2019 Fire Chief Orientation Guide

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***Please Note: The year listed on the orientation guide refers to the year the exam will take place. This guide applies both to candidates from the current administration and make-up candidates from an earlier administration who will be tested in 2019.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) has prepared this supplemental orientation guide for promotional candidates who will participate in the 2019 Fire Chief Oral Assessment Exercises. The information in this guide and the General Multiple-Choice Exam Orientation Guide (available via CSC's website at https://www.nj.gov/csc/seekers/jobs/orientation/) is designed to help candidates better understand the testing process and the types of questions they will encounter on the Fire Chief Oral Assessment Exercises. We encourage candidates to carefully review this guide along with the General Multiple-Choice Exam Orientation Guide and to take advantage of all opportunities to prepare for the exam.

Please note that no study group has been involved in the development or review of CSC exams, and at no time has any exam material been provided to such groups. Additionally, the CSC is not responsible for any claims made by study groups or the manner in which they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

II. PRE-EXAM INFORMATION

A. Date and Location

The time-frame to administer the Fire Chief Oral Assessment Exercises is late November 2019. However, in the event there are any unforeseen circumstances regarding scheduling, the exam dates may change. The test date, location, and report time will be confirmed when candidate exam notices are both emailed and mailed two to three weeks prior to the test date.

B. What Candidates **SHOULD** Bring to the Exam

Candidates arriving at the test center should have their notification card and a valid photo I.D. Candidates arriving at the test center without their notification card should report directly to Room A with their photo I.D., so that the center supervisor can issue them a new card. Candidates arriving at the test center without a valid photo I.D. **WILL NOT** be admitted to the exam. Answer sheets for CSC multiple-choice exams are scored electronically, so candidates should bring No. 2 pencils to the exam. In addition, candidates are permitted to bring highlighters to use during the exam.

C. What Candidates Should **NOT** Bring to the Exam

With the threat of high-tech cheating on the rise, possession of electronic devices, such as cell phones, pagers, tablets, PDAs, or any photographic/recording equipment, is prohibited at test centers. Candidates who are seen with these devices in the test center, even in a power-off mode, will be disqualified. The device may also be confiscated to ensure that an attempt was not made to compromise the testing process. In addition, briefcases and other personal items should not be brought inside the test center. The Civil Service Commission is not responsible for any personal items.

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D. Late Policy

Candidates should plan their route to the test center in advance of the test date as soon as the test location is made available. Candidates are encouraged to arrive early, since candidates arriving late will NOT be admitted to the exam.

E. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Candidates who require special assistance or ADA accommodations for this exam must check the corresponding box on the "Preferences" tab of their online application, regardless of whether or not they have previously been approved for accommodations with CSC in the past. Candidates who are indicating a need for accommodations for the first time will subsequently be contacted with further instructions.

Upon receipt of their exam notice with the test date, time, and location information, candidates who are already on file with CSC as being approved for accommodations must call (609) 292-4144, extension 1991001, in order to discuss the specifics of their accommodation needs for this exam.

F. Make-Up Policy

According to the New Jersey Administrative Code 4A:4-2.9(c), make-up examinations for public safety open competitive and promotional examinations may only be authorized for the following reasons:

1. Debilitating injury or illness requiring an extended convalescent period, provided the candidate submits a doctor's certification containing a diagnosis and a statement clearly showing that the candidate's physical condition precluded his or her participation in the examination;
2. Death in the candidate's immediate family;
3. A candidate's wedding which cannot be reasonably changed;
4. Military service;
5. Error by the Civil Service Commission or Appointing Authority.

Make-up requests, with supporting documentation, must be submitted in writing within five days of receipt of the test notification. However, in situations involving an illness, death, or natural disaster that occurs on or immediately before the test date, a request for make-up must be made in writing no later than five days after the test date. Written requests for make-up examinations should be mailed to: NJCSC Make-Up Exam Unit, P.O. Box 310, Trenton, NJ 08625-0310.

All make-up requests based on medical grounds must include a New Jersey Civil Service Commission Medical Authorization for Make-Up Examinations form (DPF-728), completed by the treating physician. This form can be obtained from our website at https://www.nj.gov/csc/about/publications/forms/pdf/dpf-728.pdf or by contacting the CSC's Information Center at (609) 292-4144.

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Additionally, your treating physician must provide a separate detailed letter containing a diagnosis and statement clearly indicating why your physical condition will prevent you from taking the examination as scheduled. This letter should include the date the injury/illness began, the date of your last office visit, and the earliest date you can take the test. Information on your leave time from work because of your illness/injury should also be included. The documentation must be on official letterhead, written in layman's terms and legible. If insufficient, untimely, or illegible information is provided, your request will be denied.

