals? Is that the case?

A. Exactly. I mean, a paper-based system, it's reliant on people, if there's a change to it, having to throw the old paper out and put the new paper in, and that does have difficulties. And also if fire engines responding to an incident don't have that information in their pack, they might not have a folder for the entire London Fire Brigade or whichever fire service it is. You can imagine that would be a huge paper-based document in certain services. So that's now all held on computer-based system, which is a huge step forward.

And the risk assessment that takes place is a quantifiable risk assessment. So they look at the potential likelihood of a fire occurring and the impact of that fire occurring and do a scoring matrix, which identifies whether there is a need to hold site-specific risk information on that building.

THE CORONER: Who do you say is doing that?

A. Who is doing it?

THE CORONER: Yes.

A. Well, every fire and rescue service in the country

should be doing that now. The document was issued last year, 2012.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: If I ask you then about a separate topic, which is to do with changes of incident commander. You cover this in your statement, starting at page 758. If we look at page 759, at paragraph 64, you say there are six levels of incident command, and then you give them in ascending order. You may be aware that in the Lakanal House fire, all six levels of incident command were used.

A. Yes.

Q. As the number of pumps increased in time, and because the first incident commander happened to be a crew manager, there were six incident commanders. What I wanted to ask you about was your views on the advantages and disadvantages of having so many changes of incident commander.

A. It clearly depends on the circumstances of each case. When an incident commander arrives -- the first commander of a vehicle, a fire engine, arrives, they have to make a judgment call on the number of resources they have, and as they request additional resources, more senior commanders will attend that incident, and if they decide to request a large number of vehicles very early on, which they are empowered to do -- the crew

manager arriving at an incident could easily ask for 20 fire engines if they -- if the fire was of such proportions that they believed that's what the incident would need, and that would bring the most senior fire commander onto that incident at that stage. But it really depends on, as I've said, how the commander of that first vehicle sees the situation and how they assess it, and subsequent commanders going onto the incident and assessing it.

There are potential difficulties where managers arrive close to one another, but what is fundamentally important is that the handover that takes place between them is absolutely clear and passes on all the information that they need to pass on, and that could take some time, and that's all got to happen while the incident's still being commanded. So it's quite a challenge for an incident commander in that position.

Ideally, if there would be fewer changes of command, it would make life easier for that incident to be managed, but it really is down to each individual fire and how the vehicles are arriving and how the fire officers, the commanders, are arriving at that incident, to say when they would be taking over a situation.

For example, if it is a very large fire, and the most senior officer arrives very quickly, they would be

expected to take command of that fire at that stage. But there's no set times for those people to arrive. You can't say, "Well, that most senior person needs to take 45 minutes to get there, or 30 minutes to get there", because it depends upon the geography, travel and traffic conditions, and at the time that they are mobilised -- turned out to that incident.

Q. We've heard that in the London Fire Brigade, the level of officer who carries out the incident command function seems to be tied very closely to the number of pumps requested. So once it's eight pumps then you get a station manager, and so on. Is that normal at national level?

A. That's common to every fire and rescue service that I'm aware of. They will have set criteria, size of incidents that they would turn out specific levels of commander to.

Q. I can see that there are obvious advantages in having more senior people taking incident command because of their greater experience. There therefore is obviously a necessity for changes in incident commander, and you have made the point that one could reach the highest level of officer -- so in London, an assistant commissioner -- as incident commander without having to go through five other incident commanders before you got

there.

A. If I might add, that would be very usual for a crew commander to hand over to the most senior officer at that stage.

Q. Sorry, I wasn't suggesting that. I was just saying one wouldn't necessarily have to go through all five more junior ranks to reach the situation where the incident commander was an assistant commissioner. Is it necessary for the choice of who is incident commander to be so closely tied to how many pumps are requested?

A. That is -- that is the way they trained, to manage a certain number of vehicles. So it doesn't just depend on their experience, as you mentioned; it also depends on the training that they're given, and the training is aligned to the number of vehicles they would have to command at an incident.

Q. One of Mr Brian Davey's recommendations, which I think you've seen, was that it would be helpful to review the training provided to firefighters and potential incident commanders about the sending of "Make pumps" messages. When he gave evidence he expanded upon that, saying that he was interested in people's thought processes when they said "Make pumps six" or "Make pumps eight" and what it was they were actually wanting those additional resources to do. Could, or should, part of that process

be considering what level of officer is or may be required to be incident commander?

A. I don't share his concerns. I believe that commanders at all levels are aware of the things they need to consider when they're looking to ask for additional resources at an incident, and, you know, that applies right across the fire and rescue service in England. So I really don't believe there is an additional need to train people. The incident command manual, I think, is pretty clear for people, and the level of training that is given really does ensure that people are aware of what they need to consider, how many fire engines they need. They know the number of breathing apparatus sets that are carried on each fire engine and all the equipment that's carried on each fire engine. They are pretty standard vehicles, and they know the special vehicles they will need, and that's all the -- all the levels of commander. They know that. So when they're sizing up, assessing what is needed at a building, they will know what they're looking for.

Q. Then just finally to finish off --

THE CORONER: Sorry, can you just identify the document you've just referred us to, the incident commanders' training manual?

A. I think it's -- it is one of the annexes. I can't

remember which one.

THE CORONER: I don't actually have the annexes, Mr Holland.

A. I'm sorry.

THE CORONER: If you give us the annex number, then I can try and find it.

A. Yes, if you bear with me a second. I think it's annex number 1.

THE CORONER: Whilst you're looking at the list of annexes, a moment ago you referred to another annex and I didn't make a note of which one it was. Could you just tell me which one you were looking at previously?

A. I think we were looking at 3.2, the generic risk assessment 3.2.

THE CORONER: I see.

A. On high rise firefighting.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Just to finish off this point about changes of incident commander, you say at paragraph 67 of your statement:

"Frequent changes of incident commander need not necessarily have a detrimental effect on operations. What is most important is the quality of the handover and the need to maintain close contact with their predecessor in case clarification is needed."

A. Yes, that's absolutely correct.

Q. Whilst we're on the same page of your statement, could

I ask you about paragraph 71, where you say -- a new topic now, about breathing apparatus:

"Extended duration breathing apparatus is often provided after a fire and rescue authority has undertaken a specific risk assessment following a 72D risk inspection for a specific incident type. This would be where the travel time to the scene of operations is long and/or arduous."

A. Yes, it's the sort of scenarios where you have railway tunnels and -- for example in Wiltshire, where you have lots of underground workings, where the distance to traverse to actually get to the fire are pretty long.

Q. To what extent, if at all, would you expect that to be necessary in a high rise building?

A. I wouldn't expect it to be necessary in a high rise building. The bridgehead to tackle a fire would be two floors below. The firefighting lift should carry the staff and the equipment, thus reducing the burden for the breathing apparatus operators to use, and indeed there are standard breathing apparatus sets available that will give up to 36 minutes. But I need to explain that if you are working very hard and in hot temperatures, those times can be -- the time of duration will be reduced, and some work, as I mentioned in my evidence, did change the predicted consumption rate from

40 litres a minute to 50 litres a minute because of the factor of working in high rise buildings and having to climb up staircases.

Q. Then if I move to another new topic, which is about radio communications. I think it's right that a common problem with communications is the sheer volume of radio traffic, which can cause difficulties for incident and sector commanders trying to assimilate information.

A. Yes, absolutely it's an issue, and that's why there are structures in place to reduce the amount of traffic that would take place. If you just had one fire ground radio channel, there would be just far too much information for particularly the incident commander to assimilate, which is why you have different channels, as I explain in paragraph 81 --

Q. That was what I was going to take you to. That's on page 762. Here you're talking about larger incidents, of course, but you're saying it's common at larger incidents to have as many as five different radio channels in operation?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you just explain briefly what you mean by each of those channels, and which of those an incident commander would be using?

A. Yes. Can I answer that second question first?

Q. Certainly.
A. The incident commander would use the command and control channel, as would the sector commanders. The fire ground operations channels would be for firefighters to talk to firefighters, operators of pumps on fire engines and people like that. The breathing apparatus operations would be the wearers of the breathing apparatus sets and the people who are controlling them with the control boards outside -- so-called breathing apparatus entry control officers.

Where there are -- where there's large breathing apparatus operations, more than one entry point into a building, you would establish a breathing apparatus main control, with -- and that would be a separate channel. Logistics would be for things like obtaining additional fuel for vehicles and equipment that might be needed, water supplies.

Q. Would you regard this as the best way of dealing with the inevitable limitations posed by radios, where there may be problems because a building has some limitations in radio contact and because of the volume of radio traffic?
A. It's essential, particularly in relation to the command and control channel, that the information is kept to a minimum to avoid the incident commander getting too

much information that they don't need.

Q. In your statement, you make the point that:

"The availability of dedicated channels helps to avoid communication routes being overloaded ... the use of the command and control channel is extremely useful to assist the incident commander."

A. Exactly.

Q. Then in paragraph 83, the point you just made: it helps to prevent the incident commander being overloaded with information so that he can prioritise what he needs to make key operational decisions.

A. Yes.

Q. Then on paragraph 84, just finishing this point, you say:

"The use of dedicated radio channels is tried and tested on fire grounds and can be very effective. Given the complexity of incidents such as high rise buildings fires, the correct use of radio protocols is essential and should be an integral part of pre-planning and training."

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. How would that work in a pre-planning context?

A. Well, from a training point of view, the service would -- and do -- practise using radios in such scenarios and will have exercises involving a larger

number of vehicles so you can put it actually into practice, so it's not theoretical, it's actually practical. And from experience, obviously, of incidents and -- you would debrief after incidents and, if necessary, try to improve the way that the radios are being used at operational incidents.

There wouldn't necessarily be information on a 72D information file in relation to that, but there might be, dependent upon the particular building involved and the difficulties of communications. Where you've got steel frame buildings, they have a -- well, they do impact quite significantly on radio performance.

THE CORONER: So is that something that you would expect on a 72D visit, that potential problems with radio communication might be identified and recorded?

A. Yes, I would, if there was a -- if they'd identified a problem at the incident with using the radios. I mean, from a practical point of view, there is always somebody on the end of the radio on the fire engine, in the case of a high rise building on the ground floor, because they're still on call whilst they're carrying out the 72D inspections, so they would be using -- actually using the radio whilst they're carrying out the 72D inspections. So they would check before they went into a flat to make sure that they had radio contact,

because if they were out of radio contact they couldn't actually call them to an incident, should they be needed.

THE CORONER: So if, on that sort of visit, problems of that sort were identified, you would expect them to be recorded?

A. I absolutely would expect that.

THE CORONER: And would you expect now to appear on the MDT?

A. Yes, I would.

THE CORONER: You would.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Two short topics to finish, firstly about the phrase "persons reported", which you discuss at page 763 of your statement. At the bottom of that page, you say firstly there is no relevant national guidance on the term but that it's commonly used.

A. It's custom and practice in every fire and rescue service in the country, yes.

Q. It doesn't have a standard definition, but to what extent do you think there is a commonly understood meaning of it?

A. There is a commonly understood meaning of it. If you asked any firefighter in the country, they would know exactly what "persons reported" meant.

