



Question Papers and Report of the
Assessors and the Examiners for the
Qualifying Examination for
Promotion to the Rank of
Station Officer 2002

QUESTION PAPERS AND REPORT OF THE ASSESSORS AND EXAMINERS FOR THE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION FOR PROMOTION TO THE RANK OF STATION OFFICER 2002

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Station Officers' examination held under the auspices of the Fire Services Examinations Board attracted an initial entry of 1288 candidates. However, the final number of candidates entering the examination was 1208 after late entries and withdrawals had both been accepted.

Of these, 173 (14.3%) absented themselves, which is a further increase to the figure of 13% of last year, leaving 1035 actually attempting the examination, which is a decrease of 24 (2.7%) to last year's total. Of this number, 253 (24.4%) were awarded a pass and are now qualified for the rank of Station Officer.

The number of candidates obtaining an overall pass has reduced by 106 when compared to the pass rate of last year and is also recognised as a reduction of 7.8% in the percentage pass rate.

The flexible system of taking the examination enables candidates to take two, three or four papers in their first attempt. Consequently, only 316 taking the examination attempted all four papers but has resulted in 596 candidates achieving paper passes which will enable them to continue in the examination system.

We have now had two years of scenario type questioning for this examination and there are a number of emerging issues that should be of concern, particularly in relation to paper 1, the operations paper at this level.

It is important to realise that this is the highest level of qualification of examination in the Appointment and Promotions Regulations for the fire service and, although much work is progressing in the context of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), this situation is likely to prevail for a few years until all the elements of the new system are designed and agreed. What is particularly critical is that the next few years are expected to see a unique change with large numbers of personnel retiring, with about two thirds of these holding rank above that of Firefighter. Therefore there will inevitably be a great demand for suitably qualified personnel.

Thus, it remains essential for the service to be able to promote individuals who are able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across a range of subject areas relevant to the rank to which they wish to aspire but obviously, given the nature of the fire service, in an operational context. The plethora of legislation that now overarches the responsibilities of Chief Fire Officers/Firemasters and Fire Authorities in relation to their obligations for the health, safety and welfare of personnel, reinforces the significance of this.

Within this context, the comments of the Assessors and Examiners which follow are quite worrying and demand the attention of the senior officers within the service to start to address a number of issues quite urgently, notwithstanding the fact that the service is in a state of transition through the IPDS.

This is the second year of the application of the 'new' syllabuses and the changes to papers, comparisons with last year's results in each paper are possible. This shows reduced pass rates in papers 1, 3 and 4 but a welcome improvement to the pass rate in paper 2.

For those who are to take the examinations in the future, I can only repeat the advice provided constantly over many years - undertake an effective study of the bibliography so that you have a knowledge and understanding of the subject material, read the set questions carefully to enable you to recognise what information is being sought and then provide that information in the manner requested in the question. Time management is important in all papers, but the reading of your completed script will provide you with that opportunity to reflect on your responses, and make changes where you recognise them to be necessary, before they are submitted for marking.

The following pages contain the comments of the Assessors and Examiners and a careful study of these should prove helpful to future candidates.

PAPER 1: OPERATIONS

GENERAL COMMENTS

The common theme emerging is that the way candidates continue to answer questions appears to suggest that few have actually undertaken any study of the bibliography or the syllabus. Those that have effectively studied stand out quite dramatically. The majority, it has to be said, appear to rely on the knowledge acquired as part of their day-to-day activities in their respective brigades. The 'scenario' approach to the questions taken over the last few years, in an attempt to encourage candidates to put a real world context to applying their knowledge in a particular situation or circumstance, appears to suggest to many candidates that relying on experience is legitimate or sufficient.

In addition, the introduction of Generic Risk Assessments as part of the 'Safe Person' concept has apparently generated an approach that all that is necessary for any questions that require candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of risk assessments, is 'general statements' that could be applied anywhere.

As an illustration the phrase 'suitable PPE' appeared in many answers to different questions. But, what is suitable for an incident involving pesticides will be different to that required for a civil disturbance. At this senior level of examination it is considered a reasonable expectation that candidates should not only be able to draw out this distinction and demonstrate that they understand the generic nature of risk assessments, but are also then able to apply elements to given situations rather than a bland, 'one size fits all' approach.