G. Exam Information for Make-Up Candidates

Because of exam security concerns relating to the illicit discussion and/or dissemination of test content, the make-up exam for this announcement may not be identical to the original exam. It will, however, match the content specifications of the original exam as closely as possible. This means that the make-up exam will measure, in equal proportion, the same knowledge and/or abilities that were measured by the original exam. It will also be administered and scored in the same manner as the original exam. If a different exam is used for make-up purposes, make-up candidates may be required to obtain or use resource material for test preparation/study purposes that is particular to the make-up examination.

III. EXAM INFORMATION

A. Exam Development

A job analysis was conducted to identify the knowledge and abilities that are necessary to perform the duties of a Fire Chief. A job analysis is the process of critically examining job components in order to provide a functional description of a job. Based on this job analysis, several work components were identified, and it is from these work components that a distinct examination has been developed. During the job analysis, Fire Chief incumbents rated each work component in terms of its importance. Exam questions will relate to those work components that were determined to be most critical. These work components, which have been translated into test content areas, are shown below along with their relative test weights (rounded %). The test weights depict the percentage of the test devoted to each content area.

Weight	Test Content	Test Component
25.93%	Supervision - Subordinate Incident	Oral Assessment Exercise
27.21%	Fire Department Administration	
15.16%	Finance - Budget Preparation	
20.62%	Fire-ground Operations Management	
11.08%	Oral Communication*	

* Oral Communication will be tested during each of the four oral assessment exercises and given its own independent score for each one. The weight for Oral Communication will be divided equally among the four scenarios. Therefore, each scenario's oral communication weight will be 2.77% (11.08% / 4 = 2.77%).

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B. Potential Source Material

Please note that the Civil Service Commission intends to use the book list on a limited basis to develop test items. More specifically, while the justification for correct responses may be drawn from materials on the reading list, it is not limited to that material. Justification may also be based on the collective Fire Service experience of Subject Matter Experts. When justification is based on experience, care is taken to ensure that correct answers do not conflict with the sources on the reading list.

1. **The Fire Chief's Handbook, 7th Edition (2015),** Edited by Richard A. Marinucci; Publisher: PennWell - (800) 752-9764, ISBN-13: 978-159370-262-5

2. **Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics, 4th Edition (2012) by John Norman**; Publisher: PennWell - (800) 752-9764; ISBN-13: 978-159370-279-3

3. **Managing Fire and Emergency Services (2012)**, Edited by Adam K. Thiel & Charles R. Jennings; Publisher: International City/Council Management Association – (770) 280- 4171; ISBN-13: 978-087326-763-2

4. **Legal Considerations for Fire & Emergency Services, 3rd Edition (2014)**, by J. Curtis Varone; Publisher: Pennwell - (800)-752-9764, ISBN-13: 978-159370-347-9

The following are reference booklets written by the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety and are included in the Reading/Reference List. These reference booklets are free and can be viewed/ printed at their respective web addresses found below:

Public Employees Occupational & Health PEOSHA - Booklet 3, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet_3.pdf

Model Fire Dept. Incident Mgmt. Standard Operating Guidelines - Booklet 9, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet9.pdf

New Jersey Personnel Accountability System - Booklet 10, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet10.pdf

Rapid Intervention Crew Training Guidelines - Booklet 12, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/reference_booklet_12.pdf

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Although the CSC suggests that candidates review the reading/reference list, preparation for the examination should not be restricted to the above reading/reference list. Since the test items will require open-ended responses, candidates will also have to rely on the application of knowledge and the application of fireground technical, administrative, budgetary, and supervisory principles.

C. Oral Assessment Process/Scoring

On the day of exam administration, candidates with morning report times will check-in and have the exercises administered to them. When finished, the morning group will be sequestered in the holding room while the afternoon candidates check-in. Once the afternoon group is either all checked-in, or the late policy has been satisfied, whichever comes first, the morning group will be released. Candidates testing after the holding room has been released will be free to go home after they finish testing.

Once candidates begin the test, they will not be allowed to leave the test site for any reason until the administrators have released them. While at the testing site, candidates will not be allowed to move about without the specific approval of the administrators. Access to bathrooms is restricted and all candidates must receive approval and be escorted to and into the bathrooms. Anyone not following these rules may be disqualified. Absolutely no exceptions will be permitted.