Q. And what would they understand by it?

A. It would mean that there are people who are trapped or

could possibly be trapped in a building.

Q. Then on page 764, you say in some fire and rescue services, the use of the phrase triggers some additional resource mobilising?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. And that's on a service-by-service basis?

A. Yeah, on a risk assessment basis, they might decide to send an additional vehicle or additional commander to that incident.

Q. Then finally, if I ask you about communication between brigade control and incident commanders at the fire ground, and residents, which you discuss at page 767 of your statement.

At paragraph 114, you say:

"It is essential that at all times the incident control vehicle is staffed so that in the event that fire control passes critical information, it is received immediately and conveyed to the incident commander."

A. Yes, in practical terms there would always be, in the initial response phase, a firefighter who has a loud speaker by the pump bay at the back of the vehicle, and they would pick up any messages that were coming through from control with any critical information, and they would then pass that on, through their handheld radio, to the incident commander, or verbally, if they were

close enough to say what that information was.

And then subsequently, once an incident command vehicle arrives at an incident, the initial incident control vehicle would pass over to that command vehicle, and the same would apply, albeit there would be a group of personnel on board that command vehicle.

Q. One of the themes that we've heard about in these inquests is that those working in brigade control were passing a certain amount of information to those at the fire ground but they were not getting information from the fire ground.

A. Right.

Q. So they had very little idea of how the fire was unfolding, and yet at the same time were taking calls and were, in some cases, on the line to callers for some length of time. You don't comment specifically in your statement on the possibility of communication the other way, from fire ground to brigade control, or indeed the possibility of including within any communication a resident involved in a fire survival guidance call, so I'd just be interested in your views on those sort of communications.

A. There is no specific guidance that would advise an incident commander to contact control for information from a caller. In practical terms, that does happen,

but it tends to happen around when there's a malicious 999 call, where the commander at an incident who's turned out to an address doesn't know -- needs specific information from the caller who made that call because they can't find it. I mean, it might not necessarily be a malicious call; it could be one where there was insufficient information that was available to the commander of the vehicle to actually find the incident. So contact does take place between incident commanders and control but that tends to be in the early stages of an incident rather than later on.

THE CORONER: Is there any guidance on that?

A. No, there isn't.

THE CORONER: Would it be helpful if there were?

A. I think it certainly could be -- certainly in the context of this incident, yes.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: One of Mr Davey's recommendations -- obviously it's specific to the London Fire Brigade and it's based on the evidence we've heard about practice and procedures at the time, but his recommendation was it would be helpful for the London Fire Brigade to review the training given to operational crews about brigade control practices and procedures. I suspect that was triggered by the fact that a large number of London Fire Brigade personnel were not familiar with the

phrase "fire survival guidance call", and therefore didn't know what was meant by it.

To what extent do you think that it would be useful for operational crews who go to fire grounds to have a better understanding about what brigade control do, and the sort of advice that they give on a standard basis and the way in which it might be possible for them to tailor it on a case-by-case basis?

A. I think that would be a very good idea.

Q. Mr Holland, thank you very much. Those are my questions.

Questions from THE CORONER

THE CORONER: Mr Holland, can I just pick up a couple of points with you. They both relate to the sort of information which you told us you thought should be picked up on a 72D visit, and as I understand what you were saying, in both cases recorded, so that the information should be available for those attending at a fire or an incident. The first one was that the crew should learn whether there was a "Stay put" policy appropriate for the particular premises.

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: Is that the sort of information -- I think you said "yes" -- that ought to be included on the information available to crews going to an incident?

A. Yes, that's correct.
THE CORONER: So as things are now, you would expect it to be on the MDT?
A. Yes, I would, yes.
THE CORONER: Then the second one was -- what was the other one?
A. Radio communications?
THE CORONER: Yes, I'm so sorry, yes. We talked about that a moment ago, the question of the possibility that radio communications would be difficult in a premises. Again, I think your evidence was that you would expect to find that on an MDT?
A. If there had been an identified probable, yes.
THE CORONER: If there had been an identified problem or a potential problem.
A. Yes.
THE CORONER: I don't know if you have these. I've been handed recently a print out, I think it is, from the MDT for Marie Curie House. Do you have that?
A. No, I don't. (Handed)
THE CORONER: Correct me if I'm wrong, if that's not what I'm looking at.
A. I have a document that says "London Fire Brigade" and then "ORD".
THE CORONER: Yes. I'm not familiar with these documents.

Does that look to you to appear to be what would appear on a MDT terminal?

A. Well, I've not seen London's MDT terminal but I --

THE CORONER: No, but you told us that there was a recommended format and you would expect most brigades across the country to be using a similar sort of format?

A. Yes, I would, yes.

THE CORONER: Yes, so does that look like it?

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: Well, I don't see on that any reference to whether there's a "Stay put" policy -- tell me if I'm wrong -- and I don't see on that any comment about radio communications. Now, I don't know any detail about the make-up of Marie Curie House but it's been described as a sister block. It's possible that methods of construction -- and therefore consequence on radio communications -- were the same as Lakanal House, where we heard that there were problems with radio communications. So is there scope, perhaps, for some more guidance as to how brigades across the country might consider aspects of that sort and include them on MDTs?

A. Well, I'm looking at the document which is the annex 13 -- sorry, I beg your pardon, 14 to my statement, which is the fire and rescue service

operational guidance document.

THE CORONER: Well, you have the advantage of me, Mr Holland, because I don't have it.

A. Sorry. Can it be made available?

THE CORONER: I wasn't provided with the hard copies.

A. My apologies.

THE CORONER: You tell me how it helps us and we'll go from there.

A. Yes, this is the operational guidance document that was produced last year by my predecessor within the Communities and Local Government Department, and it covers operational risk information. I don't think there's anything specific -- it's about practical considerations, so if you just give me a few moments to check. It's quite a weighty tome.

THE CORONER: The only point I'm getting is that these two areas which you've suggested to us should be picked up, should be recorded, the information should be available for use, and the only location in which, as I understand it, it would be available for use is on the MDT.

A. Yes, that's quite correct.

THE CORONER: So looking for the future, how should brigades across the country be assisted to perhaps learn from the points which you've just identified?

A. From a practical perspective, the consideration when

somebody's carrying out a risk inspection, 72D inspection, they need to look at it from the point of view of: "How would we/I deal with a fire in that building?" And all the factors that we've just talked about in terms of "Stay put" or radio communications need to be factored in and recorded on the 72D information, and the only reason that I could suggest that it's not shown on here is because there might be an assumption that there's a "Stay put" policy in those sorts of buildings and that all firefighters would know that.

THE CORONER: But that's not what you said earlier.

A. No. My view is it should be on there because firefighters could be responding from stations that don't have similar buildings to this, and that's the whole ethos of having the 72D information available for responding crews, because there could be another fire occurring which has tied up the local crews and it could be a crew responding from another place.

THE CORONER: Very well.

A. And also the radio communications in high rise buildings -- it's a well known problem but if it's -- I still would expect the crews to annotate that information onto a 72D form.

THE CORONER: All right, thank you.

Can I just come back to the sort of advice that ought to be given to residents, because it seems to me that advice to residents ought to be very clear and very straightforward, without any ambiguity.

A. Yes, I agree.

THE CORONER: And I think that your view is that that should be provided by the building owner?

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: So if we're looking, for example, at social housing, would you expect the local fire and rescue service to be working with building owners so that there was a proper and clear understanding of when it was appropriate for there to be "Stay put" policy and when it was not?

A. Yes, I would expect the fire and rescue service to work with the housing authority in connection with pre-planning for an operational incident, and also trying to reduce the number of fires that are occurring in buildings.

THE CORONER: All right. Thank you.

Shall we just have a five minute break? Thank you very much. Yes, members of the jury, you're welcome to leave your papers on your desk if you would like.

(11.54 am)

(A short break)

(12.09 pm)

(In the presence of the Jury)

THE CORONER: Members of the jury, apologies for the rather long break. Mr Atkins was photocopying a document and with the number of people in the room, it requires a large amount of photocopying, so it takes time. Yes, thank you. Mr Hendy.

Questions by MR HENDY

MR HENDY: Thank you, madam. Mr Holland, my name's Hendy. I represent some of the bereaved.

In your witness statement you refer to the generic risk assessment 3.2 for high rise firefighting. Indeed, it's one of the annexes to your statement. I wanted to ask you about some passages in it. We have it in our bundle, although the jury don't have it, but in our bundle it begins at 1493. I'd like to take to you page 1498, first of all, please.

A. Mr Hendy, I don't have the paginations that you have --

THE CORONER: Mr Clark will hand it to you.

A. I've got the document. If you just give me the internal number at the bottom.

MR HENDY: The internal page is 6.

A. Thank you.

Q. This is headed "Hazards and risks":

"Hazards of high rise firefighting are grouped under

three headings: building height and design; fire behaviour and development; firefighting and rescue operations."

And we can see in the bottom two-thirds of the page those items are dealt with at some more length. Height of the building, falling objects and burning debris, which you discussed with Mr Maxwell-Scott. Extended lines of communication -- perhaps we should just read that together:

"The location of operations may impede communication. The scene of operations may be a considerable distance from the fire and rescue service access level and point of command. Additionally, communication blind spots may exist within high rise buildings. These difficulties will create an additional demand on resource management."

Nothing controversial in that?

A. No. Perhaps I could add something from the question that was asked by the coroner earlier on. I checked in the break and in the advice that was issued last year, it very specifically covered problems with communications. It's actually on page 88 of the document, and also on page 83, in relation to the actions in an emergency for persons in the building.

THE CORONER: Which document are you talking about please?

A. It's annex number -- it's the last one, so it's number 14, and the pagination I've got I'm afraid only refers specifically to that document, and it's, in the right order, page 83 at the top of that. It talks about emergency action and training:

"Is there a suitable emergency action plan in place?"

Also on page 88, on "Firefighter risk details", communication difficulties, and it also has a bit of jargon in there which relates to leaky feeder. A leaky feeder is a coaxial cable which assists radio communications at an operational incident to ensure that people -- that firefighters -- the radio will transmit along that leaky feeder and bypass any obstructions, problems that are being caused by the construction of the building.

THE CORONER: So setting those two in context, what are you actually saying?

A. I beg your pardon. I'm actually saying that that would lead -- if there are difficulties, that would lead to recording that on a 72D in terms of communication, and in terms of the action plan in case of an emergency in the building, that's where I'm suggesting that consideration would be given by the operational crews in relation to what is in place, whether there is a "Stay

put" policy in place or whether there is an evacuation policy in place for a building.

THE CORONER: And the document is dated what?

A. Well, it was issued in 2012. I'm afraid I don't have a specific date. If you'd like me to find that specific date, I'll happily do that.

MR HENDY: Can I just --

A. I beg your pardon, it's at the back. March 2012.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MR HENDY: Thank you. Can I just identify what this document is.

A. Yes.

Q. It's the fire and rescue service operational guidance/operational risk information, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser?

