



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Wilson Carrera, Sr.,
Fire Officer 1 (PM2389C), Jersey City

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

CSC Docket No. 2023-2354

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: July 24, 2024 (ABR)

Wilson Carrera, Sr. appeals his score on the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Officer 1 (PM2389C), Jersey City. It is noted that the appellant passed the examination with a final average of 81.750 and ranks 111th on the eligible list.

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 Officer 1 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.

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 3 for the technical component, a 5 for the supervision component, and a 3 for the oral communication component. On the Arriving Scenario, the appellant scored a 2 for the technical component and a 4 for the oral communication component.

On appeal, the appellant challenges his score on the oral communication and technical components of the Evolving Scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenario were reviewed.

The Evolving Scenario provides that the candidate is the First-Level Fire Supervisor of the first responding engine company dispatched to a report of a fire in a 12th floor apartment in a 27-story apartment building. Question 1 asks the candidate to describe, in detail, what orders they will give their crew to complete their orders from the Incident Command. Question 2 asks the candidate to describe the possible causes of a significant drop in water pressure and what actions they and their crew should take in order to solve the problem with regard to each possible cause.

On the oral communication component of the Evolving Scenario, the assessor awarded the appellant a score of 3, based upon findings that the appellant displayed minor weaknesses in organization and confidence. Specifically, the assessor indicated that the appellant's pauses during his presentation constituted a minor weakness in organization. As to confidence, the assessor proffered that the appellant's statements

did not demonstrate confidence and certainty about one's actions, including, for example, giving an order using the phrase "if it's possible." On appeal, the appellant mistakenly claims that the assessor indicated that the appellant used the phrase "if it's impossible" while giving orders to his ladder company and the appellant denies using that phrase.

On the technical component of the Evolving Scenario, the SME awarded the appellant a score of 3 based upon a finding that the appellant failed to identify a number of PCAs, including, in part, the opportunity to use the elevator in firefighter mode and instructing the crew to stay low as they advanced. On appeal, the appellant argues that he used the stairway instead of the elevator because he believed it was the right thing to do based upon his 17 years of firefighting experience. Specifically, he contends that the stairway was the safer option, as it could allow the crew to reach the fire area without any disruptions or delays, potentially putting lives in danger. He also maintains that he advised his members to back up from the fire due to the water supply shortage. In addition, the appellant expresses an overall concern that the assessors misunderstood his actions during the test and that it led them to incorrectly evaluate his performance, resulting in an unfair outcome.

CONCLUSION

In the instant matter, a review of the appellant's Evolving Scenario presentation confirms the validity of the assessor's findings related to the oral communication scoring. The appellant stated during his presentation that he would advise the ladder company to do a primary or secondary search "if it's possible" and that he "would try to do ventilation." Thus, it was reasonable for the assessor to find that he displayed a minor weakness in confidence. Further, although the appellant does not appear to dispute the assessor's conclusion that the appellant displayed a minor weakness in organization based upon pauses during his presentation, the Civil Service Commission finds that a review similarly corroborates the assessor's determination. Accordingly, the appellant's oral communication score of 3 for the Evolving Scenario is affirmed.

As to the technical component of the Evolving Scenario, it is noted that the appellant's challenge to the PCA of using the elevator in firefighter mode is essentially a challenge to the validity of that PCA, rather than a contention that he identified that action. John Norman, *Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics* 466-67 (5th ed. 2019) states:

In buildings higher than 20 stories, using the elevator becomes an absolute necessity if you are going to get anything out of your firefighters. It is also a requirement if you want to keep your reflex time to anything under 45-50 minutes. Reflex time is the total time elapsed

from the receipt of the alarm until an effective stream is flowing on the fire. It includes response and setup time.

* * *

Remember that the longer your reflex time, the larger the fire you are likely to face. In addition, there are fatigue and logistical problems of mounting an attack 20 or more stories above the ground if you don't use the elevators.

The Division of Test Development, Analytics and Administration (TDAA) presents that the same considerations would be in play with the 12th floor fire involved in the scenario, as fatigue and response time considerations support the use of an available elevator in firefighting mode in a high-rise building. Specifically, TDAA avers that it is well understood that a firefighter wearing full personal protective equipment and a self-contained breathing apparatus will be fatigued after climbing 12 flights of stairs to get to the fire. Additionally, in terms of response time, TDAA notes that the scenario states that the incident commander has requested that Ladder 1 conduct a primary search and that the relative difference in time it could take to get an entire crew to the 12th floor via stairs compared to taking the elevator to the 10th floor and having to climb only two stories could allow the crew to reach victims and get the fire under control much sooner.

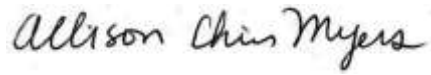
As to the PCA of instructing the crew to stay low as they advance, it is noted that this PCA was a response to Question 1. The action of having the attack crew retreat because of the water supply issue was a distinct PCA that was a response to Question 2 and an item for which the appellant received credit. A review of the appellant's presentation fails to demonstrate that he identified the separate Question 1 PCA of instructing the crew to stay low as they advanced. Accordingly, based upon the foregoing, the appellant's technical component score of 3 for the Evolving Scenario is affirmed.

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 24TH DAY OF JULY, 2024



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