



2026 Battalion Fire Chief Orientation Guide



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This guide is being provided specifically for symbols announced in September 2026 and make-up candidates for the 2025 administration.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) has prepared this orientation guide for the Battalion Fire Chief promotional examination. The information in this booklet is designed to help candidates understand the testing process and answer many of their questions about how to prepare for the examination. The exam for promotion to Battalion Fire Chief will consist of the five following dimensions:

#	Component	Dimensions
1	Written Multiple-Choice	Fireground Technical Knowledge
2	Oral	Incident Command Oral Exercise
3		Supervision Oral Exercise
4		Administrative Oral Exercise
5		Oral Communication

The exam has been designed on the basis of information obtained from a job analysis of the position of Battalion Fire Chief in the State of New Jersey. The job analysis provides a description of the tasks performed by incumbents and identifies the knowledge, skills and abilities that are required to perform each of these tasks effectively.

We are providing this orientation guide in order to better assist you in preparing for the exam. We also recognize that a considerable amount of the anxiety associated with participation in the promotional assessment process is related to the novelty of the procedures that candidates encounter. From the information presented in this guide, candidates should be able to get a better understanding of the types of questions they will encounter on each exam component and a systematic method of study which they may use in preparing for the exam.

We encourage candidates to review this guide carefully and to take advantage of any and all opportunities to prepare for the exam.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXAM

A. Test Date, Time, and Location

Approximately two to three weeks before the test date, candidates will receive a notice in the mail that shows the date, time, location, and room to which they should report for their examination.

The Written Multiple-Choice component is tentatively scheduled for January 2027 and the Oral component is tentatively scheduled for April 2027.

B. Test Security and Candidate Pledge

All candidates will be required to sign a pledge form at the examination center, stating that they understand that the current examination will be administered over different days and that they will not discuss the content of the examination with any other person, study group, or potential make-up candidate. No one is permitted to take personal notes, copy, or remove test material during the administration of the examination.

With the threat of high-tech cheating on the rise, it is the policy of the N.J. Civil Service Commission (CSC) that *possession* of electronic devices, such as cell phones, pagers, tablets, e-book readers, smart glasses, digital watches, fitness trackers, PDAs, or any device with recording/imaging, communication, or internet capabilities is strictly prohibited at the test center. **Candidates who are seen with these devices in the test center at ANY time (including before and after their individual examination has been completed), 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, note paper, any study or reference materials, briefcases, backpacks, and other personal items should not be brought inside the test center.

For more information see: <https://www.nj.gov/csc/faq/cellphones.shtml>

Most candidates scheduled to take the Oral portion of the exam will be sequestered (held in a separate room) either prior to their scheduled test time or after they have taken the examination. This sequester period is required in order to prevent candidates who have taken the exam from interacting with candidates who are scheduled to take the same exam later in the day.

Upon completion of the written testing and oral sequestering process, candidates must leave the testing premises so that other candidates (still involved in the testing) will not be disturbed/distracted by outside conversations. Failure to obey the rules and instruction before, during, and after the examination may result in a candidate's disqualification from the examination.

C. Description of Test Format

1. **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 2026 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 question 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. As always, any printed booklets provided to candidates will be collected at the end of the exam. Candidates will have 2 hours and 30 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 2026 Battalion Fire Chief Written-Multiple Choice Examination is designed to assess candidate knowledge in four major areas

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 fireground 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 material.

Firefighting Practices

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

2. Oral Exercises

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, Administrative, and Supervision) 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 total 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.

Before actually evaluating any of the responses, 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.

Incident Command Scenario

- 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 Scenario

- 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 Scenario

- 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.

3. Response Levels, Apparatus Staffing, and Initial Functions

Initial Response: Engine
 Engine
 Ladder (not a tower ladder unless specifically stated)
 Battalion Fire Chief

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

If candidates want to call on other specialized 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 the other 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 EMS have: 2 emergency medical technicians
 All Chief's vehicles have 1 Battalion Fire Chief.

D. Suggested Reading List

Please note that the CSC intends to use the book list to assist in the development of 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.

