



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

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

In the Matter of John Ryan,  
Battalion Fire Chief (PM2151W),  
Elizabeth

CSC Docket No. 2020-1312

Examination Appeal

**ISSUED:** January 30, 2020 (RE)

John Ryan appeals his score on the promotional examination for Battalion Fire Chief (PM2151W), Elizabeth. It is noted that the appellant passed the examination with a final average of 83.170 and ranks ninth 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 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. 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). These components 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 4, 4, and 1, and 3, 4, and 3, respectively.

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

## CONCLUSION

The Incident Command scenario involved a fire at a medical facility which is a chemotherapy center. Question 1 asked for specific actions upon arrival at the scene. Question 2 indicated that during fireground operations, one of the firefighters falls into an intravenous (IV) stand with IV bags containing doxorubicin, a potent chemotherapy drug, soaking himself with the fluid, and he sustained a head injury. It asked for specific actions to be taken based on this new information.

For this scenario, the SME noted that the appellant failed to monitor or protect the truss roof, which was a mandatory response to question 1. It was also indicated that he failed to conduct emergency gross decontamination with a hoseline, which was a mandatory response to question 2. It was also indicated that the appellant missed the opportunities to ensure monitoring of air, and to set up a collapse zone, which were additional responses to question 1. On appeal, the appellant argues that he

stated that the product's makeup and hazards were not known in order for him to enact proper decontamination procedures. He provides some excerpts from texts regarding decontamination which indicate that the type of the contamination is based on the product, and there are water reactive contaminants such as perchloric acid in powder form, fumigants, and most metal hydrides.

In reply, question 2 indicated that a firefighter was soaked in doxorubicin, a potent chemotherapy drug, and he had also sustained a head injury. The SMEs determined that it was mandatory that the Incident Commander (IC) conduct emergency gross decontamination with a handline, and the appellant did not take this action. The toxic effects of antineoplastic drugs used for cancer treatment have been well known since their introduction in the 1940s. Clearly the firefighter has had dermal exposure to a toxic medicine, and might have inhaled it, swallowed it, or had it enter his head injury. The appellant may not know that doxorubicin is extremely acidic, or that accidental contact with the skin or eyes should be treated immediately by copious washing with water, or soap and water, or sodium bicarbonate solution, but his argument that he did not need to decontaminate as he did not know the risks, or that doxorubicin may be water reactive, is unpersuasive. This was an IV drug, and if it was water reactive, it would cause major problems in a human when pumped into the bloodstream.

The appellant knew it was a Hazmat incident and in question 1, identified the material by MSDS and by speaking to Chemtrec, which was another mandatory response. He also requested Hazmat, which was an additional response. However, in response to question 2, the appellant took no action to conduct gross decontamination, which involves evacuating the patient (firefighter) from the high-risk area, removing his clothing, and performing a one-minute quick head-to-toe rinse with water. The appellant brought the firefighter to safety, and made sure he received "proper medical care," but he did not conduct gross decontamination. The appellant stated he would "have to decon all units," however, this is not specific to the soaked firefighter. The appellant missed this mandatory response, and the other actions noted by the assessor which include another mandatory response. As such, his score of 1 is correct.

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 ON  
THE 29<sup>th</sup> DAY OF JANUARY, 2020



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