



B-17

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of Bruce Stevens,  
Battalion Fire Chief (PM1494T),  
Elizabeth

CSC Docket No. 2017-1291

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: FEB 24 2017

(RE)

Bruce Stevens appeals his score on the examination for Battalion Fire Chief (PM1494T), Elizabeth. It is noted that the appellant passed the examination with a final average of 89.270 and ranks fourth 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. 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 4, 5, 4, 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 in 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 scenario, the SME noted that the appellant missed the opportunities to look out for suspicious activity/person (question 2), and to mark or note any potential evidence (question 2). On appeal, the appellant states that he indicated he would go to neighboring towns and discover how they found the perpetrator and what information they were looking for; asked how we preserve evidence and make sure they have the tools to find the perpetrators; and indicated he would go over spill patterns.

In reply, question 2 asked what should be included in an SOG/SOP dealing with scene security. In response to question 1, the appellant indicated he wanted to know the SOP's of neighboring towns. He then formed a committee with various individuals, and reiterated that he would go to neighboring towns to find out how they found the perpetrator, what were they looking for, and "what was the ultimate thing that gave them up" to incorporate that in the SOGs/SOPs so they know what to look for when they arrive on scenes. For this response, the appellant received credit for contacting neighboring fire departments where the incidents occurred in response to question 1. He then stated that he would involve the unions and have his committee analyze the information. At this point, the appellant had not yet begun his response to question 2. The instructions given after the questions asked candidates to be as specific as possible in responding to questions, and not to assume or take for granted that general actions would contribute to their score. If the appellant meant to include looking out for any suspicious activity/person in an SOG/SOP dealing with scene security, he needed to have verbalized that action in response to question 2. Credit cannot be given for information that is implied or assumed.

The appellant's response to question 1 was thorough, and he spent most of his time formulating his committee and developing a program regarding scene security. In doing this, he incorporated a response to question 2 within his response to question 1 rather than answering each question separately. He also provided information which was not relevant to the questions, but was relevant to the fire department and the committee. For example, he had a train-the-trainer program, indicated he would have everyone certified, and created mock drills. In that vein, he indicated he would go over radio communications and arson spill patterns. In regard to arson spill patterns, he stated, "We'll go over arson spill patterns. What are they looking for in an investigation? How do we preserve evidence? How can we save it and make sure that they have a ah, the tools they need to find perpetrators once we do our job of extinguishing the fires, saving life, and conserving property?" For this response, the appellant received credit for not disturbing any potential evidence (scene preservation). However, there is no mention that he would mark or note any potential evidence. The appellant responded as though the question had asked for the development of a program regarding scene security. He did not directly answer question 2 in his ten-minute response, and he missed the actions noted by the SME. His score for this component is correct.



## CONCLUSION

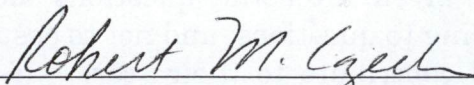
A thorough review of appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

## 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 22<sup>nd</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2017

  
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: Bruce Stevens  
Michael Johnson  
Records Center