

IFE Level 4 Certificate in Fire Science and Fire Safety

Unit 3 – Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – October 2020

Introduction

48% of the candidates who sat the examination achieved a Pass. Candidates generally performed best on question 6 with performance also good on questions 3, 5 and 8. Candidates performed least well on questions 1 and 2 where the questions addressed leadership and management issues.

Question 1

- a) *Describe the key functional elements of effective incident command. (6 marks)*
- b) *Describe the factors that a fire service should take into account when selecting and training individuals to become operational commanders. (8 marks)*
- c) *Describe the command competencies and management skills that Intermediate and Advanced Tactical Commanders should demonstrate that are specific to roles at this level. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was the least popular option for candidates. It was also the least well answered.

The question addressed section 1.2 of the syllabus ie: evaluate training requirements and explain activities to ensure that personnel remain competent in role. Many candidates did not appear to be familiar with the issues and concepts relevant to this part of the syllabus and many appeared to guess in their responses and/or wrote about activities in their FRS.

Candidates often failed to appreciate that the question was focused on the selection and training of commanders and some presented responses based on elements of JESIP.

Candidates will find it helpful to refer to the National Operational Guidance for Incident Command and also the guidance on Incident Command: Knowledge, Skills and Competence - [Incident command: Knowledge, skills and competence | NFCC CPO \(ukfrs.com\)](https://www.ukfrs.com/Incident-command-Knowledge-skills-and-competence)

Question 2

You are the Tactical Commander chairing a multi-agency meeting at a large warehouse fire.

- a) *Describe the factors that could affect the joint decision-making during the incident.*

(14 marks)

b) *Explain how you would ensure that within the meeting information has been exchanged and is understood. (6 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was generally answered poorly. Some candidates responded to this question as an operational question rather than addressing multi-agency joint decision-making as required by the question. Others pitched their response at a lower level than the context had set out and wrote about basic operational processes whilst some used the opportunity to describe the Joint Decision Model instead of focusing on factors as required the question.

Those candidates that understood how factors such as poor communication, group think, competition between commanders, interpersonal conflict, status, lack of confidence, organisational culture, trust etc could affect decision making in this context were able to score high marks.

In responding to part b) few candidates were able to articulate how to communicate in a way that ensured that communication was understood. Examples of points which would have secured marks included:

- Avoiding ambiguity by using commonly understood terms and providing clarity.
- Ensuring that information is relevant and concise and keeps to the point
- Communicating at an appropriate point in time
- Confirmed understanding to prevent misunderstandings
- Questioning assumptions about the information
- Listening actively
- Being mindful of body language - their own and the reactions of others

Question 3

You have been given the task of performing an assessment of the pre-planning arrangements for dealing with wide area flooding within your Fire and Rescue boundary.

a) *Describe the main types of event and causes of flooding. (6 marks)*

b) *Describe the strategic actions that should be considered as part of planning. (6 marks)*

c) *Describe the main considerations and control measures to mitigate flood damage to property and infrastructure. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was generally answered well with the average mark attained being 8.

In responding to part a), candidates tended to limit their responses to flooding caused by weather. Few explored burst water mains, blockages to drains and overflowing dams and

river banks. Some candidates wrote about land that could be a victim of flooding (eg homes on flood plains) rather than focusing on the events that could cause the flooding.

Candidates often omitted to include previous risk areas, early warning for flooding and pre-deployment of appliances in their response to part b). Some candidates slipped into describing operational actions and issues.

Part c) was often answered poorly with many candidates having limited understanding of control measures in this context. Candidates who considered diverting flow, removing blockages and pumping out in detail were able to score high marks.

Question 4

You are called to investigate a road traffic collision between two vehicles, one of which is a service vehicle responding to an incident. The occupants of the non-service vehicle are deceased.

- a) Describe your immediate considerations. (12 marks)*
- b) Describe the post-incident actions to be taken. (8 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

The average mark attained for this question was 7.

In responding to part a) some candidates omitted to consider the context of the question (ie investigation) and presented responses based on operational actions to resolve the incident. Marks were available for considering the issues around scene security, collecting evidence/notes and not moving bodies without consultation with police who would have primacy in this investigation.

Most candidates were familiar with the post-incident actions that would be needed and there were some good responses to part b).

Question 5

You are the Tactical Commander called to attend a fire at a large residential care home.

- a) Describe the tactical priorities that you would consider. (6 marks)*
- b) Describe the factors you would consider regarding the building type. (10 marks)*
- c) Explain the different types of evacuation procedures that could be deployed. (4 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

In responding to part a), candidates sometimes failed to understand what is meant by “tactical priorities”. Many failed to consider saving lives, extinguishing the fire and having a search plan as priorities - some appeared to prioritise closing roads and setting up cordons over rescue activities.

In responding to part b) some candidates focused on the age of the building only and did not give regard to the fact that the building was a large residential care home and the subsequent implications of its use.

Part c) was not answered well as few candidates were able to consider the different types of evacuation. Few candidates described both total and progressive evacuation options in sufficient detail to attain full marks for their responses.

Question 6

You are the Tactical Commander called to attend a road traffic collision located on a motorway and involving multiple vehicles including a lorry carrying livestock.

- a) Identify the main hazards associated with this type of incident. (8 marks)*
- b) Explain the relevant control measures that should be established. (12 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates and most candidates provided good responses. The average mark attained was 9.

Candidates were obviously familiar with this type of context. Higher marks could have been attained if candidates had provided additional information and/or more points in their responses. Some candidates failed to appreciate that the number of marks allocated to the questions are an indication of how many relevant points are required to secure full marks and they provided only brief responses with a few generic hazards or control measures. These candidates scored only low marks.

Question 7

You are the Tactical Commander called to a fire at a large food processing plant with a complex layout containing sandwich panels.

- a) Describe the general considerations and inherent hazards related to sandwich panels.
(10 marks)*
- b) Explain your considerations regarding fire spread and the stability of the building.
(10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Part a) asked candidates to describe the general considerations and inherent hazards related to sandwich panels. There were 10 marks available so indepth technical information was required. Some candidates provided only generic hazard information and therefore did not attain high marks. Candidates who demonstrated technical understanding of the structure of sandwich panel and linked this back to the hazards were able to score high marks. Candidates should be aware that the inherent hazards are as follows:

- The core materials of sandwich panels are difficult to identify when fully installed
- The insulating properties of sandwich panels may make it difficult to track fire spread even using infrared detection equipment
- The insulating properties of the core materials within sandwich panels may contribute to rapid flashover
- When exposed to the high temperatures of a developed fire, the delamination of the facing material due to a combination of expansion of the metal facing and softening of the bond line may ultimately lead to rapid structural collapse.

When responding to part b), candidates tended to list generic hazards rather than focusing on fire spread and building stability as required by the question.

Question 8

Decision-making is defined as being “essential to the development and implementation of an incident plan”. Explain in detail the model for making joint decisions. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the model for marking joint decisions. It was common for candidates to muddle up the decision making model with the wider JESIP principles or with joint working.

Some candidates were able to achieve high marks by including a diagram and breaking down each element of the decision making model. Unfortunately, other candidates drew incorrect models and/or failed to expand on the labels on their diagrams.

Date issued: February 2021