



# 2024 Battalion Fire Chief Orientation Guide



Philip D. Murphy, Governor  
Tahesha L. Way, Lt. Governor

Allison Chris Myers, Chair/Chief Executive Officer

**\*Please Note: The year listed on the orientation guide refers to the year the exam will take place. This guide applies both to candidates from the current administration and make-up candidates from an earlier administration who will be tested in 2024.**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) has prepared this supplemental orientation guide for promotional candidates who will participate in the 2024 Battalion Fire Chief examination. The information in this guide and the General Multiple-Choice Exam Orientation Guide (available via CSC's website at <https://www.nj.gov/csc/seekers/jobs/orientation/>) is designed to help candidates better understand the testing process and the types of questions they will encounter on the Battalion Fire Chief exam. We encourage candidates to carefully review this guide along with the General Multiple-Choice Exam Orientation Guide and to take advantage of any and all opportunities to prepare for the exam.

Please note that no study group has been involved in the development or review of CSC exams, and at no time has any exam material been provided to such groups. Additionally, the CSC is not responsible for any claims made by study groups or the manner in which they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

## II. PRE-EXAM INFORMATION

### A. Date and Location

The timeframe to administer the Multiple-Choice component of the Battalion Fire Chief exam is July 2024. The timeframe to administer the Oral component of the Battalion Fire Chief exam is October 2024. However, in the event there are any unforeseen circumstances regarding scheduling, the exam dates may change. The test date, location, and report time will be confirmed when candidate exam notices are both emailed and mailed two to three weeks prior to the test date.

### B. What Candidates **SHOULD** Bring to the Exam

Candidates arriving at the test center should have their notification card and a valid photo I.D. Candidates arriving at the test center without their notification card should report directly to Room A with their photo I.D., so that the center supervisor can issue them a new card. Candidates arriving at the test center without a valid photo I.D. **WILL NOT** be admitted to the exam. Answer sheets for CSC multiple-choice exams are scored electronically, so candidates should bring No. 2 pencils to the exam. In addition, candidates are permitted to bring highlighters to use during the exam.

### C. What Candidates Should **NOT** Bring to the Exam

With the threat of high-tech cheating on the rise, possession of electronic devices, such as cell phones, pagers, tablets, PDAs, or any photographic/recording equipment, 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 an attempt was not made to compromise the testing process. In addition, briefcases and other personal items should not be brought inside the test center. The Civil Service Commission is not responsible for any personal items.

### D. Late Policy

Candidates should plan their route to the test center in advance of the test date as soon as the test location is made available. Candidates are encouraged to arrive early, since candidates arriving late will NOT be admitted to the exam.

### E. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Candidates who require special assistance or ADA accommodations for this exam must check the corresponding box on the “Preferences” tab of their online application, regardless of whether or not they have previously been approved for accommodations with CSC in the past. Candidates who are indicating a need for accommodations for the first time will subsequently be contacted with further instructions.

Upon receipt of their exam notice with the test date, time, and location information, candidates who are already on file with CSC as being approved for accommodations must call (609) 292-4144, extension 1991001, in order to discuss the specifics of their accommodation needs for this exam.

### F. Make-Up Policy

According to the New Jersey Administrative Code 4A:4-2.9(b), make-up examinations for public safety open competitive and promotional examinations may only be authorized for the following reasons:

1. Debilitating injury or illness requiring an extended convalescent period, provided the candidate submits a doctor’s certification containing a diagnosis and a statement clearly showing that the candidate’s physical condition precluded his or her participation in the examination;
2. Death in the candidate’s immediate family;
3. A candidate’s wedding which cannot be reasonably changed;
4. Military service;
5. Error by the Civil Service Commission or Appointing Authority.

**Make-up requests, with supporting documentation, must be submitted in writing within five days of receipt of the test notification.** However, in situations involving an illness, death, or natural disaster that occurs on or immediately before the test date, a request for make-up must be made in writing no later than five days after the test date. Written requests for make-up examinations should be mailed to: NJCSC Make-Up Exam Unit, P.O. Box 310, Trenton, NJ 08625-0310.

All make-up requests based on medical grounds must include a New Jersey Civil Service Commission Medical Authorization for Make-Up Examinations form (DPF-728), completed by the treating physician. This form can be obtained from our website at <https://www.nj.gov/csc/about/publications/forms/pdf/dpf-728.pdf> or by contacting the CSC’s Information Center at (609) 292-4144.

Additionally, your treating physician must 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. This letter should include the date the injury/illness began, the date of your last office visit, and the earliest date you can take the test. Information on your leave time from work because of your illness/injury should also be included. The documentation must be on official letterhead, written in layman's terms and legible. If insufficient, untimely, or illegible information is provided, your request will be denied.

### G. Exam Information for Make-Up Candidates

Because of exam security concerns relating to the illicit discussion and/or dissemination of test content, the make-up exam for this announcement may not be identical to the original exam. It will, however, match the content specifications of the original exam as closely as possible. This means that the make-up exam will measure, in equal proportion, the same knowledge and/or abilities that were measured by the original exam. It will also be administered and scored in the same manner as the original exam. If a different exam is used for make-up purposes, make-up candidates may be required to obtain or use resource material for test preparation/study purposes that is particular to the make-up examination.

## III. EXAM INFORMATION

### A. Exam Development

A job analysis was conducted to identify the knowledge and abilities that are necessary to perform the duties of a Battalion Fire Chief. A job analysis is the process of critically examining job components in order to provide a functional description of a job. Based on this job analysis, several work components were identified, and it is from these work components that a distinct examination has been developed. During the job analysis, Battalion Fire Chief incumbents rated each work component in terms of its importance. Exam questions will relate to those work components that were determined to be most critical. These work components, which have been translated into test content areas, are shown below along with their relative test weights (rounded %). The test weights depict the percentage of the test devoted to each content area.

