

IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 6 – Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – October 2015

Introduction

Many candidates did not appear prepared for the examination. This was reflected in the low number of candidates who achieved a pass - only 27% of candidates who attempted the examination achieved a pass.

Many candidates performed poorly on questions involving specific technical knowledge and/or a specific context. A common approach was to provide high level generic information. This meant that candidates did not assess the given situation to an appropriate depth and did not demonstrate the detailed knowledge and understanding relevant to the specific context.

The examiner team also noted a lack of understanding in relation to positive pressure ventilation (question 1) and tactical modes (question 3).

As in previous examinations, many candidates failed to follow the instructions in the questions. This was particularly notable where candidates failed to follow instructions to “explain” points and presented their answers as brief lists of points rather taking a more analytical review of the situation and the subsequent implications as required by the question; at this level, brief lists of points will not provide an adequate response where questions ask for explanations.

Question 1

- a) *Explain how Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV) is achieved and identify three factors that affect the efficiency of PPV. (4 marks)*
- b) *Describe the significant hazards and risks associated with the use of PPV at an operational incident and explain the control measures that are employed. (16 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This majority of candidates chose to answer this question. However, it was not answered well and many candidates failed to demonstrate basic understanding. The examiner team noted that some candidates provided responses that were incorrect and/or indicative of bad, and even dangerous, practice.

Question 2

You are the Incident Commander of the first attendance at a fire on board a merchant ship berthed alongside in harbour.

- a) *Describe your initial actions upon arrival at the incident. (6 marks)*
- b) *Explain the factors that you would take into account prior to committing firefighting personnel. (14 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was not a popular option for candidates. Those candidates who did attempt the question often applied generic firefighting approaches rather than addressing the specific context of the question. This meant that candidates failed to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding required. Few candidates demonstrated understanding of key contacts such as the duty master or ship's captain and few related their responses to the specific physical conditions of a ship.

Question 3

In relation to Incident Command at an emergency incident:

- a) Describe the Offensive Tactical Mode and give two examples of actions that might be taken when this mode is employed. (5 Marks)*
- b) Describe the Defensive Tactical Mode and give two examples of actions that might be taken when this mode is employed. (5 Marks)*
- c) Describe, with an example, what is meant by Transitional Mode and explain why this mode might be employed at an incident. (4 Marks)*
- d) Explain how the Incident Commander uses the Tactical Mode when Sectors are in use. (6 Marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Nearly all of the candidates attempted this question. Although a few candidates presented excellent response to this question, the majority failed to demonstrate understanding of the tactical modes. Many candidates ignored the instructions to "describe" and "explain" and presented only brief statements or phrases. Some candidates omitted to provide examples as required by the questions or else provided inappropriate examples.

Question 4

Describe the hazards that may be present when carrying out the rescue of a large animal that is trapped in a slurry pit within a remote farm building. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Responses often lacked depth with candidates providing only a brief list of points. Some candidates listed generic points which they failed to link back to the scenario; other candidates failed to appreciate that the question was focussed on the rescue of an animal and concentrated only on issues related to the remoteness of the scene.

Question 5

- a) Describe the methods that can be used for water carriage at incidents in rural areas. (3 marks)*
- b) Outline the advantages of each method. (12 marks)*
- c) When a water relay is in operation, what safety precautions should be taken to protect crews? (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was the least well answered question on the paper and nearly of the candidates who attempted the question attained only a low mark. In response to parts a) and b), many candidates

focused on open and closed water relays rather than writing about water carriage as required by the question.

Question 6

With the aid of an annotated diagram, explain how a decision making model is applied by the Incident Commander at an operational incident. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was generally answered well and candidates often achieved their highest mark for their response to this question. Although candidates were usually able to identify the component parts of the decision-making model, they often failed to explain how the model is applied by the incident commander at an operational incident and this therefore limited the number of marks that could be attained.

Question 7

You are the Incident Commander at an incident in a small laboratory where it is suspected that a radioactive substance has been accidentally released.

- a) Explain your considerations prior to committing firefighters to the scene. (12 marks)*
- b) Describe the actions you would take after the incident has been concluded. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Some candidates provided good answers to this question. However, some candidates provided generic information relating to incidents inside a building and omitted to explore the issues and hazards associated with radioactive substances. Candidates who did not address the specific context were unable to achieve good marks.

Question 8

Identify the hazards that have the potential to cause harm at incidents in tunnels and describe the control measures that you would put in place to mitigate risks. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was generally not answered well with few candidates demonstrating specific knowledge and understanding of incidents involving tunnels. Candidates often appeared to rely on generic operational procedures and control measures instead of providing a detailed analysis of the specific context and the subsequent hazards and control measures.

Question 9

You are the Incident Commander arriving at a fire in an industrial area where acetylene cylinders are present. Describe the factors that you would take into account when assessing the situation and explain the control measures that you would put in place. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Most candidates provided detailed descriptions of the properties of acetylene but did not explain the implications of the properties and the subsequent control measures to be applied. Some candidates detailed generic approaches to incidents in industrial buildings.

Question 10

Where equipment for working at height is being used, describe the measures you would adopt to ensure safe systems of work are in place. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was poorly answered with few candidates fully exploring measures such as adequate training of personnel, restraints, work positioning and fall arrest.

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