Plan for Promotion

Setting a plan of how to reach your promotional goals can be a very intimidating process. There is a multitude of information and it can be overwhelming. I encourage promotional candidates to look at their future exam through a different set of glasses, those of the person creating the exam.

One of my favorite sayings is, "Become the test maker, not the test taker. It is important to understand that when an exam is created the designers meet with fire administration and ask what they would like to see in an exam. The fire chief meets with the exam developer and expresses his or her wishes.

If you were writing the exam, what would see as important information (become the test maker)? As a general rule, exams are very predictable. How often have you walked out of an exam and said, "That wasn't that hard, I should have done better", or, "I wished I would have studied the right stuff."

While it is not necessary to become a "subject matter expert" in each of the following areas, serious candidates should have a thorough working knowledge of each one. Remember that you are NOT studying to beat the exam, rather to learn the position. A candidate who has covered all of his or her bases during the study period will usually perform well once awarded the position. Nobody aspires to be appointed to a position and not be competent to function in the role.

Candidates should use the following as a check list to monitor their progress.

All types of fires:

- Residential
- High rise
- Strip malls
- Center hallway and garden style apartments
- Commercial (NFPA 704 Diamond)
- Tanker and refineries
- Wild land

Tactical Considerations

- Develop templates for every major size up potential
- Develop a system of tracking resources
- Think big lines, multiple supply lines, (save a spot for the truck)
- Have a plan for RIC deployment (including tactical frequencies and a leader)
- Have a plan for what to do when you locate a victim
- Don't be afraid to call for multiple alarms
- Don't forget outside agencies
- Have a plan for getting things back to normal

Candidates should have a plan to handle:

1. Weapons of Mass Destruction
2. Hazardous Materials spills
3. Multicasualty incidents
4. Aircraft emergencies
5. Marine firefighting
6. Refineries

Administrative

- Know the department's policies and procedures
- Understand the departments progressive discipline system (know how to conduct a counseling session using the 8 step process)

- Have a plan to:
  - Address your new crew (conduct a meeting)
  - Train a probationary firefighter
  - Coach, mentor, and train your crew
  - Document a substandard employee

- What would you do IF:
  - Firefighter stuck with a needle
  - Firefighter under the influence
  - Firefighters involved in a fight in the station
  - Unmotivated firefighter
  - Firefighter habitually late
  - Firefighter with a poor attitude

- Understand the injury on duty policy and how a firefighter returns to duty following injury

Oral Interview

Know the job for which you are applying
Find a role model who can teach you the idiosyncrasies of the position
Develop thoughts and ideas about current events
Understand the daylight positions

Ways to prepare

- Read fire department publications and internet chat boards to stay up on current events
- Become involved in the department committees
- Be familiar with the problems facing your department and the fire service
- Understand the rules to the testing process
- Prepare for EACH part of the process early, NOT after the previous phase is complete