



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of
Fabio Cologna, Fire Captain
(PM1123S), Hoboken

CSC Docket No. 2016-2872

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: **OCT 25 2016** (RE)

Fabio Cologna appeals his score for the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Captain (PM1123S), Hoboken. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a final score of 83.620 and his name appears as the 15th ranked eligible on the subject list.

It is noted for the record that this two-part examination consisted of a written multiple-choice portion and an oral portion. Candidates were required to pass the written portion of the examination, and then were ranked on their performance on both portions of the examination. The test was worth 80 percent of the final score and seniority was worth the remaining 20 percent. Of the test weights, 31.35% of the score was the written multiple-choice portion, 22.49% was the technical score for the evolving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the evolving exercise, 4.28% was the oral communication score for the evolving exercise, 19.23% was the technical score for the arriving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the arriving exercise, and 7.59% was the oral communication score for the arriving exercise.

The oral portion of the Fire Captain examination consisted of two scenarios: a fire scene simulation with questions designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of firefighters and the ability to assess fire conditions and hazards in an evolving incident on the fireground (evolving); and a fire scene simulation designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of firefighters and the ability to plan strategies and tactics based upon a building's

structure and condition (arriving). Knowledge of supervision was measured by questions in both scenarios, and was scored for each. For the evolving scenario, candidates were provided with a 15-minute preparation period, and candidates had 10 minutes to respond. For the arriving scenario, a five minute preparation period was given and candidates had 10 minutes to respond.

The candidates' responses were scored on technical knowledge and oral communication ability. Prior to the administration of the exam, a panel of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) determined the scoring criteria, using generally approved fire command practices, firefighting practices, and reference materials. Scoring decisions were based on SME-approved possible courses of action (PCAs) including those actions that must be taken to resolve the situation as presented. For a performance to be acceptable, 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. Each performance was evaluated by two SMEs who currently are a first level supervisor or higher. If the SME scores differed by 1 point, the score was averaged. If they differed by more than 1 point, the SMEs were required to confer with each other until they agreed on a score. Scores were then converted to standardized scores.

Candidates were rated on a five-point scale, with 5 as the optimal response, 4 as a more than acceptable passing response, 3 as a minimally acceptable passing response, 2 as a less than acceptable response, and 1 as a much less than acceptable response. For each of the scenes, and for oral communication, the requirements for each score were defined.

For the evolving scenario, the appellant scored a 2 for the technical component, a 4 for the supervision component, and a 5 for the oral communication component. For the arriving scenario, the appellant scored a 3.5 for the technical component, a 5 for the supervision component, and a 5 for the oral communication component. The appellant challenges his scores for the technical components of both scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The evolving scenario involves a fire in a Chinese restaurant, which is the second store in a row of five in a single-story building with brick walls and steel-bar joist construction built in the early 1960s. It is 8:00 PM on a Friday in June, and the temperature is 78° Fahrenheit with clear skies and a wind blowing from west to east at 5 miles per hour. Upon arrival, it is noticed that smoke is coming from the front door on side A. Dispatch states the caller was a customer picking up take-out food when they were overcome with smoke and left the building. The caller is unsure if employees managed to escape, and it is unknown if the automatic hood

suppression system has been activated. The candidate is the commanding officer of the first arriving ladder company. There were two technical questions. Question 1 asked for specific actions to be taken upon arrival. Question 2 indicates that, while searching the meat store (exposure D), a fire fighter knocks over several overstocked displays and becomes trapped. He issues a Mayday. The question asked for actions that should be taken based on this new information. Instructions indicate that, in responding to the questions, the candidate should be as specific as possible in describing actions, and should not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to a score.

In regard to the technical component, the assessors noted that the appellant failed to secure a water supply, which was a mandatory response to question 1, and to order a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR), which was a mandatory response to question 2. On appeal, the appellant states that he assigned a water supply officer, a safety officer, and an accountability officer.

In reply, mandatory responses are responses that are requirements for a performance to be acceptable (a score of 3). A review of the appellant's presentation indicates that he assigned a water supply officer in response to question 1, but he did not order the engine company to secure a water supply. These are separate actions, and credit is not given for information that is implied or assumed. After a Mayday has been issued by a firefighter trapped in the meat store in question 2, the SME's determined that it was appropriate to order a PAR to account for all the firefighters. The appellant assigned an accountability officer in response to question 1, but he did not order a PAR in response to question 2. The appellant's response to question 2 was extremely brief. His entire response to this question was, "The firefighter that was trapped, we'll activate the RIT. Replace the RIT. Make the, make the rescue." Activating the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) and rescuing the trapped firefighter were two other mandatory responses to this question. The appellant missed the mandatory response listed by the assessors for question 2, as well as all other additional responses for that question. As the appellant missed two mandatory responses, his score of 2 for this component is correct.

The arriving scenario involved a report of smoke in a single-story, wood frame constructed house with brick veneer built in the 1950s. It is 10:30 AM on a Thursday in September, 68° F, with partly cloudy skies and a wind blowing from west to east at 5 miles per hour. The candidate is the commanding officer of the first arriving engine company and the first officer on scene. Upon arrival, the candidate notices smoke coming from the open garage door on side A. Dispatch states that the caller is a neighbor who saw smoke coming from an open garage door, and says that an elderly man lives in the house and is confined to a bedroom. All appliances in this house are fueled by natural gas, and sides B and D face

similar houses 20 feet away. The rear yard is not accessible. The technical question asked for specific actions to be taken upon arrival. Instructions indicate that, in responding to the questions, the candidate should be as specific as possible in describing actions, and should not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to a score.

For the technical component, the assessors indicated that the appellant missed the opportunities to call for a second alarm, stretch a backup handline, and secure a secondary water supply. On appeal, the appellant states that he called for second and third alarms, indicated that exposures would be protected, and requested a water supply officer.

In reply, a review of the appellant's presentation indicates that he requested a second alarm, and used one company as the RIT. The appellant stretched a hoseline to extinguish fire in the garage, but he did not stretch a backup hoseline. Also, as noted above, requesting a water supply officer is not the same as establishing a water supply, and the appellant did not establish a secondary water supply. This was a formal examination setting, and candidates were required to verbalize the actions they would take on-scene. Establishing a water supply officer does not indicate that the appellant knew that he needed to establish a secondary water supply. However, the appellant did request a second alarm and his score for the technical component should be raised from 3.5 to 4.

CONCLUSION

A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that, except for the technical component of the arriving scenario, 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 the score for the technical component of the arriving scenario be raised from 3.5 to 4, and the remainder of the 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
THE 19th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2016



Robert M. Czech
Chairperson
Civil Service Commission

Inquiries
and
Correspondence

Director
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
Civil Service Commission
Written Record Appeals Unit
P. O. Box 312
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0312

c: Fabio Cologna
Michael Johnson
Records Center