Weight	Test Content	Test Component
36.53%	Fireground Technical Knowledge	Written Multiple-Choice Exam
26.15%	Incident Command	Oral Exam
13.64%	Supervision	
14.12%	Administration	
9.56%	Oral Communication*	

\* Oral Communication will be tested during each of the three oral scenarios (Incident Command, Supervision, and Administration) and given its own independent score for each one. The weight for Oral Communication will be divided equally among the three scenarios. Therefore, each scenario's oral communication weight will be 3.18% ( $9.56 / 3 = 3.18$ ).

### B. Potential Source Material

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. Although the CSC suggests that candidates review the reading/reference list, preparation for the examination should not be restricted to the reading/reference list. Since the 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.

1. **The Fire Chief's Handbook, 7th Edition (2015)**, Edited by Richard A. Marinucci; Publisher: PennWell - (800) 752-9764, ISBN10: 1-59370-262-0
2. **Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics, 5th Edition (2019) by John Norman**, ISBN: 978-1593704186; Publishers Phone Number 800-752-9764.
3. **Safety and Survival on the Fireground, 2nd Edition (2015)**, by Vincent Dunn; Publisher: PennWell - (800) 752-9764; ISBN: 9781593703493
4. **Managing Fire and Emergency Services (2012)**, Edited by Adam K. Thiel & Charles R. Jennings; Publisher: International City/Council Management Association – (770) 280- 4171; ISBN: 9780873267632
5. **Hazardous Materials: Managing the Incident, Revised 4th Edition (2019)**, by Gregory G. Noll, Michael S. Hildebrand, Glen Rudner, & Rob Schnepf; Publisher: Jones & Bartlett Learning (800) 832-0034; ISBN: 9781284188349
6. **Building Construction for the Fire Service, 6th Edition (2021)**, by Francis L. Brannigan and Glenn P. Corbett; Publisher: Jones & Bartlett Learning - (800) 832-0034; ISBN: 9781284177312
7. **Legal Considerations for Fire & Emergency Services, 3rd Edition (2014)**, by J. Curtis Varone; Publisher: Pennwell - (800)-752-9764, ISBN-13: 978- 1593703479

The following are reference booklets written by the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety and are included in the Reading/Reference List. These reference booklets are free and can be viewed/printed at their respective web addresses found below:

**Public Employees Occupational & Health PEOSHA - Booklet 3**, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety [http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference\\_booklet\\_3.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet_3.pdf)

**Model Fire Dept. Incident Mgmt. Standard Operating Guidelines - Booklet 9**, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety [https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference\\_booklet9.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet9.pdf)

**New Jersey Personnel Accountability System - Booklet 10**, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety  
[http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference\\_booklet10.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet10.pdf)

**Rapid Intervention Crew Training Guidelines - Booklet 12**, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety  
[http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference\\_booklet\\_12.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet_12.pdf)

### C. Written Multiple-Choice Examination

For this examination component, candidates will be asked to assume the role of a battalion fire chief and respond to a variety of questions associated with situationally based written scenarios and diagrams reflecting or describing typical job experiences that a battalion fire chief in the State of New Jersey might encounter. Scenarios will describe an emergency incident followed by a number of questions asking candidates how they would address issues associated with the resolution of the scenario. This portion of the examination will be based on generally accepted fire department practices/procedures and, but not limited to, the reference materials included on the published reading list. In responding to an item, candidates will be asked to choose the **BEST** response.

The written portion of the 2024 Battalion Fire Chief exam will be administered via a computer-based testing system. Candidates will be assigned to a computer with the exam loaded onto it, and the candidate will enter their identifying information during the instruction period. Once the exam begins, a countdown clock will be visible on the upper right corner of the screen so that candidates will always be able to see how much time is left in the exam. Candidates should budget their time so that they can respond to all questions within the allotted time. Each multiple-choice will have four choices from which candidates will select the BEST answer from the options provided. Candidates will click the circle next to the response option of their answer choice rather than mark answers on an answer sheet. Candidates will have the ability to skip from question to question and mark any item that they want to come back to at a later time. Once time is up, candidates will not be able to alter their responses. There will be no penalties for wrong answers, meaning points will not be deducted for wrong answers. Therefore, it is in the candidate's best interest to answer all questions.

In order to aid candidates, supplemental booklets will be provided to candidates. These supplemental booklets will contain the narratives and diagrams for each scenario. The narratives will also be visible on the computer screen. Also, candidates can use these booklets to serve as scratch paper if they wish. Candidates will have 2 hours and 15 minutes to complete the multiple-choice test.

A tutorial video for the computer-based testing system can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKv918R5Pcc>

The Battalion Fire Chief Written-Multiple Choice Examination is designed to assess candidate knowledge in four major areas. Below each of these areas are examples of the type of knowledge associated with the category.

#### **Fire Size-Up**

- Knowledge of size-up factors (e.g., construction, type of building, occupation, etc.)
- Knowledge of structure collapse potential and characteristics
- Knowledge of structure fires



### **Life Safety**

- Knowledge of fire ground safety
- Knowledge of search and rescue
- Knowledge of emergency and strategic evacuation procedures

### **Fire Technical Knowledge**

- Knowledge of fire behavior
- Knowledge of the stages of fire
- Knowledge of the chemistry of fires and the burning processes of different materials

### **Firefighting Practices**

- Knowledge of fireground evolutions, tactics, strategies, and practices
- Knowledge of strategies for performing ventilation
- Knowledge of the use of special tools, equipment and apparatus

This portion of the examination will be based on generally accepted fire department practices/procedures and, but not limited to, the reference materials included on the published reading list.

### **D. Oral Examination**

The Oral component of the Battalion Fire Chief examination will be scheduled on a separate test date. The examination will consist of three separate scenarios (Incident Command, Supervision, and Administration) with Oral Communication being measured during all three scenarios.

For this exercise, candidates will be presented with three realistic job-relevant situations for which a new Battalion Fire Chief might be confronted. Candidates will have 45 minutes to study these three scenarios and prepare a presentation for each. For the purposes of this exercise, candidates are to assume the role of a Battalion Fire Chief and assume that their presentation is being made to a superior officer or other party. Following the 45-minute preparation period, candidates will be taken to the exam room where they will make their presentation. Candidates will be given a separate 10-minute response period for each scenario. Candidate presentations will be both audio and video-recorded.

