

HOW TO EXCEL AT FIRE SERVICE PROMOTIONAL EXAMS

Steve Prziborowski
Battalion Chief

www.code3firetraining.com

Objectives:

- Define common scoring dimensions
- Identify the top 10 pitfalls of poor performers in promotional exams
- Identify what to expect in the most common promotional events
- Identify at least one new item that may benefit you on your next promotional exam.

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The Top 10 Pitfalls of Poor Performers During A Fire Service Promotional Exam

Top 10 Pitfalls Of Poor Performers:

1. Not preparing for the position
2. Focusing too much on “checking-the-box”
3. Inability to think “long-term” or “big picture”
4. Lack of knowledge of SOP/SOGs, policies, standard/accepted practices, etc.
5. Not understanding the scoring dimensions

Top 10 Pitfalls Of Poor Performers:

6. Nervousness gets the best of them
7. Cannot defend actions or non-actions
8. Unsafe / unorthodox practices
9. Lack of preparation
10. Inability to demonstrate to the raters they can hit the ground running – not just be a safe beginner!

Common Promotional Exam

Scoring Dimensions:

- Oral communications
- Written communications
- Leadership
- Command presence
- Organizational skills
- Planning ability
- ICS
- Decision making
- Delegation
- Problem analysis
- Problem solving ability
- Situational awareness
- Time management
- Strategy/tactics
- Judgment

Common Promotional Exam

Scoring Dimensions:

- Knowledge of F.D. SOGs/SOPs, Rules and Regulations, etc.
- Knowledge of local, state and federal standards and laws (OSHA, NFPA, accepted industry standards)
- Safety
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to remain calm under pressure
- Risk management
- Flexibility

General Information

- Follow all instructions provided carefully
- Read the fine print, don't assume
- Know where you're going
- Know what you're going to wear
- Talk to others who've already taken the exam
- Take professional development courses

Most Common Events

- Written Examination
- Oral Interview
- Personnel Counseling
- Oral Presentation / Teaching Demo
- Emergency Simulation
- In Basket / Writing Exercise

The Written Examination

- What to expect -

- Usually 100 questions, multiple choice
- May be a % of your final score, or used to determine whether you'll go farther
- Common subject areas include supervision, leadership, management, ICS, department manuals, strategy & tactics, etc.

The Written Examination

- Key Points -

- Know reading list well in advance
- Obtain your own copies
- Obtain any study guides
- Study a little every day
- Start reading at least a year in advance
- 3 x 5 cards to study & be quizzed on
- Write down questions afterward
- Don't read into the questions

The Oral Interview

- What to expect -

- 15 to 45 minutes of questions
- Opening and closing statement
- Questions on:
 - The dept., the community, the position
 - Your vision, values, leadership style, etc.
 - How you would handle different situations
 - Your current / future goals
 - Customer service

The Oral Interview

- Key Points -

- Know yourself inside and out.
- Rehearse answers for all questions
- Use the “Intro/Body/Conclusion” method
- Back up statements with facts
- Use personalized stories
- Use past experience to prove a point
- Listen to the question
- Answer the way you would do something - not how you think they want you to answer

Personnel Counseling

- What to expect -

- May have role players
- May be video based
- May have follow-up questions
- Is usually based on current issues relating to the department or fire service in general
- Multiple problems
- Will be expected to diffuse a highly stressful situation

Personnel Counseling

- Key Points -

- Remember, it's the behavior, not the person!
- Understand progressive discipline and how you fit in
- Be able to be the designated adult
- Utilize the 8 steps to a successful counseling session
- Ask open-ended questions
- If role playing, don't expect immediate agreement
- Understand resources available to your department (EAP, CISD, etc.)

Oral Presentation / Teaching Demo

- *What to expect* -

- May have 30 minutes to prepare
- May have 10 to 15 minutes for presentation
- Manipulative or technical presentation
- Will have an audience
- Will typically be a current issue or topic affecting the department
- Teaching / Audio-visual aids

Oral Presentation / Teaching Demo

- Key Points -

- Use the four-step teaching method
 1. Preparation
 2. Presentation (3 to 5 bullet points – max)
 3. Application
 4. Evaluation
- Use your time wisely
- Ask questions / allow time for questions
- Use teaching / AV aids
- Remember you're getting graded on oral communications!

Emergency Simulation

- What to expect -

- May be static or dynamic
- May have multiple incidents to manage
- May have follow-up questions
- May have writing expectations (tactical worksheet, ICS form 201, NFIRS report)
- May have challenges:
 - Firefighter down, missing, trapped
 - Civilians to rescue, evacuate, treat, diffuse

Emergency Simulation

- Key Points -

- Prepare for the position!
- Expect any type of incident!
- Practice every day!
- Use ICS!
- Call sufficient resources early!
- Have a full alarm in staging if large event
- Big fire = big water!
- If you don't say it, you didn't do it!
- Ask for "CAN" reports

Emergency Simulation

- Key Points -

- Provide a detailed, concise and appropriate size-up
- When assigning units:
 - Advise them what they'll be called (ICS terminology) or who they'll report to.
 - Give clear, concise orders that contain tactical objectives (1 to 3 total)
- If provided paperwork, use it
- Remember the incident doesn't start when the bell goes off, & doesn't end when you leave the scene

Emergency Simulation

- Key Points -

- Ensure “benchmarks” are stated:
 - Establish Command / C.P. location
 - 2 in / 2 out established / not established
 - Strategic mode
 - Water supply
 - Staging area location
 - All clear
 - Utilities secured
 - PARs
 - Under control

In Basket / Writing Exercise

- What to expect -

- 1 to 16 hours to complete
- 10 to 30 items to complete
- Lots of paperwork
- May have computer access
- May or may not have enough time to complete everything

In Basket / Writing Exercise

- Key Points -

- Use your time wisely
- Be familiar with department specific guidelines for emails, memos, etc.
- Prioritization is the key
- Be aware of sensitive issues
- Be able to “filter” items to get to the “real problem”

Summary

- Good luck on your next promotional exam!
- Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this class!
- Any questions?????

Contact Information

- Steve Prziborowski
- 408-205-9006 (Cellular)
- sprziborowski@aol.com (Email)
- www.chabotfire.com (website)
- www.code3firetraining.com (website)