These comments will, undoubtedly, have a familiar ring to them and repeat in large measure those of previous years. What is different in my view, however, is that the position of the service in transition through the IPDS, when set alongside the reality of the impact of extant legislation, Health and Safety, Appointment and Promotion and so on, brings with it a need to ensure a focus is maintained at local level on the importance of operational knowledge. The nature of the trend and the paucity of knowledge in the response to very relevant questions, merits the attention of senior officers of the service to preserve the reputation of the Fire Service as a highly respected operational service.

SECTION A OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND INCIDENT COMMAND

Attempt ALL questions from this Section

- 1 You are mobilised as part of a two pump attendance to a report of a car fire in an area that has recently experienced some tension within the community with reports of stones being thrown at fire appliances.

En route you are informed by fire control that the Police believe this potentially to be a civil disturbance situation and you are re-directed to a rendezvous point. On arrival you are met by a police officer who informs you the situation is rapidly deteriorating with missiles and petrol bombs being thrown. You determine you need additional appliances and establish a suitable rendezvous point with the senior police officer.

From a risk assessment perspective identify the precautions that need to be taken into account:

- (a) by the additional crews that you have requested, as well as any senior officers, when responding to the rendezvous point. (10 marks)

and

- (b) when deploying crews to undertake firefighting. (15 marks)

Bibliography: Fire Service Guide to Health and Safety, Volume 3 – Guide to Operational Risk Assessment, Section 5.6 Generic Hazards – Civil Disturbances, pages 43, 45, 47 and 48.

On the whole this question was reasonably answered with a large number of candidates achieving a satisfactory mark. Considering the civil disturbances that brigades were involved with in 2001, this particular activity, consequently, would probably have been rehearsed in many brigades. The knowledge thus obtained, theoretical and practical, should therefore have enabled candidates to provide a satisfactory answer to the question. It is therefore disappointing that large numbers of candidates who could actually be involved in this type of incident do not appear aware of the actions to be taken. The question was split into two parts and asked for actions to be taken into account whilst proceeding to the rendezvous point and then when firefighting. Many candidates who answered the question poorly provided the same answers to both parts.

- 2 You attend a fire at a large warehouse, and on arrival you are confronted with a rapidly developing fire. You 'make pumps ten', commence firefighting operations and start to implement a command system. You nominate a leading firefighter as command support.
- (a) Identify the actions and responsibilities of the leading firefighter as the command support officer. (14 marks)
- and
- (b) As the incident develops and additional appliances arrive, a command unit accompanies them and is set up. Identify the additional requirements of command support that now need to be incorporated as this incident is escalating. (11 marks)

Bibliography: Fire Service Manual Volume 2 - Incident Command, pages 13 and 14.

Parts (a) and (b) of the question both required candidates to identify the key actions and responsibilities of a Command Support Officer during the initial and developing stages of a large incident. Overall the results were disappointing for such a central and risk critical activity. Many candidates failed to identify the importance of establishing and maintaining records in respect of messages; risk assessments; operational decisions and details of resources (people and equipment), along with the need for liaison with other services, media and specialists.

Some candidates gave detailed descriptions of the duties of 'Sector Commanders' and offered detailed incident command structure diagrams. Others gave in-depth details of what information should be transferred from the initial command support to the Command Support Unit when it arrived, rather than concentrating on responsibilities. Neither attracted marks.

Where candidates overlapped the duties and responsibilities from part (a) to (b), examiners made allowances and marked the question holistically.

Given the attention paid to the issue of command in the Service over the last few years, this question should have attracted higher marks from a large number of the candidates.

SECTION B FIREFIGHTING AND RESCUE INCIDENTS

Attempt ALL questions from this Section

- 3 You attend an incident at the premises of a small Agricultural Goods wholesalers. On arrival the occupier informs you that there is a serious fire in a small detached building containing pesticides at the rear of the main building, and provides you with a list of the substances involved.

Describe:

- (a) the general hazards associated with pesticides. (10 marks)

and

- (b) general operational procedures to deal effectively with the incident. (15 mark)

Bibliography: Study Note 3104 - Stored pesticides involved in fire, pages 4 and 5.

This question in general was poorly answered. Most candidates made the mistake of answering the question 'generically' or in the context of dynamic risk assessment. There were many quotes of 'wear appropriate PPE' and 'carry out a dynamic risk assessment'. The question in an examination context was seeking more specific answers such as 'wear breathing apparatus and chemical protection suits' to be able to demonstrate knowledge. General comments, therefore, did not attract many marks.

