



California State Fire Training

PO Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Bus (916) 445-8444

1131 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811



National Recognition and Certification Examination

Frequently Asked Questions Relating to Skill Sheets and Skills Testing

PURPOSE and SCOPE: This document is intended to memorialize, in one location questions which have been posed to State Fire Training (SFT) regarding skill testing and skill sheets required for use with the Fire Fighter I certification examination process and SFT's response. This document will be updated on a periodic basis as new questions are addressed. The information in this document is considered germane to administrators of an Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP) or Accredited Local Academy (ALA). Questions or comments on this document and the information it contains should be directed to Ken Wagner, Fire Service Training Specialist III, ken-wagner@comcast.net, (916) 425-2995.

General Questions Not Specific to Any One Skill Sheet:

1. For many of the skill sheets, the candidate "must work in a team with at least one other firefighter" (5-10.1, 5-9.1, 5-9.2, 5-9.3). For these evolutions will the candidate need to perform the skill acting in both team positions? Or, as in skill 5-9.3, does that requirement only apply when explicitly stated in the evaluator instructions?

Response: *For the skills referenced in the question, the candidate need only perform in the primary skill position. The non-primary position may be filled by an assistant or volunteer. Skill Sheet 5-9.3 will be updated to clarify that the "rescuer" is the primary skill position.*

2. With statewide public scrutiny on water usage, there was mention of *simulating* water flow for non-live fire evolutions, in light of California's water situation. Do you know if that has been ironed out and decided, as it relates to the testing?

Response: *State Fire Training is certainly concerned about this and has taken the position that excessive water usage should be avoided, if not eliminated. For example, if the skill event happened to be 7-1.3 Operate portable master stream, it would be appropriate to have the candidate conduct all manipulative steps excluding flowing water. In this case, the candidate should be directed to accurately verbalize the steps associated with flowing water. For required wildland skill 8-7.1 Perform a progressive hose lay, the skills sheet states that the candidate shall "apply a continuous wet line to a simulated fireline." For this skill we would suggest that the candidate discharge water along a small predetermined section of the 500 foot fireline, established for all candidates and of a suitable length that the evaluator can establish that the candidate is proficient in water application.*

Each skill requiring the candidate to flow water will obviously be a bit different, but we hope the two examples above will help agencies in making a determination on how to proceed. How agencies may proceed will also need to be tempered by local restrictions on water use; some regions are more restrictive than others.



California State Fire Training

PO Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Bus (916) 445-8444

1131 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811



3. When selecting the Random skills for the ARTP/ALA, would it be possible to avoid simultaneously selecting *Perform Vertical Ventilation on a Structure (5-12.1)* and *Cover Building Openings (5-13.5)*? Most of us will use our Roof Vent Props to demonstrate *both* skills and selecting the two during a cert test will create an enormous logistical challenge.

Response: *Absolutely. SFT will make this a business practice.*

4. Can ARTPs/ALAs have the flexibility to use reasonable alternatives for instructional aids during the certification testing that meet its intent. *As you are probably aware, many fire academies may not have the specific instructional aids (as on page 4 in the FFI Course Plan), but do have equivalents (ie Bullex fire extinguisher trainer instead of flammable liquids pan). Having the latitude to use these equivalencies will be critical to allowing many institutions to conduct the cert testing.*

Response: *Yes, the ability to utilize equivalent examination aids will be allowed. We have discussed this with both IFSAC and Pro Board as we have prepared for accreditation. Accredited Regional Training Programs (ARTP) or Accredited Local Academies (ALA) will need to discuss alternatives with State Fire Training (SFT) in advance. This would apply to both certification examinations and delivery of the Fire Fighter I (2013) curriculum.*

5. ARTPs/ALAs need the flexibility to reject certain random skills that pose a logistical challenge or economic hardship. *Some skills if selected could make it very difficult to budget or be prohibited to implement. Examples included Deploy and Operate a Master Stream (Skill 7-1.13) since many agencies prohibit flowing water due to the drought. Or Select and Operate a Portable Fire Extinguisher (Skill 5-3.1) which would result in approx..\$900 in additional costs to refill the extinguishers.*

Response: *Yes, SFT may replace a randomly selected skill after evaluating concerns presented by and ARTP or ALA. However, an ARTP or ALA will not be allowed to simply “reject” a randomly selected skill. A sound rationale for requesting an alternative skill will be required.*

6. Among the skills tests performed, some are more involved and require significant time (I.E. Technical De-Con 9-3.3). Providing we have the resources, is there anything that would prohibit us from running two Skills stations concurrently, testing the same skill to avoid a “bottleneck” in the test process?