All oral scoring guidelines are determined, prior to the examination administration date, by a panel of Subject Matter Experts. Scoring decisions are based on Subject Matter Expert- approved guidelines that address the situations that are presented.

The assessors for all three scenarios will be fire service personnel with Battalion Fire Chief or higher experience. Before actually evaluating any of the interviews, the assessors are given training on the dimensions to be measured and on how to observe and evaluate behavior associated with these job-performance dimensions.

The Battalion Fire Chief Oral Examination is designed to elicit responses associated with the following knowledge, skill and ability (KSA) areas. These areas and an example of some of the KSA statements are:

### **Incident Command**

- Ability to anticipate changing circumstances, conditions and outcomes in an emergency situation

- Ability to anticipate need for additional resources
- Knowledge of hazardous materials and dangerous effects associated with them

### Supervision

- Ability to resolve disputes among subordinates and between self and company, peers and others
- Ability to develop the self-confidence of subordinates
- Knowledge of corrective or disciplinary action

### Administration

- Ability to prioritize activities and assignments
- Ability to recognize the critical aspects of a problem
- Ability to act as a liaison with personnel from outside agencies

When administered, one-half of the candidates for a given day will report in the morning and have the exercises administered to them. When finished, the morning group will be sequestered while the afternoon group registers. Once the afternoon group is registered, the morning group will be released.

Once candidates begin the test they will not be allowed to leave the test site for any reason until the administrators have released them. While at the testing site, candidates will not be allowed to move about without the specific approval of the administrators. Access to bathrooms is restricted and all

candidates must receive approval and be escorted to and into the bathrooms. Anyone not following these rules may be disqualified. **Absolutely no exceptions** will be permitted.

### E. Response Levels and Apparatus Staffing

Initial Response: Engine (E1)

Engine (E2) Ladder (L1) (Not a tower ladder unless specified in the scenario)

Battalion Fire Chief (C1)

Each subsequent alarm that a candidate calls will consist of the identical response levels as indicated above (i.e., two engine companies, one ladder company, and one Battalion Fire Chief).

If, in addition to the above, candidates want to call on other companies or resources, they must specifically request them.

In each scenario, a candidate should assume that he/she is the **FIRST** arriving Battalion Fire Chief, arriving with or before any of the initial response companies. A candidate should also assume that he/she will remain in command of the entire incident (that is, no higher ranking chief will arrive or relieve them of command, even if they call for them).

#### Apparatus Staffing:

All engines have: 1 Captain 3 firefighters

All ladders have: 1 Captain 3 firefighters

All Chief's vehicles have 1 Battalion Fire Chief

All EMS have: 2 Emergency medical technicians

## IV. POST-EXAM INFORMATION

### A. Explanation of the Multiple-Choice Scoring Process

The scoring of the multiple-choice Battalion Fire Chief examination will be based on the number of correct responses. Therefore, it is in the candidate's best interest to answer all questions. If the answer to a question is not known, choose the BEST option. Prior to starting the exam, candidates will be informed as to the total number of questions to answer and the total time allotted to complete the test. Candidates should budget their time so that they can respond to all questions within the allotted time. The written examination will be scored electronically.

### B. Explanation of the Oral Scoring Process

The scores for each component will be standardized, weighted, and combined to formulate each candidate's overall examination score.

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

### C. Review and Appeal Information For the Multiple-Choice Exam

A detailed review policy will be provided at the examination center. Subsequent to the date of the written examination, candidates who participated in the examination process will be provided the opportunity to review a test booklet and a FastTest Web Candidate Response Sheet. An appointment to review the Written Multiple-Choice exam must be made within five days of the administration.

Any objection to the manner in which the examination was administered must be made in writing immediately following the completion of the examination, by completing a Test Administration Comment/Appeal Form prior to leaving the examination center. This form can be obtained from the Center Supervisor. No appeal relating to the manner in which the examination was administered shall be permitted after the test date. Candidates should be aware of the fee schedule for item, scoring, and administrative appeals. The fee schedule can be accessed via the CSC website (<https://www.nj.gov/csc/authorities/faq/appeals>).

### D. Review and Appeal Information for the Oral Exam

Candidates will be given the opportunity to schedule an appointment to review the exam, as well as their final score calculations. Included in the eligibility/ineligibility notice will be a review form containing the instructions on how to schedule a review. Appointments are made on a first-come, first-served basis, until all appointments are booked. During the review, candidates will have up to 45 minutes to look through their booklets and a copy of their score sheets with SME feedback.

Any objection to the manner in which the examination was administered must be made in writing immediately following the completion of the examination, by completing a Test Administration Comment/Appeal Form prior to leaving the examination center. This form can be obtained from the Center Supervisor. No appeal relating to the manner in which the examination was administered shall be permitted after the test date. Candidates should be aware of the fee schedule for item, scoring, and administrative appeals. The fee schedule can be accessed via the CSC website (<https://www.nj.gov/csc/authorities/faq/appeals>).

#### E. Explanation of Seniority

A candidate's final score (and rank) on the promotional list consists of two weighted parts: the test score and the seniority score. The seniority score is comprised of the time from the regular appointment date (of the eligible title) to the closing date of the announcement, minus the time spent on suspensions, layoffs, and deductible leaves of absence without pay, such as an unpaid leave to attend a State or National Convention, an unpaid leave for personal reasons, an unpaid leave to attend to Union Business, a Merit Board/Court Decision without pay, or a Disability Retirement that was rescinded.

For the Battalion Fire Chief promotional exam, seniority is weighted at 30% and test score is weighted at 70%. The seniority score is combined with the test score to produce the final average score.

#### F. Calculation of 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.

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.

#### G. Explanation of Exam Results and Promotions

A candidate's final score (and rank) on the promotional list will be comprised of the test score and the seniority credit. The results from this examination will be available after the expiration of the current lists. This process generally takes a minimum of 12 weeks following the last test review date.