Some candidates took the view that it was sufficient to answer the question from a general 'chemical type incident' and, whilst the hazards and operational procedures are similar, the comments above apply in that the question was seeking specific answers set in the context of 'pesticides'.

To achieve a good mark demanded that the candidate answered the question specifically in the context of a building fire containing 'pesticides'. It was evident that only those candidates who effectively studied the associated study notes were able to answer the question successfully.

- 4 You have undertaken a generic risk assessment for a fire at a chemical plant that also has transport movements in, out and within it.

What are the general command and control issues that will improve the health and safety of the public, brigade and other personnel concerned should a fire occur?

(25 marks)

Bibliography: Fire Service Guide to Health and Safety, Volume 3 – Guide to Operational Risk Assessment, Section 5.3 Generic Hazards – Chemicals, pages 18 and 19.

This question was poorly answered with the responses provided by many candidates implying that their knowledge was insufficient to recognise what the question required of them.

The answer required specific key elements to be stated regarding command and control issues for a fire at a chemical plant. In many cases the candidates discussed at length issues surrounding the movement and handling of hazardous substances. Candidates really need to effectively study for the examination and be able to apply the generic risk assessments to particular situations and be able to demonstrate that they can have sufficient knowledge for that purpose - rather than provide a repetition of the same general points through a series of questions.

- 5 Forced ventilation is an increasingly important firefighting tactic, which can be used to accelerate the effects of natural ventilation.
- (a) What does the term 'forced ventilation' refer to? (4 marks)
- and
- (b) When using forced ventilation at an incident, describe:
- (i) its four main advantages; and
- (ii) its five main disadvantages. (17 marks)
- and
- (c) Identify the four main techniques used to achieve forced ventilation. (4 marks)

Bibliography: Fire Service Manual Volume 2 – Compartment Fires and Tactical Ventilation, page 39.

Whilst many candidates attained high marks for this question, there was a clear distinction between this group and less successful candidates who had obviously not studied the appropriate material.

This latter group of candidates had little choice but to rely on vague memories as to the advantages and disadvantages of forced ventilation with 'recollections' that provided long answers and which, in the main, kept repeating the same points in various guises. Though the answers were not particularly wrong, candidates must be aware that they can only obtain available marks once for the same point, regardless of how many times they make it.

Candidates are strongly recommended to spend time in considering the main points they wish to convey prior to answering the question. This will assist them in providing a concise response, ensuring quality rather than repetitive quantity.

SECTION C SCIENCE AND FIREFIGHTING

Attempt the question from this Section

- 6 Under Section 1(1)(d) of the Fire Services Act 1947, you undertake an inspection at a factory producing parts for the automotive industry. You are informed that the site encompasses a storage area where a large quantity of the metal potassium is stored.
- (a) Identify the main properties of metals and in what other substance you would anticipate potassium being stored. (16 marks)
- and
- (b) Describe how potassium and other metals at the higher end of 'the Activity Series of metals' will react with water. (9 marks)

Bibliography: Fire Service Manual Volume 1 - Physics and Chemistry for Firefighters, pages 76 and 77.

This question generated few good answers. Only one candidate attracted full marks. The question asked for 'the main properties of metals', 'how potassium would be stored' and 'how potassium and the other higher end metals reacted with water'.

Many answers described how reactive metals should be stored, how the higher end metals reacted with oxygen, how the intensity of reaction diminished as you descended the activity table, and the firefighting techniques to be employed when dealing with metal fires. This was all good information, but not what the question asked for and consequently attracted no marks.

Yet again it appears that many candidates failed to effectively read the question to identify the information required. Those candidates who had studied the bibliography, produced answers that achieved a satisfactory level of marks.

PAPER 2: FIRE SAFETY, EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

GENERAL COMMENTS

As in past years the performance of candidates in this paper was variable. Those candidates who had taken the time to study the bibliography were obvious as they produced some excellent scripts that achieved very high scores. However, too many seemed to have not prepared themselves, resulting in unanswered questions or very low marks.

Too many candidates appeared to take insufficient care when reading the question. As a result they gave answers that did not relate to what the question had asked for.