Response: *This is an acceptable practice. In fact, it is acceptable to set up and administer the same skill at more than two stations if resources are available and examination security can be maintained.*

7. Under section 9.7 of the SFT Certification Exam Procedures, it states that Fire Fighter I test candidates must be “...staged in an area in which active skills evaluation may not be viewed.”



California State Fire Training

PO Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Bus (916) 445-8444

1131 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811



While not specifically mentioned, this has been interpreted to mean that candidates will be escorted from the Staging Area to each Skills Test Station by an employee of the ARTP or ALA to avoid them from witnessing these activities while in transit. During our test, we found this to be a very labor intensive process, requiring up to three escorts. *Question:* If each Test Station is located in an area that cannot be seen from other Stations, and continual communication is maintained between the Staging area and the Test Stations (I.E. Radio), can the "Escort" requirement be waived?

Response: *The key in implementing procedure 9.7 is maintaining examination security and insuring that:*

- *one candidate cannot observe another candidate's performance at a skill station and,*
- *candidates cannot discuss amongst themselves how to perform the skill, and*
- *candidates do not have access to reference materials of any kind*

During evaluator training we discuss escorting the candidates between staging and skill stations. Although this is the most secure method, an ARTP or ALA may implement an alternate method which allows them to adequately monitor candidates providing it meets intent of procedure 9.7 is met by some other means. For example, an instance where the staging area manager can, from the staging area observe the candidate while he/she is in transit between staging and the skill station, and back again.

Specific Questions Listed by Discipline and Skill Sheet Number:

Fire Fighter I

5-4.2 For skill 5-4.2, is it allowed to use a Type 3 or 6 engine to hook up the hard suction and prepare for drafting or is a Type 1 apparatus required?

Response: *Any engine type with a hard suction, pump and the capability to draft may be used.*

5-9.1 Under skill 5-9.1 it states that a ladder is a needed piece of equipment yet the task steps do not require a ladder to be used to enter the IDLH environment or remove the victim. Can I assume this skill can be evaluated without a ladder being used?

Response: *This skill does not require the use of a ladder. The skill sheet will be updated to remove the requirement for a ladder.*

5-10.1 According to the Certification Examination and National Recognition Procedures "All live fire testing shall be evaluated by an FSTEP Fire Control 3 B Instructor...". Does that mean the 3B instructor is required to be the skills evaluator for the live fire testing? If so, where can we get a list of 3B instructors who are also registered skills evaluators? We do not have a 3B instructor in house.

Response: *Yes. If Skill Sheet 5-10.1(A) is utilized, a Fire Control Primary Instructor must be used as a skill evaluator. SFT will attempt to provide a list of skills evaluators that are also Fire Control 3 Primary Instructors. Further, if an SFT approved Fire Control 3B course is delivered during the training*



California State Fire Training

PO Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Bus (916) 445-8444

1131 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811



program and all candidates fully and successfully participate, alternate Skill Sheet 5-10.1(B) may be utilized. If 5-10.1(B) is utilized, a Fire Control 3 Primary Instructor is not needed as the skill evaluator.

Under SFT skills sheet 5-10.1(B) it states "Whenever possible, integrate this skill test within a consolidated fireground/emergency scenario. This will allow multiple skills to be evaluated effectively in conjunction with other fireground/emergency scenarios." Does this mean we can combine multiple skills into one continuous evolution? For example: 5-4.1 Forward Hoselay with 5-10.1(B) Structure Fire Attack combined into one continuous evolution under which we evaluate the two skills in consecutive order? Would this be acceptable if we use two evaluators, one for each skill?

Response: Yes.

Also under 5-10.1(B) it states that the candidate must be evaluated upon "correctly approaching the fire using attack techniques that facilitate suppression given the level of the fire, locate and control hidden fires, maintain the correct body posture, recognize and manage hazards, and bring the fire under control, operating as a member of a team". In order to effectively evaluate all these facets of the skill inside a live fire environment the evaluator must have adequate visibility to do so. Is it acceptable to minimize the smoke and have the evaluator utilize lighting inside the building to maximize visibility? Can I also assume that the search for hidden fires can be a discussion item rather than a manipulative task since ours is a fire control 3B style burn room and hidden fires are intentionally avoided?

Response: Yes, during the examination smoke may be minimized and lighting may also be utilized to aid in observing the performance of the candidate. Furthermore, the search for hidden fires can be a discussion item as a component of the skill test rather than a manipulative activity.