

IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Safety and Fire Science

Unit 6 – Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – October 2016

Introduction

Candidates generally performed well on this paper with 58% of the candidates who attempted the paper achieving a pass. Around 65% of candidates who achieved a pass achieved a D grade whilst 29% of pass candidates achieved a C grade and 5% achieved a B grade.

There were some very poor scripts. 47% of the candidates that failed the examination achieved fewer than 36 (ie 30%) of the marks available.

Candidates generally performed best on questions 2, 3, 6 and 9.

As in previous examinations, candidates often failed to read the questions thoroughly and this meant that responses were not always fully relevant to the question that had been asked. Responses were not always structured or planned in a logical way and this often led to the repetition of points. In addition, candidates often failed to use the mark allocation stated on the question paper as a guide in determining how much information should be provided in responses; for example, a question with a mark allocation of eight will require eight relevant points to be provided in the response. Candidates often provided responses that were too long or too short in relation to the marks available.

Question 1

- a) Describe the role of the BA Main Control Officer at an incident. (8 marks)
- b) Explain the purpose of guidelines and give an example of a situation in which they would be used. (4 marks)
- c) Describe the principles that should be applied when guidelines are in use. (8 marks)

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), candidates sometimes confused the role of the entry control officer and the main control officer. Some candidates provided unnecessary information such as the colour of tabards worn at incidents; marks were awarded only for descriptions of the role.

In response to part b), most candidates were able to give examples of situations where guidelines would be used. However, many candidates omitted to mention the most important use of guidelines ie to retrace steps to the entry point.

In response to part c), many candidates focussed their response at operational level and described the basic operational use of guidelines rather than taking the higher level view and considering principles underlying the use; for example, principles that could have been given in responses included:

- they should be used only where control measures have been established prior to use
- the guideline team should not operate in advance of any firefighting BA team.

Question 2

- a) Define a backdraught and describe the signs associated with backdraughts. (6 marks)
- b) Explain the Incident Commander's considerations in order to reduce the risk of backdraught. (4 marks)
- c) Define a flashover and describe the signs associated with flashovers. (6 marks)
- d) Explain the Incident Commander's considerations in order to reduce the risk of flashover. (4 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular option for candidates. The majority of candidates that attempted this question performed well and the average mark attained by candidates was 11.

In response to part a), most candidates were able to describe the signs of a potential backdraught. However, few candidates were able to define a backdraught in detail with most candidates referencing only the fact that a backdraught occurs when air is let into a room containing flammable gases rather than explaining the issues that lead to a backdraught.

In response to part b), many candidates wrote about generic measures to protect crews (such as not committing crews) rather demonstrating understanding of issues specific to the backdraught context; for example, candidates often omitted to consider the importance of being aware that a backdraught can be delayed for a several minutes but still have sufficient energy to break other windows in the compartment so therefore no compartment can be considered safe from a backdraught until it has been opened to fresh air for some time.

In response to part c), most candidates stated the phrase "a fire in a room becomes a room on fire" but did not demonstrate that they understood the reason for the phenomenon. However, most candidates achieved marks for describing the signs associated with flashovers.

In response to part d), few candidates demonstrated understanding of actions to reduce the risk of flashover. Many candidates repeated the generic points that they had presented in response to part b). Candidates who understood that this was a temperature-driven event knew that if they reduced the temperature either by cooling or ventilation above the fire this would reduce the chance of a flashover.

Question 3

- a) What are the hazards and risks associated with a fire at a refuse site? (8 marks)
- b) Describe the factors that should be taken into account in pre-planning for a possible fire at a refuse site. (12 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Candidates who attempted this question generally provided good responses.

Most of the candidates who attempted part a) of this question achieved half of the available marks by detailing the obvious hazards associated with refuse sites. Few candidates considered the possibility of toxic fumes and smoke affecting adjacent properties. Some candidates included the same point twice but with different wording; for example, some referred to muscular injuries and then to manual handling.

In response to part b), many candidates confused the elements of an incident commander's tactical plan with pre-planning considerations. The aim of pre-planning is to ensure that the service is prepared for any incident occurring at the site. Some candidates confused gathering information from de-briefs with gathering information from site visits and, as a result, omitted to explore the information required in key areas such as the types of waste processed, the machinery used on site and the availability of water.

