

# Fire Chief

2016



## Orientation Guide

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**Though this guide will remain on our website between administrations, always check back on the date of a new announcement for any changes specific to the new testing cycle.**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission has prepared this orientation guide for promotional candidates who will participate in the upcoming Fire Chief examination. The information in this booklet is designed to help candidates better understand the testing process and the types of questions they will encounter on the exam. This guide also offers a systematic method of study to help candidates prepare for the exam.

The exam will be designed on the basis of information obtained from job analyses of the position of Fire Chief in the State of New Jersey. The job analyses provide a description of the duties performed by incumbents and identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required to perform each of these duties effectively.

We encourage candidates to review this guide carefully and to take advantage of any and all opportunities to prepare for the exam.

**GOOD LUCK!**

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXAM

### A. Test Date, Time, and Location

The test date for the announced 2016 Fire Chief Exam is tentatively scheduled for November 2016.

Once you have been admitted to the examination, you will receive a Notification Card in the mail that shows the date, time, and location to which you should report for your examination. Please bring the Notification Card, two forms of identification, two pencils, two pens, and a highlighter with you to the Examination Center. One of the forms of identification must include your photograph. You will not be permitted to bring this Orientation Guide into the Examination Center. Make sure to map out a route in advance of your examination date and plan to arrive at the Examination Center early, since no one will be admitted late.

### B. Test Security and Candidate Pledge

All candidates will be required to sign a pledge form at the examination center, stating that they understand the current examination will be administered over different days and that they will not discuss the content of the examination with any other person, study group, or potential make-up candidate. No one is permitted to take notes, or copy, or remove test material during the administration of the examination.

With the threat of high-tech cheating on the rise, possession of personal communication devices such as cell phones, blackberries, pagers/beepers, photographic equipment, MP3 players, apple watches or other similar electronic communication devices is prohibited at test centers. Candidates who are seen with these devices in the test center, even in a power-off mode, will be disqualified. The device may also be confiscated to ensure that no attempt was made to compromise the testing process.

Most candidates scheduled to take the Oral Assessment Exercises will be sequestered (held in a separate room) either prior to their scheduled test time or after they have taken the examination. This sequester period is required in order to prevent candidates who have taken the exam from interacting with candidates who are scheduled to take the same exam later in the day.

### **C. Description of Test Format**

A distinct examination has been developed for the title, Fire Chief. The examination will consist of four scenario-based oral questions. Each scenario was developed from a task or tasks that incumbents or supervisors of incumbents deemed important to job performance. Oral exam questions are designed to elicit responses that may be used to assess one's knowledge of these areas of importance. Candidates' responses are then evaluated by assessors who are trained to be fair and objective. They compare participants' performance to predetermined performance guidelines to determine who will perform effectively in a particular job.

This methodology is known to be a reliable and content valid. For practical reasons, your fire department cannot promote everyone who is eligible for advancement and then see how they perform before making a final selection decision. The next best approach, however, is to give eligible candidates a chance to demonstrate their knowledge as it related to real-life situations.

The Oral Assessment Exercises are designed to measure behaviors in the following knowledge, skill and ability (KSA) areas as determined by New Jersey Fire Chiefs to be critical for effective performance:

1. Supervision – Subordinate Incident
2. Fire Department Administration
3. Finance – Budget Preparation
4. Fire Ground Operations Management

Test samples are available in Section VII of this guide.

### **D. Oral Assessment Scoring**

The oral assessment scoring criteria have been determined prior to the examination administration date, by a panel of Subject Matter Experts using approved fire command, administrative, and supervisory practices, as well as reference materials. Scoring decisions are based on the situations that are presented. Only those oral responses, which depict relevant behaviors that are observable and can be quantified, will be assessed in the scoring process.

For each scenario, candidates are given two scores. A technical score, which is given by a fire subject matter expert and an oral communication score, which is given by a CSC representative trained in oral scoring. All responses to the test questions will be video and audio recorded.

Each of the KSA areas have an importance weighting as determined by the job analysis. The first four KSA areas (Supervision – Subordinate Incident, Fire Department Administration, Finance – Budget Preparation, and Fire Ground Operations Management) will be tested through a scenario designed to assess candidate knowledge in its respective area. The fifth KSA area, Oral Communication, will be assessed as part of the four scenarios and its weight will be evenly distributed between those scenarios.

| # | KSA Areas                          | Weight |
|---|------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Supervision – Subordinate Incident | 25.93% |
| 2 | Fire Department Administration     | 27.21% |
| 3 | Finance – Budget Preparation       | 15.16% |
| 4 | Fire Ground Operations Management  | 20.62% |
| 5 | Oral Communication                 | 11.08% |

All scores are standardized and only candidates with passing oral exam scores will have their overall test score weighted 70% and seniority score weighted 30% in determining the final score. Candidates will be ranked based upon this final score.