1. ***Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics***, Norman, 5th Edition, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-59370-418-6; Publisher's Phone Number 800-752-9764.
2. ***Collapse of Burning Buildings***, Dunn, 2nd Edition, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-59370-233-5; Publisher's Phone Number 800-752-9764.
3. ***Brannigan's Building Construction for the Fire Service***, Brannigan, 6th Edition, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-2841-7731-2; Publisher's Phone Number 800-832-0034.
4. ***Fundamentals of Fire Fighter Skills and Hazardous Materials Response***, 5th Edition, 2024. ISBN: 978-1284298000; Publisher's Phone Number 978-443-5000
5. ***Safety and Survival on the Fireground***, Dunn, 2nd Edition. 2012. ISBN: 978-1-59370-349-3; Publisher's Phone Number 800-752-9764
6. ***The Fire Chief's Handbook***, 7th Edition (2015) Bolded, Edited by Richard A. Marinucci; Publisher: PennWell - 800-752-9764, ISBN 10; 1-59370-262-0.

7. **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”

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:

New Jersey Firefighter Skills Addendum. Available free online:

<https://www.nj.gov/csc/jobs/publicsafety/pdfs/2021%20NJ%20Firefighter%20Skills%20Addendum.pdf>

Public Employees Occupational & Health PEOSHA-Booklet 3, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety.

<https://www.nj.gov/dca/dfs/pdf/Ref%20Booklets/2023%20booklet%203%20NJ%20PEOSH.pdf>

Model Fire Department Incident Management Standard Operating Guides - Booklet 9,

New Jersey Division of Fire Safety

<https://www.nj.gov/dca/dfs/pdf/Ref%20Booklets/2023%20booklet%209.pdf>

New Jersey Personnel Accountability System - Booklet 10, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety

<https://www.nj.gov/dca/dfs/pdf/Ref%20Booklets/nj%20personnel%20accountability%20system%20booklet%2010.pdf>

Rapid Intervention Crew Training Guidelines - Booklet 12, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety

https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet_12.pdf

Although the CSC suggests that candidates review the reading/reference list in preparation for the examination, they should not be restricted to the reading/reference material found above. Since some 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.

E. Administrative Logistics

Candidates should ensure that they arrive at the test site on the correct day and time as indicated on their notification cards. Candidates are advised to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time to ensure that all necessary administrative procedures can be conducted prior to the scheduled start time. Candidates should bring their Notification Card, two forms of identification (including one photo ID), two pencils, two pens and a highlighter to the examination center. Candidates arriving at the test center without a valid photo I.D. **WILL NOT** be admitted to the exam.

Be aware that this is a closed-book exam. Candidates will not be permitted to bring this Orientation Guide or the reading list reference materials to their test site. In addition, candidates will not be allowed, under any circumstances, to make or receive telephone calls and text messages. Again, cellular phones and other electronic devices are prohibited in the examination center.

CANDIDATES SHOULD MAKE SURE TO MAP OUT A ROUTE TO THEIR TEST CENTER IN ADVANCE AND PLAN TO ARRIVE AT THE EXAMINATION CENTER EARLY, SINCE NO ONE WILL BE ADMITTED LATE.

1. The Written Multiple-Choice Examination

All candidates will be given the appropriate test materials at the same time. Once instructions have been given, the test material will be distributed to all candidates (there is no preparation period). Upon completion of the Multiple-Choice test, candidates will return all test materials to the test administrator, and may leave the test site.

2. The Oral Examination

Based on the number of jurisdictions participating in this administration, the Oral component may be administered over multiple days with alternate test forms being used. Candidates will only be required to attend the day their jurisdiction is being tested. Plan to arrive to the examination center on time. **No Candidate will be admitted late.** 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 holding room 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 will be disqualified. **Absolutely no exceptions** will be permitted.

