



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

**FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the Matter of Phillip White,
Fire Captain (PM1052V),
Pennsauken

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2019-555

ISSUED: September 24, 2018 (RE)

Phillip White appeals his score for the oral portion of the examination for the second-level Fire Captain (PM1052V), Pennsauken. It is noted that the appellant failed the examination.

This two-part examination consisted of a written multiple-choice test and an oral examination. The test was worth 70 percent of the final score and seniority was worth the remaining 30 percent. The various portions of the test were weighted as follows: written multiple choice portion, 34.91%; technical score for the Evolving Scenario, 27.11%; oral communication score for the Evolving Scenario, 1.75%; technical score for the Administration of Procedures Scenario, 10.75%; oral communication score for the Administration of Procedures Scenario, 2.5%; technical score for the Arrival Scenario, 21.23%; and oral communication score for the Arrival Scenario, 1.75%.

The oral portion of the second level Fire Captain examination consisted of three scenarios: a fire scenario simulation with questions designed to measure the ability to assess risk factors and strategies involved in fireground command (Evolving); a simulation designed to measure the ability to implement a program and the factors/problems associated with program administration (Administration); and a fire scenario simulation designed to measure the risk factors and strategies associated with an incident that could potentially involve a hazardous material (Arrival). For the Evolving and Administration scenarios, candidates were provided with a 25-minute preparation period for both, and candidates had 10 minutes to

respond to each. For the Arrival 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, fire fighting 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 in the technical component for some scenarios, 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.

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 scenarios, and for oral communication, the requirements for each score were defined. For the Evolving scenario, the appellant scored a 1 for the technical component and a 4 for the oral communication component. For the Administration scenario, the appellant scored a 4 for the technical component and a 5 for the oral communication component. For the Arrival scenario, the appellant scored a 2 for the technical component and a 4 for the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his scores for the technical component of the Arrival scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material, videotape, and a listing of possible courses of action for the scenarios were reviewed.

The Arrival scenario pertained to a report of smoke and fire coming from a three-story, ten-year-old residential property consisting of twelve rental units, eleven of which were occupied. A first floor unit was being renovated, and the property had rooftop skylights. There are possible victims on the upper floors, including an elderly woman on the third floor. The question asked for concerns and specific actions to be taken to address the incident.

For this scenario, the assessor indicated that the appellant failed to perform vertical ventilation of the skylights, a mandatory response, and he missed the opportunities to request Red Cross for displaced residents and to request a property representative, which were additional responses. The appellant argues that he coordinated ventilation efforts between the engine and truck companies. He states that he was unsure of the location of the skylights, whether they were above the stairwell or a third-floor apartment. Since the fire was on the second floor and

there was an apartment between the fire and the skylight, he argues that it would not be beneficial to open the skylight, and would not guarantee positive results, but could produce an increased burning rate. He also argues that this is a task that the Incident Commander (IC) would not dictate, but he would provide crews with objectives.

In reply, the appellant is not arguing that he performed vertical ventilation of the skylights, rather, he disagrees that this is an action that should be taken. The SMEs determined that not only is it to be mentioned by the IC, but it was mandatory. In this scene, fire is venting from the second-story windows on the a/b corner, there are skylights in the roof, and there is a possible elderly occupant on the third floor. The question asked for specific actions to be taken to address the incident. It did not ask simply for objectives, and the appellant did not give only objectives in his response. He provided other specific actions, such as stretching a line through the front door to the stairwell, and having the crew go into the common hallway to start an attack on the fire. In his presentation, the appellant states that life safety was his priority, including the residents, and he stated that he would rescue victims at windows. Regarding ventilation, the appellant stated, "Ventilation with the truck company would have to be a coordinated effort between the engine and the truck, and that the truck can't vent before the engine is ready to put water on the fire." This response pertains to the timing of the procedure, and does not provide ventilation actions. For his truck company, the appellant sent two members to search, and had two members raise ground ladders. The appellant identified a high life hazard, and performed a search, but he did not state that he did not vent the skylights because he didn't know where they were. He did not address searching for and rescuing the elderly victim on the third floor before concluding his presentation.

The assessor then asked the appellant to be more specific regarding ventilation, and the appellant responded, "Vent as well, we would vent, given today's current standards, it would be opposite the fire attack in a coordinated fashion with when the hoseline is in place, charged at the area of the fire, they are ready to put um, water on the fire so we don't have an uncontrolled flow path ah, that would either put us into the hallway or intensify the fire before the first handline is in place to make the attack on the fire." This response is not specific. Again, the appellant mentions coordination with the attack line, and he adds that it would be opposite the fire attack. The appellant's response was oriented towards attacking the fire, and did not otherwise pertain to ventilation. The appellant argues that he did not ventilate the skylights as he did not know where they were. Nevertheless, this non-action would allow heat and products of combustion to continue to accumulate on the third floor with the victim. The assessor asked the appellant to be specific about his search, and he stated that a search would start closest to the fire and directly above the fire, but that would be up to the truck company officer depending

on conditions and things of that nature. The SMEs determined that if the IC knew of a skylight, it was essential that it be ventilated, and the IC would be remiss if he did not determine that this action had been taken. Candidates were told to be specific, and the appellant's response to search and ventilation was vague. The appellant's argument that he did not have to ventilate the skylights since he did not know where they were is unpersuasive. He cannot receive credit for actions that he believes he delegated, but did not mention. The appellant missed a mandatory response and the other actions noted by the assessor, and his score of 2 for this component is correct.

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 ON
THE 20th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2018



Deirdré L. Webster Cobb
Chairperson
Civil Service Commission

Inquiries
and
Correspondence

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

c: Phillip White
Michael Johnson
Records Center