



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of
Alain Amaro, Fire Officer 1
(PM1195S), North Hudson Regional
Fire and Rescue Service

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2016-~~2573~~²⁸⁵³

ISSUED: NOV 16 2016 (RE)

Alain Amaro appeals his score for the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Officer 1 (PM1195S), North Hudson Regional Fire and Rescue Service. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a final score of 88.830 and his name appears as the 38th 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 5 for the technical component, a 5 for the supervision component, and a 4 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 4 for the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his scores for the oral communication components of both scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

For the oral communication components of both scenarios, the assessors indicated that the appellant displayed a major weakness in rate of speech by speaking so rapidly that at times he was hard to follow. On appeal, the appellant contends that because he scored 5s on the technical and supervision components, he was understood and therefore communicated clearly, distinctly and concisely. He states that his communication was effective and his rate of speech was normal.

In regard to the difference in scoring of both components for these scenarios, the components measured in the oral examination are viewed as independent and are scored accordingly. Behaviors can be attributed to each component which are sufficiently distinguishable to warrant a unique score. Thus, candidates can completely answer the questions for the technical component, while exhibiting negative behaviors or weaknesses in the oral communication component. Or, candidates can fail to properly answer the questions for the technical component, while exhibiting no weaknesses in the oral communication component. As such, an independent score can be assigned for the technical and oral communication components within a performance. Thus, a candidate's behavior on one component cannot be used to score his behavior on another component, and is not reflective of a score for another component.

A review of the video and related examination materials reveals that the appellant's presentations had the weakness listed by the assessor. The orientation guide that was available to each candidate indicated that oral communication, the ability to communicate clearly and concisely, was a component of this portion of the exam. A factor in oral communication is inflection/moderation/rate/volume. This factor is defined as speaking at an appropriate rate, maintaining appropriate pitch and volume, and properly using pitch to convey meaning or emphasis.

As to his rate of speech, the appellant spoke more rapidly than normal, and there were none of the usual pauses between sentences or ideas, much like a sales pitch. The appellant maintained a rapid pace throughout his ten-minute response periods, which resulted in the impression that the presentations were being given in "fast forward." He spoke in a rush to provide information. Slight pauses that are heard in normal speech, such as after the end of a sentence were not there, making the presentation seem to be a quick stream of words. The cadence of normal speech was absent, such as the fall in inflection of the voice at the end of a sentence, and the articulation rate was fast and difficult to follow. The appellant was correctly scored for the oral communication component for both scenarios.

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 10th DAY OF NOVEMBER, 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: Alain Amaro
Michael Johnson
Records Center