F. Final Scoring

1. Exam Score

The Battalion Fire Chief promotional exam will consist of five dimensions and are weighted as follows:

Test Component	Dimensions	Weight
Written Multiple-Choice	Fireground Technical Knowledge	36.53%
Oral	Incident Command Oral Exercise	26.15%
	Supervision Oral Exercise	13.64%
	Administrative Oral Exercise	14.12%
	Oral Communication*	9.56%

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

The final score is a sum of the weighted standardized overall examination score plus the weighted standardized seniority score. The component weights for the final exam score are 70% for the overall examination score and 30% for the seniority score. A more detailed description and explanation of the score calculation process will be given to candidates during the examination review period that follows the release of the eligibility lists.

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.

All scores are standardized and only candidates with passing examination scores will have their overall test score weighted 70% and seniority score weighted 30% in determining the final score.

Candidates will be ranked based upon this final score.

Please note that appointments made from the eligibility lists are conditional, pending results of the appeal and make-up processes.

* Oral Communication will be tested during each of the three oral scenarios (Incident Command, Supervision, and Administrative) 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% ($9.56/3=3.18$).

2. 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. The maximum score for the length of service component is 85.000.

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.

EXAMPLE: Battalion Fire Chief PROMOTIONAL EXAMINATION

Lieutenant Brown was made permanent in the Lieutenant title on March 22, 1996.

The closing date for the Battalion Fire Chief announcement was September 30, 2004. Brown was suspended for 3 days in 2002, and 2 days in 2000.

a.	3-22-96	Date of regular appointment
b.	9-30-04	Closing date of announcement
c.	8 years, 6 months, 8 days	Time from a - b
d.	8 years, 6 months, 3 days	Minus 5 suspension days
e.	No reduction for layoffs or leaves of absences	
f.	70.000	Base seniority
g.	8 years = 8.000	Points for seniority based on years
	183 days = 0.501	Months converted to days (1 day = .0027397)
	8.501	Subtotal
h.	78.501	Subtotal f + g = length of service component
i.	10.000	Added for record of service
j.	0.0075	3 days suspended within the last 3 years times 0.0025
k.	0.0025	2 days suspended over 3 years up to 5 years times 0.00125
l.	9.990	$i - (j + k)$ = record of service component
m.	88.491	(h + l) = Brown's total seniority score

III. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION POLICIES

A. Make-Up Policy

According to the New Jersey Administrative Code 4A:4-2.9(b), make-up examinations for public safety 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 as evidenced by a copy of the death certificate;
3. A candidate's wedding which cannot be reasonably changed as evidenced by relevant documentation;
4. When required for certain persons returning from military service (see 4A:4-4.6A); or
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: Public Safety Make-up Unit, NJ Civil Service Commission, 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.

B. 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.

C. Post Examination Review Policy

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 5 days of the administration.

D. Examination Cancellation Policy

In the event that circumstances force cancellation of the examination administration, the CSC will attempt to contact your department head, as soon as that decision has been made. In the case of inclement weather, please call CSC's Information Center to find out the status of the examination or listen to your local radio station for further information. To contact the CSC's Information Center, call (609) 292-4144. A cancellation message will also be posted on the CSC's homepage at: <https://www.nj.gov/csc>.

E. Study Groups

The CSC is not affiliated with any "study group" in the business of preparing individuals for examinations, nor does the CSC recommend participation in any "study group." Further, the CSC does not have authority to control or regulate the activity of "study groups." No "study group" has been involved in the development or review of CSC examinations and, at no time has any examination material been provided to such groups. Finally, the CSC is not responsible for any claims made by "study groups" or the manner in which they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

IV. EXAM PREPARATION STRATEGIES

Focusing Attention

The candidate must focus attention on the material to be studied in order to retain it. There are several ways to improve retention:

First, since people tend to pay closer attention to things that interest them than to things that do not, try to make the material more meaningful or interesting. One way to do this is to apply examples of the material back to the workplace. Eliminate distractions from the environment. Distractions compete for an individual's attention and affect recall of the material studied. It is difficult to pay attention to several things at the same time. Instead, people usually switch back and forth, paying attention first to one thing and then the other. Unfortunately, material not given attention will not be remembered. This means that listening to the radio while studying, or studying in a noisy area, will leave gaps in the candidate's memory of the material trying to be learned.