A. That's correct.

Q. If we look at the preface at page 3, we can see in the first paragraph that the objective of the guidance is:

"... to provide a consistency of approach that forms the basis for common operational practices, supporting interoperability between fire and rescue services and other emergency responders. These common principles, practices and procedures are intended to support the development of safe systems of work on the incident

ground and to enhance national resilience."

A. That's correct.

Q. And the page that you draw our attention to is part of appendix C, which begins at page 74, and that's headed -- I'll wait until the jury can see it. That's headed "Data capture fields, data capture proforma". It begins at page 74, you yourself referred to page 88, and in fact it runs to page 93, so it's some 19 pages of data.

Just help the jury with this: this isn't the proforma that firefighters would take on a 72D visit, presumably?

A. Well, yes, it's intended to be just that. It's the sort of thing that -- the information they would need to gather when they're carrying out their risk inspection, if it is a site that falls within needing a site-specific risk information file -- folder -- based on the risk assessment -- quantitative risk assessment which features in the previous -- in the earlier pages.

Q. Who would carry out that risk assessment?

A. That would be carried out -- well, that would be a matter for individual service's policies as to who would carry it out, but normally that would be the local crews or a more senior person from the fire station, a station engineer, station commander, depending on

their title within the service.

Q. So --

THE CORONER: Sorry, Mr Hendy, can I stop you for a moment. Ms McGahey, no doubt someone sitting behind you has a clean copy of this document. Could it be brought forward, please.

MS MCGAHEY: Madam, I can offer you my own clean copy. I'm afraid it's the only one I have.

THE CORONER: Thank you. (Handed) Yes, thank you.

MR HENDY: Madam, the appendix we were looking at begins at page 74.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MR HENDY: Let me just understand this, Mr Holland: this guidance, issued last year, requires a risk assessment to be performed by members of the London Fire Brigade to assess whether or not the particular site has a sufficiently high risk for fire crews subsequently to go round with this data capture proforma and fill it out; is that right?

A. To be absolutely clear, this is guidance from the centre, which -- and it's -- the individual fire brigade, fire and rescue service, will make a determination as to whether they follow it quite specifically, but if they don't, they would have to demonstrate how they were doing the same, it not more,

through a different methodology. I'm not intending to confuse you, but that's the status of the guidance. It is guidance.

Q. Because we've heard various firefighters talk about 72D visits, and I have to say -- it may be my memory at fault, but I've not heard anybody referring to this data capture proforma, or anything like it, in the London Fire Brigade. Maybe it hasn't seeped through yet; might that be the explanation?

A. Well, the date on the document is March. One would assume that's when it applied. I mean, I would think it's -- there would -- individual services would look at it and develop there own policies and procedures in relation to it, but of course, with the numbers of buildings, particularly in a large fire brigade, it would take quite a long time to carry out risk inspections of all those buildings to bring them up to this standard.

Q. This process of fire risk assessment in order to know whether to use a proforma of this kind -- again, it may be my memory that's at fault, but I can't recollect having had any evidence before about the Fire Brigade conducting risk assessments at a premises in their area in order to determine whether they're sufficiently high risk or not to warrant further data capture. Is this

something that's new as well?

A. Well this document, as I say, is 12 months old, so it's something that really has come out of incidents that have occurred within fire and rescue services over the last few years, and this is a collation of the evidence and the learning outcomes from those incidents to improve the way that we collate information to improve the way that firefighters handle incidents.

THE CORONER: Well, I think I'm now muddled. Are we talking about recommendations that there should be 72D visits, but perhaps using enhanced documentation, or some separate fire risk assessment? Because I don't follow what you're saying, sorry.

A. Okay. Perhaps the confusion -- a fire risk assessment of the building is carried out by an independent person. That's in terms of --

THE CORONER: Yes, we're familiar with that.

A. Okay. This is an assessment of the fire risk in a service's area, Fire Brigade's area, and they would need to determine which buildings they would need to carry out inspections upon, and in carrying out those inspections, they might -- using the quantitative risk assessment, the tables that are in there, they would determine whether a specific building would need to have a detailed record kept in the way that this is

recommending.

MR HENDY: Well, I've not seen this document before this morning and I hadn't appreciated that you would be giving evidence on it, so you'll have to bear with me.

A. I understand.

Q. The risk assessment, it's two stages, isn't it? First you do the risk assessment. You determine if a particular building is sufficiently high risk to warrant a further capture of data along the lines of the proforma that's suggested, right?

A. That's correct.

Q. This prior risk assessment, just help us with this: the jury know all about Lakanal House and buildings of that kind. I know you haven't seen it. You haven't inspected it, of course.

A. No.

Q. But is a high rise block of flats like that likely to be sufficiently high risk to warrant further data capture by means of such a proforma?

A. Part of the risk assessment, the quantified risk assessment that's carried out factors in things like the construction of the building, the numbers of fires that have occurred in that building and the injuries that have happened to people in that building, and that would all -- if they all applied, that would take it up the

table so the multiplier -- it's a five and five scale, so if it gets to five on the likelihood, that would indicate that it's a much higher risk and would take it into the category on the table that's in the document to require a site-specific risk inspection and record kept therein.

Q. Well, you're the chief fire and rescue officer for England. In your view, would high rise buildings of this kind be the sort of buildings that one would expect to mark high enough on risk assessment to warrant further data capture or not?

A. With the caveat that I've actually not gone into the detail of that specific building, but I would think it most likely they would fall into that category, yes, because of the incidences of fire.

Q. So as soon as this guidance is put into operation by the London Fire Brigade, the residents of Marie Curie House can expect that --

THE CORONER: Well, I'm not sure that we're looking at Marie Curie here, Mr Hendy.

MR HENDY: I've gone too far, madam.

Let me just turn back to page 1498, which we were looking at in the generic risk assessment guidance for high rise buildings. It's really on the same point. We looked at extended lines of communication. We didn't

look at premises security. Let's see what that says:

"Access for firefighters may be significantly delayed due to security arrangements. Security measures may include code entry system, card access points, security grills and multi-lock door systems. Progress may be inhibited on more than a single occasion as devices are encountered at a number of points along the route to the fire."

You won't know -- but the jury do -- that all those points, I think, other than the card access, caused difficulties for various firefighters on 3 July 2009.

And then this, "Complexity of internal layout":

"Large or complex floor layouts and a lack of information on the internal layout of the building can challenge crews seeking safe access and egress routes to and from the scene of the fire and may increase the risk of crews becoming disorientated or lost."

That obviously is an uncontroversial factor.

A. Mmm.

Q. Putting it shortly, it's really a combination of all those factors that led you to express the view a few minutes ago that probably Lakanal House was of a sufficiently high risk -- Marie Curie House -- to warrant further data capture?

A. Yes, I mean, things like that would be considered when

carrying out that -- that quantified risk assessment, yes.

THE CORONER: That a structured assessment would have to be carried out?

A. Yes, it would, yes.

MR HENDY: Can we look then at page 1502 in that document, headed "Key control measures, operational pre-planning and information gathering". The third hyphen down is:

"The identification of floor levels with respect to the fire rescue service access level."

Can you help us with what that means? Does that mean identifying the floor on which the fire fighters can access the building or does it mean the floors which firefighters may have to access in carrying out their firefighting and rescue work?

A. I think it means quite specifically -- it's how fire and rescue personnel would get into that building from the -- well, first of all, into the staircase, and then from the staircase into the corridor areas to -- to get into the flats, and how they would do that, and any other methods that they could use to get so that building.

Q. So does it follow that it's necessary to appreciate the numbers of the flats on the particular floors, which is where they may be aiming for?

A. I wouldn't have thought that they would need to know the specific numbers of the flats in advance. They would need to know the floor that the fire was on. I don't think they would keep a record of individual flat numbers on a risk information form. They'd need to know which floor the fire was on, and in -- when they got the call, what the number of the flat involved was so they could locate it.

THE CORONER: This is about operational pre-planning and information gathering before an incident, isn't it?

A. Yes. Yes, it is, yes.

MR HENDY: One of the difficulty for the firefighters at Lakanal House was that nobody appreciated --

THE CORONER: Sorry, can I just stop you, Mr Hendy. Mr Holland isn't here to talk about the specific issues relating to Lakanal House.

MR HENDY: No.

THE CORONER: Or to express any opinions on those. What we're asking him to do is to assist us with the broader national policies and how advice might be given in the future.

MR HENDY: Absolutely, madam.

THE CORONER: So it's not appropriate to be looking specifically at Lakanal House.

MR HENDY: I'll avoid mention of it if I can. The point

that I wanted to put to you, though, is a point I can put generally, and that is that the fact that the numbers of the flats don't automatically correspond with the floors that they are on --

A. Ah, right.

Q. -- is surely an important piece of operational pre-planning?

A. Well, I wasn't aware of that piece of information. If, when they're carrying out the 72D inspection, they discover that there's an unusual numbering, something's not standard in some way, shape or form, perhaps they would indicate, say, on floor number 6, that flats number 51 to 60 are on that floor, but, you know, that would be if there was some sort of unusual numbering system in place.

Q. So that information should be gathered?

A. If that's the case, yes.

Q. Yes. Then can we go to page 1503, in the bottom half of the page, which reads:

"Pre-planning arrangements should also include ..."

In the second bullet point --

A. Can I just interpret you, sorry? I don't have your numbering.

Q. I'm sorry, it's page 11. The second bullet point reads:

"Pre-planning arrangements should also include ...

the development of contingency plans for a range of reasonably foreseeable events such as fire spread beyond the compartment of origin and the potential for multiple rescues ..."

And various other matters as well. How is that to be dealt with by way of pre-planning?

A. That's something that -- when the person in charge of the team that -- if it is a team -- who are carrying out the 72D inspection, that would be the information that they would be considering in terms of tackling a fire in that building. What are the issues that they would need to face? And they would need to record that as such on their risk information, the 72D so-called.

Q. What, they'd need to record that this is the sort of building where fire could spread beyond the compartment of origin?

A. Or not, as the case may be.

Q. Or not, as the case may be, and that there is a potential for multiple rescues, if that is the case?

A. Yes.

Q. Then if we go to the next page, your page 12, our page 1504, in the second paragraph down, it says:

"Consideration should be given to the development and adoption of a system to provide role-related relevant information concerning the premises to all

personnel. This should include call handlers, first and subsequent responders and responding supervisory officers. Fire and rescue services should consider the development of common call-handling prompts to elicit and gather appropriate, relevant and timely information about the nature of the incident, affected areas, floors, et cetera. Services should also develop proactive means of call handling, in which the caller is offered reassurance and offered practical advice to minimise risks and injury."

Now, the pre-operational information gathering, so far as the evidence we've heard so far, has been confined to the firefighters in the fire stations.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. As I read this -- tell me if I'm wrong -- some of that information at least should be shared with call handlers as well?

A. And is. What this is referring to is information which can be put on the specific risk information that's given to the responding crews. So, for example, if you have a hazardous material in building, you know, whether it's explosives or petroleum spirit or something like that, or hazardous chemicals generally, that information can be posted onto a specific building. It tends to normally be in that context, commercial/industrial-type

buildings. So you can have site-specific information held in control of a limited nature like that, to assist crews, when they're responding, to look out for it. And it's really a prompt to link them to the 72D information and it should also tell them whether a 72D is in existence for that building.

