



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Joseph Tanis II, Fire
Captain (PM2324C), East Orange

**FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

CSC Docket No. 2023-2519

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: August 14, 2024 (ABR)

Joseph Tanis II appeals his score on the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Captain (PM2324C), East Orange. It is noted that the appellant failed the subject examination.

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, 35.90% of the score was the written multiple-choice portion, 22.04% was the technical score for the evolving exercise, 7.45% was the supervision score for the evolving exercise, 5.71% was the oral communication score for the evolving exercise, 23.20% was the technical score for the arriving exercise, 5.71% was the oral communication score for the arriving exercise.

The oral portion of the Fire Captain 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 fire fighters and the ability to assess fire conditions and hazards in an evolving incident on the fireground (Evolving Scenario); 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 Scenario). Knowledge of supervision was measured

by a question in the Evolving Scenario, and was scored for that scenario. 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. Only those oral responses that depicted relevant behaviors that were observable and could be quantified were assessed in the scoring process. It is noted that candidates were told the following prior to beginning their presentations for each scenario: "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."

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.

On the Evolving Scenario, the appellant scored a 2 on the technical component, a 2 on the supervision component, and a 5 on the oral communication component. On the Arriving Scenario, the appellant scored a 2 on the technical component and a 5 on the oral communication component.

The appellant appeals his scores for the technical components on both the Evolving and Arriving Scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The Evolving Scenario on the subject examination involved the response to a kitchen fire at a church where the candidate is the First-Level Supervisor of the first arriving ladder truck. Families on scene report that their teenaged children are missing and presumably still in the building. The prompt states that the incident commander orders the candidate to perform forcible entry and begin the search and rescue. Question 1 asks the candidate to give their initial actions and to describe in detail the specific procedures required to safely remove the victims. The prompt for Question 2 states that the second alarm response has not yet arrived and that upon completion of the search and rescue operation, the incident commander orders the candidate's crew to check for extension and assist in ventilation. Question 2 asks the candidate, as the supervisor of Ladder 4, to describe, in detail, what orders they should give their crew to complete the assignment from the incident commander.

The SME awarded the appellant a score of 2 on the technical component of the Evolving Scenario, based upon a finding that the appellant missed a significant number of mandatory and additional responses, including, in part, ordering each team to locate the fire and work their way out to the main entrance/exit; monitoring fire conditions (flashover, backdraft and fire spread into the drop-ceiling); and a number of additional opportunities.¹ On appeal, the appellant argues that he covered ordering a team to locate the fire and work their way out through the main entrance by stating, as a truck officer, that he would work in coordination with the engine company to locate, confine and extinguish the fire using proper tactics; that they would perform simultaneous horizontal ventilation and searches off of the hose line as the engine company deployed an attack line, and located, confined and extinguished the fire; and that his company entered through the “A” side of the structure and later exited to the incident commander to focus on performing vertical ventilation. The appellant avers that he addressed the mandatory response of identifying fire conditions and fire spread in the drop ceiling by mentioning fire spread, the possible danger of the structure having a shared common cockloft and the likely need for vertical ventilation. He further contends that he addressed this PCA by mentioning that to combat fire spread, he would open up walls and void spaces; have his company perform pre- and post-control salvage and overhaul in the structure; use a thermal imaging camera for heat signatures of potential victims; and perform vertical ventilation.

In reply, a review of the appellant’s presentation fails to demonstrate that he covered the mandatory response of ordering each team to locate the seat of the fire and work their way out to the main entrance and exits. In this regard, a number of the actions the appellant describes on appeal, like utilizing guide/search ropes, were distinct actions for which the appellant received credit. However, his statements during his Evolving Scenario presentation were not sufficiently specific² to award him credit for the mandatory response of ordering each team to locate the seat of the fire and work their way out to the main entrance and exits. As to the other mandatory response the appellant raises regarding monitoring fire conditions, it is noted that because this was a mandatory response to Question 1, the appellant needed to address it during the portion of his response covering Question 1, but the actions he cites were actions he discussed in response to Question 2. A review of the appellant’s presentation demonstrates that he did not address the mandatory response of monitoring fire conditions during the portion of his response covering Question 1 and that he was credited with the relevant actions he identified in response to Question 2. Accordingly, the appellant has failed to sustain his burden of proof with respect to the technical component of the Evolving Scenario and his score of 2 is affirmed.

¹ The appellant’s appeal erroneously lists these PCAs as being Arriving Scenario PCAs.

² As noted above, candidates were told the following prior to beginning their presentations for each scenario: “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.”

The Arriving Scenario involves a scenario where the appellant is the first-level fire supervisor at a fire in a college dormitory where the candidate is the highest-ranking officer on the scene and will serve as the incident commander. Question 1 asks the candidate to describe, in detail, their size-up of this incident. Question 2 asks what actions, orders and requests are needed to fully address this incident.

The SME awarded the appellant a score of 2 on the technical component of the Arriving Scenario, based upon a finding that he missed a number of mandatory and additional responses, including identifying the life hazards/unknown potential victims inside in response to Question 1 and missed opportunities to assign a victim tracking officer and to order a hoseline to the back of the building to extinguish exterior fire. On appeal, the appellant maintains that he covered identifying the life hazards/unknown potential victims inside by stating upon arrival that he would perform a primary search to locate any potential victims, noting a serious life hazard to his companies and the occupants in connection with the use of the fire department connection, instructing companies to use thermal imaging cameras to search for potential occupants, and deploying hoselines to the fire floor and the floor above because of potential extension. The appellant also proffers that he covered assigning a victim tracking officer by calling for EMS units, striking up to four alarms, assigning accountability and safety officers and requesting the Red Cross for any potential displaced occupants.

In reply, as noted above, candidates were told the following prior to beginning their presentations for each scenario: “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.” A review of the appellant’s presentation on appeal confirms that the statements the appellant made during his presentation were too general to award him credit for the PCA at issue and did not specifically acknowledge the number of victims inside of the involved building was unknown. Additionally, the Division of Test Development, Analytics and Administration (TDAA) advises that the appellant erroneously stated that he would go inside of the building to search for victims. In this regard, TDAA notes that because candidates were the incident commander for this scenario, they should not be going inside with their crew to perform a search. Finally, it is noted that some of the statements cited by the appellant were separate PCAs for which the appellant received credit, including ordering a primary search. As for the PCA of appointing a victim tracking officer, John Norman, *Fire Officer’s Handbook of Tactics* 317 (5th ed. 2019) states that victim tracking officers “record information about all persons transported from the scene: name, unit, description, what medical facility were they transported to, by what ambulance, or other unit were the transported?” The other actions by the appellant are distinct action and roles that are separate from this function and, thus, were insufficient to award him credit for the PCA of assigning a victim tracking officer. Accordingly, the appellant has

failed to sustain his burden of proof regarding his Arriving Scenario technical component score and his score of 2 is affirmed.

CONCLUSION

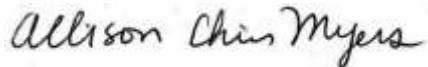
A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

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 ON
THE 14TH DAY OF AUGUST, 2024



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