



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of Howard Simone,
Fire Officer 2 (PM1513T),
Jersey City

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2017-1319

ISSUED: DEC 23 2016 (RE)

Howard Simone appeals his score on the examination for Fire Officer 2 (PM1513T), Jersey City. It is noted that the appellant passed the examination with a final average of 84.050 and ranked 24th on the eligible list.

This two-part examination consisted of an integrated system of simulations designed to generate behavior similar to that required for success on the job. The first part consisted of 70 multiple-choice items that measured specific work components identified and weighted by the job analysis. The second part consisted of three oral scenarios; a Supervision, Administration and Incident Command scenario. All candidates received the same multiple-choice exam, but differing versions of the oral exercises were given based on the day the oral exam was administered. The examination was based on a comprehensive job analysis conducted by the Civil Service Commission, which identified the critical areas of the job. The weighting of the test components was derived from the job analysis data.

For the oral portion, candidates had 60 minutes to prepare for all three scenarios and had 10 minutes per scenario to present their response. For all three oral exercises, the candidate was to assume the role of a Battalion Fire Chief (or Fire Officer 2). Candidates were scored based on the content of their response (technical) and the how well they presented their response (oral communication). Both of these dimensions were scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest rating.

Each candidate in a given jurisdiction was scored by a team of three different Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), who were trained in current technical and oral communication scoring procedures. Each SME is a current or retired fire officer who held the title of Battalion Fire Chief (or Fire Officer 2) or higher. As part of the scoring process, an SME observed and noted the responses of a candidate relative to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that each exercise was designed to measure. An SME also noted any weaknesses that detracted from the candidates overall oral communication ability. The SME then rated the candidate's performance according to the rating standards and assigned the candidate a technical or oral communication score on that exercise.

In order to preserve the relative weighting of each of the components of the examination, the ratings for each portion were adjusted by a well-recognized statistical process known as "standardization." Under this process, the ratings are standardized by converting the raw scores to z-scores, an expression of the deviation of the score from the mean score of the group in relation to the standard deviation of scores for the group. Each portion of the examination had a relative weight in its relation to the whole examination. Thus, the z-score for the multiple-choice portion was multiplied by a test weight of 36.53%, the oral technical scores were multiplied by a test weight of 53.91% and the oral communication scores were multiplied by a test weight of 9.56%. The weighted z-scores were summed and this became the overall final test score. This was weighted and added to the weighted seniority score. The result was standardized, then normalized, and rounded up to the third decimal place to arrive at a final average.

For the technical and oral communication components of the Supervision, Administration and Incident Command scenarios, the appellant received scores of 5, 3, 5 and 5, 5, 5, respectively.

The appellant challenges his score for the technical component of the Administration scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material and a listing of possible courses of action (PCAs) for the scenario were reviewed.

The Administration scenario indicated that there was a long delay of apprehension of the individuals involved in a rash of arson incidents in a neighboring town due to mismanagement of evidence by the firefighters in that jurisdiction. The Fire Chief wants to take proactive action against this possibility, particularly considering that the Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines (SOPs/SOGs) have not been updated in over eight years. The Fire Chief asks the newly appointed Battalion Fire Chief to update and revise the SOPs/SOGs to reflect current standards. The question asked candidates to base their responses on the text *The Fire Chief's Handbook*, and their experience. Question 1 asked for initial steps to take to update scene security SOPs/SOGs. Question 2 asked what should be included in a SOP/SOG dealing with scene security.

For this question, the SME noted that the appellant missed the opportunities to look out for any suspicious activity or person (question 2) and to indicate that, if something must be moved, they should memorize or mark the original location (question 2). On appeal, the appellant stated that he said he would have the safety officer preserve evidence at the fire scene.

In reply, in response to question 1, the appellant stated that an immediate short goal would be to be proactive, and if there is a fire, with the safety officer and the fire investigator's unit, he would rope off the area so it is preserved, as it is a crime scene. While he did not specify that this was in response to question 2, the appellant received credit in question 2 for not disturbing any potential evidence, *i.e.*, scene preservation. This was a separate response from either note given by the SME. The appellant spent most of his time responding to question 1 and did not directly answer question 2. Scene security was the only appropriate response he gave to question 2, and his score of 3 for this component is correct.

CONCLUSION

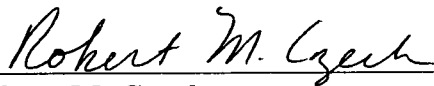
A thorough review of appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

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 21st DAY OF DECEMBER, 2016



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