Q. With the advent of modern information technology, there would appear to be no reason why the information displayed on the mobile data terminal nowadays in fire appliances shouldn't equally be displayed to call handlers in brigade control. Do you agree?

A. There's no reason why you couldn't do that. The question is how much value that is to the control operator whilst they're handling that call, because you wouldn't want to overwhelm them with information. It would need to be useful information that would help them in handling that call.

Q. Well, supposing the call handler knew, for example, that in a fire in a high rise building there were escape balconies accessible to every maisonette on alternate floors. That might be a crucial bit of information for a call handler to know, might it not?

A. Yes, it could be, yes.

Q. And equally an important piece of information for the incident commander and those on the fire ground?

A. Yes, but that would be gathered, hopefully, on the 72D, so the incident commander should -- should have gathered that sort of information when they're doing their inspection.

Q. Well, isn't it a recommendation that our coroner might consider making that the information -- the limited, to-the-point information -- displayed on the mobile data terminals on the appliances attending a fire, should be equally displayed for the call handlers?

A. Yes, I think that would -- that would be a good recommendation, yes.

Q. Can I next take you to the bottom of that page, 12, our page 1504, which deals with "On arrival". Now the document is talking about the role of the incident commander. This is something you've touched upon, but I wonder if we could just explore the last paragraph together:

"The first attendance incident commander must ascertain as much information as available, both by a visual check of the structure as well as by gathering information from building occupants and any fire control systems that may be present. Information should be gathered from ..."

Then it goes over the page to 1505:

"... security personal, occupants, et cetera, as to

where the fire is located and its extent. It is this officer's responsibility to ensure that the fire floor is correctly identified and ascertain if the floors have an odd configuration."

In answer to our coroner, you agree that guidance on the exchange of information between the fire ground and brigade control would be helpful. What I wanted to ask you was what that guidance is going to say. How is this information practically to be shared?

Let me just explain the situation. This is going to be a difficult situation. We've got somebody believing they're in danger in a block of flats where there's a fire. They're on the mobile phone. They're speaking to brigade control.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. Firefighters are on the ground. The information commander is there with his radio and assistance. There may be a command unit as well, in touch with brigade control. How are the three points of this information to be shared so that no critical information is lost? How, practically, is this guidance to be expressed?

A. Okay. The member of staff in the fire control who has the caller on the end of the line would -- either they would, or probably a colleague alongside them, would contact the incident command vehicle, whether that's the

initial command vehicle or the main command vehicle, depending on the timing of the passing of that information, and they would then radio through, talk to the firefighter, whoever is on the end of that radio, who would then use that dedicated incident command channel to contact the incident commander with that information, if it was of the critical nature that you suggested it was.

Q. Would there be, or should there be, in such guidance, some help for an incident commander, or for brigade control operator, to say, "Hang on, let's cut through this three-way communication. Incident commander [or his assistant], speak directly to the person in the flat on the mobile phone"?

A. I mean, there's no guidance or anything around that at the moment.

Q. No.

A. And that would mean the person in the -- the flat going off the line and then contacting -- or the incident commander having that number and having a mobile phone to hand to be able to contact them.

Q. Yes.

A. That's not something that there's any guidance around at the moment, for sure.

Q. Well, I'm not suggesting that guidance should specify

the circumstances in which that should be done, but surely that should be an operational possibility, and those in brigade control and those in incident command should be aware of that as a possibility, and if that means that every incident commander has to have a mobile phone in their pockets in case, then so be it?

A. It's certainly a consideration, but I mean, it's -- that would be a very rare situation indeed, for someone to be able to talk coherently on a mobile phone. Clearly it happens, but it is unusual, so it's certainly something to be considered, yes.

Q. Well, I'm sure that it's rare. Loss of life in a fire in a block of flats is comparatively rare as well.

A. Exactly.

Q. So we're only talking about rare occasions, and the question always is whether the guidance or the precaution is proportionate to the risk, and if it's loss of life that's the risk, then sensible precautions ought to be taken.

A. Mmm.

Q. So would you accept that some sort of guidance, at least as to the possibility of direct communication through mobile phones or brigade control patching -- I think that's the technical word, patching the call through to the incident commander -- is something that should

certainly be considered at least?

A. Certainly considered, yes.

Q. One other aspect of this potential guidance is this: in 2009, all the families who lost loved ones had mobile phones with them, and mobile phones are really so common now that it's unusual for an adult not to have a mobile phone, perhaps, in England. Given that that is the case and that mobile phones will be frequently used in emergency situations of this kind, should the -- do you think it would be desirable for the guidance to consider how that means of communication -- immediate, portable, accessible -- might be employed in a way that might save life in the future?

A. Yes, I do, and of course as technology moves on, with social media as well, there might be other opportunities to make contact with people -- large numbers of people in a building. So yes, that's certainly worth exploring, yes.

Q. Sorry, just one moment. (Pause)

Turning to another matter, page 758 in your witness statement at paragraph 56. You're talking about pre-planning and the use of aerial appliances, and you say that:

"It is good practice for fire and rescue authorities, as part of their information-gathering,

training and exercising, to pre-plan the best siting of aerial appliances for risks that might have access difficulties. This information could then be shared on the 72D information record mentioned earlier."

I haven't had a chance to study your data capture form, but is the siting of ALPs one of the things which should be captured by way of data?

A. Yes, it absolutely will be. I was just looking to see if I could find it, but I mean, that's -- as I mentioned, the whole ethos behind the 72D inspection is to consider how you would tackle a fire in a building, and if the potential is there to need to use an aerial appliance, a high rise appliance, you would clearly need to consider how you would get that vehicle close enough and where you could get it close enough to a building, and that should be recorded on the 72D information.

Q. What if, on a 72D visit, the visiting team see that there might be a need to get an aerial appliance to one side of a building but find that there's a tree which might foul their ladder and might need to be cut down in the event of a fire. Should that be recorded on a 72D form?

A. Well, that would be dealt with at the time. Rather than, you know, just recording it, saying "There's

a tree there that you'll need to cut down if there's a fire" -- I mean, (a) we don't have the equipment to start chopping trees down. That's not something we carry on fire engines, so that would be something that the person carrying out the 72D would deal with, I assume, with the local authority, around the issue relating to that tree or other obstruction.

Q. So putting it shortly, it should be noted on the 72D visit and actioned back at the station by communication with the land owner or whoever it happens to be, to say, "The trees might be in the way if we need to get to a particular point with our ALP; we want it removed"?

A. Yes, if that is noted on the -- when they're assessing whether they can get the aerial appliance in -- close enough to the building.

THE CORONER: Does one find that sort of recommendation in written guidance anywhere?

A. In relation to obstruction?

THE CORONER: Yes.

A. I beg your pardon, madam?

THE CORONER: Yes, whether there's sufficient access for ALPs. Is there guidance somewhere which recommends to various brigades that this is something that they should be particularly looking out for when making 72D visits?

A. I think it will be contained within the document at the back that I was trying to find a few minutes ago.

THE CORONER: Well, we'll give you a moment if you want to look through.

A. Thank you. (Pause) Yes, page 92 -- well 91 and 92, actually.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MR HENDY: Thank you.

A. Would you like me to identify it?

THE CORONER: Well I see that there's a section which refers to site access, and I assume you're looking at that top box.

A. Yes, I am, and the fourth item down on that which relates to aerial access, that's a bit of jargon talking about aerial ladder platforms, is a commonly used term.

THE CORONER: And you said 92, what do you look at in 92?

A. In 92 it talked about an aerial plan.

THE CORONER: Thank you, yes.

MR HENDY: The plan being what, how the ALP might be used?

A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. Just one other matter on ALPs, Mr Davey agreed that it would be -- I can't remember what his words were, but he agreed with the proposition that ALPs should practice in various sites on their patch in order to know how the ALP could be used for rescue, or what types of water to

lay down, and so forth?
A. And that happens.
Q. And it should happen?
A. It should happen and does happen, yes.
Q. Is there any guidance for that?
A. I don't think there's any specific guidance other than, really, from the fire and rescue service that you have to consider how you're going to tackle a fire in a building, and if that includes the use of aerial platforms, then you would -- you would follow up on that and practice.
Q. He pointed to a logistical difficulty which arises from the fact that there are far fewer ALPs than there are pump appliances, and therefore the range for any particular ALP is going to be much greater than the more limited territory that an ordinary pump appliance is likely to visit?
A. Yeah, I covered that in my statement. The maximum height that you can go up to a with a manually handled ladder is 13.5 metres and --
Q. No, sorry, my mistake, I didn't make myself clear. The fire appliances at Peckham Fire Station, for example, cover Peckham's fire ground, and it's going to be an unusual emergency which calls on them to go north of the river, for example, a real big emergency. But for

an ALP based at Peckham, its scope of operations is likely to be much wider, because there are fewer ALPs in London than there are appliances?

A. Yes.

Q. And the logistical difficulties, therefore, that the ALP is not just looking at the tower blocks and factories nearby, it's got to cover a greater range. Therefore to practice, or even to look at access, on a wider geographical area, is going to be more difficult?

A. Yes, it is, and if you recall in the evidence I gave earlier, I did mention about the incident commander, when they're assessing what equipment they would need to tackle a fire in a certain building, would consider what we called in jargon terms special vehicles, special appliances, and aerial platforms would fall into that category, and they would --

THE CORONER: Sorry, I'll just stop you there, Mr Holland, because what we're talking about at the moment is the pre-planning stage.

A. Yes, absolutely. No, I understand that, but it's so that they have to consider how they're going to tackle a fire in a building, and okay, I was applying it in the actual operational context rather than the pre-planning context.

THE CORONER: Yes, if we could confine it to pre-planning,

please.

A. Yes, but the logic is the same, you'd consider what equipment you would need when there was a real fire, and they -- all crew commanders upwards understand what special vehicles can do, what aerial ladder platforms can do --

THE CORONER: Yes, sorry to cut across you, what we're looking at is the logistical problems. We have a limited number of ALPs, for example, if we're looking at London, a limited number of ALPs, and a very large number of buildings of different sorts.

A. Of course, yes.

THE CORONER: And you're talking now about requiring people to be training, using ALPs across that whole area.

A. Yeah.

THE CORONER: Now that presents a huge logistical problem, does it not?

A. I beg your pardon. Clearly there are a lot more buildings than it would be practically possible to train on on a very regular basis.

THE CORONER: So what is the guidance that you would suggest that should be given in relation to this particular issue?

A. Well I mean they would train on high rise buildings, and how an aerial ladder platform would be used in terms of

high rise buildings, and the similarities -- I mean the reality is there's a limit to the height they can go up to, round about the 9th/10th storey will be the limit, but --

THE CORONER: I don't want to go down that detail, I am just looking at the logistics, the difficulty that one is facing with -- well I've already outlined it, we don't need to repeat it.

Yes, Mr Hendy.