The Oral Assessment Exercises consist of four separate scenarios (Supervision - Subordinate Incident, Fire Department Administration, Finance - Budget Preparation, and Fire Ground Operations Management) with Oral Communication being measured during all four scenarios.

For the first three scenarios, candidates will be presented with three realistic job-relevant situations for which a new Fire Chief might be confronted in Preparation Room I. Candidates will have 45 minutes to study these three scenarios and prepare a presentation for each. For the purposes of this exercise, candidates are to assume the role of a Fire Chief and assume that their presentation is being made to a superior or other party. Following the 45-minute preparation period, candidates will be taken to the first three exam rooms (A, B, & C) where they will make their presentation for each respective scenario. Candidates will be given a separate 10-minute response period in each room. Following their Room C presentation, candidates will be taken to Preparation Room II where they will be presented with the fourth and final testing scenario. They will have ten minutes to prepare their response immediately after which they will be taken to Room D where they will make their presentation. Candidate presentations will be both audio and video-recorded.

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All scoring guidelines are determined prior to the examination administration date by a panel of NJ Subject Matter Experts using approved fire command, administrative, budgetary, and supervisory practices, as well as reference materials. Scoring decisions are based on the situations that are presented. Only those oral responses that depict relevant behaviors that are observable and can be quantified will be assessed in the scoring process.

For each scenario candidates receive two scores: A technical score, which is given by a NJ Subject Matter Expert, and an oral communication score, which is given by a CSC assessor trained in scoring oral communicative ability.

All technical fire assessors will be fire personnel with Fire Chief or higher job experience. Furthermore, these assessors receive training on the dimensions to be measured and on how to observe and evaluate behavior associated with these job performance dimensions. The Fire Chief Oral Assessment Exercises are designed to elicit responses associated with the most critical knowledge, skill, and ability (KSA) areas. These areas and an example of some of the KSA statements are:

Supervision - Subordinate Incident

- Ability to recognize subordinate performance capabilities.
- Ability to apply leadership theory.
- Knowledge of supervisory techniques for individual and team performance.

Fire Department Administration

- Ability to set administrative goals.
- Ability to draft policy and procedure statements.
- Knowledge of federal, state, and local laws/ordinances relating to fire, emergency, and protective services.

Finance - Budget Preparation

- Ability to understand budget concepts.
- Ability to evaluate information from multiple sources.
- Knowledge of budget procedures.

Fire-ground Operations Management

- Ability to formulate an incident action plan at an emergency scene.
- Ability to anticipate changing circumstances, conditions, and outcomes.
- Knowledge of fire characteristic/fire behavior.

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D. Response Levels and Apparatus Staffing

Initial Response: Engine (E1)
Engine (E2)
Ladder (L1) (not a tower ladder unless specifically stated)
Battalion Fire Chief (C1)

Each subsequent alarm that a candidate calls will consist of the identical response levels as indicated above (i.e., two engine companies, one ladder company, and one Battalion Fire Chief).

If, in addition to the above, candidates want to call on other companies or resources, they must specifically request them.

Apparatus Staffing:

All engines have:	1 Captain	3 firefighters
All ladders have:	1 Captain	3 firefighters
All Chief's vehicles have	1 Battalion Fire Chief	

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IV. POST-EXAM INFORMATION

A. Explanation of the Oral Scoring Process

The scores for each component will be standardized, weighted, and combined to formulate each candidate's overall examination score.

The scoring criteria for this examination has been determined prior to the administration date by a panel of Subject Matter Experts using generally approved fire command, administrative, budgetary, and supervisory practices, as well as reference materials. Scoring decisions are based on the situations that are presented. Only those responses, which depict relevant behaviors that are observable and can be quantified, will be assessed in the scoring process. All scores are standardized, and only candidates with passing oral exam scores will have their overall test score weighted 70% and seniority score weighted 30% in determining the final score. Candidates will be ranked based upon this final score

B. Review and Appeal Information

Candidates will be given the opportunity to schedule an appointment to review the exam, as well as their final score calculations. Included in the eligibility/ineligibility notice will be a review form containing the instructions on how to schedule a review. These notices are mailed the day that the lists issue. Appointments are made on a first-come, first-served basis, until all appointments are booked. During the review, candidates will have up to 60 minutes to watch their video recorded responses. Candidates will also have all their test materials and their score justification sheets.

Any objection to the manner in which the examination was administered must be made in writing immediately following the completion of the examination by completing a Test Administration Comment/Appeal Form prior to leaving the examination center. This form can be obtained from the Center Supervisor. No appeal relating to the manner in which the examination was administered shall be permitted after the test date. Candidates should be aware of the fee schedule for item, scoring, and administrative appeals. The fee schedule can be accessed via the CSC website (https://www.nj.gov/csc/authorities/faq/appeals).

