

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, supervision 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. 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 scenes, and for oral communication, the requirements for each score were defined.

For the evolving scenario, the appellant scored a 1 for the technical component, a 3 for the supervision component, and a 3 for the oral communication component. For the arriving scenario, the appellant scored a 1 for the technical component, and a 4 for the oral communication component. The appellant challenges his scores for the technical, supervision and oral communication components of the evolving scenario, and for the technical component of the arriving scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The evolving scenario involved a report of fire at a maintenance and repair automotive garage. The Incident Commander (IC) orders the candidate to establish a water supply and begin an offensive attack. Question 1 asked for detailed orders given to the crew of Engine 3 to complete the orders from the IC. Question 2 indicated that during the fire attack, a portion of the roof collapsed and blocked the means of egress, causing disorientation of the candidate and his crew. This question asked for immediate actions to be taken by the candidate and his crew. Question 3 (supervision) indicated that upon arrival the candidate discovered that the supply hose was improperly packed which caused a delay in current operations. This question asked for specific actions to be taken now and back at the firehouse.

For the technical component, the assessor noted that the candidate failed to search for victims off the line (question 1), failed to cool the trusses (question 1), failed to check crew accountability (PAR) (question 2), and failed to activate his PASS device (question 2). On appeal, the appellant argues that he did not have to search for victims off the line, as that was not part of his orders, and as this was

commercial property, he would have a 2 1/2" hoseline which would require his entire crew to handle. He states that the ladder company would perform this duty, and he had to commit to fire extinguishment. For question 2, he states that he said that the crew would always stay together and maintain crew integrity, he checked the crew's air supply, and he told the IC his location. He states that it was the IC's job to conduct a PAR and that activating his PASS device was not necessary as the air was not low, they could look for a way out, and it would hinder crew communication with the IC.

In reply, the appellant's argument that it was not necessary for him to search off the line is not persuasive. The PCAs were developed by SMEs who disagree with this approach. The scenario indicated that multiple people were standing on the grass but no one could confirm if anyone was still inside the building. The truck company would be responsible for a primary search, which is quick search for live victims performed before the fire has been brought under control. However, the engine company should search for victims off the line as it advances. If victims' locations are not immediately known, the most important prior is to get the hoseline operating between the fire and the victims, as human life takes precedence over all other concerns. A review of the appellant's performance indicates that he did not search for victims off the line, or cool the steel trusses in the roof in response to question 1. For question 2, the scenario indicated that both the candidate and his crew are disoriented. Staying together and maintaining crew integrity, checking the crew's air supply, and giving the IC his location is not that same as activating the PASS device. A portion of the roof has collapsed, blocking egress. As such, the candidate should call for help by every means possible, radio, PASS alarm, and voice. A review of the appellant's presentation indicates that he did not activate his PASS device, nor did he check crew accountability. The appellant missed four mandatory responses and his score of 1 for this component is correct.

For the supervision component, the assessors indicated that the appellant missed the opportunities to order the firefighters to correctly deploy the hose, and to check the firefighters' records, both training and personnel. On appeal, the appellant argues that he deployed a 2 1/2" line to the seat of the fire. He also states that he went over the SOPs/SOGs with the crew, and discussed training. He states that going over training and personnel records was not necessary since he was not issuing a formal reprimand.

In reply, the question asked candidates for specific actions to be taken now and back at the firehouse, and the appellant did not respond with any actions he would take at the scene. In his appeal, the appellant is asking for credit in question 3 for an action taken in response to question 1, stretching a 2 1/2" line to the seat of the fire, an action for which he already received credit. Candidates were expected to directly respond to the questions. The appellant cannot receive credit in question 3 for ordering his crew to correctly deploy the hose because he stretched a 2 1/2" line to

the seat of the fire in question 1. The appellant stated he would provide training and he went over the SOPs/SOGs with the crew, two separate actions which contributed to his score. However, he did not check the firefighters' personnel and training records prior to providing training, and that appellant's arguments that he did not have to are not persuasive. An effective supervisor would check the records to see who may not have had training in this area, how long ago the crew was trained, and if anyone is having a problem which would affect their duties.

