



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Goncalo Duarte, Fire
Officer 1 (PM2390C), North Hudson
Fire and Rescue

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

CSC Docket No. 2023-2447

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: September 25, 2024 (ABR)

Goncalo Duarte appeals his score on the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Officer 1 (PM2390C), North Hudson Fire and Rescue. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a score of 85.300 and ranks 43rd on the subject 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. 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 5 on the technical component, a 2 on the supervision component, and a 3 on the oral communication component. On the Arriving Scenario, the appellant scored a 4 on the technical component and a 4 on the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his scores for the supervision component of the Evolving Scenario and 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 Evolving Scenario involves a fire reported on the second floor of a college dormitory where the appellant is the first-level fire supervisor of the first arriving engine company, Engine 4. The prompt indicates that Battalion 4 and Ladder 2 are responding with the appellant while Engine 5 is seven minutes out. The prompt for the supervision component of the Evolving Scenario states that upon arrival, the candidate discovers that their supply hose was improperly packed after a prior incident earlier that shift, causing a delay in current operations. It then asks the candidate what specific actions they should take on scene and back at the firehouse.

The assessor found that the appellant missed several opportunities in his response, including, in part, the opportunity to document all actions taken. As a result, the assessor awarded the appellant a score of 2 for the supervision component of the Evolving Scenario. On appeal, the appellant presents that he stated at a specified point that he would “forward all reports to the Chief.” He argues that because a report is a specific form of written documentation that serves as a permanent written record of the specific actions taken, he should have been credited with the PCA at issue.

In reply, initially, is noted that keeping his supervisor informed of the investigation progress/outcomes was a distinct PCA for which the appellant received credit. Further, 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.” Clearly, the appellant’s generic statement about forwarding all reports failed to directly convey that he was documenting the actions he was specifically taking, as required. Accordingly, the appellant’s score of 2 for the supervision component of the Evolving Scenario is sustained.

The Arriving Scenario involves a fire at an end unit apartment where the candidate will be the incident commander as a first-level fire supervisor. Question 1 asks candidates to deliver their initial reports to dispatch to the camera as they would upon arrival at this incident and directs them to use proper protocols. Question 2 directs candidates to state their actions and orders to fully address this incident.

The SME awarded the appellant a score of 4 on the technical component of the Arriving Scenario, finding that the appellant missed multiple opportunities, including, in part, the opportunity to mention that the structure had one attached exposure on exposure Side D of similar construction and that there was a fire wall present. On appeal, the appellant argues that he covered this action by stating at a specified point that he had a “two-story frame attached on the delta side.”

In reply, the Division of Test Development, Analytics and Administration (TDAA) advises that the appellant’s statement was not sufficient to award him credit for the PCA at issue, as it indicated that the fire building was attached on Side D, rather than describing the exposure itself, its construction or the fire wall present, as required under the scoring standard. Accordingly, TDAA maintains that the appellant was properly denied credit for the subject PCA. The Civil Service Commission agrees with TDAA’s assessment and affirms the appellant’s Arriving Scenario technical component score of 4.

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 that 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 25TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2024



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