MR HENDY: Let me turn to another matter. Can I ask you, please, to look at page 760 of your witness statement. Here you're talking about incident commanders, and now we've moved away from pre-planning, we're actually at a fire incident. In paragraph 67, you say:

"Frequent changes of incident commander need not necessarily have a detrimental effect on operations. What is most important is the quality of handover and the need to maintain close contact with their predecessor in case clarification is needed."

It's just that last phrase that I wanted to ask you about, the need to maintain close contact with predecessors. Is that something that's addressed in the guidance at all?

A. Yes, I believe it is, in the command manual.

Q. Right.

Madam, it's clear I'm going to go into the afternoon, forgive me, but perhaps we could look at that at lunchtime?

THE CORONER: All right.

MR HENDY: And come back to it.

Can I take one other very short matter before the break. Page 762 of your witness statement, under the heading "Access through locked doors including the use of drop keys," I wanted to ask you whether there is a standardisation of drop keys in social housing. I should perhaps have asked somebody else, but let me ask you because of your considerable experience. So will a particular borough, or council, have standardised drop keys for all their blocks of flats, how does it work?

A. Not in my experience, but that's not to say it doesn't happen.

Q. What about private landlords like the Peabody Trust and so on, who have multiple dwelling buildings?

A. Well I mean they might have, but again, not to my knowledge.

Q. Is this something that should be addressed by way of guidance? Because we know that there were difficulties over drop keys in 2009. Is there room for improvement there?

A. Well as I put in the statement, the -- carrying keys,

and I think you're making the point on a standard key rather than individual keys, and I'm -- that's something for an individual service to look at how they're going to gain access into individual buildings, and if there was a problem with -- with security, that's something they would address at a local level.

Q. So it's not, in your view, not suitable for national guidance and national coordination between major landlords and the fire service?

A. Well I think the practicalities of that are these are by their very nature security doors, and if you start making keys readily available, you've lost the security, potentially.

Q. Right.

What's convenient, madam?

THE CORONER: Well I think if you've reached the end of a topic, then I suggest we have a break now.

MR HENDY: Certainly.

THE CORONER: We'll break for lunch now, members of the jury, thank you very much. Could you be back at 1.55, please, thank you.

Mr Holland, please could you be back for continuing at 1.55.

A. Yeah, and obviously not talk to anyone.

THE CORONER: And obviously you must not talk to anyone

during the break, thank you.

(12.57 pm)

(The short adjournment)

(1.56 pm)

(In the presence of the Jury)

THE CORONER: Yes, Mr Hendy.

MR HENDY: Mr Holland, can we just try and clear up a couple of points that we raised this morning. First of all, we looked at page 760 in your witness statement and paragraph 67, and it was that point about needing to maintain close contact between an incident commander and his or her predecessor. I asked you whether that was in the guidance and you said you thought it was. I looked through it over the lunchtime adjournment and I couldn't find it, but --

A. Perhaps I can help.

Q. -- obviously I'm not familiar with it and you are.

A. Perhaps I can help.

THE CORONER: Yes, okay.

A. It's page number 13 on mine. I'm not sure what that is.

THE CORONER: 1505, I think. Is that the page you're looking at?

A. No, it's not. Ah, I beg your pardon. You're looking in generic risk assessment 3.2. It's actually in the incident command manual. It's the annex --

MR HENDY: Annex 1?
A. I'm in annex -- I think annex 13.
Q. I think it's annex 1.
A. I beg your pardon. It's the incident command manual, whatever annex that is.
Q. It's that document on the screen?
A. That's correct, thank you.
Q. So it's page 13.
A. That's the one.
THE CORONER: Sorry, which annex number is it?
A. That new first paragraph --
THE CORONER: Which annex number are we looking at, please?
MS MCGAHEY: Annex 1, madam.
THE CORONER: Thank you.
A. So it's that first new paragraph on that page, which begins "An incident commander". If I can refer you to the final sentence:

"Having assumed command, the senior officer will, in all likelihood, want to retain the previous commander in the command structure to provide advice and continuity."

THE CORONER: Thank you.
MR HENDY: Right. It's not quite the same as the way you've expressed it in your witness statement, which is the need to maintain close contact with their predecessor in case clarification is needed.

A. Well, with great respect, it does say:

"Having assumed command ... will, in all likelihood, want to retain the previous commander in the command structure to provide advice and continuity."

I think it achieves that actually.

Q. Okay. The other point I wanted to raise with you was in relation to a point which you dealt with with Mr Maxwell-Scott, which was the gathering of pre-planning information. We now have hard copies of the pre-planning document for Marie Curie House. When I say "we", the coroner and the advocates. I wonder if that could be put up on the screen.

THE CORONER: Are you talking about the MDT?

MR HENDY: Yes, madam, the document that you had this morning.

THE CORONER: Yes, well, Mr Hendy, I'm not going to put it up on the screen.

Members of the jury, the reason for that is this: it's a document which postdates the fire and it's about the way that matters are to be dealt with in the future, which will go to matters within my remit, namely any recommendations once the inquests are over, and what I'm most anxious to try to help you with is not to be looking at things with the benefit of hindsight.

So for that reason, Mr Hendy, I'm not putting it up

on the screen.

MR HENDY: I understand. Madam, really, this is a matter of potential recommendation from you if there are defects to be found in it.

THE CORONER: Yes.

MR HENDY: And therefore a matter for the advocates to address you with rather than through the witness.

THE CORONER: Yes.

MR HENDY: I'm obliged.

So let's move on then, Mr Holland, to the next point I wanted to raise with you, which comes at page 764 in your witness statement, where you deal, in the top half of the page, with the phrase "persons reported". You dealt with it this morning. All I wanted to ask you is whether you agree that making an incident "persons reported" triggers a need to establish where those persons are and to attempt to rescue them if they are thought to be in danger.

A. Yes, it does.

Q. If persons are reported in a high rise residential block, would that not trigger a need for a call for FRUs?

THE CORONER: Well, Mr Hendy, this is looking back to incidents. It's not looking ahead to policy and procedure and what should happen in the future, is it?

At least not the way you're putting the question.

MR HENDY: Have I put it in a wrong way? What I wanted to focus on, Mr Holland, was that second bullet point in paragraph 93, where you say:

"In some services, the declaring of persons reported triggers some additional resource mobilising ..."

And one of those things is "one or more additional appliances"?

A. Yes.

Q. The point I just wanted to explore with you is whether, if the fire is in a high rise residential block, that would trigger in particular a need for an FRU, because they have extended duration breathing apparatus and they're committed to search and rescue rather than firefighting.

A. An FRU -- a fire and rescue unit is specific only to the London Fire Brigade and not to other fire and rescue services in the country.

Q. Right. But so far as the London Fire Brigade is concerned, would the policy properly be to consider --

THE CORONER: Well, that's a matter for the London Fire Brigade, isn't it, not for Mr Holland.

MR HENDY: Okay. The final area that I want to explore with you is this "Stay put" matter. You were referred this morning to the fire and rescue in high rise buildings

document, "Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats". If we could just look at pages 19 and 20. Mr Maxwell-Scott took you to part of this, but I want to just raise something else with you. At the bottom of page 19, paragraph 11.1 says that:

"In England, around 10 per cent of the population live in a purpose-built flat. Yet, during 2009/2010, around 25 per cent of dwelling fires occurred within purpose-built blocks of flats. As a result, in that year, 23 per cent of all fire deaths in dwellings occurred in these blocks."

Then there's an explanation for that over the page at 11.2. It says:

"The number of fire deaths in purpose-built flats appears significantly disproportionate ... but this is simply the result of number of fires in such dwellings, most of which are started accidentally. There is no evidence from fire statistics to suggest that those living in purpose-built blocks of flats are at greater danger from fire, once it breaks out, than those who live in houses."

Having said that, clearly the risk of fire is an ever-present one in every kind of dwelling?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. And with that, of course, the risk of injury and indeed

death?

A. Yes.

Q. In paragraph 11.4, it says:

"In addition, because, in a block of flats, each individual flat is totally enclosed in fire-resisting construction, the vast majority of fires are contained within the flat (and, in the majority of cases, the room) where they start. It is certainly rare for anyone outside the flat where a fire starts to die as a result of a fire in a flat."

That goes on:

"This is the basis for the 'Stay put' principle (discussed later in this guide). When a fire occurs within one dwelling (or, less likely, in the common parts), it is normally safe for the other residents to remain within their own flat."

If we go to page 26, in paragraph 17, under the heading of "Compartmentation", 17.1 says:

"The high degree of fire separation between flats and the common parts is achieved by making each flat a fire-resisting enclosure. This is known as compartmentation. A compartment is simply a part of a building bounded by walls and floors that will resist the passage of fire for a specified period of time. The fire resistance of this construction is such that,

normally, a fire will burn itself out before spreading to other parts of the building."

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. Now, that description, or that kind of description, presumably is the basis on which the "Stay put" policy, where it applies, and the circumstances in which it applies, is communicated not just to firefighters on the ground but also to brigade control telephone operators as well; is that right?

A. It's not conveyed to brigade control operators, in my experience of these flats. That might be a policy in a certain service, but not my experience.

Q. I'm not talking about the policy itself; I'm talking about the description of compartmentation, that we've read there.

A. Oh sure, yes.

Q. That's understood in all parts of the service?

A. Yes.

Q. And you paraphrased it by saying that you thought of a compartment as a box.

A. A fire-resisting box, yes.

Q. A fire-resisting box. Now, we heard evidence yesterday that the requirements for external walls in blocks of flats that are well away from other buildings -- I'll put it the other way round: there is no requirement for

fire resistance for such walls. There is a requirement that they should not permit the spread of flame, but there's nothing about fire resistance.

Now, is it the case that this idea that a compartment is a fire-resisting box but that one side of it may not, in fact, be fire-resistant at all, is understood throughout the fire service?

A. Yes, it is. I mean, the glazing -- the fire will -- once that ventilates, ie the glass shatters, or windows are open, the fire will ventilate out of that window, and of course, the heat will rise, and the idea of the -- what is called the surface spread of flame standard for the external glazing is to stop it propagating the fire, continuing that fire to burn and ignite that -- that glazing panel and frame.

Q. Do you seriously think that brigade control operators understand that the fire-resisting box has one side which is not fire-resisting?

A. The fire control operators are given the training which is in -- one of the annexes that is in my evidence. Their knowledge base will depend upon the information they've received in training, so they will be aware of what a fire resistance is but in a very limited term. But to answer you specifically, they may or may not be aware of whether a fire spreading from a flat could

spread through a window.
Q. Or indeed through -- I'm sorry.
THE CORONER: Well, Mr Hendy, we're not looking backwards to Lakanal House.
MR HENDY: No.
THE CORONER: I think that point has been covered sufficiently.
MR HENDY: Yes.
THE CORONER: When one's looking at the external walls, we have to remember not only fire resistance but also Class 0, surface spread of flames, as we keep saying.
MR HENDY: Indeed, madam. I think I did mention that.
THE CORONER: You did.
MR HENDY: So far as the guidance for fire risk assessors is concerned, do you think that they too would also appreciate this concept of a fire-resisting box with one side not fire-resisting, although limited spread of flame?
A. They absolutely should, otherwise they shouldn't be doing the fire risk assessments for certain, yes.
Q. The coroner put to you this morning that in relation to the "Stay put" policy and escape policy, there were, as it were, two defaults. I wonder if I could explore that with you. If you look in the bundle of documents at page 1704, we have a document which is in one of your

appendices. I think it's appendix 12. It's emergency call-handling techniques, fire survival guidance.