Candidates should NOT call the CSC for their scores. Candidates will receive their examination results in the mail.

If you pass your exam, your name will go on a promotional list ranked by your final score (a composite of test score and seniority score). This promotional list will last for three years from its promulgation date or until it is exhausted, whichever occurs first. However, for good cause, the promotional list may be extended by the CSC for up to one additional year.

When your appointing authority notifies the CSC that it wants to fill vacancies, the CSC sends it the names that are ranked highest on the promotional list. This is called a certification list. When your name appears on a certification list, it means that you may be interviewed and considered for promotion.

Also, when your name appears on a certification list, the CSC will send you a Notification of Certification. You must contact the appointing authority in writing within five business days to express your interest. If you do not respond, your name may be removed from the promotional list. If a disabled veteran or veteran is the first name on the certification, the appointing authority must hire that candidate unless there is a very good reason not to. If there are no disabled veterans or veterans on a certification, the appointing authority can normally choose from among the top three candidates for each position.

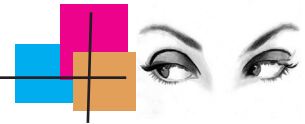
**Please Note: Promotional appointees are considered to be serving conditionally, pending resolution of all scoring appeals related to the examination.**

## V. STUDY TIPS

### A. Descriptions and Study Tips for Different Learning Styles

Research suggests that not all people learn the same way. With so much information available in the source material, it may help you to consider which learning style best matches your abilities, so you can determine the most effective way for you to study the material. While this is not an exhaustive description of the different learning styles, consider the following information as one possible way to determine which study method is best for you.

#### 1. *The Visual Learning Style*



##### Description

You learn best when information is presented visually and in a written language format. In a classroom setting, you benefit from instructors who use the blackboard (or overhead projector) to list the essential points of a lecture, or who provide you with an outline to follow along with during lecture. You benefit from information obtained from textbooks and class notes. You tend to like to study by yourself in a quiet room. You often see information “in your mind’s eye” when you are trying to remember something.

##### **Study Tips**

- Find a quiet place to study, away from noise and visual distractions.
- Preview the study material by looking at the table of contents, headings, and pictures before starting to read.
- Write symbols or key words in the margins of your textbook or manual.
- Use highlighters in different colors to emphasize and organize important concepts.
- Write down key points and details that you want to remember.
- When given information in charts, write out explanations in your own words.
- Organize your notes in outline format, including main headings or categories and notes below each. As an alternative, you can organize your notes by using charts, graphs, pictures, or diagrams.
- Make flashcards of important points and key terms. Limit the amount of information placed on each card.
- Visualize key concepts in your head.

#### 2. *The Auditory Learning Style*



##### Description

You learn best when information is auditory (presented in an oral language format). In a classroom setting, you benefit from listening to lectures and participating in group discussions. You also benefit from obtaining information from audio tape. When trying to remember something, you can often “hear” the way someone told you the information, or the way you previously repeated it out loud. You learn best when interacting with others in a listening/speaking exchange.

##### **Study Tips**

- Before reading, look through headings and pictures and say out loud what you think each section may cover.
- While reading your notes or textbook, read out loud whenever possible.
- Take pauses while reading to summarize aloud what you have read.
- Record yourself reading your notes or textbook, then play it back and listen to it repeatedly, or listen to audiobooks.
- Study in a group or with a friend. Discuss the material.
- Make up flashcards and read the material out loud as you memorize it.
- Ask a friend to help quiz you on test material.

### 3. The Tactile-Kinesthetic Learning Style



#### Description

You learn best when physically engaged in a “hands-on” activity. In the classroom, you benefit from a lab setting where you can manipulate materials to learn new information. You learn best when you can be physically active in the learning environment. You benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations, “hands-on” student learning experiences, and field work outside the classroom.

#### **Study Tips**

- Before reading, look over the table of contents, headings, etc., to get a feel for the book or manual.
- Write notes, draw pictures, or make charts as you are reading or listening to study material.
- Take short (3-5 minute) breaks during your study time.
- Walk around while reading or memorizing information.
- Move while learning (e.g., tap a pen, squeeze a “stress relief” object, swing an arm, kick a leg).
- Listen to audio recordings of study material while working out.
- Type notes on the computer. Incorporate tables and graphics as needed.
- Consider studying in a lounge chair rather than at a desk.
- Consider playing background music (baroque) while trying to learn new material.
- Consider reading material through colored transparencies in order to help with focus.
- While reading, point to or trace the words as you go along.
- Paraphrase the material being learned.
- When possible/appropriate, act out what is being learned. If this is not possible, visualize the concept in your mind.
- Find real-life examples of concepts being learned.
- Write important information several times to help with memory.

#### **Sources:**

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## B. Understanding and Reducing Test Anxiety

Battalion Fire Chiefs face a level of stress on a daily basis that is unlike almost any other career. However, most officers would prefer to deal with the stress involved in maintaining public safety than to deal with the anxiety caused by sitting for an exam that impacts their chances of being promoted. This portion of the Battalion Fire Chief orientation guide attempts to assist candidates in recognizing some of the causes of test anxiety and provides strategies on how to reduce it. Test anxiety is a condition in which a person experiences worry or distress before, during, or after a test or other assessment, to such an extent that it causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning. Because of its effect on performance, it is important that candidates recognize the potential symptoms of test anxiety and take steps to reduce it.

It is normal for any candidate taking an exam to feel a certain degree of nervousness. However, true test anxiety can be a serious threat to a candidate's preparation and performance on the exam. Test anxiety can manifest itself in psychological ways such as "blinking," having difficulty concentrating, and experiencing negative thoughts, as well as physical ways, such as nausea, headache, sweating, and muscle tension. Candidates can attempt to reduce the effects of test anxiety and increase their chances of maximizing their performance on the exam by focusing on three steps: be prepared, get organized, and practice.