C. Explanation of Seniority

A candidate's final score (and rank) on the promotional list consists of two weighted parts: the test score and the seniority score. The seniority score is comprised of the time from the regular appointment date (of the eligible title) to the closing date of the announcement, minus the time spent on suspensions, layoffs and deductible leaves of absence without pay, such as an unpaid leave to attend a State or National Convention, an unpaid leave for personal reasons, an unpaid leave to attend to Union Business, a Merit Board/Court Decision without pay, or a Disability Retirement that was rescinded.

For the Fire Chief promotional exam, seniority is weighted at 30% and test score is weighted at 70%. The seniority score is combined with the test score to produce the final average score.

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D. Calculation of Seniority Score

To a base score of 70.000, one point is added for each year of eligible service up to a maximum of 15. The maximum score for length of service is 85.000.

Ten additional points are given for record of service. The record of service component is reduced by disciplinary suspensions occurring within five years of the closing date, by the following rules:

.0025 times the number of days suspended, up to three years from the closing date, and
.00125 times the number of days suspended, from 3 years to 5 years from the closing date.

The maximum possible seniority score is 95.000

E. Explanation of Exam Results and Promotions

A candidate's final score (and rank) on the promotional list will be comprised of the test score and the seniority credit. The results from this examination will be available after the expiration of the current lists. This process generally takes a minimum of 12 weeks following the last test review date. Candidates should NOT call the CSC for their scores. Candidates will receive their examination results in the mail.

If you pass your exam, your name will go on a promotional list ranked by your final score (a composite of test score and seniority score). This promotional list will last for three years from its promulgation date or until it is exhausted, whichever occurs first. However, for good cause, the promotional list may be extended by the CSC for up to one additional year.

When your appointing authority notifies the CSC that it wants to fill vacancies, the CSC sends it the names that are ranked highest on the promotional list. This is called a certification list. When your name appears on a certification list, it means that you may be interviewed and considered for promotion.

Also, when your name appears on a certification list, the CSC will send you a Notification of Certification. You must contact the appointing authority in writing within five business days to express your interest. If you do not respond, your name may be removed from the promotional list. If a disabled veteran or veteran is the first name on the certification, the appointing authority must hire that candidate unless there is a very good reason not to. If there are no disabled veterans or veterans on a certification, the appointing authority can normally choose from among the top three candidates for each position.

Please Note: Promotional appointees serve conditionally, pending resolution of all scoring appeals related to the examination.

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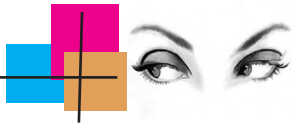
V. STUDY TIPS

A. Descriptions and Study Tips for Different Learning Styles

Research suggests that not all people learn the same way. With so much information available in the source material, it may help you to consider which learning style best matches your abilities, so you can determine the most effective way for you to study the material. While this is not an exhaustive description of the different learning styles, consider the following information as one possible way to determine which study method is best for you.

1. The Visual Learning Style



Description

You learn best when information is presented visually and in a written language format. In a classroom setting, you benefit from instructors who use the blackboard (or overhead projector) to list the essential points of a lecture, or who provide you with an outline to follow along with during lecture. You benefit from information obtained from textbooks and class notes. You tend to like to study by yourself in a quiet room. You often see information "in your mind's eye" when you are trying to remember something.

Study Tips

- Find a quiet place to study, away from noise and visual distractions.
- Preview the study material by looking at the table of contents, headings, and pictures before starting to read.
- Write symbols or key words in the margins of your textbook or manual.
- Use highlighters in different colors to emphasize and organize important concepts.
- Write down key points and details that you want to remember.
- When given information in charts, write out explanations in your own words.
- Organize your notes in outline format, including main headings or categories and notes below each. As an alternative, you can organize your notes by using charts, graphs, pictures, or diagrams.
- Make flashcards of important points and key terms. Limit the amount of information placed on each card.
- Visualize key concepts in your head.

2. The Auditory Learning Style

Description

You learn best when information is auditory (presented in an oral language format). In a classroom setting, you benefit from listening to lectures and participating in group discussions. You also benefit from obtaining information from audio tape. When trying to remember something, you can often "hear" the way someone told you the information, or the way you previously repeated it out loud. You learn best when interacting with others in a listening/speaking exchange.