Question 4

- a) Explain how dust and powder in industrial buildings can pose a risk to firefighters. (6 marks)
- b) Explain the control measures that could be put in place to mitigate the dangers and to deal effectively with a fire in an industrial building where dust and powders are present. (14 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Few candidates opted to respond to this question. Those candidates that did respond demonstrated only limited understanding of the context with few recognising the potential for dust explosions in these situations.

In response to part b), few candidates demonstrated understanding of the way that risks from dusts could be managed. Some candidates even advocated firefighting actions that would have increased the potential for an explosion. Some candidates provided irrelevant information and focussed their responses on measures to be taken to prevent fires rather than focussing on managing risks in an actual fire situation.

Question 5

You are the Incident Commander at a fire at a public building. The fire has been started during a protest and rioters are still present in the area.

- a) What are the specific risks and hazards associated with this type of incident? (4 marks)
- b) Describe the control measures that you would implement. (16 marks)

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), many candidates presented irrelevant information as they wrote at length about public buildings and the possible use of public buildings for largescale public entertainment. The question required candidates to focus on the issues relevant to dealing with fires at a public disturbance and the likely hazards from the actions of the rioters.

In response to part b), many candidates presented only six or seven brief points when there were 16 marks available. Candidates should be aware that the mark allocation provided on the question paper is an indication of the number of points which are required so presenting

only a few points where a question carries a high mark immediately reduces the marks that can be attained.

Candidates often provided generic control measures/actions without relating these to the specific scenario; few candidates referenced specific control measures such as working direct from a hydrant, ensuring that the appliance is facing the direction of egress and avoiding confrontation.

Question 6

- a) Explain the factors that should be considered when carrying out a rescue from a trench collapse. (8 marks)
- b) Describe the control measures that you would put in place. (12 marks)

Examiner Feedback

In response to part a), most candidates were able to identify the potential hazards and difficulties arising from a trench collapse that needed to be taken into account.

Responses to part b) were less well developed with several candidates failing to provide control measures to mitigate risks they had identified in responding to part a). Examples of control measures that were often omitted included the use of correct PPE, the use of safety officers and the use of onsite specialists along with their equipment.

Question 7

With reference to command and control at incidents, explain the function and duties of the following key personnel:

- a) Incident Commander (10 marks)
- b) Sector Commander (5 marks)
- c) Incident Support Officer (5 marks)

Examiner Feedback

The question was about the function and duties of the officers identified and not about how they could be identified on the incident ground; therefore no marks were awarded for mentioning donning a tabard or describing the tabards to be worn.

Candidates generally attained most of their marks for their response to part a). However, fewer candidates achieved a high proportion of the marks for part b) and many candidates failed to achieve any marks at all for their response to part c). In responding to part c), many candidates confused the roles of functional officers or operational commanders with the function of an incident support officer.

Question 8

You are the Incident Commander at a fire in an office building where persons are reported to be trapped. Identify and explain the priorities to be considered when formulating and implementing your tactical plan. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates failed to demonstrate an understanding of the priorities that this type of incident would raise. Candidates often presented only generic information (eg citing the use of dynamic risk assessments and cordons) but omitted to relate this back to the context or explain priorities. Most candidates missed obvious priorities such as the need to identify the last known location and number of missing persons in order to identify whether any rescues were needed and, if so, how these should be tackled.

Question 9

- a) Explain the hazards and risks involved in a road traffic incident involving a lorry carrying food and other products for a food chain supplier. (Note: this is a single vehicle road traffic incident with the lorry on its side and the driver of the vehicle trapped in the vehicle.) (14 marks)
- b) Describe the control measures that you would put in place. (6 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was a popular choice for candidates and candidates generally performed quite well. However, the responses provided often appeared to reflect only practical experience at road traffic collisions and there were few responses that demonstrated a deep underlying understanding of the issues surrounding this particular scenario.

Question 10

Describe and explain the actions that Incident Commanders should take when closing down an incident.

Examiner Feedback

This was not a popular question and most of those who attempted it attained only low marks.

Many candidates presented their response as only a brief list of points and did not explain the actions they listed. The failure to expand points limited the marks that could be attained.

Most of those attempting this question understood the need to carry out a de-brief and the reasons why a de-brief is necessary; they also covered welfare issues including post-traumatic stress. However, few candidates considered the need to maintain control during the closing down phase of the incident and nor did they explain the necessity to release resources at an early point after the incident had been resolved.

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