### **1. *Be Prepared***

Preparation begins with recognizing and confronting negative thoughts you may have about your past exam performance and your chances for scoring well on the upcoming Battalion Fire Chief exam. Negative thoughts can influence your preparation for the exam by affecting your study habits, breaking your concentration, and causing you to second-guess your abilities. One strategy to reduce these thoughts is to take out a sheet of paper and create two columns. On the left side of the paper, you will honestly assess your attitudes and write down every negative thought you have about the prospects of taking a written exam. Next, on the right side of the paper, you will write a positive thought that counteracts the negative thought. For example:

#### Negative Thought

I always do poorly on tests.

If I don't pass this test, I'm a failure.

I can't possibly know everything that will be on the exam.

#### Positive Thought

I will be more prepared than I have been in the past.

I'm going to pass, but if I don't, I can still bounce back.

I know the areas where my knowledge is strong and I will focus on the areas in which I am unfamiliar.

Honestly assessing your feelings and concerns will help you begin to change your attitudes and create a positive mindset.



Another strategy to prepare for the exam is to gather as much information about the exam as possible. Consulting the Battalion Fire Chief job specification through the webpage at <https://info.csc.state.nj.us/jobspec/00856@.htm> and reading over this orientation guide thoroughly will help you familiarize yourself with all aspects of the exam. Information provided in this guide will tell you, in general, what topics will be covered and what resources you can use to learn about the topics. This is a vital step in preparation for the exam, because knowing the information covered by the exam will assist you in organizing a study plan.

### **2. Get Organized**

Being organized in your study habits is the next step in reducing test anxiety and increasing your performance on the exam. After you have determined from the information available to you, the topics to be covered on the exam, you need to honestly assess in which areas you are strong and which areas require more attention. You may find it helpful to create a study plan or schedule that defines what you will need to study, what resources you will need to compile, and the amount of time you will spend on each topic. When creating a study plan, you must remember to make it realistic for your current lifestyle. Candidates with responsibilities, such as family obligations, cannot expect to spend all their off-duty hours studying. Candidates should also make an attempt to avoid changing their normal routine in order to focus all their energy solely on studying. Although you may find that you need to make some sacrifices in order to put in the proper amount of time studying, it should not be at the expense of eliminating all your other interests and obligations. Some candidates believe that if they skip meals or stay up late, they are gaining extra hours of study time. Research suggests, however, that altering your normal sleeping and eating patterns, as a result of trying to spend all your spare time studying, does not have the benefits you would expect. Physical health is as important as emotional health in reducing anxiety.

Finally, remember that studying involves more than highlighting words in a book and memorizing definitions. When establishing your study plan or schedule, your goal should be to have a full understanding of terms and concepts. You will know you have a full understanding of the information when you can define a given term in your own words and discuss why it is important. Similarly, concepts are fully understood when you are able to take two related concepts and discuss their similarities and differences.

### **3. Practice**

The final step in reducing test anxiety is to practice. While it is not possible to replicate the conditions you will encounter during the exam administration, there are strategies that you can use to simulate the skills you will need during the exam. For instance, during a multiple-choice exam, you may be sitting at a desk for several hours working on your exam. To prepare for this, it may help to block out a similar amount of uninterrupted time while you are studying. This can help you experience what it will be like to have to focus your attention for that period of time. Using the chapter review in a text book or other resource is often another way to test your knowledge, while also giving you the opportunity to practice reading and analyzing multiple-choice questions. In some cases, candidates will know others who are taking the exam. Although many people prefer to study on their own, coming together to review in a group can also be helpful. During this review, each member of the group can come with prepared questions based on the source material. This strategy has the benefit of ensuring that you are reading the material critically enough to develop questions from it, while at the same time, practicing the routine of sitting down and answering questions prepared by another person.

During the days leading up to the exam, you should focus on reviewing the material you have already studied. In order to reduce test anxiety on the day of the exam, you should make every attempt to get a good night's sleep the night before, so that you can arrive at the test center well rested. Plan to arrive early, so that you are not rushing into the test center with only minutes to spare before the exam. It is important to listen to the monitor's instructions carefully and ask questions if you are unsure of anything that has been said. Be aware of how much time you have to complete the exam and the fact that you will be responsible for keeping track of your own time. Remember that, unless instructed otherwise, you are permitted to write in your test booklet.

As you proceed through the test, you may wish to circle key words or concepts that may be important in answering test questions, making sure to properly mark all answers on your answer sheet. Review each question carefully and select the BEST answer from the options given.

Remember that anxiety is fed by a fear of the unknown. The more you do to prepare before the exam, the better chance you will have at performing at your highest level.

Additional study tips are available in the General Multiple-Choice Exam Orientation Guide, which is available via the CSC's web site at <https://www.nj.gov/csc/seekers/jobs/orientation>.

#### Sources:

[https://www.gace.ets.org/s/pdf/gace\\_reducing\\_test\\_anxiety.pdf](https://www.gace.ets.org/s/pdf/gace_reducing_test_anxiety.pdf)

#### C. Tips for Answering Multiple-Choice Questions

- Don't read too much into each question. Avoid imagining scenarios in which the answer could be true. In most cases, questions that appear to be "trick questions" are usually only tricky because they are not taken at face value. Determine the best answer using only the information supplied in the question, without making unwarranted assumptions. The correct answer is the one that works best for the situation described.
- Be sure to choose an answer that is directly related to the question being asked. Do not select an answer choice, even if it is a true or correct statement by itself, unless it specifically answers the question asked.
- The correct answer is the choice that contains the most exact or most complete information in response to the question. Some answer choices may be correct or true in part, but less exact or less complete than the "best" choice. An answer choice that is only partially correct, partially true, or true only under certain conditions should be considered an incorrect choice.
- Don't let more difficult questions affect your attitude and steal valuable time.
- Don't linger over questions you cannot answer. If you cannot decide on an answer choice, make your best guess and move on. However, if you must guess, try to eliminate as many clearly wrong choices as you can in order to make your guess from as few options as possible.

