



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of Alfred Guzzi Jr.,  
Fire Captain (PM1128S),  
Long Branch

CSC Docket No. 2016-631

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Examination Appeal

ISSUED: OCT 22 2015 (RE)

Alfred Guzzi Jr. appeals his score for the oral portion of the examination for the second level Fire Captain (PM1128S), Long Branch. It is noted that the appellant failed the examination.

It is noted for the record that this two-part examination consisted of a written multiple-choice test and an oral examination. The test was worth 70 percent of the final score and seniority was worth the remaining 30 percent. The various portions of the test were weighted as follows: written multiple choice portion, 34.91%; technical score for the Evolving Scenario, 27.11%; oral communication score for the Evolving Scenario, 1.75%; technical score for the Administration of Procedures Scenario, 10.75%; oral communication score for the Administration of Procedures Scenario, 2.5%; technical score for the Arrival Scenario, 21.23%; and oral communication score for the Arrival Scenario, 1.75%.

The oral portion of the second level Fire Captain examination consisted of three scenarios: a fire scenario simulation with questions designed to measure the ability to assess risk factors and strategies involved in fireground command (Evolving); a simulation designed to measure the ability to implement a program and the factors/problems associated with program administration (Administration); and a fire scenario simulation designed to measure the risk factors and strategies associated with an incident that could potentially involve a hazardous material (Arrival). For the Evolving and Administration scenarios, candidates were provided with a 25-minute preparation period for both, and candidates had 10 minutes to

respond to each. For the Arrival scenario, a five minute preparation period was given and candidates had 10 minutes to respond.

The candidates' responses were scored on technical knowledge and oral communication ability. Prior to the administration of the exam, a panel of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) determined the scoring criteria, using generally approved fire command practices, fire fighting practices, and reference materials. Scoring decisions were based on SME-approved possible courses of action (PCAs) including those actions that must be taken to resolve the situation as presented. For a performance to be acceptable in the technical component for some scenarios, a candidate needed to present the mandatory courses of action for that scenario. Only those oral responses that depicted relevant behaviors that were observable and could be quantified were assessed in the scoring process.

Candidates were rated on a five-point scale, with 5 as the optimal response, 4 as a more than acceptable passing response, 3 as a minimally acceptable passing response, 2 as a less than acceptable response, and 1 as a much less than acceptable response. For each of the scenarios, and for oral communication, the requirements for each score were defined. For the Evolving scenario, the appellant scored a 2 for the technical component and a 3 for the oral communication component. For the Administration scenario, the appellant scored a 3 for the technical component and a 3 for the oral communication component. For the Arrival scenario, the appellant scored a 2 for the technical component and a 4 for the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his scores for the technical components of the Evolving and Arrival scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, audiotape, and a listing of possible courses of action for the scenarios were reviewed.

The Evolving scenario concerned an activated fire alarm at the four-story county courthouse on a Thursday in May at 2:30 PM. It is 88°F with a 12 MPH wind blowing from the southwest. The candidate is the officer of the first arriving ladder company, and he arrives with two engine companies and a chief officer. The courthouse was recently completed and opened, and utilizes non-combustible construction. The first floor has a lobby, several sitting areas, two separate office cubicle spaces, and a small cafeteria. The second and third floors have a combination of courtrooms and conference rooms, and the fourth floor has open office space with cubicles. There is also a cellar which includes prisoner holding cells, two elevators, and two sets of stairs. Upon arrival, the candidate does not see any visible smoke. The building manager says that you can see and smell smoke on the second floor, but they have not been able to determine its source or locate any fire. He tells the candidate that, early that morning, a plumber was working on the sprinkler system which is out of service. The chief has assigned the candidate as

Division 2 supervisor, and gives the candidate his ladder company and two engine companies to start initial operations. The Incident Commander (IC) has already requested a second alarm response. Question 1 asked for initial actions including the assignments of the resources. Question 2 indicated that, as the companies are performing their designated assignments, flashover occurs inside the walls and in the ceiling of the second floor bathroom. The bathroom and adjacent rooms are now fully involved, and fire is now spreading laterally on division 2. This question asks for additional actions and requests at this time to address the situation.

