IFE Level 3 Certificate in Fire Service Operations and Incident Command – Zone 2

Examiner Report – March 2026

Introduction

Of the 112 candidates who sat this examination 53 (47%) achieved a pass. This represents a notable decrease in performance compared with previous years' outcomes. Candidates generally performed best on question 4 where the average mark was 10.7 and least well on question 7 where the average mark was 4.1.

Question 1

You are the Incident Commander arriving at a three-storey residential building where a well-developed fire is issuing from a third-floor window on the front elevation. There is a strong wind blowing directly onto the front face of the building.

a) Describe the critical elements of your initial 360-degree size-up, focusing on indicators relevant to a wind-driven fire. (7 marks)

b) Explain the potential hazards a wind-driven fire poses to both interior attacking crews and any remaining occupants in the flow-path. (6 marks)

c) Outline the immediate tactical actions and control measures you would consider to mitigate these hazards. (7 marks)

Examiner Feedback
This was a popular question with candidates. Those who described the need to manage the air flow through the building attracted more marks than those who responded to the question in terms of a simple building fire.
It was good to see that most candidates could describe the control measures that would be needed for a wind driven fire with many listing the use of portable smoke curtains to assist in managing air flow.
Many candidates failed to mention the need for adequate water flow to meet the anticipated heat release rates.

Question 2

Modern methods of construction (MMC), particularly involving lightweight timber and engineered wood products, are increasingly common in the built environment.

a) *Describe how the fire dynamics and structural stability in a building constructed with lightweight timber or engineered wood products differ from traditional masonry or heavy steel/concrete construction (9 Marks)*

b) *Explain the specific hazards these differences present to firefighters during interior operations, including warning signs and potential collapse characteristics. (6 Marks)*

c) *Outline the key tactical considerations and control measures firefighters should adopt when responding to a well-developed fire in an occupied lightweight construction building. (5 Marks)*

Examiner Feedback
Whilst most candidates who attempted this question explained the higher fuel loading and more intense fire development in modern methods of construction compared with traditional materials, most failed to expand on this. Those who discussed elements such as delamination of engineered wood, sudden I-joist collapse and the influence of adhesives clearly engaged with the reading list and attracted marks.
In part (b), many candidates did not fully explain the specific interior hazards associated with the scenario. Where responses identified key issues such as rapid collapse without warning signs, fire spread within hidden voids, and fire development within structural insulated panels (SIPs), higher marks were generally achieved.
Part (c) was well answered in general with most candidates understanding the need for thermal scanning, higher water flows, consideration of a defensive mode of operation and use of external tools such as COBRA/Fognail/Fogspike.

Question 3

Tactical Ventilation, including Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV), is a critical strategy for managing fire incidents.

a) *Define 'Tactical Ventilation' and explain its primary objectives in structural firefighting.(5 Marks)*

b) *Discuss the benefits and potential hazards associated with implementing Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV) in a ventilation-controlled house fire.(9 Marks)*

c) *Outline the key principles and strict protocols firefighters must adhere to for safe and effective PPV deployment. (6 Marks)*

Examiner Feedback
This was a very popular question with all candidates scoring well in Part (a) (defining tactical ventilation) and Part (b) (describing the benefits and hazards associated with it).
Part (c) involved describing the principles and protocols of tactical ventilation. Whilst most candidates cited the need for adequate staffing and covering jest by exhaust vents, most failed to list simple principles such as good communication across the incident ground, ventilation timing co-ordinated with fire attack and having located the fire.

Question 4

a) Describe five key signs and symptoms for each of the following fire phenomena:
i) Flashover (5 Marks)
ii) Backdraught (5 Marks)

b) Explain what is meant by the term 'Flammable Range' and its implication to fire development. (5 Marks)

c) Describe the characteristics of Carbon Monoxide. (5 Marks)

Examiner Feedback
The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question scored well in part (a), demonstrating their ability to list the signs and symptoms of flashover and backdraught, with most scoring maximum marks.
Few candidates sufficiently explained what is meant by the term 'Flammable Range'. A number of responses instead focused on flashpoint and fire point, which were not directly relevant to the question. Where candidates correctly described the lower explosive limit, upper explosive limit, and stoichiometric mixture, higher marks were generally achieved.
Given that CO is the most common fire gas encountered, it was surprising that few candidates scored maximum marks. Those who explained that CO is an asphyxiant, highly toxic, flammable with a wide flammable range, colourless, odourless and tasteless scored well.
While many candidates recognised that carbon monoxide is slightly lighter than air, a number of responses did not take into account that in fire conditions it will be heated and therefore rise.

