

## BULLETIN

NO: 25-126  
DATE: July 21, 2025  
TO: All Personnel  
FROM: Kevin Pendleton, Battalion Chief, Training & Education Division  
SUBJECT: 2025 Captains Exam AAR

This bulletin serves as an after-action review for the 2025 Captains Promotional Exam process, highlighting key observations and recommendations across each component of the examination.

### **1. Oral Presentation on Leadership**

The oral presentation was largely successful in evaluating candidates' leadership capabilities. Most candidates demonstrated strong commitment to the department's mission. The "Make Your Bed" speech by General McRaven was an impactful and appropriate reading material, generating passionate responses. Candidates showed clear motivation and pride in their roles. The inclusion of a moral dilemma introduced emotional depth, and although challenging, it elicited thoughtful responses. Follow-up questions were valid and insightful. While messages about community involvement were common, they often lacked personalization, focusing more on the department than on individual contributions. The choice to provide reading material ahead of time was well-received.

### **2. Structured Interview**

Interview performance was generally positive, though some trends raised concern. A notable number of candidates were hesitant to initiate formal discipline, showing over-reliance on expectations and behavioral health interventions to address an under-performing employee. Part of this can be contributed to the HSO movement, and removing the Role-Play from the exam may be a factor as well, since candidates seemed unprepared to initiate discipline. This component will need to be addressed in the Company Officer's Academy. Mayday responses were handled well and successful candidates were familiar with the mayday checklist. The quality of opening statements improved overall. Providing the first question in advance proved beneficial. Candidates that were prepared had well-structured, well-timed responses. Candidates that were not prepared lost track of time in their opener and were rushed in later responses. Many candidates appeared nervous, but the ones with proper preparation gathered their thoughts and recovered. Successful candidates considered the questions from a captain's perspective and answered accordingly. Successful candidates fell back on documented policy/procedure to guide their responses, as opposed to past practice or guessing.

### **3. Emergency Command Scenario**

Candidates approached the emergency command scenario with strong preparation. Scoring in this section showed wide variability, ranging from very high to very low, with candidate preparation playing a major role. Some failed to deploy units remaining in staging without prompting. In general, the outside raters continue to speak highly of our agency in this exercise.

#### **4. Writing Assignment**

The written component showed overall improvement from previous exams. Most candidates demonstrated a strong grasp of Health and Safety Officer (HSO) responsibilities and conveyed a clear mentorship culture. However, many overlooked the importance of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) following major incidents. Writing samples tended to overemphasize physical wellness while neglecting broader behavioral health aspects.

#### **Summary & Recommendations**

Overall, the 2025 Captains Exam reflected a high level of professionalism and dedication from our candidates. This is a challenging process. The candidates who began their preparation early and chose a leadership style that matched their personality were largely successful, as they came across as genuine. It was obvious to the panelists that many candidates dedicated substantial time to the process, and their efforts are greatly appreciated. We anticipate the next Company Officer's Academy in mid-October 2025 (subject to change).

Thanks to everyone that took the exam and showed initiative to step into a leadership position. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out.