



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

In the Matter of Sharif Jennings, Fire  
Captain (PM2341C), Orange

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

CSC Docket No. 2023-2286

Examination Appeal

**ISSUED:** November 27, 2024 (ABR)

Sharif Jennings appeals his score on the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Captain (PM2341C), Orange. It is noted that the appellant failed the subject examination.

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, 35.90% of the score was the written multiple-choice portion, 22.04% was the technical score for the evolving exercise, 7.45% was the supervision score for the evolving exercise, 5.71% was the oral communication score for the evolving exercise, 23.20% was the technical score for the arriving exercise, 5.71% was the oral communication score for the arriving exercise.

The oral portion of the Fire Captain 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 Scenario); 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 Scenario). Knowledge of supervision was measured

by a question in the Evolving Scenario and was scored for that scenario. 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. Only those oral responses that depicted relevant behaviors that were observable and could be quantified were assessed in the scoring process. It is noted that candidates were told the following prior to beginning their presentations for each scenario: "In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score."

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.

On the Evolving Scenario, the appellant scored a 1 on the technical component, a 4 on the supervision component, and a 4 on the oral communication component. On the Arriving Scenario, the appellant scored a 1 on the technical component and a 5 on the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his scores for the technical components of the Evolving and Arriving Scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The Evolving Scenario involves a report of a fire at a single-story ranch house where the candidate is the first-level fire supervisor of Ladder 7 and Battalion 1 is the incident commander (IC). Upon arrival, the IC reports that there is smoke coming from Side A and orders the candidate's crew to conduct a primary search, as he cannot get confirmation if the owners are home or not. Question 1 then asks the candidate, as the supervisor of Ladder 7, to describe, in detail, what orders they would give their crew to carry out the assignment from the IC. The prompt for Question 2 states while conducting primary search operations the candidate and their crew notice a partial collapse from the interior over the garage. Question 2 then asks the candidate what actions they should now take.

The SME awarded the appellant a score of 1 on the technical component of the Evolving Scenario, based upon a finding that the appellant failed to perform multiple mandatory actions, including ordering a primary search of the house, ensuring the removal of found victims, and evacuating the crew; and missed a number of additional opportunities, including the opportunity to close/mark doors of rooms searched. On appeal, the appellant argues that he covered conducting a primary search by stating that he would use a thermal imaging camera to find lost victims; and addressed removing victims by stating that he would have emergency medical services (EMS) treat possible victims and “treat, triage and transport” any possible victims.<sup>1</sup>

In reply, as noted above, candidates were told the following prior to beginning their presentations for each scenario: “In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score.” Here, the use of a thermal imaging camera was a PCA for which the appellant received credit. However, his passing reference to “find[ing] lost victims” in discussing his use of a thermal imaging camera did not equate to an express order to have his crew conduct a primary search. Therefore, he was properly denied credit for the mandatory response of conducting a primary search. Similarly, the statements cited by the appellant related to EMS fell short of the requirement that he give a specific statement related to the removal of victims. Accordingly, the appellant has failed to sustain his burden of proof with respect to his Evolving Scenario technical component score and his rating of 1 is affirmed.

The Arriving Scenario involves a response to a report of fire and smoke at a two-story, single family, wood-framed residential property, in which the candidate will be the highest-ranking officer on scene. Upon arrival, the candidate sees fire and smoke coming from a second floor window and the attic above it on Side A. There are no cars in the driveway upon arrival and nobody is outside of the home. The candidate sees a single police officer running around the house attempting to make entry into the house.

The SME awarded the appellant a technical component score of 1, based upon a finding that the appellant failed to identify a significant number of mandatory and additional responses, including, in part, the mandatory responses of establishing a primary water supply and ordering an attack line stretched to the residence. On appeal, the appellant argues that he covered establishing a water supply by indicating that he would have a water supply officer present and contacting the water department to ensure proper water pressure at specified points. He further presents that he stated that he would deploy a hoseline at a specified point during his presentation.

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<sup>1</sup> It is noted that the appellant also submits that he discussed raising a ladder during the Evolving Scenario. However, a review of his appeal package indicates that failing to order vertical ventilation from an aerial ladder and horizontal ventilation was a PCA he missed in response to the Arriving Scenario, rather than the Evolving Scenario.

In reply, the statements cited by the appellant were insufficient to award him credit for establishing a water supply. In this regard, although the appellant indicated that he would designate a “water supply officer to ensure that [they] ha[d] proper water supply,” this was insufficient to cover the specific action of establishing a water supply. In this regard, a water supply officer would deal with water supply issues after the water supply was established, particularly after additional units arrive on scene. Since the appellant failed to provide a statement directly addressing the initial establishment of the water supply, such as identifying that he was taking a hydrant, he was properly denied credit for this PCA. As to the mandatory response of ordering an attack line stretched to the fire building, it is noted that the full context of the statement cited by the appellant was that he would place the “engine in a flanking position for the best way to deploy a hoseline.” In other words, his statement referred to the placement of the engine and failed to order the actual deployment of a hoseline. Further, even if it could be said that the appellant’s statement could be said to communicate that he was ordering the deployment of a hoseline, it would still be too general to cover the PCA of deploying an attack line, as the general reference to “deploy[ing] a hoseline” does not indicate whether the appellant was utilizing the hoseline for defensive operations or employing it as an attack line, as contemplated by the PCA at issue. Accordingly, the appellant has failed to sustain his burden of proof and his score of 1 for the technical component score of 1 is affirmed.

### 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 that 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 27<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2024



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