Avoid trying to learn material when tired. Fatigue reduces the amount of material that can be retained. This means that it might be better to get a good night sleep and study in the morning rather than staying up a few extra hours and sleeping late. It is more difficult to maintain focus when normal sleeping patterns are interrupted.

Finally, try to make studying enjoyable in whatever way you can. Since you will spend a lot of time studying, you need to keep things interesting. Take care of yourself physically and mentally, analyze GoPro fire scene videos on YouTube with a group, and take study breaks.

One Method for Studying Individually: SQ3R

SQ3R stands for survey, question, read, recite, and review. These five elements make up a set of study habits that can enhance performance on the test.

SURVEY

Survey means to find the limits or borders of an area. Survey the material to be studied to get an idea of the content and organization of the material before beginning in-depth study efforts.

To survey a body of information, scan it from start to finish. Skimming over the pages will help get an idea of what is to come. In most documents, this type of survey is made much easier by using headings. Bold, large, or major headings introduce big or important elements; smaller headings introduce sub-areas of these important elements. Another helpful overview of the material can be found in summaries such as chapter summaries, overviews, or statements of objectives. Looking over such summaries will allow for a quick view of the important parts or pieces of the material covered. Surveying the study material gives an idea of how long it will take to cover the material. This will help to break the assignment down into reasonable time blocks. Material should be read in chunks of a reasonable size. Focus on a specific section or chunk and ensure understanding before moving on. A chunk might be all of the material under a major heading. If the material under the heading runs for many pages, try reducing the material to be understood to each of the minor headings, taking one at a time.

QUESTION

Most people need a reason to do things. In studying text material, a question becomes a reason. If some questions can be predetermined, the material to be read will take on more life and be more meaningful.

Before beginning each study session, look over the material you intend to cover. Develop some questions using the list of headings from the chapter or document outline. Write a question for each major and minor heading. Developing questions can provide a reason for reading the material and can help the information become more meaningful.

READ

For most people, reading means the same thing as studying. When they say that they have studied material, they often mean that they have read it through several times. Reading is important, but it will be done more effectively when the survey and question steps have been completed.

The most effective way for a candidate to pace himself/herself is to decide on the number of chunks that will be read and understood in a given study session. Use the questions developed through the previous step as the definition of understanding. Once these questions are answered move on to the next section. A good time to take breaks is between these sections, not in the middle of them. This can be viewed as a reward for successfully completing the reading of each section.

It is important to ensure that the material being read is understood. One way to do this is to look up the definitions of all new and unfamiliar terms. Make a list of the words and phrases that are not understood. If these terms are technical in nature and have not been encountered before, the answer may be in the chapter or document being read. Have a notebook available to mark down each of these terms, leaving a space for their definition. The quicker the terms are understood, the more effective the candidates' studying will be. If the term or word is not technical, but simply a large or uncommon word that is unfamiliar, look it up in a dictionary. It might be helpful to record the definitions of these non-technical terms in a notebook as well in order to keep track of all of the important terms, even those that are understood.

Another good way to make reading time as useful as possible is to mark or underline the text while reading. This will make each candidate a more active participant in the studying process. In addition, it will help candidates to focus on the major ideas. Underlining or highlighting can also make it easier to find relevant material later for review. In marking or underlining the text, the candidate should actually go through the text and underline key words and concepts that are important in understanding the material in the "chunk" being read. The candidate might also make notes right on the text page. Here are a few guidelines to follow when using the underlining and marking method:

1. Read the whole section before doing any underlining or marking.
2. Do not mark or underline too much. The value of the technique lies in highlighting only the most important material.
3. Use ink if possible so that the underlining and notes do not disappear or become unclear in the course of studying.

4. Use symbols as much as possible. For example, use “?” as a symbol for questions; use “*” to stand for a particularly important idea.

RECITE

It is very helpful to recite with another individual. He or she can ask questions about portions of the material that will make the candidate recite or locate the relevant material in a formal way. It is not necessary to choose someone who is familiar with the material. The person only has to be able to recognize that the response (what is recited) corresponds to what is written in the reference material or notes.

