



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of  
Michael Feaster, Fire Lieutenant  
(PM1188S), Vineland

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2016-2748

ISSUED: **NOV 16 2016** (RE)

Michael Feaster appeals his score for the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Lieutenant (PM1188S), Vineland. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a final score of 85.600 and his name appears as the fourth ranked eligible on the subject list.

It is noted for the record that this two-part examination consisted of a written multiple-choice portion and an oral portion. Candidates were required to pass the written portion of the examination, and then were ranked on their performance on both portions of the examination. The test was worth 80 percent of the final score and seniority was worth the remaining 20 percent. Of the test weights, 31.35% of the score was the written multiple-choice portion, 22.49% was the technical score for the evolving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the evolving exercise, 4.28% was the oral communication score for the evolving exercise, 19.23% was the technical score for the arriving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the arriving exercise, and 7.59% was the oral communication score for the arriving exercise.

The oral portion of the Fire Lieutenant examination consisted of two scenarios: a fire scene simulation with questions designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of firefighters and the ability to assess fire conditions and hazards in an evolving incident on the fireground (evolving); and a fire scene simulation designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of firefighters and the ability to plan strategies and tactics based upon a building's

structure and condition (arriving). Knowledge of supervision was measured by questions in both scenarios, and was scored for each. For the evolving scenario, candidates were provided with a 15-minute preparation period, and candidates had 10 minutes to respond. For the arriving scenario, a five minute preparation period was given and candidates had 10 minutes to respond.

The candidates' responses were scored on technical knowledge and oral communication ability. Prior to the administration of the exam, a panel of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) determined the scoring criteria, using generally approved fire command practices, firefighting practices, and reference materials. Scoring decisions were based on SME-approved possible courses of action (PCAs) including those actions that must be taken to resolve the situation as presented. For a performance to be acceptable, a candidate needed to present the mandatory courses of action for that scenario. Only those oral responses that depicted relevant behaviors that were observable and could be quantified were assessed in the scoring process. Each performance was evaluated by two SMEs who currently are a first level supervisor or higher. If the SME scores differed by 1 point, the score was averaged. If they differed by more than 1 point, the SMEs were required to confer with each other until they agreed on a score. Scores were then converted to standardized scores.

Candidates were rated on a five-point scale, with 5 as the optimal response, 4 as a more than acceptable passing response, 3 as a minimally acceptable passing response, 2 as a less than acceptable response, and 1 as a much less than acceptable response. For each of the scenes, and for oral communication, the requirements for each score were defined.

For the evolving scenario, the appellant scored a 5 for the technical component, a 3 for the supervision component, and a 4 for the oral communication component. For the arriving scenario, the appellant scored a 5 for the technical component, a 2 for the supervision component, and a 4 for the oral communication component. The appellant challenges his scores for the supervision component of both scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The evolving scenario involved a fire in a pet store in the middle of a four-store strip mall of lightweight, steel-joint construction built in the 1980s. It is 7:30 AM on a Tuesday in February and the temperature is 33° Fahrenheit with clear skies and a wind blowing from east to west at 8 miles per hour. Upon arrival, it is noticed that smoke is coming from the side A windows of the pet store. The candidate is the commanding officer of the first arriving ladder company and he establishes command. There were two technical questions. Question 1 asked for specific actions to be taken upon arrival. Question 2 indicates that, during the incident the

candidate notices smoke inside of the furniture store on side B. The question asked what actions should now be taken, based on this new information. The supervision question indicates that during the overhaul, the candidate observes his crew laughing and using inappropriate language while overhauling the pet store. The pet store owner is now on the scene and observes this and complains to the candidate. This question asks what should be done at the scene and after returning to the firehouse. Instructions indicate that, in responding to the questions, the candidate should be as specific as possible in describing actions, and should not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to a score.

In regard to the supervision component, the assessors noted that the appellant missed the opportunities to meet with, or interview, the overhauling firefighters separately, review the crew's training records, document any actions taken, and follow-up with the store owner and the actions taken. On appeal, the appellant argues that he stated that he would call the pet store owner when he got back to the station and explain the situation to him as best as possible. He also stated that he would review Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs), and Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) with members involved. He states that, "In doing the above, that would document as well as serve as an interview to the members of my truck or fire house."

A review of the appellant's video and related examination materials indicates that the appellant received credit for talking with or apologizing to the store owner, which was a separate action from following-up with the store owner and explaining the actions taken. He did not mention that he would follow up with the store owner on any actions that were taken regarding his concerns. He cannot receive credit for this action for one instance of speaking with the pet store owner on-scene. The appellant did not state that he would call the pet store owner when he got back to the station. Additionally, instructions to candidates made it very clear that credit was not given for information that was implied or assumed. It is irrelevant if meetings are documented in general. This was a formal examination setting and candidates were required to verbalize the actions that they would take in response to the stimulus material. The appellant did not state that he would document his actions, or take the other actions noted by the assessors. The appellant's score for this component is correct.

The arriving scenario involves a report of fire coming from a two-story, wood-frame house built in the 1970's. It is 1:00 PM on a Saturday in June, 92°F, with sunny skies and a wind blowing from the east to the west at 5 mph. The candidate is the officer of the first arriving engine company and the first officer on scene. Upon arrival, the candidate notices smoke coming from the first and second floor windows on side A. Dispatch reports that the caller is an occupant in a second floor bedroom and the caller said she was taking a nap, and when she woke up, her

bedroom was filled with smoke. The technical question asked for specific actions to take upon arrival. The supervision question indicated that the candidate notices a rookie firefighter on his crew having trouble raising a ladder. The question asked for actions to take at the scene and after returning to the firehouse. Instructions indicate that, in responding to the questions, the candidate should be as specific as possible in describing actions, and should not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to a score.

In regard to the supervision component of the arriving scenario, the assessors noted that the appellant missed the opportunities to review the rookie firefighter's training records, interview the rookie firefighter after the incident, interview other crew members separately, monitor and follow up with the firefighter after a period of time, and document any actions taken. On appeal, the appellant states that he would review SOPs, SOGs, JPRs while doing training and it is common practice for fire departments to record training, also it would be documented. He states that, while documenting, he would discuss what differed or changed during the fire where the rookie firefighter had a difficult time raising the ladders.

A review of the appellant's video and related examination materials indicates that the appellant provided company-based training of different types, in order to not single out the rookie. However, he did not review the rookie firefighter's training records prior to this action. He received credit for reviewing SOPs, SOGs, and JPRs, which was another action. The candidate's actions were general in nature and did not provide the specific supervision necessary for this firefighter and the situation given. He did not get any information from the firefighter in an interview. Instead, he explained the situation to the firefighter, including what his role and responsibilities are, what was expected of him, and what he did and the negative effects of his actions. After this action, the appellant returned to responding to the technical question. He did not get any information from the rookie firefighter in the interview, review his training records, interview other crew members, monitor and follow up with the firefighter after a period of time, or document any actions. The appellant's supervisory actions were less than acceptable, and his score of 2 for this component is correct.

## CONCLUSION

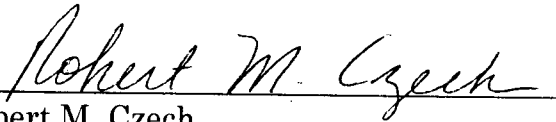
A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be denied.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
THE 10<sup>th</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2016

  
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