

B-25



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of Christopher Eodice,  
Battalion Fire Chief (PM1499T),  
Newark

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2017-1314

ISSUED: FEB 14 2017 (RE)

Christopher Eodice appeals his score on the examination for Battalion Fire Chief (PM1499T), Newark. It is noted that the appellant passed the examination with a final average of 84.170 and ranked tenth on the eligible list.

This two-part examination consisted of an integrated system of simulations designed to generate behavior similar to that required for success on the job. The first part consisted of 70 multiple-choice items that measured specific work components identified and weighted by the job analysis. The second part consisted of three oral scenarios; a Supervision, Administration and Incident Command scenario. All candidates received the same multiple-choice exam, but differing versions of the oral exercises were given based on the day the oral exam was administered. The examination was based on a comprehensive job analysis conducted by the Civil Service Commission, which identified the critical areas of the job. The weighting of the test components was derived from the job analysis data.

For the oral portion, candidates had 60 minutes to prepare for all three scenarios and had 10 minutes per scenario to present their response. For all three oral exercises, the candidate was to assume the role of a Battalion Fire Chief. Candidates were scored based on the content of their response (technical) and the how well they presented their response (oral communication). Both of these dimensions were scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest rating.

Each candidate in a given jurisdiction was scored by a team of three different Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), who were trained in current technical and oral



communication scoring procedures. Each SME is a current or retired fire officer who held the title of Battalion Fire Chief (or Fire Officer 2) or higher. As part of the scoring process, an SME observed and noted the responses of a candidate relative to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that each exercise was designed to measure. An SME also noted any weaknesses that detracted from the candidates overall oral communication ability. The SME then rated the candidate's performance according to the rating standards and assigned the candidate a technical or oral communication score on that exercise.

In order to preserve the relative weighting of each of the components of the examination, the ratings for each portion were adjusted by a well-recognized statistical process known as "standardization." Under this process, the ratings are standardized by converting the raw scores to z-scores, an expression of the deviation of the score from the mean score of the group in relation to the standard deviation of scores for the group. Each portion of the examination had a relative weight in its relation to the whole examination. Thus, the z-score for the multiple-choice portion was multiplied by a test weight of 36.53%, the oral technical scores were multiplied by a test weight of 53.91% and the oral communication scores were multiplied by a test weight of 9.56%. The weighted z-scores were summed and this became the overall final test score. This was weighted and added to the weighted seniority score. The result was standardized, then normalized, and rounded up to the third decimal place to arrive at a final average.

For the technical and oral communication components of the Supervision, Administration and Incident Command scenarios, the appellant received scores of 5, 1, 5 and 5, 5, 4, respectively.

The appellant challenges his scores for the technical component of the Administration scenario and the oral communication component of the Incident Command scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material and a listing of possible courses of action (PCAs) for the scenario were reviewed.

The Administration scenario indicated that the department responded to a fire that was believed to be a one-story, abandoned warehouse. However, upon arrival, it was discovered that the warehouse had recently been converted into a childcare center. While there were no major injuries, the Incident Commander's strategy and tactics were severely affected by the change of use and occupancy. The Fire Chief has called the newly appointed Battalion Fire Chief into his office to discuss the situation, and tasked him with investigating the incident and to revise the department's current pre-fire plan procedure. The scenario asked candidates to answer the questions based on the text *The Fire Chief's Handbook* and their experience. Question 1 asked for specific steps to be taken to investigate the incident and the lack of an updated pre-fire plan. Question 2 asked which should be included in a pre-fire plan standard operating guideline/procedure (SOG/SOP).



For this component, the SME noted that the appellant missed the opportunities to interview the Incident Commander (IC) present on scene (question 1), to contact the building owner (question 1), to review incident reports at this location (question 1), and to include frequency of inspections in the pre-fire plan SOP (question 2). On appeal, the appellant argues that he spoke to the day-care owner to inquire as to their opening, permits and fire drills.

In reply, the instructions in the scenario tell candidates to be as specific as possible and not to assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to a score. These instructions were also read aloud to the appellant by the room monitor. This was a formal examination setting, and candidates were required to specifically state the actions that they would take in response to the questions. Candidates cannot receive credit for knowledge that they do not profess. In this case, at the start of his presentation, the appellant states that he is going to meet with the Fire Chief, and then he formed a committee of fire personnel, representatives of the school, community and church leaders, State and local fire marshals, and neighboring departments. He then asked the Fire Chief the time frame for implementing the program, and talked about a program. For this response, the appellant received credit for contacting a city representative. The question asked for specific steps to be taken to investigate the incident and the lack of an updated pre-fire plan, not for specific steps to be taken to implement a program. As such, the appellant's response was following the appellant's own agenda, and was not a direct response to the questions asked. The appellant did not respond to question 2 at all. While he did contact the building owner, the day-care center owner, this response was not enough to elevate the appellant's score to a 2. He essentially responded as though he was asked to develop and implement a program, rather than answering the questions asked. The appellant's score of 1 for this component is correct.

For the Incident Command scenario, the SME indicated a weakness in word usage/grammar. Specifically, the SME indicated that the appellant repeated three times that he established command. On appeal, the appellant argues that he only made this statement twice.

In reply, a review of the appellant's presentation indicates that he repeated information. While the appellant is correct that he only indicated twice that he established command, he also called for the Health Department twice, the EMS twice, a rehab officer twice, a safety officer twice, utilities twice, conducted a PAR twice, and a progress report six times. The appellant's score of 4 for this component will not be changed.



CONCLUSION

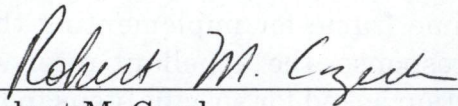
A thorough review of appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

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 8<sup>th</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2017

  
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