Study Tips

- Before reading, look through headings and pictures and say out loud what you think each section may cover.
- While reading your notes or textbook, read out loud whenever possible.
- Take pauses while reading to summarize aloud what you have read.
- Record yourself reading your notes or textbook, then play it back and listen to it repeatedly, or listen to audiobooks.
- Study in a group or with a friend. Discuss the material.
- Make up flashcards and read the material out loud as you memorize it.
- Ask a friend to help quiz you on test material.

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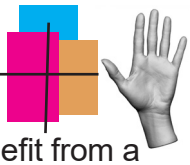
3. The Tactile-Kinesthetic Learning Style



Description

You learn best when physically engaged in a “hands-on” activity. In the classroom, you benefit from a lab setting where you can manipulate materials to learn new information. You learn best when you can be physically active in the learning environment. You benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations, “hands-on” student learning experiences, and field work outside the classroom.

Study Tips

- Before reading, look over the table of contents, headings, etc., to get a feel for the book or manual.
- Write notes, draw pictures, or make charts as you are reading or listening to study material.
- Take short (3-5 minute) breaks during your study time.
- Walk around while reading or memorizing information.
- Move while learning (e.g., tap a pen, squeeze a “stress relief” object, swing an arm, kick a leg).
- Listen to audio recordings of study material while working out.
- Type notes on the computer. Incorporate tables and graphics as needed.
- Consider studying in a lounge chair rather than at a desk.
- Consider playing background music (baroque) while trying to learn new material.
- Consider reading material through colored transparencies in order to help with focus.
- While reading, point to or trace the words as you go along.
- Paraphrase the material being learned.
- When possible/appropriate, act out what is being learned. If this is not possible, visualize the concept in your mind.
- Find real-life examples of concepts being learned.
- Write important information several times to help with memory.

Sources:

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B. Understanding and Reducing Test Anxiety

The Chief of the Fire Department faces a daily stress level that is unlike almost any other career. However, most officers would prefer to deal with the stress involved in maintaining public safety than to deal with the anxiety caused by sitting for an exam that impacts their chances of being promoted. This portion of the Fire Chief orientation guide attempts to assist candidates in recognizing some of the causes of test anxiety and provides strategies on how to reduce it. Test anxiety is a condition in which a person experiences worry or distress before, during, or after a test or other assessment, to such an extent that it causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning. Because of its effect on performance, it is important that candidates recognize the potential symptoms of test anxiety and take steps to reduce it.

It is normal for any candidate taking an exam to feel a certain degree of nervousness. However, true test anxiety can be a serious threat to a candidate's preparation and performance on the exam. Test anxiety can manifest itself in psychological ways such as "blanking," having difficulty concentrating, and experiencing negative thoughts, as well as physical ways, such as nausea, headache, sweating, and muscle tension. Candidates can attempt to reduce the effects of test anxiety and increase their chances of maximizing their performance on the exam by focusing on three steps: be prepared, get organized, and practice.

1. Be Prepared

Preparation begins with recognizing and confronting negative thoughts you may have about your past exam performance and your chances for scoring well on the upcoming Fire Chief exam. Negative thoughts can influence your preparation for the exam by affecting your study habits, breaking your concentration, and causing you to second-guess your abilities. One strategy to reduce these thoughts is to take out a sheet of paper and create two columns. On the left side of the paper, you will honestly assess your attitudes and write down every negative thought you have about the prospects of taking a written exam. Next, on the right side of the paper, you will write a positive thought that counteracts the negative thought. For example:

Negative Thought

I always do poorly on tests.

If I don't pass this test, I'm a failure.

I can't possibly know everything that will be on the exam.

Positive Thought

I will be more prepared than I have been in the past.

I'm going to pass, but if I don't, I can still bounce back.

I know the ares where my knowledge is strong and I will focus on the areas in which I am unfamiliar.

Honestly assessing your feelings and concerns will help you begin to change your attitudes and create a positive mindset.

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Another strategy to prepare for the exam is to gather as much information about the exam as possible. Consulting the Fire Chief job specification through the web-page https://info.csc.state.nj.us/jobspec/01837.htm and reading over this orientation guide thoroughly will help you familiarize yourself with all aspects of the exam. Information provided in this guide will tell you, in general, what topics will be covered and what resources you can use to learn about the topics. This is a vital step in preparation for the exam, because knowing the information covered by the exam will assist you in organizing a study plan.