D. Tips for Responding to Oral Exam Scenarios

Keep in mind that the exercises are set in a generic, 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, scenarios, or town. Take action and make decisions based only on the information given. The responses, however, should not be generic, but directly related to the narrative and the question asked.

The Oral Assessment Exercises are designed to assess the appropriateness of a candidate’s stated actions during presented, job-related situations. If the candidate desires to score well, it is his responsibility to demonstrate to the Subject Matter Experts assessing his exam that he possesses true problem-solving skills that can be applied to changing circumstances and demands, either in simulation exercises or in real-world events. The candidate who only makes general statements without also addressing the specific facts of the scenario may find himself penalized by the assessors. Compare:

General Statements	Specific to the Scenario
“I’ll conduct a detailed size-up...”	“The property is a taxpayer from the 1930’s, so we’ll have to check for extension in the cockloft; it’s midnight, so there will be occupants sleeping in the house...”
“I’ll send my crew in to put out the fire.”	“I’ll send my primary hose team through the front door on the A Side of the house with a secondary team, hoses charged, staged on the D side of the building to check extension on the property next door...”

**1. LCES! SLICERS! COAL WAS WEALTH!**

Some candidates believe that by learning a collection of tricks and techniques, they can guarantee themselves a better score on an examination. These tricks may consist of anything from techniques for organizing information (e.g., acronyms), to statements and actions that will lead to better scores. Predetermined strategies are fine as a starting point, but they cannot take the place of knowing the material *and successfully applying it to the scenarios presented in the exam.*

Candidates are also coached by paid study groups and other parties on how to project a favorable façade (e.g., smile, be courteous, wear certain clothes, etcetera), relying on this to hide deficiencies in performance. While a tailored dress uniform and thanking the Subject Matter Experts for their attention is nice, this will not influence the candidate’s score whatsoever: what is said, and how it is presented from an oral communication standpoint, will wholly contribute to his or her score.

How to best prepare for the Oral Assessment Exercises as a candidate comes down to one question: “Is the focus going to be learning tricks and techniques, or on actively preparing for the position being tested?” There appears to be no ready substitute for the hard work and persistence required to advance skill and knowledge levels.

## 2. Oral communication skills need to be practiced

The oral communication component is perhaps the most overlooked element in the Oral Assessment Exercises. And yet, because Fire Subject Matter Experts have identified being able to communicate clearly and concisely as critical to job performance, doing poorly in oral communication will affect a candidate's score; averaging below a score of 2.5 will make the candidate fail altogether. Therefore, it is in your best interest to prepare for the oral communication components as seriously as the technical components.

The best way for you to improve your skills in oral communication is to videorecord yourself making a presentation on a smartphone or a camera, and then review the video and/or show a friend for an honest critique:

- Choose a sample Oral Assessment Exercise from the Sample Materials section (starting on page 22) and prepare a presentation as you would in a testing situation.
- Use a timer; candidates will have a maximum of ten minutes for each scenario.
- Videorecord yourself, or have a friend record you giving your response for the questions presented.
- Finally, review the completed video for general deficiencies in oral communication. While the list below is not exhaustive, reviewers can consider these elements:
  - ensure that the response was organized, and that you chronologically reported your actions as it would happen on the fireground (i.e., not jumping around).
  - present your response in complete sentences, not with bulleted statements or phrases.
  - make eye contact with the camera, and do not read directly from your notes the entire time. (The candidate will be instructed on the day of the exam to treat the camera as though it was their audience.)
  - eliminate any nervous tics that are visible onscreen (e.g., pencil tapping, fidgeting, shuffling papers).
  - seem confident in your presentation.
  - limit excessive filler words (e.g., “um,” “ah,” “y’know”).
  - speak clearly.
  - do not ramble and/or repeat the same information over and over. As long as all actions are addressed appropriately, you do not need to use all of the allotted time.
  - be mindful of your rate of speech: breathe regularly and slow down when going too fast, eliminate long pauses and quicken your pace when going too slow. (Note: Pausing occasionally to review notes is expected and will not be penalized.)

If you find you are deficient in some oral communication skills, you should continue to practice in front of a camera and re-evaluate your performance. While the assessors are not expecting perfection, the closer you are to it, through practicing your oral communication skills, the better your score will be.

### 3. Don't psyche yourself out on the day of the examination.

The exercises are designed to be difficult; again, perfection is not expected. The evaluation is based on a candidate's overall performance on each exercise. Even if a candidate thinks he is not doing well during a response, he should continue doing the best possible work on the remaining exercises. **DO NOT** give up halfway through an exercise! The only guaranteed way to fail the Oral Assessment Exercises is to resign: push through and finish the exam.

## VI. SAMPLE MATERIALS

The following pages contain examples of materials from the Written Multiple-Choice Examination and the Oral components. The following examples are provided as samples so that you may become familiar with some of the types of materials and response formats that you will encounter. The actual assessment materials will be different from the ones presented here. These problems are merely illustrative of the kinds of problems which you may face during the Battalion Fire Chief examination.

### A. Written Multiple-Choice Exam

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

It is a Friday morning (7:00 a.m.) in January with a temperature of 31 degrees Fahrenheit and overcast skies. The wind is blowing from the east to the west at 10 MPH and it has begun to snow heavily. You have been dispatched to a report of a fire at twenty-two (22) Adams Street. You are the first arriving officer on the scene and establish command.

