IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 6 – Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – March 2016

Introduction

32% of candidates achieved a Pass.

Many poor scripts were submitted and the majority of candidates that failed the examination achieved only low marks – 74% of the candidates that failed the examination achieved fewer than 30% of the marks available.

Many candidates appeared to approach the examination without preparation. This meant that they often lacked the specialist/technical understanding required by the questions.

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

Question 1

An important part of incident command is the Decision Control Process. Describe the four parts of the Decision Control Process. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Some candidates presented good responses and supported their answer with a diagram. Other candidates did not appear to be familiar with the decision control process and appeared to guess at the steps included in the process.

Credit was given to candidates who demonstrated understanding of either the latest version of the decision making process or the previous model. The IFE advises candidates to review the material provided in the National Occupational Guidance, particularly in the Foundation for Incident Command when preparing for examinations.

Question 2

Explain the control measures that an Incident Commander can introduce to manage an incident safely. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Candidates who attained high marks identified and explained control measures such as sectorisation, functional officers, cordons etc. Many candidates wrote at length about risk assessments but omitted to focus on, or explain, the actual control measures that the Incident Commander could employ.

Question 3

Describe the hazards that may be encountered by fire and rescue personnel when attending an incident involving a military aircraft crash landing next to an airfield. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates provided responses that lacked depth and focused mainly on generic hazards. This meant that they omitted to explore hazards related to the aircraft construction (eg materials used in the construction, engine materials, weakened elements of construction) crash site hazards (eg reactive components such as fuel, site debris) and specific military aircraft hazards (eg flares, missiles, cargo).

Candidates should be aware that questions that are set in a specific context (in this case an incident involving a military aircraft crash) require responses that are tailored to that context. When responding to this question, many candidates simply listed generic issues without illustrating how they related to the situation. Candidates who did not demonstrate relevant technical understanding or link their answer to the context attained only low marks for their response.

Question 4

With regards command and control protocols, describe the six distinct phases of a collapsed structure incident. (This is often referred to by the acronym REPEAT.) (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was a not a popular question and the acronym REPEAT did not appear to be well known. REPEAT stands for:

- reconnaissance and initial scene survey
- elimination of utilities
- primary surface search and casualty extrication
- exploration of voids
- access via selective debris removal
- termination of the incident

Those candidates that did attempt the question and who were familiar with the acronym often achieved high marks for their response to this question.

Question 5

a) Identify three typical uses for each of the following type of expansion finished foams:

   i. Low
   ii. Medium
   iii. High

   (9 marks)

b) Describe the hazards associated with the use of high expansion foam. (11 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular question and many candidates achieved high marks for their response.

Some candidates provided irrelevant information in their responses and focused on facts and figures related to expansion ratios rather than providing information about uses and the hazards identified with high expansion foam.

Question 6

You are the Incident Commander of the first attendance called to a de-railment involving a passenger train.

a) Describe the hazards associated with this type of rail incident. (14 marks)

b) Describe six control measures that you would put in place to protect crew members. (6 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was a popular option for candidates and those candidates that responded to the question often achieved high marks.

Part a) was generally answered well although some candidates identified only a small number of hazards and failed to demonstrate an appreciation of the full scope of the situation.

Candidates sometimes omitted to respond to part b) and failed to identify control measures. Those candidates that did respond to part b) sometimes listed control measures without describing them or illustrating their relevance to the context.

Question 7

Describe the issues to be considered and the specific techniques to be used when undertaking actions to deal with a leak of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) from a pipeline. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Candidates that provided good answers to this question demonstrated technical understanding of the issues to be considered when dealing with LPG.

Candidates who identified key issues (such as the fact that LPG is heavier than air, that it is colourless, odorless and has anaesthetic properties, that it can cause front burns when in contact with the skin etc) were able to describe appropriate actions. Actions to be considered should have included gas monitors, cordons, evacuation, PPE and specialist advice.

Some candidates attempted to answer the question without drawing on specialist knowledge. This led to some generic statements about hazards and repetition of points. These candidates achieved only low marks.

Question 8

a) Describe the control measures used to protect crew members when there is a risk of biological infections at water-related incidents. (12 marks)

b) Describe the post-incident measures the Incident Commander should consider to help eliminate or remove any further risks. (8 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates wrote about water rescues rather than focusing on the risk of biological infections at water-related incidents. Some candidates concentrated on dynamic risk assessments rather than describing control measures that would be appropriate in the situation. Examples of appropriate control measures included specialist advice, suitable PPE and RPE, fully briefing staff on dangers, ensuring evaluation processes were in place and ensuring that there was no eating or drinking in the area.

Many candidates provided poor responses to part b). Some candidates limited their responses to discussion of de-briefing without considering decontamination requirements or ongoing monitoring of the health of personnel involved in the incident.

Question 9

a) The Incident Commander must take into account environmental damage caused by incidents. Describe the hierarchy of environmental control measures used to contain polluted fire water run-off at an incident. (12 marks)

b) Explain the factors that an Incident Commander should consider when determining whether or not a controlled burn would be appropriate. (8 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was not a popular option.

In response to part a), many candidates failed to understand or fully describe the control measures required ie containment at source, containment close to source, containment on the surface, containment in the drainage system, containment on or in watercourse.

Most candidates were able to identify one or two factors but responses generally lacked depth and were not fully expanded.

Question 10

Describe the hazards and risks that an Incident Commander must take into account while attending an incident at a farm. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates and some candidates achieved a high mark.

As in previous examinations, a common approach was to list words or phrases (eg “weather”) without providing information as to how this presented a hazard or risk.

Some candidates drew on general knowledge and experience and did not relate their answer to the specific context. This meant that only a limited range of risks were identified. In addition, there was a great deal of repetition of the same points.