How To Excel At Fire Service Promotional Examinations

California Training Officers Symposium
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FREE RESOURCES:

• My websites:

Promotional Prep/Officer Development:
www.code3firetraining.com
(click the FREE STUFF link)

Entry-Level Firefighter Preparation:
www.chabotfire.com

OBJECTIVES:

• Provide an overview of the fire service assessment center process & typical events encountered

• Identify most commonly used scoring criteria

• Provide necessary tools to create an action plan to best prepare for your next assessment center

• Provide the necessary tools to create an action plan to best prepare for the position you are testing for
OBJECTIVES:
• Provide specific information & nuggets relating to most commonly used assessment center components
  – The oral interview
  – In basket/writing exercises
  – Personnel counseling sessions
  – Oral presentation/teaching demonstrations
  – The emergency simulation

OBJECTIVES:
• Provide common mistakes candidates make when participating in promotional examinations and the specific events

• Provide typical traits of successful performers in promotional examinations

This Class Is Not....
• A department specific promotional class that will give you all the answers and/or nuggets to be successful...

• Going to cover everything you need to know or do during your next promotional exam

• Going to have enough time to cover or practice everything we need to – we have less than 8 hours together.
This Class Is Based Upon:

Why Prepare For The Position?

Day Overview
1. Self Evaluation Exercise
2. Overview of a typical Assessment Center
3. Resumes
4. The Written Examination
5. In-Basket / Writing Exercises
6. The Oral Interview
7. The Personnel Counseling Problem
8. The Oral Presentation / Teaching Demonstration
9. The Emergency Simulation Exercise
Individual Activity

- Please complete the “Company Officer/Chief Officer Self Evaluation” to the best of your ability
- Do the best you can, don’t feel intimidated by what you have not yet accomplished…..
- You have 10 minutes

Consider This……

- It’s not the resume that will get you promoted…..
- It’s your current and past behavior and more importantly…..

Consider This……

- Your ability to demonstrate to the promotional process raters and ultimately your department Senior Staff, future supervisors, future peers and future subordinates that you can not only be a safe beginner, but you can hit the ground running, take care of your personnel, do what is right for the community, the department and the customers you serve.
Only 15% of your success is due to your technical knowledge – while 85% of your success is attributable to your ability to express ideas, arouse enthusiasm and lead people!

- Carnegie Institute of Technology

In the year 2016 (almost 2017) – it’s easier than ever to get promoted!! Why??

What are the two (2) primary responsibilities of a supervisor?
What do “they” want in a promotional candidate?

Top 10 Pitfalls Of Poor Performers:
1. Lack of preparing / Not preparing for the position
2. Focusing too much on “checking-the-box”
3. Inability to think “long-term” or “big picture”

Top 10 Pitfalls Of Poor Performers:
4. Lack of knowledge of SOP/SOGs, policies, standard/accepted practices, etc.
5. Not understanding the scoring dimensions
6. Nervousness gets the best of them
Top 10 Pitfalls Of Poor Performers:

7. Lack of detail / unable to justify or defend actions or non-actions

8. Unsafe / unorthodox practices

Top 10 Pitfalls Of Poor Performers:

9. Inability to be the DESIGNATED ADULT!

10. Inability to demonstrate to the raters they can hit the ground running – not just be a safe beginner!

11 Steps For Success

1. Take the process seriously

2. Get involved

3. Network / get mentored / mentor others
11 Steps For Success

4. Keep out of trouble

5. Train & educate yourself

6. Learn as much as you can

7. Prepare for ALL phases of the process

8. Know your strengths & weaknesses

9. Act is if you’re in the position

10. Be on time for all phases

11. Ensure your dress uniform still fits!
What To Expect In An Assessment Center:

- 1, 2 or 3 days
- Candidates are assigned time/event slots
- Standardized process for all
- Position / job related activities

What To Expect In An Assessment Center:

- Outside raters
- Inside proctor / moderator
- May be created by inside or outside personnel
- Most valid way to assess candidates

Most Common Events

- Written Examination
- Oral Interview
- Personnel Counseling
**Most Common Events**

- In Basket / Writing Exercise
- Oral Presentation / Teaching Demo
- Emergency Simulation

**Common Scoring Dimensions:**

- Oral communications
- Written communications
- Leadership
- Command presence
- Decision making
- Delegation
- Problem analysis
- Problem solving ability

**Common Scoring Dimensions:**

- Organizational skills
- Planning ability
- ICS
- Flexibility
- Situational awareness
- Time management
- Strategy/tactics
- Judgment
Common Scoring Dimensions:

- Knowledge of F.D. SOGs/ SOPs, Rules and Regulations, etc.
- Safety
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to remain calm under pressure

Common Scoring Dimensions:

- Knowledge of local, state and federal standards and laws (OSHA, NFPA, accepted industry standards)
- Risk management
- Customer service

How Will They Rate Me?