Two technical points should be remembered by all candidates. Firstly, always use a pen and not a pencil. Secondly, start each answer on a new page of the answer book. Both these simple points greatly aid the examiners who assess the candidates level of knowledge and understanding.

Overall, this was a paper that produced reasonable results. However, with an improved study of the bibliography, careful reading of the question and some thought given to the structure and content of the responses provided, candidates would achieve much higher scores in the future.

SECTION A FIRE SAFETY LEGISLATION

Attempt ALL questions from this Section

- 1 As a Station Officer in a fire safety department, you have been asked to explain to a new junior officer the principal points associated with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996.

What are the four principal requirements in relation to acoustic signals for a warning in case of fire that you would include? (25 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3203 – The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996, pages 11 and 12.

Overall this was a reasonably well answered question. Candidates who had studied the bibliography and taken time to read and understand the question gained a reasonable level of marks.

However, those who failed to grasp the requirement of the question and went to great length to describe permanent, occasional or illuminated signs failed to attract marks for their efforts. Reading the question carefully and taking a little time to understand exactly what is being asked for always pays dividends.

- 2 The owner of a small business contacts you in order to seek advice on whether or not the premises must comply with the requirements of the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997. The owner is particularly unsure about the definition of a 'workplace'.

Describe 'workplaces' to which the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 apply.

(25 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3204 – The Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations, page 4.

Unfortunately, this was a rather poorly answered question.

When asked to describe 'workplaces', many candidates gave descriptions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 criteria for certification, or a risk assessment process rather than what was requested. Many candidates listed types of premises rather than the key elements which constitute a workplace.

It was obvious that, as always, those candidates who had seemingly studied the bibliography scored highly. However, those who relied upon past knowledge, or at best guess work, failed to achieve a satisfactory level of marks.

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- 3 As an officer in a fire safety department you have served an enforcement notice on the occupier of a local factory in accordance with Regulation 13 of the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997. On receipt of the enforcement notice the occupier contacts you and asks for an explanation of the rights of appeal.

Identify:

- (a) the occupier's rights of appeal against the enforcement notice; (7 marks)

and

- (b) the effect that an appeal will have on the operation of the enforcement notice; (8 marks)

and

- (c) the rulings that may be made regarding the enforcement notice when the appeal is dealt with. (10 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3204 – The Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, page 9.

This was in general not a particularly well answered question with many candidates obviously unclear about an occupier's rights of appeal. A large proportion of candidates failed to differentiate between the Workplace Regulations and other legislation related to fire safety. In particular there was a good deal of confusion with the requirements and procedures under the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

Added to these problems many also failed to restrict their comments to the area asked for under the appeals procedure. There were no extra marks available for detailing the employers' risk assessment responsibilities under the Regulations, however well they were explained.

It was possible to score highly with the minimum amount of time consuming writing, and those few who had evidently put in good preparation efforts generally did so.

SECTION B COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

Attempt the question from this Section

- 4 You are a Station Commander at a wholetime station. The station will soon be holding a major open day that is likely to attract a large number of people from the local community. You have decided to compile a written emergency procedure plan to be applied in the event of an accident.

What issues should be considered in that plan?

(25 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3207 – Safety at Community Events, page 6.

Many candidates applied detailed risk assessment procedures or accident prevention and investigation principles to the question which was not required. Others seemed to rely on some obscure personal experiences of station open days to answer the question, missing the point altogether. This was a major open day attracting large crowds. Candidates who produced a suitable list of issues that should be included in the emergency procedure plan scored highly.

SECTION C FIRE SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Attempt BOTH questions from this Section

- 5 As an officer in a fire safety department you have been tasked to contribute to a talk to a wholetime watch about firefighting in high rise buildings. Part of your talk deals with firefighting shafts.

Describe:

- (a) the three factors that determine the number of firefighting shafts in a building. (8 marks)

and

- (b) the design, construction and installation requirements of firefighting shafts including their stairs and lifts. (17 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3208 – Access and facilities for the Fire Service, pages 4 and 5.

A reasonable level of marks could be obtained in this question by the application of sound operational knowledge. However, greater attention to detail was expected.

Part (a) required candidates to describe the factors that determined the number of firefighting shafts in a building. Most scripts described the circumstances when shafts are provided.

