IFE Level 3 Certificate in Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – October 2025

Introduction

31 (27%) of the 113 candidates that sat the examination achieved a Pass. On average, candidates performed best on question 7, where the average mark was 8 marks, and least well on question 4, where the average mark was 4.5 marks. It is evident from the answers, as in previous years, that candidates are relying on their operational experience to answer questions, rather than referring to the recommended reading, which would help achieve higher marks.

Question 1

Uncontrolled ventilation can endanger firefighters as well as impacting fire development, which will impact any ventilation strategy. Describe the following in relation to ventilation:

a) *Wind driven fire. (4 marks)*
b) *Coanda Effect. (5 marks)*
c) *Piston Effect. (4 marks)*
d) *Trench Effect. (4 marks)*
e) *Stack Effect. (3 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Most candidates could describe a wind driven fire, although many did not relate that this could be seen in wildfires as well as high rise buildings. Many had an awareness of the Coanda effect and how it tends to follow the surface of buildings.

Many candidates could not fully describe the Piston, Trench or Stack effect. Those that did were able to explain how the Piston effect impacts smoke movement in tunnels and lift shafts, how the Trench effect produces a fire plume that accelerates up an inclined surface (as in the Kings Cross fire) and that the natural buoyancy of fire gases produces the Stack effect.

Given the extent of media coverage of high-profile fire incidents involving these ventilation effects, and their established link to basic fire behaviour, higher levels of attainment might reasonably have been anticipated; however, many candidates did not achieve half of the available marks.

Question 2

a) Premise Information Boxes (PIBs) / Secure Information Boxes (SIBs) are provided for all Residential High-Rise Buildings, which contain the Emergency Response Pack (ERP). What information is contained in the ERP to assist Fire and Rescue Services? (10 marks)

b) Plans of the High-Rise premises should be provided to enable firefighters to orientate themselves with the building and its location. What information should be included on the orientation plans? (10 marks)

Examiner Feedback

a) This question was attempted by many candidates. It specifically relates to the information contained in the Emergency Response Pack (ERP) for high rise buildings. Most only cited a layout plan, an orientation plan, evacuation strategy, PEEPs information and location of water supplies.
Further marks would have been awarded for candidates referencing the following from the NFCC PIBS Guide: A3 encapsulated plans, event logbook, 'Off the Run' notices, initial information for the FRS and any fire safety issues present.

b) This question relates to information on the orientation plan (which is part of the ERP). It was poorly answered by most candidates, with only access points, floor numbers and nearest water supplies being cited in the main. Candidates who either studied the reading list or had experience of working with an orientation plan were able to state the other relevant information, such as occupancy, building dimensions, address, plan key, weight restrictions and PIB location.

Question 3

a) As the Incident Commander of a fire in a large office complex, what are your operational priorities? (10 marks)

b) As the Incident Commander, what are your essential actions to support the successful resolution of the incident? (10 marks)

Examiner Feedback

a) This was a popular question relating to a large office fire. Part (a) focused on the priorities of the IC. Surprisingly, many candidates did not provide the more straightforward answers, such as: Carry out rescues, locate the fire, contain and extinguish the fire, Many focused on crew safety, essential actions (which part (b) requested) and stating the JESIP principles. Most understood the need to consider extra resources and to secure water supplies.

b) Candidates who cited information gathering, risk assessment, identifying tactical options, resources, structuring the incident and JESIP faired well on this question. Those who did not discuss essential actions to support the resolution of the incident did not.

Question 4

a) Describe the main types and operation of drencher systems. (12 marks)

b) Describe the benefits and hazards of drencher systems. (8 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was not a popular question; most candidates did not demonstrate an ability to describe a water spray or foam spray drencher system of either roof, curtain wall or window type. Most elected to describe sprinkler systems which attracted no marks.
Likewise, most candidates failed to describe benefits such has providing pseudo-compartmentation or preventing external fire spread or hazards such as wet floors, reduced visibility or water penetration through building structure.

Question 5

a) When attending a Road Traffic Collision alongside the police and ambulance service, what is the role of the fire service? (5 marks)

b) As the Incident Commander at a Road Traffic Collision with persons trapped, what are your priorities? (15 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Most candidates attempted this question, with part (a) being generally well answered. Most candidates successfully identified the FRS role at RTCs as being the rescue of people, extinguishing fires, dealing with released chemicals or contaminants, assisting the ambulance with casualty care and taking the lead on health and safety. Most did not identify the need to preserve the scene as far as possible.
Part (b) was less well answered; those candidates who were able to identify the need to make contact with casualties, undertake primary surveys, triage, create space and extricate faired better.

Question 6

Explain the effects of stress that the Incident Commander may recognise in themselves or others. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

A popular and, in some cases, well answered question. Most candidates were able to explain the behavioural and physical indicators of stress, with fewer looking at the emotional or cognitive indicators. Many candidates discussed the effect of heat stress on firefighters, which did not gain marks, as the question was focused on the effects of stress on incident commanders.

Question 7

a) Describe the hierarchy of control measures in relation to managing risks at an incident. (5 marks)

b) Discuss the types of Risk Assessments that Incident Commanders can use at an operational Incident. (15 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Most candidates answered this question, with many being able to describe the 'ERICPD' hierarchy of risk control for part (a).

Most listed DRA and ARA within part (b); candidates are reminded that the question asked for descriptions rather than lists.

Candidates who were able to describe Personal, Environmental, Generic and Joint (JESIP) risk assessments gained further marks.

Question 8

The Incident Command System relies on the role of functional officers.

a) Describe the role of a National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer (NILO) and the types of incidents they may attend. (6 marks)

b) Describe the responsibilities of the Command Support Officer. (6 marks)

c) Describe the responsibilities of the Sector Commander. (8 marks)

Examiner Feedback

a) Candidates who were able to describe that a NILO is a specially trained officer who can advise and support ICs and other agencies on FRSs capacity and capabilities, alongside the main categories of incidents that they may be involved with scored well.

b) Many candidates described the role and responsibilities of the command support team / command unit rather than the command support officer. Those who were able to discuss the briefing and supervision of the command unit team, co-ordinating the handover from the initial command point to the command unit, liaison with other agencies and ensuring a decision log is completed scored well.

c) Most candidates were able to discuss the responsibilities of the sector commander, it was good to note that some discussed the need to communicate with adjacent sectors to ensure operational tactics are aligned and do not compromise crew safety.