THE CORONER: Is that, in fact, one of your appendices, Mr Holland?

A. Yes, it is.

THE CORONER: Which number is it?

MR HENDY: It's number 12, madam.

THE CORONER: Well, I seem to have a different -- 1704?

MR HENDY: 1704, emergency call-handling techniques.

THE CORONER: The description in Mr Holland's witness statement is "Making people safe" and the cover gives me a different --

A. Madam, if I can help, the emergency call-handling techniques title is on the inside page of that document. The external page is annex C.

THE CORONER: Yes, okay, I'm with you. Thank you very much.

MR HENDY: So far as emergency call handling techniques, there's only one default position, and that's "Get out -- stay out", isn't it?

A. That's the default position, yes.

Q. Yes. We can see that at many pages. I won't take you to all of them, but just looking at page 1712, under 7, "Giving advice" in the left-hand column:

"The standard advice to persons involved in a fire situation is to get out and stay out. Only when this is

not immediately possible will further advice be appropriate."

Then it deals with escape. There's a summary of the advice on page 1714 in the right-hand column:

"When advice is given, it must be prioritised in the following way: check if escape is possible; protect location from fire and smoke; assist rescue separation."

Yes?

A. Yes. It might be helpful to look at -- again, my pagination's different to yours -- page 33, paragraph 5.3.

Q. Page 33 is 1711. 5.3 deals with flats and maisonettes, indeed.

A. This is the training for control staff which has been adopted by pretty well most services. It was given by the predecessor department responsible for fire and rescue, which was the Home Office at the time, hence the title at the beginning.

Q. Yes.

A. It describes a maisonette, how it has two levels, and talks about potential for alternative exits there, but in the previous paragraph it also mentions about fire-resisting construction from the corridor.

Q. Indeed it does, but there is nothing there to indicate that the default position for flats and maisonettes

should be any different to any other kind of dwelling. Escape if possible?

A. Yes, yeah.

Q. But in your evidence, you've described a "Stay put" policy, which I understood to apply to high rise compartmentalised residential properties; am I right?

A. Yes, it does, yeah.

Q. But as I understand it, there is no written "Stay put" policy?

A. No, not that I'm aware of, no.

Q. There's no second default position document which applies if this one doesn't, which prioritises escape first?

A. Again, not that I'm aware of, no. The guidance that you referred to previously, which is one issued by the Local Government Association to housing authorities, is the one which does talk about "Stay put" policies and advising housing authorities in relation to that principle.

Q. But it doesn't detract from the primary position, which is: "Escape if you can; if you can't, then consider staying put"?

A. If the control operator's in contact -- when the control operator's in contact with somebody, if the person can't get out of the premises, they would advise them to take

action to try and protect themselves by, you know, trying to put things at the bottoms of doors, trying to stop smoke and fire egress into the room they're in, closing doors and things like that. But there's also advice in relation to -- and that was the point I was making, taking you back to page 33 -- and I can't remember the page number, forgive me -- about looking at an alternative escape.

THE CORONER: I think I'm looking for clarity of policy, clarity of guidance and clarity of training.

A. I understand that.

MR HENDY: I don't think you're suggesting that brigade control operators would be aware that in your view certain buildings had been designated as "Stay put" policy buildings?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Neither would incident commanders or firefighters?

A. Well, incident commanders and firefighters, because of the involvement in doing 72D inspection as home fire safety inspections, will pick up on it when they are visiting those premises.

Q. Well, they'll pick up on the fact that they're visiting a residential block of flats which ought to be composed of fire-resistant compartments, but how, if there's no policy document, would they appreciate that this was

a "Stay put" policy building, rather than "Escape if you can and stay put if you can't"?

A. From a guidance policy document -- it effectively had been enshrined in the Building Regulations but the specific point about a policy document which relates to it, as I say, it's enshrined in the Building Regulations and that's what firefighters work to, and firefighters would know about the fire resistance and the compartmentation in that type of building where there's no general fire alarm.

Q. I think we're misunderstanding each other, Mr Holland. Of course one understands that firefighters appreciate that compartmentalised high rise residential blocks are meant to be fire-resistant and therefore it's generally safe to stay put. The point that I'm putting to you is that they would not know that "Stay put" took precedence over "Escape if you can" because there's no policy document to guide them to that conclusion.

A. No, but they would know that if people were staying put and they knew the policy on the building, that if people were in jeopardy that they would need to get them out of the building.

Q. You say "the policy on the building" but there is no policy.

A. I accept that it's a design principle enshrined in the

building.

Q. You say that for the incident commander on the ground it's a judgment call as to whether "Stay put" or "Get out". One understands that if the incident commander is aware of somebody in respect of whom a choice has to be made. I imagine that you would accept that such a decision should be made, if it can practically be done, in liaison with brigade control, who may be in touch with that person?

A. Practically that would be difficult, in terms of the communication lines. From a practical expensive, the crews have arrived at the incident, their contact with control -- if they needed to establish further information, they could do that as we discussed earlier, the potential to go back to control to ascertain information from the caller.

Q. But the difficulty for the incident commander may be that he doesn't know where the trapped person is?

A. Ah.

Q. The brigade control is in touch with that person and does know where they are.

A. Yes.

Q. And has the means of exploring with that person whether it's possible to escape, whether there are means of escape.

A. Mm-hmm.
Q. Therefore if the incident commander is in the position of proffering advice as to whether to stay put or escape, it would be essential to take that decision in conjunction with brigade control?
A. No, they would make that decision on the ground, to evacuate people if they thought they were in jeopardy.
THE CORONER: Mr Hendy, we do need to relate this to broad questions of policy and guidance.
MR HENDY: Indeed.
But as I understand it, there's no guidance for incident controllers on the ground in relation to helping them make that sort of decision?
A. Controllers would -- I mean, the guidance is in the appendix we were just looking at a few moments ago, and controllers, if they've got information from -- the whole idea -- the whole ethos of the call-handling techniques is to get information to both help the occupant and also help the crews to find the persons who are trapped.
Q. What I've been trying to explore with you is the proposition that guidance should be given to incident commanders faced with an issue as to whether a trapped person should stay put or get out, that they should liaise, if they possibly can, with brigade control, who

may know more about that person than they do, in order that the proper decision can be made, the best decision.

A. If the incident commander thought that control had information that they didn't have, yes, they should be trying to get that information from control. We talked about the use of mobile phones earlier on.

THE CORONER: I think we've covered that point, Mr Hendy.

MR HENDY: I think we have, madam. Thank you very much, Mr Holland.

THE CORONER: Mr Dowden? Ms Al Tai?

Mr Walsh.

Questions by MR WALSH

MR WALSH: Yes, please, madam.

Mr Holland, I ask questions on behalf of the London Fire Brigade. I just want to clarify -- I'm afraid you've been taken to it a number of times now, but I think it is necessary, for the purpose of broad policy reasons, to clarify what you say about the difference between, or the tension which exists between, the "Get out -- stay out" principle of policy and the "Stay put" principle.

Could you have a look at page 24 of the LGA guidance. It's the only page I'm going to take you to, and I know you've been taken to many but I have to do this to put it in context. The LGA guidance.

A. Sorry? I can't hear the final bit of your comment.
Q. Page 24 of the LGA guidance.
A. Yes, I've got that, thank you.
Q. Thank you. I just want to take you to paragraph 16.9.
A. Yes.
Q. Which, as you will see -- and you've been taken to this already -- concerns the design of communal means of escape in purpose-built blocks of flats. Do you see it's not saying in "some" purpose-built blocks of flats; the assumptions that are applied are applied for all purpose-built blocks of flats, because they have to be built to certain requirements in the building regs and so on. You would agree with that?
A. Yes, I would.
Q. Thank you. We can see what the assumptions are for the purposes of communal means of escape. I'm going to ask you whether these are equally applicable, these assumptions, for the purposes of firefighting and rescue. The first bullet point is:

"The most likely place of origin of a fire will be in a flat itself."

A. That is the most likely, yes.
Q. Thank you. I'm sorry, you have been taken through these before, but I'm going to take you through two more and you can read the rest:

"... that there is a high degree of fire separation between flats and the common parts and, therefore, the likelihood of fire and smoke spread beyond the flat of origin is low."

A. Yes.

Q. The next one I'm going to ask you to expand on a little bit more:

"The materials used in the construction of the building or the protection afforded to them are such that fire is unlikely to spread through the fabric of the building."

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. You're very familiar with that concept?

A. Yes.

Q. And very quickly, what you mentioned earlier on in relation to the spread of fire up the outside of the building --

A. Yes.

Q. -- the requirements, as you understand them, are to restrict the rate at which fire can travel up the outside of the building?

A. Yes, that's -- that very specific surface spread of flame test, so-called.

Q. Yes, and one of the benefits of that is that it allows some time for the fire rescue service to get to an event

and try to prevent it from going above?
A. Yes.
Q. That's the point?
A. Yes.
Q. The result of all those bullet points, essentially, is that high rise blocks of flats like this are designed to be fought from the inside, with dry rising mains?
A. Oh yes, definitely.
Q. That being so, would you agree that those assumptions that I've just asked you to look at, which are expressed to be for the purpose of communal means of escape, are equally applicable to firefighting? Those assumptions which I've asked you to look at.
A. Oh yes. The consideration about compartmentation is a fundamental part of the incident commander's thought processes, because they want to know where the fire is likely to spread to and where they can contain it to.
Q. Yes, and indeed they've been relied upon for decades by fire and rescue services?
A. Yes.
Q. Those assumptions apply right across the board to high rise blocks of flats which are built in accordance with Building Regulations?
A. Yes.
Q. And it is in respect of those premises -- I won't call

it a policy -- that the "Stay put" principle over many years has applied to, for the reasons which we've gone into?

A. Yes.

Q. It's probably my fault. I may have misunderstood what you said before, but I think you were indicating before that an individual building might have a "Stay put" policy?

A. Yes.

Q. What I'm going to put to you, certainly in London at least, is that the "Stay put" principle applies to all high rise buildings of a residential nature, for the reasons which we've identified.

A. Where there's no general fire alarm built into the building, yes, that's true.

Q. Right, and as is pointed out in this document, in the vast majority of buildings in this kind there is no fire alarm. You have blocks of flats and the reason that people can feel safe is that they're supposed to be compartmentalised?

A. Yes.

Q. It follows, does it not, with those principles in mind, that if we now look at the difference between "Get out and stay out", that tension, and "Stay put" -- I wonder if you would agree with the following propositions which

I'll put to you. You may not. There is no question, is there, but that if you have a fire in a house or in a flat on the 9th/10th/12th floor, the person must be told to get out and stay out if there is a fire in that flat, or even a house?