Question 5

a) You have been mobilised as part of the first attendance to an incident involving an unidentified hazardous material in a large open air shopping centre. Describe how you would arrive and initially approach the scene. (12 Marks)

b) Information received during an Initial Operational Response (IOR) to Incidents Suspected to Involve Hazardous Substances or CBRN Materials will help to potentially lead to its identification. The 'BAD COLDS' substance assessment tool may be used to support this process. Describe the elements of this assessment tool. (8 Marks)

Examiner Feedback
This was a less popular question. Many candidates correctly cited aspects such as looking out for hazmat indicators when approaching the incident and arriving upwind and uphill. Those who expanded on this by describing actions such as establishing a hot zone, sending a METHANE message and implementing the 3Rs for casualties scored better.
Very few candidates described the 'BAD COLDS' substance assessment tool.

Question 6

You are the initial Incident Commander at a fire involving a commercial vehicle repair workshop with smoke issuing. On arrival, you are met with a rapidly developing fire in the main workshop building, which also houses a fuel storage area with several 200 litre drums of engine oil. A small stream runs immediately behind the property, which feeds into a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) 2 km downstream. Fuel is leaking from damaged drums and flowing across the concrete yard towards a surface water drain.

a) *Identify three key environmental risks associated with this incident and outline your immediate actions to mitigate these risks. (7 Marks)*

b)

i. *Describe the hierarchy of pollution control an Incident Commander should consider at this incident. (4 Marks)*

ii. *Identify at least three specific pieces of equipment from a standard Fire and Rescue Service Grab Pack that you would consider deploying to protect the stream. (4 Marks)*

c) *You are considering using firefighting foam to suppress the fuel fire. Explain five environmental considerations associated with using firefighting foam. (5 Marks)*

Examiner Feedback
Most candidates attempted this question and scored well. The majority successfully described the environmental risks and the immediate actions that were required to address them. In Part (b) of the question, most candidates identified which parts of the EA grab packs could be used to address the hierarchy of pollution control.
Many failed to attract full marks in Part (c). While most stated that foam is toxic to aquatic life many did not expand any further. Those who described the high biochemical oxygen demand of many foams, its toxicity, the nitrate content or issues with PFOS scored well.

Question 7

The role of the operational commander is to work with other responder organisations, to protect life, property and the environment by ensuring that effective actions are implemented at an incident to save lives and reduce harm. The tactical commander's role is to protect life, property and the environment by ensuring that effective actions are implemented through a Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG).

a) *Describe the responsibilities of an operational commander in a multi-agency incident. (10 marks)*

b) *Describe the responsibilities of a tactical commander in a multi-agency incident. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback
This question was not as well answered in general. The roles and responsibilities of an Operational and Tactical Commander in a multi-agency incident are listed on the JESIP website, those who were familiar with this were able to attract some marks. Some candidates described the JDM or listed the responsibilities of an Incident Commander, which did not directly address the question and therefore limited the marks available.

Question 8

You are incident commander at a domestic house with a roof fire involving solar photovoltaic panels.

a) Describe the hazards associated with building fires involving solar photovoltaic systems (6 Marks).

b) You are handing over command of this incident; describe the components of the IIMARCH briefing tool used to brief the new incident commander. (14 marks)

Examiner Feedback
Most candidates successfully described the hazards associated with solar photovoltaic systems in part (a) and achieved strong marks.
Candidates who demonstrated awareness of the IIMARCH handover briefing tool also performed well, particularly where they applied it directly to the incident described in part (a) to structure their response. Candidates who were less familiar with this tool generally achieved lower marks, highlighting the importance of engaging fully with the reading list provided for the examination.