

AspiringFireOfficers.com

FIRE OFFICER TRAINING

ORAL INTERVIEW PREPARATION



ORAL INTERVIEW:

SAMPLE QUESTIONS / ANSWERS PREVIEW

ORAL INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

You have a newly assigned second house probationary firefighter under your command. It is important to maintain the continuity of the firefighter's training. Describe the steps you would take in establishing and continuing with the training program for this member. Please discuss the provisions that are in place to assist you if this member's performance falls below a satisfactory level.

The first step I will take when I learn that I will be assigned a second house probationary firefighter will be to make contact with his or her prior supervisor and get a description of the training plan the firefighter was currently under. Through this conversation I will find out the firefighter's strengths and weaknesses and where he or she left off in training.

In addition to these items, I will make contact with the training staff who will be tracking that probationary firefighter's performance and see where they are. Once I have that information in hand, I will begin to develop a training plan for the firefighter. The first thing I will do as soon as the firefighter arrives at the station for his or her first shift is have a sit-down discussion with him or her. I will congratulate the firefighter for getting hired and completing the initial training and his or her first station rotation. I will inform the firefighter that my goal is to help him or her not only get through the probationary process, but also to earn a reputation as a capable and well respected firefighter in our fire department.

I will try to determine where the firefighter believes he or she is in the probationary process. I will make sure that his or her perception aligns with the information that I have learned from the prior supervisor. I feel that it is very important to know that the firefighter and prior supervisor are aligned in their visions of how he or she was performing during the probationary process.

If the firefighter's and supervisor's visions match up, it would seem that the prior plan they had in place was effective. If this is the case, I will implement a plan similar to the one that had proven to be effective. If they are aligned but the plan was not effective, I will alter the plan as I deem necessary in order to help the probationary firefighter rise up to the standard we are trying to achieve.

A more difficult situation occurs when the prior supervisor's assessment does not match

ORAL INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

up with the probationary firefighter's. In other words, if the firefighter does not know where he or she is failing to meet expectations, he or she will be unable to correct them. If this is the case, I will review the documentation from the previous supervisor. In the end, I will conduct a needs assessment on the probationary firefighter, starting with the areas that the prior supervisor had identified as areas of weakness.

Since there is a discrepancy between what the probationary firefighter and the prior supervisor thought, I will be very specific in describing issues that I had identified and how to improve. This will ensure that the probationary firefighter understands exactly where the deficiencies are and what is needed to correct them. Based on these interactions, I will put together a plan for improvement that will take the probationary firefighter from the current substandard level (if applicable) to the basic competency level which is where we expect him or her to be.

While all of this is going on, I will keep the battalion chief informed of the situation. I will inform him of the discrepancies and the areas of weakness that I have identified. I will also outline my plan of action to help make the probationary firefighter successful. Lastly, I will document the performance of the probationary firefighter. I will make my expectations, clear and ensure that he or she knows where he or she is coming up short.

Describe a situation in which you had to deal with an irate citizen. What was the background and how did you handle it?

An example that comes to mind occurred when my partner and I were assigned to conduct a fire prevention inspection at a local business. During the inspection we identified an illegal extension cord being used to power a neon sign. I explained to the business owner that the problem with a permanently installed extension cord is that over a period of time, the extension cord (also known as a "zip cord") deteriorates. When electricity runs through the cord the wire heats up and expands. When the power is turned off, the wire contracts back to its original size. This frequently results in a crack in the insulation and can even cause fire.

I understood the business owner's point of view. The reason they had the extension cord

ORAL INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

was that it was more expensive to run EMT piping to extend a junction box.

The business owner was angry because he had to hire an electrician to come out and fix the issue. I explained that I understood his plight, but our objective was to keep him in business, not put him out of it. I explained the hazards of the zip cord and shared that the vast majority of businesses that have a fire never open their doors again. I reminded him that his business is important to our community. He employs people in the community and helps provide a tax base for the city. I reinforced that our mission was not to cause him to go out of business, quite the contrary; we want to keep him in business.

We continued with the fire prevention inspection, staying alert for potential violations. I reminded him that we were doing our best to ensure the viability and long term success of his business. We were careful to pay attention to the location of his computers, the accounts receivable, and other areas containing important items or packaging. In the event of a fire, we wanted to come in with the knowledge of what was most important beforehand so that we could protect those items. This information would help us decide where to place our hose lines or what to place salvage covers on. As a last resort, we would remove these items while the firefighting efforts were taking place. The more we knew about his business, the better we could protect it in the event of a fire.

When we left the inspection, the business owner thanked us for our time and insisted that we come back each year. Three months later he asked us to do a presentation to his Rotary club on the importance of fire prevention, inspections and how a business could complete a self-inspection prior to their annual fire prevention inspection.

Another potential answer is:

My crewmates and I were working on the scene of a medical aid, treating an elderly man who was very sick. His family became agitated that we were not loading the patient into the ambulance and transporting to the hospital. Instead we were treating the patient in the living room of his house.

One of the patient's sons began screaming at us, saying that we should be transporting his father to the hospital so the doctor could begin to treat him and that we were just delaying treatment for his father.

ORAL INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

I explained to the entire family that we were treating their family member with all of the drugs that would be used in the emergency room. It was in his best interest to be treated now in his living room, rather than be transported to the emergency room, which would delay treatment.

Once I took the time to calmly explain this to the family they understood that we were looking out for their father's best interest. In the end the family thanked us and apologized for their actions.

You write a Notice of Correction to a business owner that mandates that he correct a fire prevention violation. He informs you as he signs the notice that he is friends with the mayor, and he intends to bring this to the mayor's attention. What do you do and why?

I will explain to the business owner the reason why we have written the violation and our intention to keep him in business, not to negatively impact it. He produces tax revenue for our city and employs our residents. It's healthy for our economy for him to be in business. I'll share with him the specific reason the violation was written, whether it's because of a locked exit or an unsafe practice. I will also tell him what he can do to correct it.

Whether or not he is friends with the mayor doesn't change what we will do. He can bring it to the mayor's attention, and my expectation is that the mayor will support what we are doing. The Mayor may bring it to the fire chief's attention. That would not be out of the realm of possibility.

I am okay with the fire chief knowing that I have written a fire prevention violation, because if I do, there is a good reason for it. I would expect the chief to support my decision. If he felt it was warranted, he could send out somebody from the Fire Prevention Bureau and meet with the business owner. I am certain, though, that the procedures I have followed will be in direct accordance with the fire prevention codes.

When I return to the station, I will call my battalion chief and let him know about the incident. I will follow up with an email to him that will outline all of the particulars of the

ORAL INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

violations and any comments and or concerns expressed by the business owner. I expect the battalion chief will contact the fire chief and brief him on the event. He will probably forward my email to the fire chief so he has written documentation of all of the events.

I have a good understanding of politics and I know that this is likely to get back to the Fire Chief. I'm okay with that. I will not treat this business owner any differently because he is friends with the mayor. I will reiterate that my intent is to keep him in business, not to try to find violations that will cause him to go out of business.

This is just a sample of the 75+ pages of questions with suggested follow-up answers included in the AspiringFireOfficers.com member site.