In order to be most effective, recitation should take place quite soon after the material has been reviewed or read for the first time. This is important because the greatest amount of information is lost or forgotten within a short period after it is first learned. Do not try to cover too much information at once. Depending on the number of pages covered, this might be all of the information in one major section or chapter.

REVIEW

Reviewing the areas to be covered by the examination will help each candidate understand and organize the material. The review should also cover the outline of how the material is organized, and where certain topics can be found.

Review is done just before beginning a new study session. In this form of review, the candidate is actually preparing for new learning by strengthening old learning. This helps to ensure that any old learning that is needed as a basis for new learning is correct and available.

Another form of review is done a few days before a test. This review can be done quite effectively in a group with other test takers. This cuts down on some of the chore of pre-test studying and increases the meaning of much of the information. That is, while taking the test, information can be more easily remembered by thinking back to who said what and how the review conversation went.

In summary, the SQ3R method is based on sound learning principles and gives the candidate a simple formula to follow:	
SURVEY	skim the reading material and create manageable “chunks” to study
QUESTION	develop a purpose for reading by posing questions that reading the material will answer
READ	read and re-read the material until it is understood thoroughly
RECITE	write down or talk about what was just learned to improve retention and integrate new information into the knowledge base
REVIEW	look over highlighted text and notes and integrate new information with old information

Multiple-Choice Test-Taking Strategies

The purpose of the Written Multiple-Choice Exam is to assess each candidate's knowledge of the specified areas that are listed on page 3, as well as how well this knowledge can be applied to specific scenarios. At times, factors other than knowledge of the tested material can influence performance. These suggestions should help to reduce these extraneous influences and allow each candidate to do his best on the multiple-choice component of the examination:

- Make sure the test format and requirements are understood.
- Read, and/or listen to, all of the directions carefully.
- Be aware of how much time has been allotted to complete the test. Candidates should check their watches periodically to keep track of the amount of time remaining in the examination period.
- Read each question carefully and make sure it is understood.
- Try to answer the question before looking at the choices. If the answer is known, compare it to the available choices and pick the closest alternative. A thorough understanding of the knowledge areas will allow questions to be answered without looking at the answer choices.
- Since writing in test booklets is allowed, it might be helpful to mark the exam narratives in a way that makes them easier to read.
- Use slash marks to break down sentences into small segments. This will make the candidate more attentive to each separate idea in a long sentence.
- Underline key words that tell what a sentence or passage is about. If a question has been skipped, the markings can make it easier to remember what the question was about when revisiting it, without reading the full question or passage again.
- Find words that “harden” or “soften” statements:
 - AND means that one element of the alternative must be present or true in addition to another element for the alternative to be correct (i.e., all statements must be true).
 - OR means that there is a choice of situations. Only one of the elements of the alternative must be present or true for it to be a correct alternative.

- Proceed through the questions strategically:
 - Skim through all materials pertaining to each scenario at least once before starting to respond to the multiple-choice items.
 - Read each scenario and examine each diagram pertaining to the scenario for a general understanding. Next, read each of the items associated with that scenario and return to the scenario and diagrams to check the details.
 - Answer items in a set at the same time.
 - The multiple-choice exam items will be organized around scenarios and diagrams. As a rule, all test items associated with a set of materials (e.g., narrative, diagrams) should be answered at the same time. It is very time-consuming to re-familiarize one's self with all of the materials for an item left unanswered in a set. If the set of items looks difficult in general, it would be more time efficient to skip the entire set of items and then come back to them later. Whenever a set of items is skipped, be sure to mark them as skipped so they can easily be identified.
- Tackle difficult questions methodically:
 - Do not let unfamiliar words slow your progress. The main idea can usually be grasped without knowing the individual word or fully understanding an individual sentence.
 - Do not be afraid to go with the first answer that comes to mind. It can be changed later but, often, first guesses are correct.
 - Use process of elimination. If the answer to a question is not known, first eliminate those choices that seem completely wrong. This will save time by reducing the number of choices needed to be re-read and re-evaluated before selecting your final choice.
- Guess:
 - No more credit will be lost for an incorrect response than for leaving it blank, so it is to each candidate's advantage to respond to every question even if guessing is required. If the examination period is about to end and there will be a substantial number of questions (e.g., more than 5 or 10) that will not be completed, reserve some time (e.g., 60 seconds) toward the very end of the examination period to respond to these questions, even if guessing is the only option. While these guesses may not be correct, the alternative is to leave these questions blank and be assured of getting them wrong.