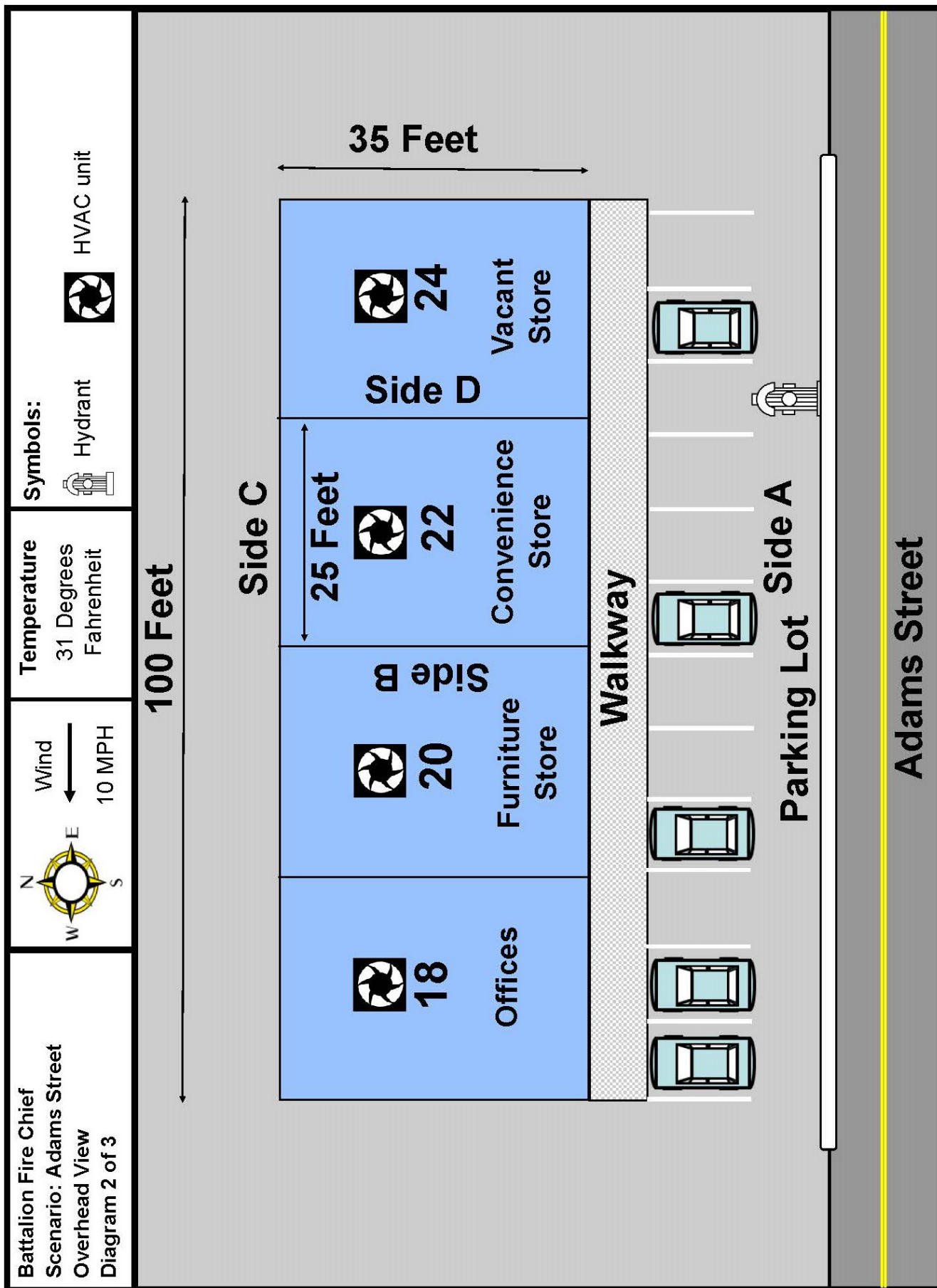
Adams Street Plaza is a strip mall of lightweight steel bar joist construction built in the 1980's. The building consists of four (4) adjoining stores. The entire building measures 100 feet by 35 feet. Each store measures 25 feet by 35 feet and has an HVAC unit directly overhead. The fire originated in twenty-two (22) Adams Street, which is a convenience store in the middle of Adams Street Plaza. Side A faces a parking lot, beyond which is Adams Street. Side B faces a furniture store and Side D faces a vacant store. Side C faces access way for deliveries, beyond which is a fence. There is a hydrant located in the front of the building between the parking lot and Adams Street on Side A. The water supply is adequate.

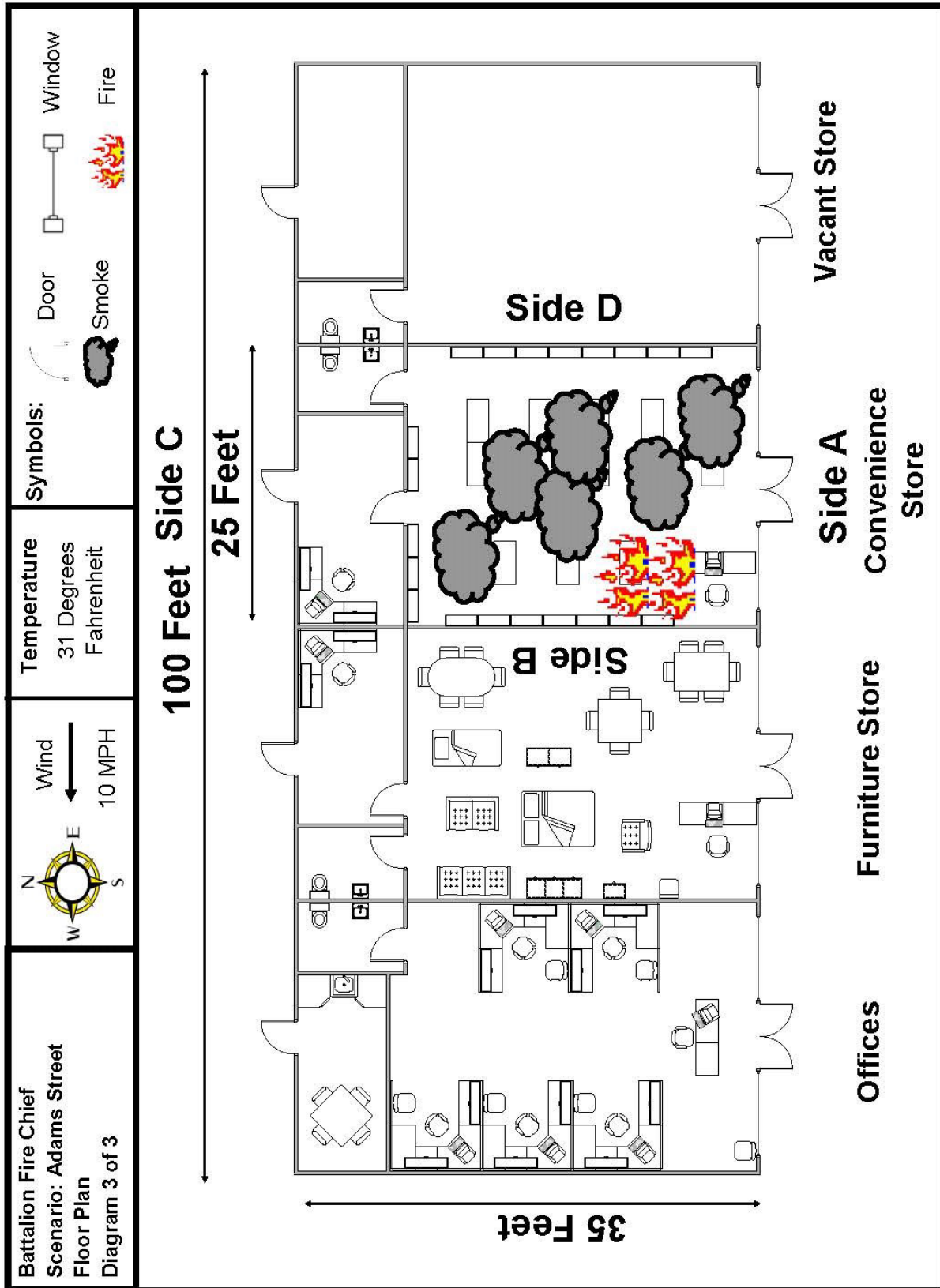
Upon arrival, you notice smoke and flames through the store front windows near the Side B wall.