2. Get Organized

Being organized in your study habits is the next step in reducing test anxiety and increasing your performance on the exam. After you have determined from the information available to you, the topics to be covered on the exam, you need to honestly assess in which areas you are strong and which areas require more attention. You may find it helpful to create a study plan or schedule that defines what you will need to study, what resources you will need to compile, and the amount of time you will spend on each topic. When creating a study plan, you must remember to make it realistic for your current lifestyle. Candidates with responsibilities, such as family obligations, cannot expect to spend all their off-duty hours studying. Candidates should also make an attempt to avoid changing their normal routine in order to focus all their energy solely on studying. Although you may find that you need to make some sacrifices in order to put in the proper amount of time studying, it should not be at the expense of eliminating all your other interests and obligations. Some candidates believe that if they skip meals or stay up late, they are gaining extra hours of study time. Research suggests, however, that altering your normal sleeping and eating patterns, as a result of trying to spend all your spare time studying, does not have the benefits you would expect. Physical health is as important as emotional health in reducing anxiety.

Finally, remember that studying involves more than highlighting words in a book and memorizing definitions. When establishing your study plan or schedule, your goal should be to have a full understanding of terms and concepts. You will know you have a full understanding of the information when you can define a given term in your own words and discuss why it is important. Similarly, concepts are fully understood when you are able to take two related concepts and discuss their similarities and differences.

3. Practice

The final step in reducing test anxiety is to practice. While it is not possible to replicate the conditions you will encounter during the exam administration, there are strategies that you can use to simulate the skills you will need during the exam. For instance, during a multiple-choice exam, you may be sitting at a desk for several hours working on your exam. To prepare for this, it may help to block out a similar amount of uninterrupted time while you are studying. This can help you experience what it will be like to have to focus your attention for that period of time. Using the chapter review in a text book or other resource is often another way to test your knowledge, while also giving you the opportunity to practice reading and analyzing multiple-choice questions. In some cases, candidates will know others who are taking the exam. Although many people prefer to study on their own, coming together to review in a group can also be helpful. During this review, each member of the group can come with prepared questions based on the source material. This strategy has the benefit of ensuring that you are reading the material critically enough to develop questions from it, while at the same time, practicing the routine of sitting down and answering questions prepared by another person.

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During the days leading up to the exam, you should focus on reviewing the material you have already studied. In order to reduce test anxiety on the day of the exam, you should make every attempt to get a good night's sleep the night before, so that you can arrive at the test center well rested. Plan to arrive early, so that you are not rushing into the test center with only minutes to spare before the exam. It is important to listen to the monitor's instructions carefully and ask questions if you are unsure of anything that has been said. Be aware of how much time you have to complete the exam and the fact that you will be responsible for keeping track of your own time. Remember that, unless instructed otherwise, you are permitted to write in your test booklet.

As you proceed through the test, you may wish to circle key words or concepts that may be important in answering test questions, making sure to properly mark all answers on your answer sheet. Review each question carefully and select the BEST answer from the options given.

Remember that anxiety is fed by a fear of the unknown. The more you do to prepare before the exam, the better chance you will have at performing at your highest level.

Additional study tips are available in the General Multiple-Choice Exam Orientation Guide, which is available via the CSC's web site at https://www.nj.gov/csc/seekers/jobs/orientation.

Sources:

http://www.studygs.net/tstprp8.htm

http://www.ets.org/s/praxis/pdf/reducing_test_anxiety.pdf

C. Tips for Responding to Oral Assessment Scenarios

Keep in mind that the exercises are set in a generic, hypothetical fire department. This is done intentionally so as not to give an advantage to someone with a particular work background. Do not make assumptions about the hypothetical fire department, scenarios, or town. Take action and make decisions based only on the information given. The responses, however, should not be generic, but directly related to the narrative and the question asked.

The Oral Assessment Exercises are designed to assess the appropriateness of a candidate's stated actions during presented, job-related situations. If the candidate desires to score well, it is his responsibility to demonstrate to the Subject Matter Experts assessing his exam that he possesses true problem-solving skills that can be applied to changing circumstances and demands, either in simulation exercises or in real-world events. The candidate who only makes general statements without also addressing the specific facts of the scenario may find himself penalized by the assessors.

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Compare:

General Statements	Specific to the Scenario
"I'll conduct a detailed size-up…"	"The property is a taxpayer from the 1930's, so we'll have to check for extension in the cockloft; it's midnight, so there will be occupants sleeping in the house..."
"I'll send my crew in to put out the fire."	"I'll send my primary hose team through the front door on the A Side of the house with a secondary team, hoses charged, staged on the D side of the building to check extension on the property next door…"

1. LCES! SLICERS! COAL WAS WEALTH!

Some candidates believe that by learning a collection of tricks and techniques, they can guarantee themselves a better score on an examination. These tricks may consist of anything from techniques for organizing information (e.g., acronyms), to statements and actions that will lead to better scores. Predetermined strategies are fine as a starting point, but they cannot take the place of knowing the material *and successfully applying it to the scenarios presented in the exam.*

Candidates are also coached by paid study groups and other parties on how to project a favorable façade (e.g., smile, be courteous, wear certain clothes, etcetera), relying on this to hide deficiencies in performance. While a tailored dress uniform and thanking the Subject Matter Experts for their attention is nice, this will not influence the candidate's score whatsoever: what is said, and how it is presented from an oral communication standpoint, will wholly contribute to his or her score.