- Use extra time wisely:
 - If a candidate finishes the examination before the test time expires, he/she should go back and review the responses. Make any changes that are necessary.
- Finally, remember that exam monitors will be there to help candidates with testing procedures. If there are any questions about the testing procedures, ask for assistance before the test begins.

Oral Assessment Test-Taking Strategies

- 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 15) 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.

Studying With Other Candidates

Candidates may also benefit from studying with other candidates dedicated to learning the material (not in paid study groups). Interacting with others is a way to find out what you truly know (and what you truly don't know), role-play hypothetical scenarios and possible questions/courses of action, and practice oral communication skills. Here are some suggestions for creating a successful study group:

1. Don't base study partners solely on friendship: look for people who are committed to scoring well, actively participate in training and drills, and have schedules that work well with yours.
2. Don't make the group too big; a group of three or four people is the ideal size.
3. Designate someone (a moderator) to keep you on schedule. This role can rotate from one meeting to the next.

4. Decide on the topic you are going to discuss **BEFORE** meeting (e.g., at the end of the previous meeting, on a closed Facebook/WhatsApp group, group text). Looking at a reference book's Table of Contents is a good way to find a topic for discussion. Don't take on too much material for one session.
5. Schedule a **SPECIFIC** period of time for your study group (e.g., 1.5 hours) before meeting; it is the moderator's responsibility to keep to that time. This will prevent the session from dragging on—and you feeling your valuable study time has been wasted.
6. Each participant should thoroughly **PREPARE** and identify key points and areas of confusion within the material to be covered in the group.
7. Discuss and quiz each other on the material. Come into the group well-prepared, but be ready to identify areas that you do not understand—it's expected that you won't know everything.
8. Teach others material you understand, and learn from others who understand material better than you do. When you teach someone else material, you have to know it in much more depth, and you will find it solidifies your knowledge. You may even surprise yourself with how much you know.
9. Make it a goal whenever you speak to keep your message brief, crisp, and to the point. This is good practice for the Oral Assessment Exercises and for real life.
10. At the end of each meeting, each participant should have:
 - a. an understanding of what he doesn't know yet/what needs to be studied more, and
 - b. what he already knows well so he can prioritize his time.
11. Every so often, review how the group is going. Keep the tone positive; avoid blame and getting personal. Figure out how the study group is helping and what needs improving.¹

¹ Sources:

<https://forum.facmedicine.com/threads/8-tips-for-getting-the-most-out-of-study-groups.21574/>
<https://www.bradley.edu/wp-content/uploads/HowtoOrganizeandConductEffectiveStudyGroups.pdf>

V. SAMPLE MATERIALS FOR EACH COMPONENT

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. Sample Items from Written Multiple-Choice Test

NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION BATTALION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION

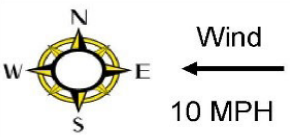
Scenario: Adams Street

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.

