

2014 Contra Costa Battalion Chief Examination

Candidate Orientation

During the week of April 21, a promotional examination will be conducted to evaluate candidates for the position of Battalion Chief in the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. The examination will take the form of an assessment center. **It is absolutely critical that you be prompt for report times!** There will only be a brief check-in period before you are assigned your first exercise.

You will be required to complete a confidentiality agreement which precludes you from sharing test information during the testing process. Candidates violating the confidentiality agreement will be eliminated from further consideration.

The examination will consist of a series of exercises which simulate critical job requirements for Battalion Chiefs. You will be evaluated on the following dimensions in the assessment center: leadership, motivational ability, judgment/decision making, planning/organization, oral communication, written communication, interpersonal skill, composure and technical knowledge.

Subsets of these dimensions will be evaluated in different exercises. There will be both oral and written exercises in the assessment center. All exercises will be evaluated by rating teams consisting of chief or training officers from other fire departments.

Written exercises must be completed in the test administration room. You will have preparation time for oral exercises, and the preparation must be done in the test administration room. You will then be sent to other rooms for the oral exercises. You will be able to take your preparation notes into the oral exercises but not any other materials.

No outside materials may be brought to the examination. All supplies necessary for the exercises will be provided. When you have completed an exercise, you will have to return all exercise materials and notes to the test administrators.

There will be a visible clock in the test administration room which will serve as the official time keeping mechanism. You may want to bring a watch to guide your allocation of time during the oral exercises. Raters in the oral exercises will stop you if you run over the time allocated for these exercises. In every exercise, you are not obligated to use all the time allotted to you. Your evaluations will hinge on whether or not you make the critical points specified in rating guidelines.

Assessment Center Exercises

The following represents a description of the range of different types of exercises you will face in the examination. In all exercises, you should respond exactly as you would as a District Battalion Chief.

Emergency Simulation Exercise: You will be required to develop a tactical and strategic response to one or more emergencies. You will be provided with some background material, and you will have a short time to prepare your response to the situation. Then you will report to another room at the appropriate time, knock on the door, and go in. When you enter the room, you will be greeted by raters who will evaluate your performance.

The raters will help manage the entire process, provide directions, and ask you questions. You should respond as a Battalion Chief would in this simulation. If necessary, you may ask the raters questions to clarify the information presented to you and the conditions of the scenario.

Role Play Exercises: You will be required to play the role of a Battalion Chief in multiple interactions you might face on the job. In these exercises, you will be provided with some background material, and you will have time to prepare your response to the situation. Then you will report to another room at the appropriate time, knock on the door, and go in. When you enter the room, you will be interacting with raters who will automatically be playing the role of the persons in your meeting. From the moment you enter the room, begin playing the role of a Battalion Chief. If you exceed the time limit for an exercise, the raters/role players will find a means appropriate to their role to indicate the end of the exercise.

Written Exercise(s): You will be required to write one or more reports or memos regarding an important issue facing the District. Topics may be related to policy, planning, procedural, operational, service, or personnel issues. **Candidates will be required to use a computer for their response to this exercise.**

In-Basket Exercise: In this written exercise you will be required to respond to a simulated in-basket that would be typical for a Battalion Chief in the District. The in-basket will consist of an array of messages, memos, reports, and/or correspondence. You will have to prioritize and band the items and write an appropriate response to them. You will also have to write justifications for your responses. There will be **no** opportunity to explain your responses and justifications in this exercise orally to assessors after this exercise. Therefore, your written responses should be complete and clear.