

IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 6 – Fire Service Operations and Incident Command (Zone 1)

Examiner Report – March 2017

Introduction

Candidates generally performed well in this examination with 50% of those that attempted the examination achieving a pass.

As in previous examinations, many candidates appeared to rely solely on operational experience. This meant that responses often lacked the depth of detail and understanding required.

Many candidates failed to follow instructions to explain or describe. As in previous examinations, candidates often presented their responses in lists of single word or very short sentences. This format rarely meets the requirement to explain or describe.

Candidates generally performed best on questions 2, 6 and 7. They generally performed least well on question 4.

Question 1

- a) *Explain the term “situational awareness” and its relevance to the role of Incident Commander in successfully managing an incident. (10 marks)*

- b) *Incident Commanders often have to work with other agencies such as the police at the scene of an incident. Describe the factors that you would take into account when working with other agencies at an incident in order to ensure achievement of objectives. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was one of the least popular options for candidates. Those candidates that did respond to the question usually attained fewer than 8 marks for their response.

Few candidates explained “situation awareness” in detail and few expanded their responses sufficiently to explain its importance in relation to effective decision making processes, supporting problem recognition and enabling the development of an appropriate action plan.

In responding to part b), candidates were usually able to identify other relevant agencies. However, the question did not ask for a list of other agencies but asked for the factors to be taken into account in order to enable effective working arrangements. Candidates often identified a few brief words (eg “communication”) without describing the factor in sufficient depth. For example, rather than writing only the word “communication”, candidates were

expected to draw out points such as identifying information that needs to be shared and the methods to do this in an accurate and timely fashion, establishing joint understanding of risks and subsequent implications for working arrangements, establishing liaison arrangements and ensuring shared understanding of roles and responsibilities of different agencies.

Question 2

- a) *Define the term “flashover” and describe the signs associated with flashover. (8 marks)*

- b) *Define the term “backdraught” and describe the signs associated with backdraughts. (8 marks)*

- c) *Define the term “fire gas explosion”. (4 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question covered an area that is fundamental for firefighters. Although there were some good responses, there were also many poor responses with some candidates appearing to confuse backdraughts and flashovers.

Part c) was the least well answered part of the question. Some candidates omitted to provide a definition and wrote about generic explosions rather than about fire gas explosions.

Question 3

- a) *Describe the factors that the Incident Commander would take into account prior to implementing working at height at an incident. (6 marks)*

- b) *Describe the measures that the Incident Commander should implement in order to ensure a safe system of work for working at height. (8 marks)*

- c) *Describe how individual protection when working at height can be achieved. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Part a) was often answered poorly with candidates failing to demonstrate an understanding of the issues to be considered. The type of factors that should have been covered in responses included time imperatives for action, the availability of suitable resources and equipment, the nature of the working environment (eg rough/uneven ground or complex building conditions) and the competence of personnel relative to the complexity of the intended activities.

Part b) was often answered well with candidates able to identify appropriate control measures. However, many candidates failed to appreciate that there were 8 marks available for this element of the question and provided only one or two brief points.

In responding to part c), candidates often failed to consider one or more of the following: work restraint; fall arrest; work positioning.

Question 4

It is essential that Local Authority Fire Services liaise with airports in their area to pre-plan for emergency incidents. Describe the factors that should be included in pre-planning for a possible incident at an airport. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was one of the least popular options for candidates and those candidates that attempted the question usually attained only low marks – the average mark awarded for this question was 5.

Pre-planning appears to be poorly understood. Some candidates wrote about tackling an incident at an airport rather than about working with the airport to ensure that all partners were **prepared** for a possible incident.

Responses should have covered issues such as fast and effective access in an emergency (eg entrance points, contacts to enable access, security challenges), access to firefighting media, locations of any hazards that attending crews should be aware of and communications (eg facilities to contact both air traffic control and ground stations, any blindspots etc).

Question 5

You are the Incident Commander mobilised in response to an incident involving a fire in the radiological unit of a local hospital.

- a) Describe the two principal hazards which arise from radioactivity. (4 marks)
- b) Describe the factors that the Incident Commander would take into account prior to formulating a tactical plan. (6 marks)
- c) Describe the control measures that the Incident Commander should put in place when managing an incident involving radiation. (10 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Part a) was often poorly answered. Many candidates failed to identify and describe irradiation and radiation contamination.

In order to secure a high mark for part b), candidates were required to assess the situation and identify the issues that the incident commander needed to take into account. Few candidates demonstrated understanding of this type of situation and therefore most failed to identify key issues for consideration such as: whether or not rescues were required, the

information on the site available via pre-planning and other sources, the quantity and nature of the source, the resources available, the non-radioactive additional hazards, advice available from site personnel and from other experts and the protection against radiation needed.

Part c) was usually answered well with most candidates able to identify at least some suitable control measures. Some candidates failed to appreciate that there were 10 marks available for this element of the question and therefore they needed to provide 10 relevant points in their response.

Question 6

- a) *Explain the operational challenges that an Incident Commander will need to take into account when attending a fire in a long road tunnel. (10 marks)*
- b) *Describe the control measures that would need to be put into place to protect crew members when managing a fire in a long road tunnel. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

There were a number of excellent responses to this question.

Good responses to part a) recognised the need to take into account firefighter safety, travel distance, heat, fatigue and possible collapse. Less well developed responses omitted key issues such as communication problems, flooding, possible collapse and distance to travel.

Part b) was generally answered well and many candidates were able to attain a high proportion of the marks available.

Question 7

- a) *Describe the role and responsibilities of a safety officer at an incident. (10 marks)*
- b) *Describe the role and responsibilities of a sector commander at an incident. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Generally candidates performed well on this question. Those candidates who were familiar with the roles were able to provide detailed responses. Responses to part a) were particularly good and candidates often attained a high proportion of the marks available.

Some candidates provided only a few brief points in their responses. A number of candidates appeared to be either unfamiliar with, or to have limited knowledge of, the role of sector commander.

Question 8

- a) *Describe the process of de-briefing following an incident and identify the matters considered during de-briefs. (12 marks)*
- b) *Explain the importance of de-briefing. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was not answered well.

In response to part a), candidates often provided only limited information. Candidates sometimes described the process but omitted to consider the content that needed to be covered.

Part b) was usually answered poorly with few candidates able identify and explain more than one or two aspects in relation to the importance of de-briefing. The types of points that could have been covered included: promoting improvements in individual performance and promoting improvements in organisational performance which leads to enhanced efficiency and also safety for the individual, other members of the crew and the public; providing a formal mechanism to record information related to different sites that may be important in the future and/or which may need to be passed to other agencies; identifying welfare or other personal issues that need to be addressed and helping to ensure that all crew members are aware of any follow-up arrangements (eg related to health checks or further investigation).