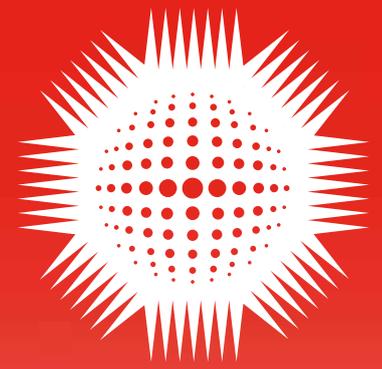


April - June 2015

Examiners' Report

NEBOSH National
Certificate in
Fire Safety and Risk
Management (NFC1)



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Examiners' Report

NEBOSH NATIONAL CERTIFICATE IN FIRE SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

UNIT FC1: FIRE SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

APRIL – JUNE 2015



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Introduction

NEBOSH (The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health) was formed in 1979 as an independent examining board and awarding body with charitable status. We offer a comprehensive range of globally-recognised, vocationally-related qualifications designed to meet the health, safety, environmental and risk management needs of all places of work in both the private and public sectors.

Courses leading to NEBOSH qualifications attract around 50,000 candidates annually and are offered by over 600 course providers, with examinations taken in over 120 countries around the world. Our qualifications are recognised by the relevant professional membership bodies including the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM).

NEBOSH is an awarding body that applies best practice setting, assessment and marking and applies to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) regulatory requirements.

This report provides guidance for candidates which it is hoped will be useful to candidates and tutors in preparation for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content and the application of assessment criteria.

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General comments

Many candidates are well prepared for this unit assessment and provide comprehensive and relevant answers in response to the demands of the question paper. This includes the ability to demonstrate understanding of knowledge by applying it to workplace situations.

There are other candidates, however, who appear to be unprepared for the unit assessment and who show both a lack of knowledge of the syllabus content and a lack of understanding of how key concepts should be applied to workplace situations.

This report has been prepared to provide feedback on standard date and on-demand FC1 examinations sat between April and June 2015.

Feedback is presented in these key areas; examination technique, command words and learning outcomes and is designed to assist candidates and course providers to prepare for future assessments in this unit.

Candidates and course providers will also benefit from use of the 'Guide to the NEBOSH National Certificate in Fire Safety and Risk Management' which is available via the NEBOSH website. In particular, the guide sets out in detail the syllabus content for FC1 and tutor reference documents for each Element.

Additional guidance on command words is provided in 'Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers' which is also available via the NEBOSH website.

Candidates and course providers should also make reference to the FC1 'Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers' which provides example questions and details Examiners' expectations and typical areas of underperformance.

Unit FC1

Fire safety and risk management

Candidate performance

This report covers all examinations, both standard and on-demand examination sittings during April to June 2015.

Learning outcomes

Candidates performed well in these areas of the syllabus:

2.4 Describe the principles of fire growth and fire spread

This area of the syllabus covers physical conditions and the principles that can govern how fires grow and spread within buildings. These include means of heat transfer and conditions under which phenomena such as flashover and backdraught may occur. During this period it was noted by Examiners that candidates performed well in this area, in particular, issues relating to how heat transfer methods cause fires to spread were understood and generally well described. This demonstrated that course providers seem to be covering this part of the syllabus well and passing on understanding of the topic to their students.

5.3 Outline the perception and behaviour of people in the event of a fire

Having knowledge of how people may react in a fire situation can help a practitioner when managing fire risk and inform matters such as recognising potential problems in the layout of buildings and how they are used, and identifying training issues needed to raise awareness of fire safety to occupants in order to positively affect their behaviour.

Examiners noted that most candidates showed a good understanding of good and poor behaviours in relation to how people may react to a fire starting within a building, both when they witness a fire directly and when they hear a fire alarm activate in an area remote from a fire.

The following learning outcomes have been identified as being the most challenging area of the syllabus for candidates in this period:

4.4 Outline the selection procedures for basic fire extinguishing methods for both life risk and process risk

This area of the syllabus expects candidates to identify the different types of fire-fighting equipment available to use in buildings and to demonstrate understanding of how each type of fire extinguisher works in practice and their advantages and limitations in various situations. While most candidates seem to know the types of extinguishers available and the classes of fire they can tackle, Examiners reported that many could not outline the limitations of fire extinguishers sufficiently. Such knowledge can be important when practitioners are specifying fire extinguishers to be installed in a building, or when assessing the appropriateness of existing provision.

Course providers are advised to ensure that all aspects of the advantages, limitations and mode of use of all types of extinguishers found in workplaces are fully covered to help ensure candidates have a good understanding.

4.1 Outline the means of fire protection and prevention of fire and smoke spread within buildings in relation to building construction and design

This area of the syllabus covers issues such as how properties of materials used in buildings can affect how a fire can grow and spread and how use of protective measures such as compartmentation and selection of suitable materials can reduce fire risk.

Some parts of this area are technical and demand knowledge of documents such as Approved Document B from the Building Regulations. Examiners reported that many candidates seemed to show a poor knowledge of such technical documents and their specifications. Course providers are advised to be sure such documents are covered and that key terms such as 'compartmentation', 'elements of structure', etc are known by students, as well as how the protective measures specified in this part of the syllabus can be effective in controlling the spread of fire and smoke in buildings.