How to best prepare for the Oral Assessment Exercises as a candidate comes down to one question: "Is the focus going to be learning tricks and techniques, or on actively preparing for the position being tested?" There appears to be no ready substitute for the hard work and persistence required to advance skill and knowledge levels.

2. Oral communication skills need to be practiced

The oral communication component is perhaps the most overlooked element in the Oral Assessment Exercises. And yet, because Fire Subject Matter Experts have identified being able to communicate clearly and concisely as critical to job performance, doing poorly in oral communication will affect a candidate's score; averaging below a score of 2.5 will make the candidate fail altogether. Therefore, it is in your best interest to prepare for the oral communication components as seriously as the technical components.

The best way for you to improve your skills in oral communication is to videorecord yourself making a presentation on a smartphone or a camera, and then review the video and/or show a friend for an honest critique:

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- Choose a sample Oral Assessment Exercise from the Sample Materials section (starting on page 22) and prepare a presentation as you would in a testing situation.

- Use a timer; candidates will have a maximum of ten minutes for each scenario.

- Videorecord yourself, or have a friend record you giving your response for the questions presented.

- Finally, review the completed video for general deficiencies in oral communication. While the list below is not exhaustive, reviewers can consider these elements:

  - ensure that the response was organized, and that you chronologically reported your actions as it would happen on the fireground (i.e., not jumping around).
  - present your response in complete sentences, not with bulleted statements or phrases.
  - make eye contact with the camera, and do not read directly from your notes the entire time. (The candidate will be instructed on the day of the exam to treat the camera as though it was their audience.)
  - eliminate any nervous tics that are visible onscreen (e.g., pencil tapping, fidgeting, shuffling papers).
  - seem confident in your presentation.
  - limit excessive filler words (e.g., “um,” “ah,” “y’know”).
  - speak clearly.
  - do not ramble and/or repeat the same information over and over. As long as all actions are addressed appropriately, you do not need to use all of the allotted time.
  - be mindful of your rate of speech: breathe regularly and slow down when going too fast, eliminate long pauses and quicken your pace when going too slow. (Note: Pausing occasionally to review notes is expected and will not be penalized.)

If you find you are deficient in some oral communication skills, you should continue to practice in front of a camera and re-evaluate your performance. While the assessors are not expecting perfection, the closer you are to it, through practicing your oral communication skills, the better your score will be.

3. Don’t psyche yourself out on the day of the examination.

The exercises are designed to be difficult; again, perfection is not expected. The evaluation is based on a candidate’s overall performance on each exercise. Even if a candidate thinks he is not doing well during a response, he should continue doing the best possible work on the remaining exercises. **DO NOT** give up halfway through an exercise! The only guaranteed way to fail the Oral Assessment Exercises is to resign: push through and finish the exam.

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VI. SAMPLE MATERIALS

The following pages contain examples of materials from the Fire Chief Oral Assessment Exercises. These examples are provided as samples so that you may become familiar with some of the types of materials and response formats that you will encounter. The actual assessment materials will be different from the ones presented here. These problems are merely illustrative of the kinds of problems which you may face during the Fire Chief Oral Assessment Exercises.

A. Supervision - Subordinate Incident Scenario

NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION

Supervision - Subordinate Incident

While responding to a fire alarm, one of your engine companies was involved in a motor vehicle accident. The police report and bystanders' statements suggest that the engine was traveling at an excessive rate of speed. It has been alleged that the driver was unable to control the vehicle. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but the engine was severely damaged. The Deputy Chief of this shift has recommended disciplinary action against the driver and the captain of the engine.
Because both the driver and the captain are minorities, action against them may appear discriminatory. The minority fire fighters' association has informed you that it is against the disciplinary action because of the lack of driver training. It also states that "past practice" has not lead to disciplinary action when similar accidents occurred.

Based on the text the Fire Chief's Handbook and your experience, answer the following questions:

Question 1: How would you conduct a full investigation of this matter?

Question 2: After completing your investigation, what actions would you take?