**Please note that appointments made from the eligibility lists are conditional pending results of the appeal process.**

## E. Seniority Score

To a base score of 70.000, one point is added for each year of eligible service up to a maximum of 15. The maximum score for the length of service component is 85.000.

Ten additional points are given for record of service. The record of service component is reduced by disciplinary suspensions occurring within five years of the closing date, by the following rules:

.0025 times the number of days suspended, up to three years from the closing date, and

.00125 times the number of days suspended, from 3 years to 5 years from the closing date.

The maximum possible seniority score is 95.000.

### EXAMPLE: BATTALION FIRE CHIEF PROMOTIONAL EXAMINATION

Captain Brown was made permanent in the Captain title on March 22, 1996. The closing date for the Captain announcement was September 30, 2004. Brown was suspended for 3 days in 2002, and 2 days in 2000.

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| a. | 3-22-96  | Date of regular appointment                               |
| b. | 9-30-04  | Closing date of announcement                              |
| c. | 8 years, 6 months, 8 days                      | Time from a - b   |
| d. | 8 years, 6 months, 3 days                      | Minus 5 suspension days                                   |
| e. | No reduction for layoffs or leaves of absences |   |
| f. | 70.000   | Base seniority  |
| g. | 8 years = 8.000                                | Points for seniority based on years                       |
|    | 183 days = 0.501                               | Months converted to days (1 day = .0027397)               |
|    | 8.501  | Subtotal  |
| h. | 78.501   | Subtotal f + g = length of service component              |
| i. | 10.000   | Added for record of service                               |
| j. | 0.0075   | 3 days suspended within the last 3 years times 0.0025     |
| k. | 0.0025   | 2 days suspended over 3 years up to 5 years times 0.00125 |
| l. | 9.990  | i - (j + k) = record of service component                 |
| m. | <b>88.491</b>                                  | <b>(h + l) = Brown's total seniority score</b>            |

### III. READING/ REFERENCE LIST

Please note that the Civil Service Commission intends to use the book list on a limited basis to develop test items. More specifically, while the justification for correct responses may be drawn from materials on the reading list, it is not limited to that material. Justification may also be based on the collective Fire Service experience of Subject Matter Experts. When justification is based on experience, care is taken to ensure that correct answers do not conflict with the sources on the reading list.

**The Fire Chief’s Handbook, 7th Edition (2015)**

Edited by Richard A. Marinucci;  
Publisher: PennWell - (800) 752-9764

**Fire Officer’s Handbook of Tactics, 4th Edition (2012)**

by John Norman;  
Publisher: PennWell - (800) 752-9764

**Managing Fire and Emergency Services (2012)**

Edited by Adam K. Thiel & Charles R. Jennings;  
Publisher: International City/Council Management Association – (770) 280-4171

*Although the CSC suggests that candidates review the reading/reference list in preparation for the examination, they should not be restricted to the above reading/reference material. Since some test items will require open ended responses, candidates will also have to rely on the application of knowledge and the application of administrative and supervisory principles.*

### IV. HELPFUL HINTS

*Try Your Best* – The exercises are designed to be difficult. Perfection is not expected. Your overall evaluation is based on your performance on each exercise. Even if you feel as though you did poorly on one exercise, continue to try to do your best on the remaining exercises.

*The Exercises Are Set In A Hypothetical Fire Department* – This is done intentionally so as not to give an advantage to someone with a particular work background. Do not make assumptions about the hypothetical fire department or town. Take action and make decisions based only on the information that will be supplied to you.

*Tricks and Techniques* - Some candidates believe that by learning a collection of tricks and techniques they can guarantee a better examination score. Candidates are coached on how to project a favorable façade (to smile, be courteous, wear certain clothes, et cetera). They may rely on this to hide deficiencies in performance. Some candidates are taught that certain exercises have specific “tricks” associated with them. These tricks may consist of anything from techniques

for organizing information, to statements and actions that should be done to get better scores. Developing strategies for how to attack a problem is a good test taking technique, in that an organized approach is better than a disorganized approach or no approach at all. Predetermined strategies are fine as a starting point but cannot take the place of true problem-solving skills of the critical thinking that can be applied to changing circumstances and demands, either in simulation exercises or in real-world events.

“Tricks and techniques” will only take a candidate so far. Tricks and techniques are not part of the scoring criteria. More importantly, tricks and techniques are poor substitutes for developing skills in supervision and management areas.

