

B-21



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of Joseph Franklin,  
Battalion Fire Chief (PM1504T),  
Plainfield

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2017-1439

ISSUED: **MAR 13 2017** (RE)

Joseph Franklin appeals his score on the examination for Battalion Fire Chief (PM1504T), Plainfield. It is noted that the appellant failed the examination.

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 3, 3, 1 and 4, 3, 3, respectively.

The appellant challenges his score for the technical 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.

In the Incident Command scenario, the candidate is dispatched to a report of a fire at a local hardware store. It is 2:00 PM on a Saturday in June, 65° Fahrenheit, and wind is blowing from east to west at 10 miles per hour. The fire building is 1½ stories, and of lightweight wood-frame construction, measuring 45 feet by 90 feet. A cellar used for storage runs the entire length of the building and is accessed by a staircase on side C. There are two residential buildings approximately 10 feet away from the involved building on side B. Upon arrival, the candidate sees smoke emanating from side C, and an employee indicates that a fire started in the cellar and has extended to the first floor of side C while they were in the middle of accepting a shipment of propane tanks from a delivery truck. This employee states that not all employees are accounted for. Directions to candidates were to base their responses on the text *Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics* and their experience. Question 1 asked for specific actions upon arriving scene. Question 2 indicated that, while personnel are involved in evacuation and extinguishment operations, there is an explosion near side C of the

building with one Mayday being broadcasted. Question 2 asked what specific action should be taken now based on this new information.

For the Incident Command scenario, the SME indicated that the appellant failed to check the truss roof for fire involvement, and failed to cool the propane tanks, which were mandatory responses to question 1. He also indicated that the appellant missed the opportunity to identify materials and to ensure monitoring of air. These were additional responses to question 1. On appeal, the appellant argues that he stated that he ordered a 1¾ inch line to side C to protect exposures of the tanker truck deliveries.

Instructions to candidates, which are read after the questions, state, "In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score." For the Incident Command scenario, a review of the appellant's video and related examination materials indicates that the appellant stated, "Ah, I have a, a hoseline on the Bravo side for exposures protection, and ah, another hoseline, inch and three quarter hoseline to the um, C side of the building to ah, protect the, the exposures of the tanker truck delivery." The appellant's response was not specific enough to warrant credit. "The exposures of the tanker truck delivery" does not identify the propane tanks. The employee had stated that they were in the middle of accepting a shipment of propane tanks from a delivery truck, and the candidates should have identified that it was mandatory to cool the propane tanks. The appellant's response is not sufficiently specific, and ignores the propane tank hazard. The appellant argues that the scenario did not indicate that fire was impinging on the propane tanks, requiring them to be cooled. However, the Incident Commander would be remiss to overlook a shipment of propane tanks, half on the truck and half off, knowing that fire has extended to the first floor of side C of the building. The appellant also did not check the truss roof for fire involvement. The appellant missed two mandatory actions for question 1, and his score of 1 for this component is correct.

## CONCLUSION

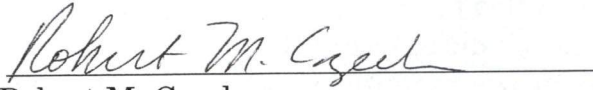
A thorough review of appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

## 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 9<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MARCH, 2017



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