- Standardized score sheets
- Think of school – A, B, C, D & F or 100% to 90%, 89% to 80%, 79% to 70%, 69% to 60% etc.
- If you don’t say it or do it, you don’t get credit for it!
How To Best Prepare

• Talk to those who’ve taken or assisted with developing tests (inside & outside your FD)
• Understand & practice the events you may see on the test
• Review the job flyer
• Review the job specifications
• Prepare for the position!

Resume Preparation Tips

• Remember the main difference between a resume and an application
• Ideal length – 1 page
• May be used as a screening mechanism (make sure you accurately showcase yourself)
• Accentuate things with UPPERCASE, bold, italics, underline, bullets/dashes – using each sparingly and in various combinations

Resume Preparation Tips

• Use major headings such as Objective, Education, Experience, Community Service, etc.
• Spell check, proofread, ensure accuracy
• No references, hobbies, pictures, items that may show your age (high school, date of birth) or be used to discriminate against you
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

The Written Examination
- Key Points -

- 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
In Basket / Writing Exercise

- What to expect -

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

In Basket / Writing Exercise

- Key Points -

- Use your time wisely
- Be familiar with department guidelines for emails, memos, etc.
- Prioritization is the key
- Be aware of sensitive issues
- “Filter” items to get to the “real problem”
- Be comfortable with computers
- Take writing classes

How To Address Customer Complaints

1. **Express regret:** “I am sorry that we did not meet your expectations.”

2. **Accept responsibility:** “This is not the way we would like it to happen”

3. **Making restitution:** “What can I do to make it right?”
How To Address Customer Complaints

4. **Genuinely repenting:** “We will work with the staff to ensure they are better prepared to meet your expectations.”

5. **Requesting forgiveness:** “I hope that you will have confidence in us in the future.”

Allen Johnson (Chief Executive Officer – Montgomery County Hospital District, TX)

The Oral Interview

- **What to expect** -

- **15 to 45 minutes of questions**
- Opening / closing statement
- www.code3firetraining.com - Free Stuff link
- **Questions on:**
  - The dept., the community, the position
  - Your vision, values, leadership style, etc.
  - How you would handle different situations
  - Your background / current and future goals
  - Customer service

- **Key Points** -

- Know yourself inside and out.
- **Rehearse answers for all questions**
- “Don’t just answer the question, answer the question!”
  - www.code3firetraining.com - Free Stuff link
- **“Intro/Body/Conclusion” method**
  - www.code3firetraining.com - Free Stuff link
The Oral Interview

- *Key Points*
  - Back up statements with facts
  - Use personalized stories
  - Use past experience to prove a point
  - Listen to the question
  - Answer how you would do it - not how you think they want you to answer
  - Show passion & enthusiasm!!!!

Personnel Counseling

- *What to expect*
  - Role players or video based
  - May have follow-up questions
  - Is usually based on current issues relating to the department or fire service in general
  - Multiple problems
  - Expected to diffuse highly stressful situations
  - For sample Personnel Counseling scenarios, go to – [www.code3firetraining.com](http://www.code3firetraining.com) - Free Stuff link

Personnel Counseling

- *Key Points*
  - Remember, it’s the behavior, not the person!
  - Understand progressive discipline / how you fit in
  - Be able to be the designated adult
  - Ask open-ended questions
Personnel Counseling  
- Key Points -

- If role playing, don’t expect immediate agreement
- Understand resources available to your department (EAP, CISD, etc.)
- Create personnel expectations in advance
  - [www.code3firetraining.com](http://www.code3firetraining.com) - Free Stuff link

Personnel Counseling  
- FRISK METHOD -

- **F** = FACTS evidencing employee’s unsatisfactory conduct.
- **R** = RULE or authority violated by the employee’s behavior.
- **I** = IMPACT of the employee’s unsatisfactory conduct on the workplace.
- **S** = SUGGESTIONS to assist the employee in improving performance and directions as to the proper conduct the employee is expected to follow in the future. These directions are also referred to as directives such as “Effective immediately, you will....”
Personnel Counseling
-FRISK METHOD-

- K = KNOWLEDGE of the employee’s right to respond to corrective documentation placed in personnel file.
- Created in 1994 by Stephen J. Anderson

Personnel Counseling
-FRISK DOCUMENTATION METHOD-

- **Primary Objectives:**
  - Effect positive change through clear communication
  - Identify common elements necessary for legally sufficient documentation
  - Simplify the drafting of documentation by establishing a framework

Personnel Counseling
-8 Steps to a successful counseling session-

1. Start with a friendly greeting
2. Briefly state the problem
3. Let the employee explain their side, while you listen
4. Now you explain your side, what you have witnessed, and what facts you have while the employee listens
Personnel Counseling  
- 8 Steps to a successful counseling session -

5. State the rules for desired behavior
6. Develop an action plan to get the desired behavior
7. Review with feedback from the employee
8. Have a positive closing.