**Refer to the description of the scenario above and the diagrams on the following pages when responding to questions 1-3.**

<p><b>Battalion Fire Chief</b> <b>Scenario: Adams Street</b> <b>Side A View</b> <b>Diagram 1 of 3</b></p>	 <p>Wind ← 10 MPH</p>	<p><b>Temperature</b> 31 Degrees Fahrenheit</p>	<p><b>Symbols:</b></p>  <p>Smoke Inside Windows</p>  <p>Fire</p>
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1. Based on this scenario, which should be the MOST accurate size up?
  - (a) The interior sizeup, because interior firefighters can determine potential for fire spreading due to wind conditions.
  - (b) The interior sizeup, because interior firefighters can see the location and extent of the fire better than the outside sizeup.
  - (c) The exterior sizeup because the incident commander must make an initial report to dispatch based on these his observations outside.
  - (d) The exterior sizeup because interior firefighters will not be able to radio a sizeup while attacking the fire.

*B is the correct response because at the initial stage of a fire, the inside sizeup is more accurate and useful than the sizeup made from outside the building; the fire officers inside the structure are closer to the fire and obviously, can see more of it than someone standing outside.*

2. The firefighters begin their attack in the convenience store. Immediately, smoke and steam bank down to the floor causing limited visibility. Based on this information and the scenario narrative, what stage is the fire in?
  - (a) Incipient stage
  - (b) Free burning stage
  - (c) Smoldering stage
  - (d) Extinguished stage

*B is the correct response because once the attack commences, the smoke and stream will bank right down to the floor until properly vented.*

3. The HVACs on the roof of this building are an example of a(n)
  - (a) impact load.
  - (b) repeated load.
  - (c) live load.
  - (d) dead load.

*D is the correct response because Live Loads are any loads other than dead loads. An elevated water tank is a dead load. The water in the tank may be there for years but it is a live load.*

**B. Oral Exam Supervision Scenario****NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION BATTALION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION****Supervision – Form A**

There is a captain under your command who has been a rising star. He has taken advantage of many opportunities to contribute to and move up in the department. Recently, you have noticed some minor rule infractions on his part. Today, for example, while on the fire ground, you observed him wearing a cracked face shield that you had ordered him to replace last week. Later, you questioned him and he replied that he had checked with the supply room, but was unable to find a replacement. He added that just like everything else, it's on order, and then he walked away from you.

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

**Question 1: What steps should you take to resolve this situation with the Fire Captain?**

**Please note that you have 45 minutes to review all three oral exam booklets. Be sure to budget your time accordingly.**

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 the questions within the 10 minute response period.**

C. Oral Exam Administration Scenario

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

**Administration – Form A**

You have been assigned as a new Battalion Fire Chief in your jurisdiction. Your predecessor, recently retired Battalion Fire Chief Tim Connelly, who was in charge of Station 6, was from the old school of firefighting in terms of station training. He felt that after-hours were meant for fellowship and for talking through the events of the day. Training was a necessary evil that occasionally broke through the routine.

As part of your new assignment, you have been asked by Fire Chief to investigate the quality of station training in the department, beginning with Station 6, and to compare the amount and quality of training there with that of the other five fire stations in the department.

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

**Question 1: What steps should you take to investigate the levels of training at Station 6?**

**Question 2: What information should be used to compare the training level of Station 6 to the other five stations?**

**Please note that you have 45 minutes to review all three oral exam booklets. Be sure to budget your time accordingly.**

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 the questions within the 10 minute response period.**

D. Oral Exam Incident Command Scenario

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

**Incident Command – Form A**

You arrive on the scene where a first alarm crew is responding to a warehouse fire. The warehouse is 200 feet by 200 feet and contains the excess stock from a local furniture outlet. One of the threatened exposures is a 5,000-gallon pressure tank. The fire is burning in the northeast corner of the warehouse, and the pressurized tank is located near the seat of the fire.

**Question 1: What actions should you take to address this incident?**

**Question 2:** The fire has encroached on the 5,000-gallon pressure tank causing it to explode. There are numerous mayday reports. **Based on this new information, what actions should you now take to address this incident?**

**Please note that you have 45 minutes to review all three oral exam booklets. Be sure to budget your time accordingly.**

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 the questions within the 10 minute response period.**