Many candidates recognised that providing a fully labelled diagram of a typical firefighting shaft would attract the majority of marks in part (b). Very few scripts made mention that firefighting shafts should be designed, constructed and installed in accordance with the relevant British Standard, and therefore failed to gain all available marks.

- 6 During a general discussion with a local builder you are asked for an opinion about the general behaviour of the walls of a building in a fire.

Describe:

- (a) the four factors that usually determine the stability of a brick or stone load bearing wall in a fire; (9 marks)

and

- (b) the six factors that usually cause the collapse of walls at a fire. (16 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3209 – Building design and structural Fire Precautions, pages 25 and 26.

A question which attracted a very good response by the majority of candidates resulting in a large percentage who demonstrated a satisfactory level of knowledge of the subject. However, it might be that examiners considered the responses of a number of candidates had been drawn from practical experience rather than concerted study.

Terminology regarding elements of structure caused confusion to a number of candidates, and had they known the difference between joist and joint and column, beam and lintel, the result would have demonstrated their level of knowledge further.

PAPER 3: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

GENERAL COMMENTS

Far too many candidates had not spent enough time studying the bibliography. The study notes for this area are concise and contain all the points needed to obtain full marks. It was apparent from a number of excellent scripts that effective preparation which produces a thorough theoretical knowledge of the subjects enables high marks to be achieved.

Far too many candidates appeared to rely on 'experience' to answer the questions and missed the key points required to be awarded high marks.

A number of scripts scored very low marks, indicating that the candidates had never looked at the study note for this paper. It is disturbing to note that candidates at Station Officers' level of their assessment of knowledge and understanding for that rank are prepared to take a chance and rely on day to day experiences to obtain sufficient marks to pass the examination.

SECTION A EMPLOYMENT

Attempt BOTH questions from this Section

- 1 On joining a new fire station as the Station Commander you find that there are tensions between the personnel, caused by one member of staff being allowed time-off for trade union duties. Some personnel feel that the entitlement is being abused.

You decide to explain to the station personnel the rights to time-off for trade union activities.

Identify the eight matters, related to collective bargaining on industrial relations, that would entitle a trade union representative to reasonable time-off, with pay, during the employee's working hours.

(25 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3305 – Law Relating to Trade Unions, page 5.

The question required candidates to demonstrate in a clear and concise way that they understood what matters relating to collective bargaining on industrial relations would entitle a trade union representative to reasonable time off with pay in working hours.

A very small number of candidates were able to achieve full marks, however those who did had clearly studied the required bibliography and were able to gain high marks. The majority of candidates appeared to rely on guesswork and 'experience' with many confusing the role of safety representatives and that of union representatives.

Candidates are reminded of the need to study the published bibliography in full and read the question carefully to ensure that what is asked for is provided.

2 With the increasing emphasis being placed on Equality at Work issues you have been asked to provide a glossary of terms for a new guidance note to be issued by your Brigade.

Define the following terms:

- (i) Discrimination.
- (ii) Direct discrimination.
- (iii) Positive action.
- (iv) Victimisation.
- (v) Racial harassment.
- (vi) Sexual harassment.
- (vii) Bullying. (25 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3302 – Fairness at Work, pages 2, 3 and 4.

Although this was a well answered question on the whole with a majority of candidates achieving more than 50% of the available marks, it is still very disappointing that many candidates who hope to aspire to the rank of station officer achieved less than that standard, for what should be a straight forward question for all ranks. The question clearly asked for definitions and these are provided in the study notes. Again, it is disappointing that very few candidates were able to clearly provide the definitions as per the bibliography with many candidates seemingly relying on 'experience' and limited general knowledge.

It is particularly disappointing to note that a number of candidates scored very poor marks when one considers the time effort and money that the service has spent in raising awareness of this issue.

Where candidates failed to give any definitions and relied purely on examples, these rarely achieved a satisfactory level of the marks available

SECTION B TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Attempt BOTH questions from this Section

- 3 You are briefing new members of the training department of your Brigade who will hold the particular reference of 'Planning and Implementation of Training'.

You decide to produce an aide memoir to assist their initial understanding of their new duties.

- (a) By means of a diagram illustrate the four stages required for the effective delivery of any training. (8 marks)

and

- (b) Describe the eight points that are vital when designing operational training. (17 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3313 – The Planning and Implementation of Training, pages 2 and 3.

The majority of candidates who attempted this question gained high marks for the simple diagram required in part (a).