A. The occupant, yes.

Q. That's the whole point of the "Get out and stay out", assuming that there is an appropriate escape route, of course.

A. Yes.

Q. If in a flat, though, a person is not affected by the fire or smoke, and there may be a fire in another flat somewhere else in the building, it's appropriate, following what we've discussed in relation to the "Stay put" principle, for that person to stay put?

A. Yes.

Q. And indeed, when callers call control -- I'm going to put this to you in relation to London anyway -- control officers are very familiar with the principles that we've been talking about. So if a caller calls control and says, "Look, there's a fire in the building, it's not affecting me at the moment but it's two floors down", or something like that, it is appropriate advice to tell them or to advise them to remain where they are?

A. Providing there's no heat and smoke that's affecting

them.

Q. Absolutely. Because the consequence of telling them: "You must get out and stay out" is that you may have a large number of calls from the same building and you end up with large numbers of people evacuating down single stairways, causing difficulties?

A. Yes.

Q. And it becomes a little bit more complicated for control, does it not, because there's a further risk that people may be advised to leave their flat, which is not impinged by fire or smoke, and, you know, to travel some distance down a number of stairs, along a corridor, through a building where there may be dangerously smoke-logged corridors, things of that kind. That's a consideration which a control officer has to bear in mind?

A. Yes, if they're going out onto the communal landing -- once the door's open to the flat involved, there will be smoke on that landing, yes.

Q. Yes. So all of those factors are taken into account, and so -- I think it probably was my fault, I probably misunderstood what you said earlier -- it is understood that control officers will be aware of the position in relation to the "Stay put" principle, and of course the control officer will be aware, when the call comes in,

that it is from a high rise premises because it will be on the PDA. So the control officer knows that they're dealing with a person in a flat in a high rise premises?

A. Yes, as they're gathering information, that's part of what they have to do to ensure the right predetermined attendance is sent to the incident, yeah.

Q. All right. Do you think there's a need for further guidance, then, to explain in relation to residential high rise buildings really what you've just said to us, the relationship between "Get out and stay out" and the "Stay put" principle that we've been through, to make that clear?

A. I thought it was clear.

Q. You thought it was clear.

A. Yes.

Q. It's very clear in the way that you say it, but one needs to look at the documents.

A. I think the important thing is when the crews are gathering their risk information, that if they -- when they discover that there is a "Stay put" policy in place, that recording of that is available to control, and I think that does make sense, yes.

Q. Well, Mr Holland, that's the next thing I was going to ask you about, because of course you will accept, I'm sure, that the recording of information that appears on

an MDT, anyway, should be critical information, and there is a risk sometimes that too much information can be counterproductive?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And in relation to high rise premises, a high rise premises, wherever it may be, is identified as such and a PDA, a predetermined attendance, is allotted to those premises?

A. Yes, based on an assessment of how many fire engines are needed to tackle a normal fire in that building.

Q. Yes. And the vast majority -- if not all of them, actually -- of high rise premises, for the reasons we've discussed, are premises to which the assumptions which we were looking at a moment ago on the screen apply?

A. Yes.

Q. And so the "Stay put" principle, as we've identified, applies to all such premises. The question I ask is: we don't quite follow how the crew going, for example, to a 72D will determine whether there is a "Stay put" policy for a particular building because that won't happen by reason of the fact that it applies to all residential high rise. So there would be no need to identify a particular "Stay put" policy for an individual building. Do you see what I mean?

A. The document that I referred to, the provisional

operational risk information, does pose the question about the evacuation of that building and how that's undertaken, if an evacuation takes place.

Q. Yes, but on the basis, as I think we accept, that the vast majority -- it's very hard to think of any, actually, residential buildings with flats, by contrast to hotels, which are different, who have those procedures -- the vast majority will be those to which the principles we've discussed apply, namely that they are "Stay put" principle premises?

A. I -- I couldn't answer the question for the London Fire Brigade in terms of whether the vast majority of the blocks of flats have a fire alarm or don't have a fire alarm. I don't have that information, I'm afraid.

Q. Well, let me put it this way: for the purposes of 72D, if the position is, in fact, in a particular area or in a particular city, that the vast majority, if not all, of a certain type of building are buildings to which the "Stay put" principle applies, there is no need to put that on the MDT as a "Stay put" policy, because there is no such thing as the "Stay put" policy. It's simply identified by the fact that it is a high rise building.

A. Yeah, and it's a principle, and if the control operator believes the person's in jeopardy, they should tell them

to get out.

Q. Yes, that's a different thing. What I'm saying is in relation to the 72D requirement to put it on the MDT, on the computer terminal, if, in a particular city, all buildings of that particular kind apply that policy, there's absolutely no need to put that that on the MDT?

A. That's a judgment call for the individual service concerned.

Q. Yes, which is why I was just going to ask you about the recommendations or the matters which you've identified on 72Ds. I think, if I have it right, that most of the evidence that you were helpfully giving earlier on begins in relation to 72Ds, and then the question of whether it's recorded on an MDT terminal, with the requirement to carry out a risk assessment or a calculation as to whether the risk of a particular building is such as to justify its then later appearance on the MDT?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. I don't think you're suggesting for a moment that all the high rise buildings in London or round the country should necessarily appear on MDTs?

A. Well, I've not done the calculation personally in relation to any of these those buildings, actually, so -- but certainly the ones with a high incidence of

fire would -- would fall into that category for sure.
Q. Right, so a building with a history of a very high incidence of fire might be regarded as high risk and might need an entry?
A. Yes.
Q. And there are many other factors that I need not go into.
A. Yes.
Q. But once it achieves that score, a particular set of premises -- I just want to ask you a couple of matters because of course, people will be very much listening to what you have to say in relation to what should be being done on 72Ds. Aerial ladder platform and turntable ladder access. You were given a scenario earlier on about supposing you had some difficulty with access because there were trees, and you told us that arrangements might be made to chop them down. There are lots of complicating factors with aerial ladder platform access?
A. Yes.
Q. And one of them is that many buildings, certainly in city areas, with which you're familiar, don't provide any access for aerial ladder platforms at all to speak of?
A. Because it's a congested area and there's also an issue

about cabling, overhead cabling, which makes access difficult.

Q. Yes, and indeed, certainly in modern times, there is no particular requirement to provide access for aerial ladder platforms because premises are designed to be fought from the inside?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Yes. So if one is looking, for example, at -- I was going to say a block of flats, to give the hypothetical example that was given to you earlier on, there may be trees in the way, there may be landscaping, there may be paving areas which would be inadequate for the purposes of allowing an aerial platform to set out its jacks anyway?

A. Yes.

Q. So you wouldn't expect detail of that sort of thing unless it was deemed locally, by the person carrying out the 72D, to be a factor which would be relevant for the use of an aerial ladder platform at that building?

A. That's something they would need to consider, whether they thought an aerial ladder platform might be needed at some stage in a fire in that building.

Q. Yes, all right.

There's just one other matter I wanted to ask you about, and that was in relation to the use by incident

commanders of mobile telephones. Now, there are all sorts of factors that have to be considered. What I understood you to say was not that you recommend that incident commanders use them, but in answer to a question, you said you were willing to give consideration to that issue?

A. Yes. I also mentioned -- you know, as technology moves on, other things might be available. I did mention social media, potentially, but I've no idea how that could be a benefit. But it's certainly a consideration as technology improves.

Q. So it's worth your looking out, but there are difficulties with incident commanders being on the outside, needing to deal with an incident, and, you know, there may be a skill-set that they would be required to communicate, as control officers do, with a person in a remote position?

A. Yes.

Q. Those are factors to be taken into account?

A. Can I just be clear: it wouldn't be me that would be considering it; it would be the Operational Guidance Programme Board.

Q. Oh, right. If that's who would be considering it, I won't ask you any further about that. Thank you very much, madam.

THE CORONER: Mr Holland, before lunch you told me that you were of the view that a crew who made a 72D visit should make a record that they were looking at a "Stay put" building, if I can put it that way.

A. Yes.

THE CORONER: But now, as a result of Mr Walsh's questions, you take a different view; is that right?

A. No, the -- part of the documentation -- when the officer in charge, the person filling out the form -- it's a factor that they have to consider, how the evacuation takes place, and if it's something that's significant to that building, they should make a record of it.

THE CORONER: Very well. Mr Matthews.

Questions by MR MATTHEWS

MR MATTHEWS: Mr Holland, my name's Matthews. I ask questions on behalf of the London Borough of Southwark. Can I make it very clear that I'm only asking questions in an effort to assist the coroner with the future and any recommendations she may make under rule 43.

A. I understand.

Q. But having said that, can we just set in context and give a little more time --

THE CORONER: Sorry, can I just stop you there. If you're using your mobile phone at the back, can you please stop straight away. Thank you, yes.

MR MATTHEWS: Just to get some clarity here -- and it's about any future recommendations concerning "Stay put" in any sense, okay?

A. Yes.

Q. You've been referred on a number of occasions to some guidance which we've, I'm afraid, all called different things. It's the Local Government Association guidance -- it was published by them -- entitled "Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats". That came out in August 2011. Mr Holland?

A. Yes, sorry, I'm with you.

Q. Our understanding is that that came out, and its contents were very much affected by what had happened in this terrible tragedy?

A. Yes.

Q. And part of the driving force behind it was fire and rescue authorities and local government, social landlords and other housing associations saying there is no guidance about purpose-built blocks of flats?

A. Yes.

Q. So when you've been taken to passages in it, I think the coroner has to bear in mind that much of what's in this guidance is still, in some ways, looking to the future, what should be there from now on.

A. Yes, yes.

Q. And it's there, in that guidance, that there's talk of "Stay put" as a policy and a principle.
A. Yes.
Q. In a sense, then, it looks like, from a fire risk assessor's point of view, thanks to this guidance, there's direction about and understanding of "Stay put" in terms of the principles for building.
A. Yes.
Q. That's what this document's about. It's 172 pages long.
Lastly, in context -- I don't need to take you there because we're familiar with it and I'm sure Madam Coroner's familiar with it now -- the 2006 sleeping accommodation guidance for risk assessment. It actually made no mention of "Stay put".
A. Right.
Q. Those words don't appear.
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. Why I say that's the context is because you've been asked questions, and it may be very important in terms of the understanding of "Stay put" operationally for fire and rescue authorities.
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. My understanding of what you told us is that it's accepted and known by firefighters and fire and rescue authorities that fire spread from one flat to the flat

above is common, is likely, is something that can and does occur, and it does so through, largely, glazing, through the unprotected areas on the front of a building?

A. Yes, it can do, yes.

Q. You've also said -- and forgive me if I don't get your words exactly right -- that in terms of considerations by an incident commander to evacuation, he should be considering the flats either side of the incident flat?

A. And above.

Q. And above. So lastly, for context, can I ask that you look at a document. It's an LFB document in our jury bundle behind tab 19. (Handed) It's at page 1523. There's just one paragraph to take you to. This is LFB's policy on high rise firefighting --

THE CORONER: Can you just wait for the jurors to get their pages, please.

MR MATTHEWS: Certainly. Page 1523, behind divider 19.

