

Don McNea Fire School
www.FirePrep.com

Below are in-basket strategies that will increase your chances of being promoted. We strongly suggest you take the time to review these strategies before you take your examination. These strategies have been developed by experts in the field who have helped thousands of firefighters increase their score and gain their promotion!

At our website, www.FirePrep.com, under Fire Department Assessment Center Exam Preparation, we have an in-depth In-basket Exam Prep for Lieutenant, Captain and Battalion/Deputy Chief as well as other Assessment Center Exam Prep to put you in that top percentile over your competition and get that coveted officer badge - good luck!

TOP SCORING PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

- Knowing the amount of time you have for the exercise is important to your level of success. When you begin the in-basket, be sure to note the starting and stopping times. For most in-baskets, the time frame for completion is between 2 and 3 hours.
- If there is an instructional sheet on how to do the in-basket, be sure to read it carefully before starting to work. When reading through the instructions, make note of the date and time, who you are, and your level in the organization.
- Familiarize yourself with all of the pertinent material contained in the in-basket. Please note that this does not mean you should study each piece of information. Remember that you only have a specific time frame in which to complete this exercise. It will be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to know each piece of the material in depth. If you waste valuable time in studying the material too much, it will inhibit your ability to complete the in basket within the specified time frame.
- If there is a calendar, roster, organizational chart, standard operating procedures, rules and regulations - immediately remove these items for easy reference during the exercise.
- If a calendar is supplied with the information, pay particular attention to notes on specific dates within the calendar.
- If you are taking the place of an officer, know who that officer is.
- Know today's date – month and day.
- Know what shift you are assigned to.
- If you are assigned to a company or battalion, make note of the firefighters or officers in your company or battalion.
- Note the chain of command; know who your immediate supervisor is.

- Pay strict attention to dates that could cause a conflict or problem for you.
- Make note if there is information in the in-basket that correlates to a task or item found elsewhere in the material. Look for correlations between memos, dates, pertinent information directed to you, and organizational and personal issues.
- Appropriate notes should be taken on issues and memos that are of particular attention to you, your shift, your battalion or your organization.
- While going through the information contained in the in-basket, you should circle, highlight, underline, asterisk, etc., important dates and information, so when scanning back over the material looking for important information it can be easily accessed.
- Be sure to know who your subordinates are and delegate to them whenever applicable. This is an important dimension which many assessors are looking for in these examinations.
- Pay particular attention to hand-written notes on some items. These notes can be very important in determining your responses.
- All in-baskets will include material known as "filler". This information is used to take up your time and will have nothing to do with any questions you are responding to.
- Not all material can be dealt with immediately within the time frame you are given. If certain issues are not of particular importance, they can wait for your return to respond.
- When issuing memos or letters, they should be concise, directed to the appropriate person and easily understood.
- Items which you determine can be delayed until a further date should have a definite follow-up date written on the memo or letter to be certain that the issue is dealt with.
- Look for corresponding relationships between memos, orders, dates, issues and time frames.
- Anything of extreme importance or of a sensitive nature should be handled personally whenever possible.
- When delegating tasks or making recommendations or suggestions, it is very important that you include instructions that are concise and to the point.
- Follow the chain of command.