As to oral communication for the evolving scenario, the assessor noted that the appellant failed to maintain eye contact when speaking. The appellant argues that he referred to his notes and handouts, and that it was unfair to "grade someone based on how much they looked at the camera," especially with a monitor sitting next to the camera. He states that it is up to the appointing authority to make "that assessment" when interviewing for a promotion, but that he did make eye contact from time to time with the camera.

In reply, a factor in oral communication is nonverbal communication. A weakness in this factor is defined as failing to use gestures effectively, thereby causing confusion or distractions, and failing to maintain eye contact with the camera when speaking. 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 review of the evolving scenario indicates that the appellant's lack of eye contact was a weakness. The appellant states that eye contact, should not be scored. In this respect, candidates were permitted to use their notes, but they were told to make their presentation to the camera. Further, it is noted that test conditions were standardized in their application to all candidates, *i.e.*, nonverbal communication (including eye contact) was assessed for all candidates. Prior to commencing the examination, the room monitor reads the same information to every candidate. When giving instructions, the monitor told the appellant to direct his responses to the video camera and not to her, as she will not be involved in the scoring of the examination. She said, "I will now explain to you the examination process. The exam will be both video and audio recorded. You are to respond facing the camera as if you were talking to your target audience. I will not be involved in the scoring of your exam." This was a formal examination setting, and candidates were told to address the camera.

Throughout the evolving scenario, the appellant looked down at his notes. He read from these notes, which were on the table in front of him, rarely looking up. The appellant gave multiple actions and occasionally glanced up at the camera for a second at a time. This is not proper eye contact. The appellant looked up for seven seconds, while responding to question 2, and this was the longest period of time that

he looked up. His behavior was a major detractor the presentation and his score of 3 for this component is correct.

The arriving scenario involved a report of smoke at a gas station and convenience store. An employee says that the origin of the fire is unknown, and there was another employee in the break room when the fire started, but she does not know where he is now. There is visible fire in a window. Question 1 asked candidates to deliver an initial report to the camera as they would upon arrival, and use proper radio protocols. Question 2 asked for specific actions to take after the initial report.

For the technical component, the assessor indicated that the appellant failed to establish command (question 1), failed to address the lightweight wood trusses (question 1), and failed to order the crew to secure the fuel pumps (question 2) These were mandatory responses. It was also indicated that the appellant missed the opportunities to request a rehab unit, request EMS, and establish a Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC), which were other responses for question 2. On appeal, the appellant stated that the fuel pumps were not involved with the fire in the store, and his manpower was best used to extinguish the fire and check for victims. He states that once power is secured to the structure, the fuel pumps would be inoperable. He states that he struck a second alarm, and the remaining missed opportunities were routine response protocols and unnecessary radio communications.

In reply, the appellant missed the mandatory actions in question 1. For question 2, the appellant's argument that he did not have to order a crew to secure the fuel pumps is unpersuasive. In response to question 1, the appellant did not indicate that the structure had a gas station and the appellant did not mention the fuel pumps in his response to question 2. He ignored this potentially very dangerous element of the scene. The appellant did not shut off power to the store, and therefore, he did not secure the fuel pumps as he argues. At the end of every scenario and prior to the questions, instructions state, "In responding to the questions, make sure your actions directly relate to the scenario. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score." As to the remaining non-mandatory responses, question 1 asked for an initial report via the radio, but question 2 asked for specific actions to be taken after the initial report. The appellant's argument that giving these actions to address the situation would involve unnecessary radio communications is misplaced. Further, the candidates could only be scored based on what they said. That the appellant may have known that these actions are routine response protocols cannot be evaluated if he does not articulate them. The appellant missed four mandatory responses, and the additional actions listed by the assessor. His score of 1 is correct.

CONCLUSION

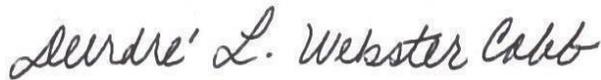
A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

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 30TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2020



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