



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Curt VanMater, Sr.,
Fire Lieutenant (PM2374C), Mount
Laurel

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

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2023-2317

ISSUED: July 3, 2024 (ABR)

Curt VanMater, Sr. appeals his score on the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Lieutenant (PM2374C), Mount Laurel. 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 Lieutenant 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.

For the Evolving Scenario, the appellant scored a 2 for the technical component, a 2 for the supervision component, and a 4 for the oral communication component. For the Arriving Scenario, the appellant scored a 1 for the technical component and a 3 for the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his score for the supervision component of the Evolving Scenario and for the technical component of the Arriving Scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The supervision component of the Evolving Scenario involves a Fire Fighter beginning to argue with a pickup truck driver who has crashed into Engine 3 and the two subsequently beginning to push and shove one another. It then asks what actions the candidate should take to handle the argument and the Fire Fighter both on scene and back at the station. The assessor found that the appellant missed a number of opportunities, including, in part, the opportunity to review the Fire Fighter's personnel file, and the opportunity to document all findings and actions. Based upon the foregoing, the SME awarded the appellant a score of 2. On appeal, the appellant argues that he covered the PCA of reviewing the Fire Fighter's personnel file by stating that he'd follow standard operating procedures (SOPs).

In reply, a review of the appellant's Evolving Scenario presentation fails to demonstrate that the appellant should have received credit for the PCAs at issue. 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 appellant's arguments regarding the additional PCAs at issue are clearly contrary to this unambiguous directive. Based upon the foregoing and a review of the appellant's presentation, his supervision component score of 2 is affirmed.

The Arriving Scenario involves the response to a fire at a barn on a farm which has steel truss construction with corrugated steel walls and a roof with steel I-beams. The building houses farm equipment, bales of hay and straw, diesel fuel, solvents, oils, and lubricants. Question 1 directs candidates to perform their initial reports to the camera as they would upon arrival at this incident. Question 2 asks, after the candidate's initial report, what specific actions they should take to fully address the incident. The SME indicted that the appellant missed a number of opportunities, including, in part, establishing a water supply, ensuring the rescue of the victim and ordering an attack with a 2.5 inch or larger hoseline. Based upon the foregoing, the SME awarded the appellant a score of 1. On appeal, the appellant argues that he identified each of these PCAs during his response.

In reply, a review of the appellant's presentation demonstrates that although the appellant stated that he would establish a water supply, ensure a victim was rescued, and order an attack on the fire using 2.5 inch or larger hoselines, because these were mandatory responses to Question 2 on the Arriving Scenario, it was imperative that the appellant make clear that he was performing these actions specifically in response to Question 2. Here, because he failed to do so, he was properly denied credit for these mandatory responses to Question 2. Therefore, the appellant's score of 1 for the technical component of the Arriving Scenario remains correct.

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 3RD DAY OF JULY, 2024

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