Personnel Counseling  
- Key Points -

- Items needing to be addressed ASAP:
  1. Issues relating to not treating others with respect and courtesy
  2. Issues affecting customer service
  3. Issues affecting service delivery
  4. Issues relating to character traits

Class Activity  
Personnel Videos
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
- You’re getting graded on oral communications!

Emergency Simulation

- What to expect -

- 30 to 60 minutes
- One or more events
- May be the first or later arriving unit
- 2 to 4 raters / one department proctor
- May be static or dynamic
- May have follow-up questions
- Will be stressful
Emergency Simulation

- What to expect -

- May have writing expectations (tactical worksheet, ICS form 201, NFIRS report)

- May have immediate need challenges:
  - Firefighter down, missing, trapped
  - Civilians to rescue, evacuate, treat, diffuse
  - Media in your face
  - City folks in your face
  - Exposure problems

Emergency Simulation

- Key Points -

- Prepare for the position!

- Expect any type of incident!

- Practice every day!

- Use ICS!

- Call sufficient resources early!

Emergency Simulation

- Key Points -

- Have a full alarm in staging if big 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 & appropriate size-up and radio reports

- **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)

Emergency Simulation - Key Points -

- **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 / Command Post location
  - 2 in / 2 out established or not established / RIC
  - Strategic mode / Objectives
  - **Water supply**
  - Staging area location
  - **All clear / Secondary search completed**
  - Utilities secured
  - **PARs**
  - Under control
Emergency Simulation
- Key Points -

- Ensure “notifications” are stated:
  - Utility company (gas & electric)
  - Law enforcement (& supervisor)
  - Ambulance (& supervisor)
  - Key FD personnel (Safety, PIO, Fire Investigator, Senior Staff, Duty Chief, etc.)
  - Station move-ups / Volunteer call-back
  - Mass Casualty Incident alert
  - Board-up Company / American Red Cross
  - City officials (Building Official, City Manager)

Individual Activity

Report On Conditions Practice

You are the first arriving Officer (Company or Chief) – write out your on scene, 30 seconds or less radio report

848 El Monte Road
**Initial RADIO REPORT:**

1. Unit ID
2. Brief description of incident situation
3. Obvious conditions
4. Brief description of action taken
5. Command mode & command post location

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**Initial RADIO REPORT:**

6. Strategic mode
7. Obvious safety concerns
8. Need for additional resources & staging area (or release of units)
9. Corrected address (if applicable)
   - All of the above in 30 seconds or less....

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**Individual Activity**

**Size-Up Practice**

You are the first arriving Officer (Company or Chief) – write out all of your Size-Up concerns related to the same situation
SIZE-UP:

- **W** (Water Supply)
- **A** (Area)
- **L** (Life Safety)
- **L** (Location / Extent)
- **A** (Apparatus Responding)
- **C** (Construction / Collapse Potential)
- **E** (Exposures)

SIZE-UP:

- **W** (Weather)
- **A** (Auxiliary Appliances)
- **S** (Special Matters)
- **H** (Height)
- **O** (Occupancy)
- **T** (Time of Day)
Individual Activity

Assign Your First Alarm Companies

You are the first arriving Officer (Company or Chief) – write out your assignments for your first-alarm companies (ICS designator & tactical objectives)

- Water Supply
- Area
- Life Safety
- Location / Extent
- Apparatus
- Construction / Collapse potential
- Exposures
- Weather
- Auxiliary Appliances
- Special Matters

Individual Activity

Report On Conditions Practice

You are the first arriving Officer (Company or Chief) – write out your on scene, 30 seconds or less radio report
How To Excel At Fire Department Promotional Exams

Steve Prziborowski
www.code3firetraining.com

Individual Activity

Report On Conditions Practice

You are the first arriving Officer (Company or Chief) – write out your on scene, 30 seconds or less radio report
Individual Activity

Report On Conditions Practice

You are the first arriving Officer (Company or Chief) – write out your on scene, 30 seconds or less radio report

176 Stevens Creek Road
Individual Activity

• You will have five minutes to:
  1. Write out your on-scene radio report (30 seconds or less) as the 1st due officer
  2. Write out your size-up concerns (FPDP, WALLACE WAS HOT, etc.)
  3. Assign your normal first-alarm companies

Resources:

• Soft cover copy; or

• EBook version

• Available at:
  – iTunes
  – Amazon
  – www.code3firetraining.com
Remember – Every Day Is An Assessment Center!!!!!!!

Thank you very much for your time
– don’t just stay safe – make it safe!

Thank You Very Much!

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Resources:
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