In part (b), some candidates confused the design of training with the purpose of operational training and also training methods.

It was of concern to the examiners that a few candidates did not consider the need to apply a risk assessed approach when balancing the need for realism in training against the benefits obtained, suggesting that exposing trainees to 'significant risk' was an acceptable practice.

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- 4 You are required to design a new brigade training structure for instructors who will deliver operational training packages. In your advice to the training management team you wish to stress the importance of the competence of the trainers themselves, in order that personnel should gain maximum benefit from the training they receive.

List the eight requirements that will determine the competence of trainers for this purpose.

(25 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3313 – The Planning and Implementation of Training, page 6.

Generally this was a poorly answered question.

It is apparent from many of the scripts marked that candidates had failed to cover this study note in their preparation. Many resorted to guesswork, which usually resulted in them achieving a very low mark. It was pleasing to note that a small number of candidates who had studied the subject achieved full marks. This underlines the need of candidates to approach their studies in a structured and methodical manner, using the bibliography provided.

Many candidates felt that there was a special requirement for instructors to be fit; presumably this requirement does not extend to other roles. This comment did not attract any marks.

SECTION C HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

Attempt BOTH questions from this Section

- 5 You have been asked to review the terms of reference and procedures of the Brigade's health and safety committee.

Identify:

- (a) the four areas that would be considered appropriate business for a fire brigade health and safety committee to address; (16 marks)
- and
- (b) the provisions that must be made by the employer to assist the appointed safety representatives. (9 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3311 – The Planning and Implementation of Training, pages 3 and 4.

It was disappointing to note that the majority of candidates failed to obtain a satisfactory level of marks.

Those candidates who had effectively prepared for the examination produced some excellent well-structured responses that attracted high marks, however, many candidates failed to recognise the needs of the question, and seemed to rely on reproducing information possibly based on their own Brigades procedures for reporting health and safety concerns. Candidates who responded with terms such as 'risk assessment', or cited the 'Health and Safety at Work Act', 'management regulations' or 'COSHH' in isolation and without context, did not attract the available marks.

Candidates are reminded that the essence of success is effective preparation before sitting the examination.

- 6 In preparing the brigade guidance note on health and safety procedures, you wish to ensure that the principles of risk prevention are fully understood. You decide to emphasise certain points.

List the nine principles that should be applied to 'preventive and protective measures'.

(25 Marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3312 – Management and Control of Health and Safety, page 3.

This was a poorly answered question with a large number of candidates failing to achieve a satisfactory level of marks. The question required candidates to list nine principles. Candidates who listed more than nine received no marks for the additional points. Candidates are reminded that they should read the question and when a list is requested, a list should be given and not a prose description or more than the number of points asked for.

A significant number of candidates implied by their responses that they had sufficient knowledge of the subject to understand the question and appeared to believe that they were being asked to risk assess a training exercise, as opposed to preparing the brigade guidance note on Health and Safety procedures.

Candidates must read the question carefully before committing themselves to paper.

PAPER 4: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Section A Principles of Management

Assessor's Comments

One of the questions in this section dealt with Local Government Finance, the other with Performance Management.

If a candidate is serious in wishing to achieve a satisfactory result in this Section, it is absolutely essential to carefully and effectively study the 'Study Notes' provided. A reliance on experience and general background knowledge is unlikely to provide responses that will provide a satisfactory level of marks

This was clearly illustrated by the wide spread of marks achieved, with those having studied scoring particularly well and those who seemingly relied on pre-knowledge without further effective study performing poorly.

Attempt BOTH questions

Both questions in this Section carry equal marks

- 1 (a) The demand for many of the services provided by the public sector has been steadily increasing due to economic and social trends. This pressure requires optimum use of limited resources and has given rise to the concept of 'Value for Money'.
- Identify and define the three elements which constitute 'Value for Money', or the three E's, as they are sometimes known. (9 marks)

and

- (b) The amounts of money an Authority plans to spend is set out in the annual budgeting process. There are two kinds of expenditure, Capital and Revenue.
- Name and briefly describe the four normal sources of finance for Revenue expenditure. (16 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3403 – Local Government Finance and Accounting, pages 3, 6 and 7.

This question was not particularly well answered mostly due to a lack of in-depth understanding of this subject.