It's November 2008, high rise firefighting, London Fire Brigade's policy procedure. Paragraph 5.5 is exactly the point I've been asking you about:

"Vertical fire spread may travel internally but more commonly occurs externally when fire breaks out of windows, flowing over the surface of the building, rapidly spreading to floors above. This is known as the

Coanda effect."

The learning, as it were, for incident commanders is:

"Assess resource requirements, consider evacuation and carry out firefighting/rescue on upper floors."

A. Yes.

Q. Tying all of this together, what you were asked by my learned friend Mr Maxwell-Scott, much earlier on, was about whether there was some need for operational guidance to firefighters around "Stay put". Perhaps what I invite you to consider is whether there's any need in the light of what you've said concerning considering the evacuation of flats either side of an incident flat, or evacuation, as this document says, of flats above the incident flat. With respect, it appears to me that what would best assist our coroner is your view on whether there's any need for operational guidance on that aspect of "Stay put".

A. Can I be absolutely clear. "Stay put" -- from the point of view of an officer commanding an incident, they have to make a judgment on the people they would need to get out of a building, and that is dependent upon the circumstances around that building. So if people are still in that building, which they would know because there's no general alarm -- they would know that there

are -- if there are people likely to be in the building through the "Persons reported" message or they're told whilst they're going into the incident. They then make a judgment call onto which areas of that building they will evacuate. I don't see a need to change operational guidance in relation to the crews. They should know that that is the case when they respond to a building like that.

Q. Well, that's why I remind you of what I understood Mr Maxwell-Scott was asking you, because I think the question may be a difficult one to answer, as it were, off the top of your head, as to whether there is operational guidance that says exactly what you've just described, that that's what incident commanders should do, think about: "Do I need to evacuate all the flats either side and the flats on all the floors above"?

A. Well, I think operational guidance does exist which advises operational commanders to consider evacuation when there is a serious fire underway, where an evacuation hasn't taken place. It's possible the fire alarm has failed, for example, in the building.

THE CORONER: When you say it exists, do you say it exists in the document that Mr Matthews has taken you to or do you say it exists somewhere else?

A. This document is purely a London Fire Brigade document.

THE CORONER: Yes, of course, yes.
A. I would have to check, and if I have time after this, obviously I will pass you any information if I can find such guidance.
THE CORONER: Thank you. That would be very helpful. Thank you.
MR MATTHEWS: Madam, that's all I ask.
THE CORONER: Thank you very much. Mr Compton?
MR COMPTON: I have no questions.
THE CORONER: Thank you.
MR DICKASON: No questions.
THE CORONER: Yes. Ms McGahey.

Questions by MS MCGAHEY

MS MCGAHEY: Thank you, madam.

Mr Holland, there's one preliminary question I'd like to ask by way of clarification. It's right, isn't it, that the jury should understand you have not studied in detail the evidence that this inquest has heard about the causes of the fire and loss of life at Lakanal House?
A. No, I haven't.
Q. So you're not in a position to give a view as to why that loss of life occurred?
A. That's correct.
Q. Thank you.

I'd like to touch on two topics, both of which I'm afraid have been explored in depth already.

THE CORONER: Sorry, do you think you could get your microphone a little closer.

MS MCGAHEY: I'm sorry, madam. I'm very grateful to Mr Matthews.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

MS MCGAHEY: Thank you very much.

Mr Holland, you were asked earlier this afternoon by my learned friend Mr Walsh about the compartmentation design of blocks of flats, and you said that compartmentation principle would be expected in a high rise building that didn't have an alarm system?

A. It would be expected in all buildings, but it would definitely have one in -- that didn't have a fire alarm system, yes.

Q. It's right, isn't it, that the Building Regulations require residential high rise blocks to be built on the compartmentation principle?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. And so the sort of high rise building in which you might expect an evacuation-style design and a general alarm, sprinklers, is something like a big department store or a big office block?

A. Yes, there's a whole range of buildings that could fall

into that category, yes.

Q. But in a block of flats, with the compartmentation principle in place, the general advice to a resident whose flat is not on fire and not affected by heat or smoke is "stay put"?

A. Yes, that's correct.

Q. That is the advice that could properly be given in a leaflet, say, to residents of the building?

A. Yes, it could.

Q. Or put on a notice board behind every front door?

A. Yes, and indeed it should be as part of the tenancy agreement for new occupants.

Q. But when a caller from that block of flats calls 999, will the advice from the operator depend on what that caller says?

A. Yes, it definitely will.

Q. And on the amount of information that the operator can obtain from the caller?

A. Yes.

Q. As to the level of risk that that caller is facing?

A. Yes.

Q. You've been asked about an apparent tension between the two messages "Get out -- stay out" and "Stay put". Dealing first with "Get out -- stay out" it's right, isn't it, that that would be the advice given to

a caller from a two storey house?
A. Yes.
Q. Because in a two storey house, that whole building is the compartment?
A. Yes.
Q. And everyone in that building is at risk?
A. Yes.
Q. So every occupier must get out and stay out?
A. Yes.
Q. But let's say that this is a terraced house, and the person who reports the fire is not the person whose house is on fire, but the man at the far end of the terrace. The advice to him wouldn't be "Get out and stay out" would it?
A. No, it wouldn't.
Q. Because --
A. Well unless there was something like a common roof void which spread across that entire terrace, in which case that might be the case, but -- and that would only manifest itself in that caller having smoke in their property, so that would be teased out as part of the 999 call and the call handling procedure.
Q. But if he's not at risk, the fact that he's in physically the same building doesn't cause him to be advised to get out and stay out?

A. No, that's right.
Q. Is it true that the same applies essentially vertically in a block of flats?
A. Yes it does.
Q. Can I ask you to look, please, at annex 12 and page 34. Madam, I'm afraid I may have to ask for help as to what number that is on the screens, I only have a hard copy. It is annex 12, "Making people safe, emergency call handling techniques, fire survival guide". It's been referred to before. Thank you very much.

Mr Hendy earlier this afternoon drew your attention to this, and he pointed out that the default advice given was "Get out and stay out"?
A. Yes.
Q. And no reference to "Stay put" advice. If you look at paragraph 7 it says:

"Giving advice. The standard advice to persons involved in a fire situation is to get out and stay out."

So if a person calls from the end of the terrace, he's not involved in the fire, is he?
A. No, they're not.
Q. If the person is on the 5th floor of a block of flats and phones to say there's a fire on the 15th, would you regard him as involved in the fire?

A. No, he wouldn't be.
Q. Only if his flat was on fire or he's affected by heat and smoke does he become involved in the fire?
A. That's right.
Q. Then the advice is to get out and stay out?
A. Yes, and the call handler would be aware of that, the person would be coughing and they would be saying, "There's smoke coming into the flat" and that sort of thing.
Q. Thank you very much.
Thank you, madam.
THE CORONER: Thank you.
Members of the jury, do you have any questions for Mr Holland?
Questions from THE JURY
THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you. One of these points may just have been dealt with by Ms McGahey, I'm not entirely clear. You have mentioned that "Get out -- stay out" might be applied to flats adjacent to the one in which the fire started or is indeed affecting. Would you say that this advice would also be applied to the flat below the fire seat?
A. No.
THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Is there a particular reason for that?

A. The fire's unlikely to spread downwards; heat rises and the fire spreads upwards.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: I'll just check that that answers the question. Okay, thank you.

Our next question: regardless of the original status of the building, as far as being either a "Stay put" or a "Get out" building, would you agree that after major refurbishment, a building should automatically be reassessed?

A. Yes, if it's had a major refurbishment, it -- the compartmentation would need to be checked to see if it was still in place, if indeed it had affected the compartmentation, and any pipework, any ducting or anything like that that penetrates any of that compartmentation needs to be -- we describe it as fire stopped, ie you can put fire-resisting materials in to stop a fire spreading through that compartment.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you, just one more.

We've heard a little from you about the mobile data terminals that are now carried on fire appliances. Are these terminals updated with the information from paper files, or is the information recorded just current since their introduction?

A. I think you could have a mix, because it's a relatively new system that's been introduced, but the -- they

should be, if you like, reassessed as the -- based on the new system, because the old system of doing it would be different to this one, but as an interim measure it is possible that some services would use their existing paper base and put it on the mobile data terminal until such time as they can get to the new standard.

THE CORONER: So you're saying that you think in some brigades they might put on the MDT the information contained in the paper record, is that what you're saying?

A. Yes, as a pragmatic way of because of the amount of time it's going to take to inspect all the premises in their area.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY: Thank you, that covers everything.

THE CORONER: Thank you.

Mr Holland, thank you very much for coming and for the help that you've been able to give to us. You're free to go if you would like.

A. Thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

THE CORONER: Yes, that's all the evidence today, Mr Maxwell-Scott?

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Yes, madam, that is.

THE CORONER: Thank you. Members of the jury, you're free to go now. Please be back for a 10 o'clock start

tomorrow morning, which I think will probably be our last day of evidence. Thank you very much.

(In the absence of the Jury)

Housekeeping

THE CORONER: Now, Mr Hendy, how are we doing with the London Building Act?

MR HENDY: Mr Atkins very kindly has supplied a number of plans this morning, which we were able to digest with our adviser late this morning. Mr Edwards, as you see, is not here at the moment, he's putting the finishing touches to it, so we should be in a position to distribute it to all parties within a couple of hours.

THE CORONER: Okay. So when you say "distribute it," what is it, a further submission or an updated submission?

MR HENDY: An update of the submission that we did in draft yesterday. Again, I say we've been assisted by other parties who have offered suggestions and omissions and so forth which we've tried to check.

THE CORONER: Right. Where, if anywhere, is it going to be taking us?

MR HENDY: I was just about to say don't ask me, madam.

THE CORONER: It's getting kind of late in the day for that kind of response.

MR HENDY: It's simply because Mr Edwards has been working on it for the last two hours and I'm not clear where

he'd got to with it since I was preparing the cross-examination.

THE CORONER: I think we do need to have a firm view by this evening --

MR HENDY: Absolutely.

THE CORONER: -- as to where, if anywhere, you're wanting us to go on this.

MR HENDY: Yes, absolutely. It's a submission of law and I'm very conscious of the fact that we should have it to you within the next two hours or so.

THE CORONER: Right. I appreciate that you don't yet quite know where you are with it, but are you thinking that you might be asking for further factual evidence?

MR HENDY: No, absolutely not, madam.

THE CORONER: All right, well that helps. Thank you.

Any other points to raise?

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: No, madam, but simply in the light of what Mr Hendy's just said, may we formally let Mr Martin know that he won't be required to return?

THE CORONER: Please, that would be very helpful, thank you.

MR MAXWELL-SCOTT: Thank you.

THE CORONER: All right, just to clarify the events next week, I think that the proposal that was suggested was that we should have submissions from advocates by close of business on Monday, and oral argument on Tuesday,

beginning in the afternoon, that was the proposal that was made, and then that I should begin my summing-up to the jury on Thursday. Is there any dissent from that current proposal? Because I'd like to give the jurors tomorrow morning a firm view that that's what we're expecting from them. No dissent? Good.

All right, anything else before tomorrow? Good. Right, tomorrow morning then. Thank you very much.

(3.06 pm)

(The Court adjourned until 10 o'clock the following day)