The question of how to best prepare as a candidate basically comes down to one question: “Is your focus going to be the learning of tricks and techniques, or are you, the candidate, going to work on actively preparing yourself for the position being tested?” There appears to be no substitute for the hard work and persistence required to advance one’s skills and knowledge levels.

## **V. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION POLICIES**

### **A. Examination Make-Up Policy**

Per N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.9, make-up exams for public safety titles may be authorized only in cases of:

1. Death in the candidate's immediate family
2. Error by the Civil Service Commission or Appointing Authority;
3. When required for certain persons returning from military service (see N.J.A.C. 4A:4-4.6A);
4. A catastrophic health condition or injury, which shall be defined as either: a.) a life-threatening condition or combination of conditions; or b.) a period of disability required by the candidate's mental or physical health or the health of the candidate's fetus which requires the care of a physician who provides a medical verification of the need for the candidate's absence from work for 60 or more work days.

Additionally, please note the following:

- 1.) Make-up requests must be accompanied by supporting documentation as applicable.
- 2.) Make-up requests must be submitted within five days of receipt of your original exam notice.
- 3.) In situations involving death, illness or injury that occurs on or immediately before the test date, make-up requests must be made in writing within five (5) days after the test date.
- 4.) Requests will be denied if documentation is insufficient, incomplete, or untimely.

Additionally, all requests for public safety make-up exams based on medical grounds must be accompanied by the Civil Service Commission's Medical Authorization for Make-up Examination form (DPF-728), completed by the treating physician. The Medical Authorization for Make-up Examination form can be obtained through our website at <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/about/publications/forms/>.

Your treating physician must also provide a separate detailed letter containing a diagnosis and statement clearly indicating why your physical condition will prevent you from taking the examination as scheduled. It should include the date the injury/illness began, the date of your last office visit, and the earliest date you can take a make-up test. The documentation must be on official letterhead, written in layman's terms, and legible. A form letter will not be accepted. If insufficient, untimely, or illegible information is provided, your request will be denied.

Make-up requests must be submitted in writing with supporting documentation to: NJCSC Make-Up Exam Unit, P.O. Box 310, Trenton, NJ 08625-0310.

## **B. ADA Accommodations**

Candidates who require special accommodations for this exam should check off the ADA Assistance box on your application. This includes candidates who are requesting accommodations for the first time, as well as candidates who are already on file with NJCSC as being approved for accommodations.

Candidates with a first time accommodation request will be contacted regarding the next step in being approved for ADA assistance. Candidates who are already on file as being approved for ADA assistance will receive confirmation and further information.

If you receive your test notice, and have not been contacted about your accommodations for this test, or are not sure that your accommodation needs are in place for this exam, you should contact Marty Berrien at (609) 292-4144, ext. 199-1001.

## **C. Post Examination Review Policy**

A detailed review policy will be provided at the examination center. Subsequent to the date of the examination, candidates who participated in the oral assessment process will be provided the opportunity to review their examination scores upon receipt of an INELIGIBILITY/ELIGIBILITY NOTICE.

#### **D. Examination Cancellation Policy**

In the event that circumstances force cancellation of the examination administration, the Civil Service Commission will attempt to contact your department head, as soon as that decision has been made. In the case of inclement weather, please call CSC's Information Center to find out the status of the examination or listen to your local radio station for further information. To contact the Civil Service Commission's Information Center, call (609) 292-4144. A cancellation message will also be posted on the CSC's homepage at: <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/>

#### **E. Study Groups**

No "study group" has been involved in the development or review of Civil Service Commission examinations and, at no time has any examination material been provided to such groups. Finally, the Civil Service Commission is not responsible for any claims made by "study groups" or the manner in which they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

### **VI. CONCLUSION**

This orientation guide attempts to familiarize Fire Chief candidates with certain selection instruments. Although some suggestions have been provided for test preparation, they are not exhaustive — we encourage candidates to engage in additional preparation strategies that will enhance their chances of performing effectively on the exam and on the job.

*We hope that each candidate has found this orientation guide to be beneficial.*

## VII. SAMPLE EXCERSICES

### NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION

#### Fire Department Administration

As the Fire Chief, you are notified by the city fathers that they have entered into an agreement to hold an annual festival next summer in your community. It is to be a public private partnership with the local business association and the city. It will take place in the heart of the city's business district with (7) seven blocks of main street closed. It will include a stage at one end (for three days, starting Friday) with setup for vendors (food, craftspeople and the carnival style rides). There will be 20 vendors who will be using some form of cooking and heating. Saturday and Sunday will be actual festival days. The hours of operation are 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The area is a mix of commercial and multi-family housing. You have been tasked with developing a plan for fire prevention and protection during the festival, including a cost estimate.