1.5 Outline the main sources of external fire safety information and the principles of their application

An understanding of how key external fire safety documentation can be used in practice to assist in many aspects of effective fire safety management is vital if practitioners are to make good use of all sources of information available to them. This area of the syllabus covers the range of documents available and how they can be used.

Examiners reported that many candidates appreciated the legal standing of the various types of document available, but did not show a good understanding of the types of information given in the documents and how that information can be used in applied in practice. Students are advised to ensure they have a good knowledge of the use of the types of documents specified in the syllabus and, if unsure of any aspect, seek advice from their course provider.

Examination technique

The following examination techniques were identified as the main areas of improvement for candidates:

Candidates did not respond effectively to the command word

Examiners reported some candidates' answers had an incorrect level of depth as required by the command word in the question.

The most common error reported is where insufficient depth of information is given in questions. If a point is made in an answer but without sufficient detail, the Examiner cannot give credit for it when marking. As an example, giving a simple list of items will not satisfy the requirements of an 'outline' or 'explain' question. More detail on command words is given later in this report.

The NEBOSH guidance on command words gives useful information on the level of depth expected from each command word and gives some example answers for illustration. Candidates should make use of this document while preparing for the examination and also consult with their course providers for guidance.

Candidates misread/misinterpreted the question

There were many answers given that did not fully address the question set, suggesting that candidates had misinterpreted the question. An example seen on many answers during this period was where discussion of one particular aspect of the fire risk assessment process was asked for, but descriptions of the whole process were given instead. It is most important for candidates to read and re-read a question to be sure they understand the subject that is being asked for.

As has been noted previously there were answers given that started well but then moved away from the topic asked for, resulting in points being made that were not relevant and therefore not creditworthy. The use of simple plans or structuring answers clearly can make it easier to review the points made, for example by crossing off points in a simple answer plan or underlining key points in their answer as they write it. This enables candidates to more easily identify which points have been made and coupled with regular re-reading of the question can assist in making sure the answers stay focused on the topic at hand.

Candidates unnecessarily wrote the question down

Examiners reported that some candidates copied the question into their answer books, or began their answer with a reiteration of the question. For example, if a question asked to identify components of a fire alarm system a common start to an answer may be 'The components of a fire alarm system are:'.

Reiterating the question in this way is not required in an answer and will not attract marks in its own right. Also the time taken to do this is effectively wasted.

Command words

The following command words are listed in the order identified as being the most challenging for candidates:

Outline

As has been seen on previous occasions it is clear that candidates find 'outline' to be the most challenging command word in questions. The NEBOSH guidance on command words states that 'outline' means *"to indicate the principal features or different parts of."* and that *"an exhaustive description is not required. What is sought is a brief summary of the major aspects of whatever is stated in the question"*.

A sentence or two of information is required in order for the candidate to be able to demonstrate knowledge of the subject asked for and hence gain marks for correct points. A list or simple series of bullet points with no additional detail does not provide sufficient detail for an 'outline' question and Examiners cannot give credit for such points.

Explain

'Explain' questions expect candidates to demonstrate their understanding and are often in association with the words 'how' or 'why'. In similar fashion as found for 'outline' questions many answers gave simple bullet-point lists that did not provide sufficient depth to show that the candidate understood the concepts asked for in these questions.

Give

'Give' questions require a statement that is relevant to the subject asked for in the question but additional explanation is not required. Often, 'give' questions ask for the meaning of a particular term. While detailed explanation of the application of the term would not be required, a correct knowledge of the term itself is needed in order for the Examiner to award marks.

Describe

Examiners reported a generally good response to 'describe' questions in this period. An answer to such a question should be able to put a picture in the reader's mind of the topic that is being described. For example, an adequate description of the location of a particular room within a building would allow someone to easily find that room. Candidates should bear an example like this in mind while tackling such questions.

Identify

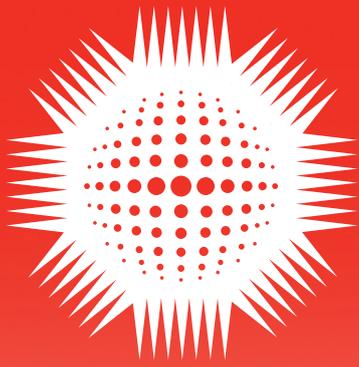
'Identify' questions require the name or title of an item without any additional explanation. For example, if asked to identify types of equipment found in an office appropriate answers could be personal computer, printer, telephone, photocopier, etc. There would be no need to embellish those points with a description of the equipment or its function.

For additional guidance, please see NEBOSH's *'Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers'* document, which is available on our website: www.nebosh.org.uk/students/default.asp?cref=1345&ct=2.

Conclusion

The feedback from Examiners highlighted that candidates taking the FC1 examinations in April to June 2015 needed most improvement in the areas of the limitations of all types of fire extinguishers (learning outcome 4.4), the meaning and application of protective measures from relevant technical documents such as Approved Document B (learning outcome 4.1) and the main sources of external fire safety information and the principles of their application (learning outcome 1.5).

With regard to examination technique, candidates sitting this examination should focus on reading and re-reading questions and structuring answers clearly to reduce the chances of misinterpreting questions and take care to provide answers in the depth required by the command word.



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