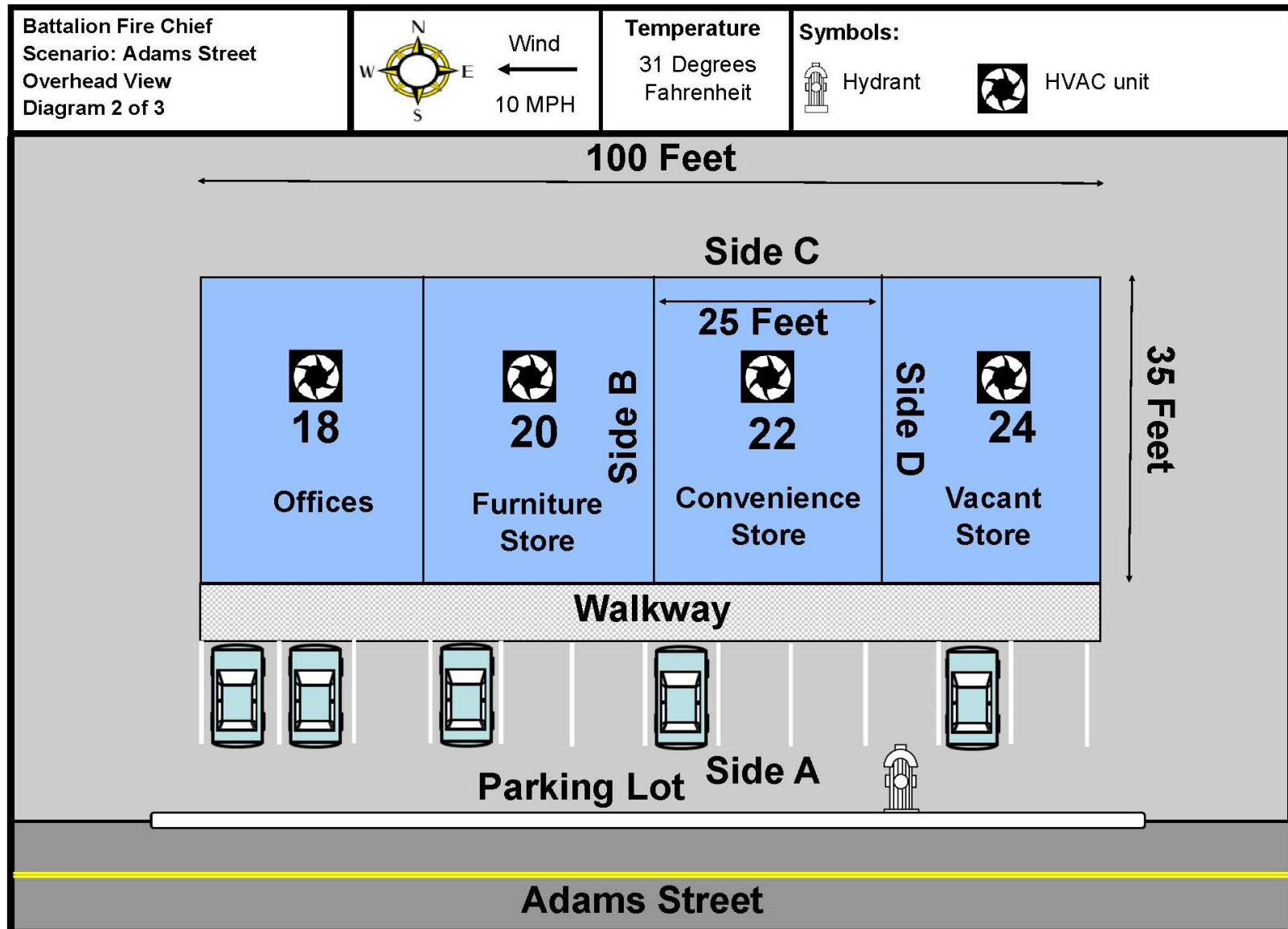
Upon arrival, you notice smoke and flames through the store front windows near the Side B wall.