The assessor noted that the appellant failed to keep the IC informed of rescue efforts and fire control (progress reports), which was a mandatory response to question 2. He also noted that the appellant missed the opportunities to request an additional ladder company to assist in search and rescue (question 1), and to request progress reports from all division 2 teams (question 2). On appeal, the appellant argues that he said he conducted a PAR, made sure all members had radios and communications, reported rescue efforts and other actions, gave a size-up report to the IC about extra alarms and fire conditions, requested additional alarms and extra units, and requested a secondary search.

It is noted that certain responses to the situation presented in the scenario are mandatory. That is, mandatory responses are responses that are requirements for a performance to be acceptable (a score of 3). All mandatory responses must be given in order for a performance to be acceptable, whether there is one mandatory response or five of them. It is not assumed that candidates receive a score of 5 which is then lowered for lack of responses. Performances that include mandatory responses get a score of 3, and those without mandatory responses get a score of 1 or 2. Additional responses only increase a score from 3 to 4 or from 3 to 5.

The SMEs determined that, due to the severity of the evolving conditions, a mandatory response to question 2 was to keep the IC informed of rescue efforts and fire control (progress reports). In response to question 1, the appellant stated that he made sure all members had radios and communications and received credit for that response. He indicated that an officer would do periodic engine and truck PAR checks, and he designated an evacuation stairwell in question 1, but this is not the same as any of the actions the assessor noted.

In responding to question 2, the appellant indicated that he reported to the IC that there was heavy fire and flashover. This was a mandatory response to question 2. He also requested an additional alarm, and additional resources, and received credit for that response as well. The appellant received credit for performing a secondary search. Neither of these responses are the same as keeping the IC informed of rescue efforts and fire control (giving progress reports). When the appellant had not mentioned the mandatory response, the assessor asked him to

elaborate on checking in with command. The appellant asked, "On arrival?" The assessor responded, "In general." The appellant then replied that upon arrival he would notify dispatch that he was on location, and he would check in with command. He said he would check in with the command center to see what assignments he would be given. This was not the same as keeping the IC informed of rescue efforts and fire control in response to the information provided in question 2. In sum, none of the actions listed by the appellant in his appeal are the same as those mentioned by the assessors. The appellant missed the mandatory response, as well as other responses, and his score of 2 for this component is correct.

The Arrival scenario concerned a notification of an activated fire alarm at an apartment complex. It is 12:40 AM on a Thursday in May, the temperature is 56° F, and there is no wind. The apartments are on the second, third and fourth floors of a 30-year-old, four-story building of non-combustible construction. The first floor contains many individual commercial spaces. The candidate is the company officer of the first arriving engine and the highest ranking officer on-scene. Upon arrival, the candidate sees smoke venting from the third floor open windows on side D. A resident who lives on the second floor indicates that the property manager is currently installing new carpets in the hallways of the second, third and fourth floors. He states that there are carpeting, paint, solvents, adhesives, and cleaning agents being stored on all three floors. Question 1 asked for the main concerns at this incident. Question 2 asked for specific actions to take to fully address the incident.

The assessor noted that the appellant failed to mention the possible hazardous materials situation, which was a mandatory response to question 1, and to request a hazardous materials response team, which was a mandatory response to question 2. It was also noted that he missed the opportunity to indicate there was a common cockloft, which was an additional response to question 1. On appeal, the appellant argues that he stated that there were steel bar joist construction concerns and to get the fire out before it extended, and he monitored the air for CO and LELs on the fire floor and building.

In reply, as mentioned in the instructions to candidates, credit was not given for information which is implied or assumed, but was based on what the candidate actually said during his performance. Steel bar joist construction concerns are not the same as indicating there was a common cockloft. The appellant received credit for mentioning steel bar joists, which was another response to question 1, but he cannot receive credit for implying that he was aware of the common cockloft as well, as he did not mention it. As to hazardous materials, monitoring the air for CO and LELs on the fire floor and building is simply not the same action as requesting a hazardous materials response team. If the appellant meant to call for a hazardous materials response team, he should have mentioned this in his presentation. The

appellant missed the actions noted by the assessor, which included two mandatory responses, and his score of 2 for this component is correct.

CONCLUSION

A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be denied.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ON  
THE 21<sup>st</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2015

  
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