

IFE Level 4 Certificate in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 3 – Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – March 2017

Introduction

Candidates undertaking this paper were required to demonstrate the strategic understanding required by operational station officers. Many candidates provided responses at operational level and therefore failed to demonstrate understanding at the level required. Only 21% of candidates achieved a Pass; this was a slight reduction on pass rates in 2016.

Some candidates presented their responses as simple bullet pointed lists. This approach did not achieve many marks as the approach did not draw out the detailed considerations required at this level.

Candidates generally performed best on questions 1 and 7. They performed least well on question 5.

Question 1

You are the Incident Commander mobilised to an incident that has involved the main line of a national railway network.

- a) Explain how liaison with the Railway Infrastructure Management could assist when dealing with this incident. (5 marks)*
- b) Describe how rail traffic movements can be managed. (10 marks)*
- c) Explain the implications on the wider community of interrupting or stopping the rail movements. (5 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was one of the most popular options and those candidates who provided successful responses were able to contextualise the situation and consider the wider implications beyond the operational response associated with the immediate incident area.

Responses rarely considered the potential for passengers to be stranded in-between stations at remote locations or within tunnels, with some candidates focussing on passengers being annoyed and requiring food and warmth. Few candidates appreciated the issues related to business continuity and economic impacts. Poor handwriting or bullet point answers limited the opportunities for examiners to award high marks.

A useful source of information for this question can be: GRA 4.2: Incidents Involving Transport Systems – Rail National Operational Guidance – Transport.

Question 2

- a) *Explain the incident command protocols that would operate when attending incidents within prisons or other places of lawful detention and explain how the fire service would work with other relevant organisations during and immediately after the incident. (8 marks)*
- b) *Explain the safety precautions specific to attending incidents within prisons or other places of lawful detention. (12 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was not a very popular option for candidates. Some candidates demonstrated understanding of the specific context but many others relied on generic statements that failed to appreciate the unique approach required or an awareness of specific security arrangements.

There also seemed to be a misunderstanding regarding primacy at these incidents and incorrect statements relating to the application of the Fire Safety Order at Crown Premises.

A good source of information for this question is: GRA 3.9 – Firefighting in Places of Lawful Detention.

Question 3

Following the escalation of an incident, a tactical/silver Incident Commander is called to the incident. Explain the responsibilities and considerations of the tactical Incident Commander when arriving at the scene and taking over control. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was another popular option for candidates. However, many responses seemed to rely on reciting the incident command model without contextualising the answer or providing enough detail to demonstrate an understanding of how it would be applied. It was evident that some candidates had enough experience to express the rationale and considerations associated with this level of responsibility. Where candidates simply repeated the commonly understood model without explanation, marks were limited.

A good source of information for this question is: National Operational Guidance – The Foundation for Incident Command.

Question 4

Multi-agency working is essential at large or complex incidents where joint decisions are made to achieve a common goal.

- a) Explain the rationale for keeping a log of decisions during such incidents. (8 marks)*
- b) Explain the factors that may affect the effectiveness of joint decision-making when working at tactical and strategic level. (12 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates.

There were many good answers to part a). However, candidates responded less well to part b) as many failed to draw out the psychological issues that impact on the effectiveness of joint decision making such as interpersonal conflict and organisational culture. Few candidates demonstrated in-depth understanding of multi-agency working.

A good source of information for this question is: National Operational Guidance – The Foundation for Incident Command.

Question 5

In relation to confirmed chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (explosives) materials (CBRN(E)) incidents:

- a) Explain the circumstances where you would consider committing fire crews without full chemical protective clothing and also state the circumstances where you would not commit fire crews. (4 marks)*
- b) Explain the control measures that you would instigate where crew members are committed without full chemical protective clothing. (6 marks)*
- c) Explain the considerations and additional control measures that would be employed beyond the initial phase of the incident. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This was a very poorly performing question with only a handful of candidates achieving 8 marks or more.

Part a) was answered well with most candidates able to identify that the critical determining factor was saveable lives.

In responding for part b), few candidates were able to explain the time limitations associated with the use of SCBA and Fire Kit and exposure in the Hot Zone or the circumstances where casualties may be trapped.

Candidates generally identified a few valid points in response to part c) but few explored in detail the issues associated with managing this type of incident.

A good source of information for this question is: National Operational Guidance – The Foundation for Incident Command.

Question 6

Describe the matters to be considered when pre-planning for an incident involving a ship (non-military) fire alongside in a large marine port within your Fire and Rescue Service's boundary. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates focused their attention on dealing with the vessel and operational tactics but failed to elevate their response to the wider issues associated with the port environment. The question required a strategic overview and consideration for matters that would need to be considered to manage an incident on any non-military ship.

Successful candidates detailed the facilities and expertise that may be available and included reference to the control and movement of endangered vessels and the potential business impact.

A good source of information for this question could be found in: Fire Service Manual Volume 2 – Marine Incidents.

Question 7

As duty officer you have been asked to attend an incident at a theme park in your service area which involves a number of individuals suspended in a defective car of a large roller coaster.

- a) Describe the factors you would take into account in developing your tactical plan to complete the rescue. (8 marks)*
- b) Explain the control measures that you would employ when carrying out the rescue. (12 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

This question was the most popular option for candidates. It was generally well answered well.

Many candidates were able to describe viable considerations and identify how these fitted into the developing the tactical plan. Some candidates declared a major incident, and some considered controlling park attendance but most marks were awarded for working at height considerations and detailing the use of specialist teams and equipment.

Other than incident reports for such incidents, a good source of information for this question is: GRA 5.10 – Working at Heights.

Question 8

Explain the command and control procedures that may need to be implemented and the specific precautions that should be considered with regard to a Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) road tanker that is involved in a fire. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

The responses to this question were generally poor with few candidates attaining 8 marks or more.

Those who attained good marks gave consideration to whether only the cab was involved before deciding on their approach and were able to outline an approach that considered multiple agencies and exclusion zones depending upon weather and topography. Many candidates focused on describing a BLEVE in detail and failed to consider use of monitors and cooling water. Some candidates even considered decanting the LPG from the tanker. Not many answers included precautions for a dry wall scenario or the specific procedures that were relevant to the question. Generic statements such as “set up an inner cordon” without further explanation did not attract marks.

Good sources of information for this question are: Fire Service Manual Volume 2 – Fire Service Operations – Petrochemical Incidents; GRA 3.10: Fighting Fires in Petrochemical Plant and Pipelines.