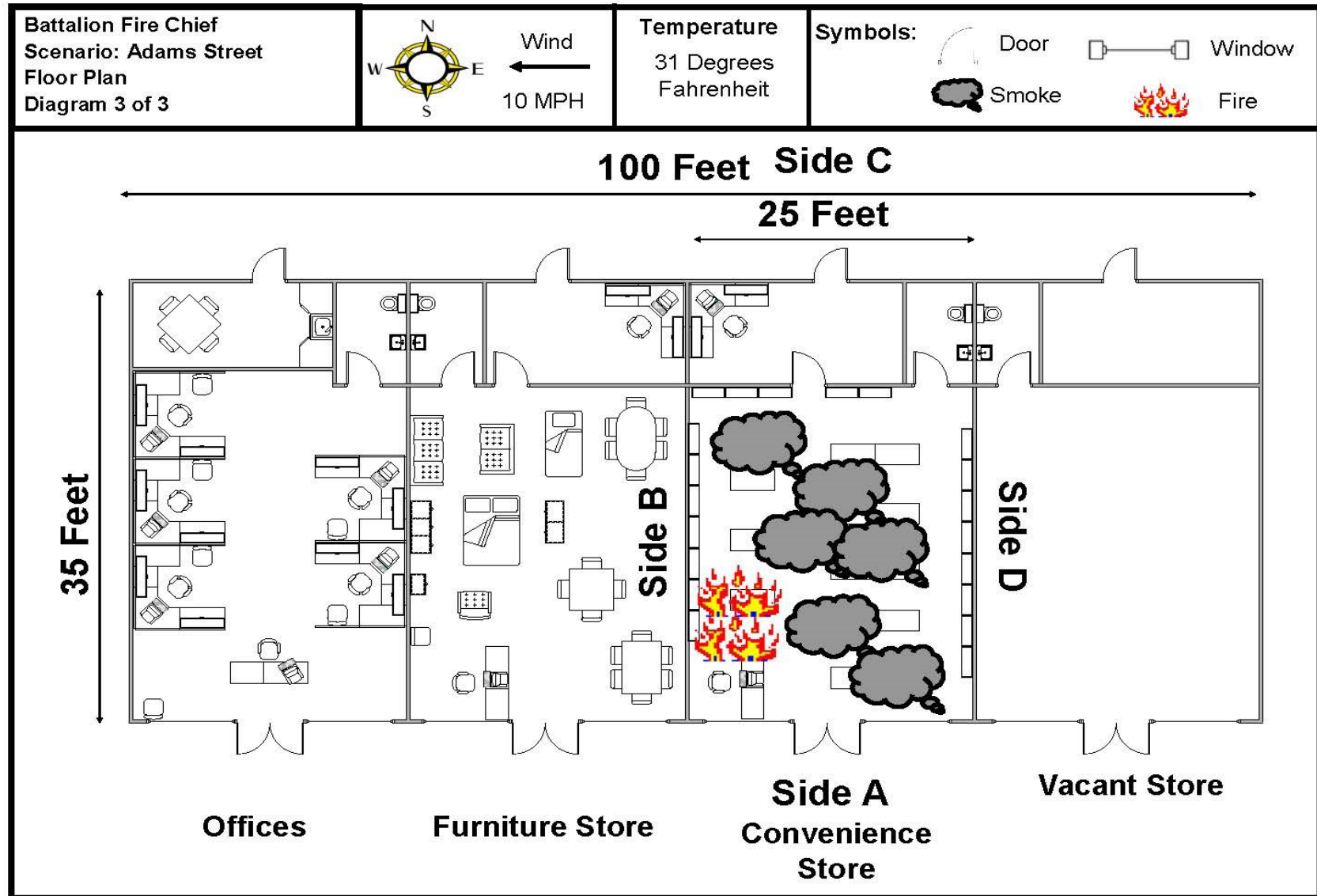
Refer to the description of the scenario above and the diagrams on the following pages when responding to questions 1-3.

Battalion Fire Chief Scenario: Adams Street Side A View Diagram 1 of 3		Temperature 31 Degrees Fahrenheit	Symbols:  Smoke Inside Windows  Fire
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Side A





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.

V. CONCLUSION

This orientation guide represents an attempt to familiarize candidates with all aspects of the Written and Oral components, including the items, materials, logistics and evaluation approach. It also provides some suggestions for preparation. The suggestions provided here are not exhaustive — we encourage candidates to engage in whatever additional preparation strategies they believe will enhance their chances of performing effectively on the exam and on the job.

We hope that this guide has been helpful to you. Good luck!