



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of  
Peter Comey, Fire Officer 1  
(PM1194S), Jersey City

CSC Docket No. 2016-2760

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: **OCT 25 2016**

(RE)

Peter Comey appeals his score for the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Officer 1 (PM1194S), Jersey City. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a final score of 88.290 and his name appears as the 55<sup>th</sup> 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 Officer 1 examination consisted of two scenarios: a fire scene simulation with questions designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of fire fighters and the ability to assess fire conditions and hazards in an evolving incident on the fireground (evolving); 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 3 for the technical component, a 4.5 for the supervision component, and a 5 for the oral communication component. For the arriving scenario, the appellant scored a 5 for the technical component, a 5 for the supervision component, and a 5 for the oral communication component. The appellant challenges his score for the supervision component of the evolving scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The evolving scenario involved a report of a fire in a one-story, ordinary construction building consisting of a bakery, Laundromat, convenience store, and liquor store. It is 6:00 AM on a Sunday in September and the temperature is 72° Fahrenheit with clear skies, and a wind blowing from east to west at 5 MPH. Upon arrival, it is noticed that smoke is coming from the Laundromat on side A. A bystander said she noticed smoke coming from the closed Laundromat and called 911. The candidate is the commanding officer of the first arriving ladder company and he establishes command. There were two technical questions and a supervisory

question. The supervisory question states that, during the incident, the candidate knows all personnel have been accounted for, but a firefighter from the candidate's crew stops his assigned task and begins to remove collapse debris from the front of the building. This question asked for actions that should be taken at the scene and after returning to the firehouse. 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 supervision component, the assessors noted that the appellant missed the opportunity to review applicable department Standard Operating Procedures/Standard Operating Guidelines (SOPs/SOGs). On appeal, the appellant states that he specified "rules and regulations," and he gives definitions for standard operating procedure, regulation, guidelines, and rules.

In reply, the scoring of this examination was not based on buzzwords. Credit was given when appropriate answers were given in context. A review of the appellant's video and related examination materials indicates that he did not take any appropriate actions on scene. Rather, he stated he would take corrective action on the scene if there were any problems. The scenario indicated there was a problem, and candidates were expected to state what corrective action they would take. The appellant did not do so and credit is not given for information that is implied or assumed. After returning to the firehouse, candidates were expected to review applicable department SOPs and SOGs. The appellant did not take this action, nor did he mention rules and regulations, or state that he would review rules and regulations, as he implies in his appeal. The appellant's score for this component will not be changed.

## 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  
THE 19<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2016

  
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