In Part (a), most candidates knew what the 'three Es' were and could name them. Unfortunately, few could correctly define them. Those who did achieve the available marks had very obviously read and understood the content of the study note. Numerous candidates used many lines of script, attempting to include large quantities of 'Best Value' jargon which was simply not asked for.

Part (b) was answered in a similar fashion, with most candidates displaying a confused knowledge of financial terminology. Most answers indicated that candidates knew some of the sources where revenue came from, but could not reinforce this with any detail. Several candidates had seemingly not read the question properly and detailed how revenue is spent. Again, concise answers scored the highest mark.

2 In recent years, management models based around performance are increasingly used and are particularly relevant to the Fire Service whose business relates to the reduction of risk and the control of operational incidents. Such management systems typically have six key elements.

(a) In addition to 'audit', illustrate by means of a diagram the other five elements and indicate the linkage between all six elements for the purpose of control and information.

(17 marks)

and

(b) By using information from data, monitoring, research and external investigation methods, what results should an audit provide?

(8 marks)

Bibliography: Study Note 3405 – Management Systems, pages 3, 5 and 6.

Candidates attempting this question fell broadly into two groups. The first group produced a detailed diagram of the 'Management Model' and scored well for this part of the question.

The second group, who scored poor marks, demonstrated an insufficient knowledge of the model or, in a significant number of cases, answered the question from a 'Best Value' perspective. Some of these candidates may have been influenced by the previous question on 'value for money'. This emphasises the need for candidates to read the question carefully before attempting an answer, and to have sufficient knowledge to understand what is being referred to.

The second part of the question was generally poorly answered with many candidates having little grasp of what information an Audit should provide.

Assessor's Comments

Section B In-Tray Exercise

Overall there was an improvement in the way most of the questions in Section B were answered when compared to last year. This may be due to the advice provided in last year's report regarding the need for some station training and mentoring in the way to tackle every day problems and tasks facing a Station Commander. This advice is as pertinent today as last year and is strongly recommended to candidates for future examinations.

Most of the areas under examination in this section required a basic analysis of information supplied, establishment of priorities and a listing of actions to be carried out. Much of this could be adequately achieved by careful study of the question, information supplied, the application of sound judgement and common sense. These requirements could all be practiced, relatively easily, at watch and station level.

Question 3

Overall there seemed to be a general improvement in the quality of answers to that shown last year. The recommendations for improvement made in last year's 'Examiners Report' had obviously been adopted by candidates to help produce this improvement.

However, in completing the 'Justification' column many candidates listed their 'Justification' of the 'Action Taken' rather than 'Justification' for the 'Rating' as required by the question.

Failure to make necessary entries in the diary, as suggested, created problems for some candidates in this paper.

Often it resulted in single word answers which lacked substantiation, were unsuitable to obtain marks when portraying 'Actions' or 'Justification for rating' when dealing with the prioritising of in-tray items.

Question 4

Generally this question was poorly answered mainly because candidates failed to read the associated instructions thoroughly. This resulted in candidates providing unrequested information for what was being asked and a failure to extract the key relevant data from the supporting documentation. Many candidates responded to the contents of a letter rather than understanding the necessary research of other facts which were provided, in order to answer the enquiry made by the Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster.

Question 5

This question required candidates to respond, as a Station Commander, to the need to arrange a training exercise at a recently completed industrial premises. There was therefore a need for the candidate to select an appropriate date compatible with other activities scheduled in the station diary and then list all the necessary actions and promulgation of information to meet the exercise objectives.

Although this question was generally well answered, there were a number of poor responses, mainly due to an inability to plan and prioritise actions and a lack of recognition of all the ancillary activities which need to occur before and after such an exercise and the correct arrangements needed to identify and obtain the resources required during the exercise.

Question 6

This question was generally well answered and required candidates to demonstrate skills in written communication.

The main areas of weakness were when candidates displayed an inability to differentiate between the formal style of a memorandum to the Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster and a less formal style required to a member of the public.

Another common fault was that of candidates failing to link with and include information obtained previously in the paper in their responses. This factor led to candidates including too much irrelevant information in the limited space available for their answers, thereby failing to obtain available marks.

Published by:
Fire Services Examinations Board
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London EC1M 5LG

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PDF version produced for FSEB by Electronic Equipments Ltd. elnet@ntlworld.com

This PDF file was produced on 23 May 2002.