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10-minute response period.

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B. Supervision - Subordinate Incident Scenario

NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION

Fire Department Administration

As the Fire Chief, you are notified by the city fathers that they have entered into an agreement to hold an annual festival next summer in your community. It is to be a public-private partnership with the local business association and the city. It will take place in the heart of the city's business district with (7) seven blocks of main street closed. It will include a stage at one end (for three days, starting Friday) with setup for vendors (food, craftspeople and the carnival style rides). There will be 20 vendors who will be using some form of cooking and heating. Saturday and Sunday will be actual festival days. The hours of operation are 10:00 am to 8:00 pm.

The area is a mix of commercial and multi-family housing. You have been tasked with developing a plan for fire prevention and protection during the festival, including a cost estimate.

Based upon the reference Managing Fire Services, 2nd edition and your own experience, answer the following questions:

Question 1: What are your main concerns in developing a fire prevention plan for this festival?

Question 2: What would you do specifically to prepare for this event?

Question 3: How would you plan for the allocation of resources (money, manpower, etc.)?

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10-minute response period.

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C. Finance - Budget Preparation Scenario

NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION

Finance – Budget Preparation

As the newly appointed Fire Chief of your department, you have been notified by your finance officer that she would like your input in the preparation of the budget for the new fiscal year. You have taken note that you will need to replace one of the front-line pumpers due to age and frequent breakdowns, and you would like to replace this piece as soon as possible.

Based on the reference The Fire Chief's Handbook and your experience, answer the following questions:

Question 1: How would you justify the need to purchase a new front-line pumper and to whom would you present this justification?

Question 2: In order to make an educated, financially sound purchase, what steps would you take to prepare for the purchase, and what, if any, follow up would you do after the pumper was ordered?

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10-minute response period.

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D. Fire-ground Operations Management Scenario

NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION

Fire-ground Operations Management

You are newly prompted Chief of the department. It is 2345 hours on Monday in mid-November. The outside temperature is in the low 30s with a slight wind blowing from West to East. Dispatch received a call from the manager of Maplewood Restaurant who reported smelling smoke all night in the dining / bar area of the restaurant. The manager stated he thinks there is a problem in the fireplace.

Maplewood Restaurant is 2 stories tall with a partial basement wood framed building built in the 1800s. On the second floor there are two apartments and a small office. The second floor is only accessible by an exterior entry door and stairway on Side A. The structure measures 105' x 75' and has large parking area on side C. The peak roof is a combination of tin and asphalt shingles. There are no sprinklers and the alarm system is out of service. Violations are on file for this location. The building has been in operation since it was built and has been renovated numerous times. The first floor is a full-service restaurant and bar with an additional partitioned dining area. All interior walls are wood paneled.

Side A faces Jade Street beyond which are several residential homes. Side B faces Antilles Avenue, beyond which is a wooded area. Sides D and C face parking lots which contain patrons' vehicles. There is a fire hydrant on the corner of Antilles Avenue and Jade Street and another fire hydrant located on Jade Street.

Engine One arrives on scene reporting smoke visible from the fireplace chimney side D. The Engine One officer reports a slight haze throughout the downstairs with several patrons sitting at the bar and two workers cleaning the kitchen. The officer reports he is going to check the basement. Basement access is achieved only by entry through a floor hatch behind the bar. Engine One crew has air packs, hand tools and a TIC, but no hose line. Upon opening the hatch door to the basement, The Engine One officer reports heavy smoke and fire in the basement and is unable to close the hatch. Smoke and fire immediately fill the restaurant. Engine One officer transmits "Mayday" and his company is trapped with the fire breaking out throughout the walls.

You arrive on scene as the officer reports the Mayday and observes fire coming from the kitchen door exterior on Side D.

Based on the text, Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics, and your experience, answer the following questions:

Question 1: What are your concerns at this incident scene?

Question 2: What actions and specific assignments should you make to mitigate this incident scene?

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.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10-minute response period.

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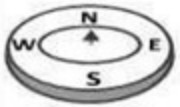
Fire Chief Exam A/B Corner View Fire Ground Operations Mgmt. Diagram 1 of 2	 **Wind:** 1-5 MPH	**Temperature:** 30 degrees Fahrenheit	**Symbols:** Smoke

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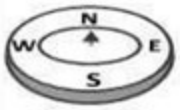
Fire Chief Exam
Overhead View
Fire Ground Operations Mgmt.
Diagram 2 of 2



Wind: 1-5 MPH

Temperature: 30 degrees Fahrenheit

Symbols: Fire Hydrant, Smoke

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