Based upon the reference Managing Fire Services, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and your own experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: What are your main concerns in developing a fire prevention plan for this festival?**

**Question 2: What would you do specifically to prepare for this event?**

**Question 3: How would you plan for the allocation of resources (money, manpower, etc.)?**

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Supervision - Subordinate Incident**

While responding to a fire alarm, one of your engine companies was involved in a motor vehicle accident. The police report and bystanders' statements suggest that the engine was traveling at an excessive rate of speed. It has been alleged that the driver was unable to control the vehicle. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but the engine was severely damaged. The Deputy Chief of this shift has recommended disciplinary action against the driver and the captain of the engine. Because both the driver and the captain are minorities, action against them may appear discriminatory. The minority fire fighters' association has informed you that it is against the disciplinary action because of the lack of driver training. It also states that "past practice" has not lead to disciplinary action when similar accidents occurred.

Based on the text the Fire Chief's Handbook and your experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: How would you conduct a full investigation of this matter?**

**Question 2: After completing your investigation, what actions would you take?**

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Finance – Budget Preparation**

As the newly appointed Fire Chief of your department, you have been notified by your finance officer that she would like your input in the preparation of the budget for the new fiscal year. You have taken note that you will need to replace one of the front line pumpers due to age and frequent breakdowns, and you would like to replace this piece as soon as possible.

Based on the reference The Fire Chief's Handbook and your experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: How would you justify the need to purchase a new front line pumper and to whom would you present this justification?**

**Question 2: In order to make an educated, financially sound purchase, what steps would you take to prepare for the purchase, and what, if any, follow up would you do after the pumper was ordered?**

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Fire Ground Operations Management**

You are newly prompted Chief of the department. It is 2345 hours on Monday in mid-November. The outside temperature is in the low 30s with a slight wind blowing from West to East. A call was received by dispatch from the manager of Maplewood Restaurant reported smelling smoke all night in the dining / bar area of the restaurant. The manager stated he thinks there is a problem in the fireplace.

Maplewood Restaurant is 2 stories tall with a partial basement wood framed building built in the 1800s. On the Second floor there are two apartments and a small office. The Second floor is only accessible by an exterior entry door and stairway on Side A. The structure measures 105' x 75' and has large parking area on side C. The peak roof is a combination of tin and asphalt shingles. There are no sprinklers and the alarm system is out of service. Violations are on file for this location. The building has been in operation, since it was built and has been renovated numerous times. The first floor is a full service restaurant and bar with an additional partitioned dining area. All interior walls are wood paneled.

Side A faces Jade Street beyond which are several residential homes. Side B faces Antilles Avenue, beyond which is a wooded area. Sides D and C face parking lots which contain patrons' vehicles. There is a fire hydrant on the corner of Antilles Avenue and Jade Street and another fire hydrant located on Jade Street.

Engine One arrives on scene reporting smoke visible from the fireplace chimney side D. The Engine One officer reports a slight haze throughout the downstairs with several patrons sitting at the bar and two workers cleaning the kitchen. The officer reports he is going to check the basement. Basement access is achieved only by entry through a floor hatch behind the bar. Engine One crew has air packs, hand tools and a TIC, but no hose line. Upon opening the hatch door to the basement, The Engine One officer reports heavy smoke and fire in the basement and is unable to close the hatch. Smoke and fire immediately fill the restaurant. Engine One officer transmits "Mayday" and his company is trapped with the fire breaking out throughout the walls.

You arrive on scene as the officer reports the Mayday and observes fire coming from the kitchen door exterior on Side D.

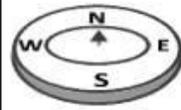
Based on the text, Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics, and your experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: What are your concerns at this incident scene?**

**Question 2: What actions and specific assignments should you make to mitigate this incident scene?**

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.

Fire Chief Exam  
A/B Corner View  
Fire Ground Operations Mgmt.  
Diagram 1 of 2



Wind:  
→  
1-5  
MPH

Temperature:  
30 degrees  
Fahrenheit

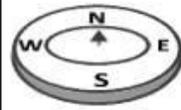
Symbols:



Smoke



Fire Chief Exam  
Overhead View  
Fire Ground Operations Mgmt.  
Diagram 2 of 2



Wind:  
→  
1-5  
MPH

Temperature:  
30 degrees  
Fahrenheit

Symbols:



Fire Hydrant



Smoke

