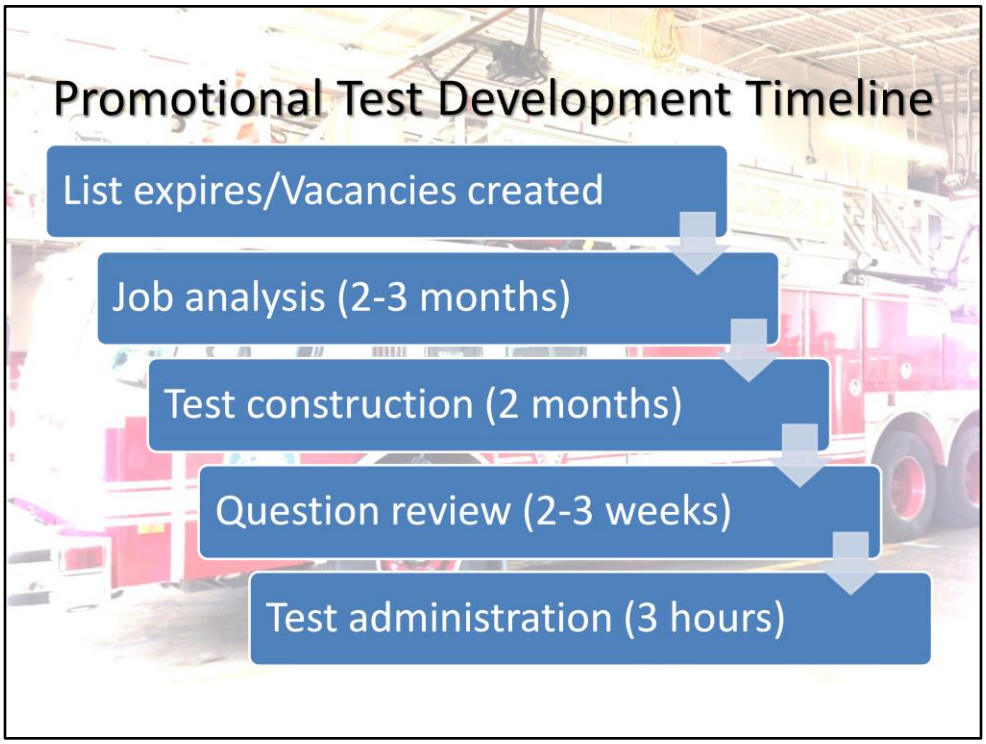
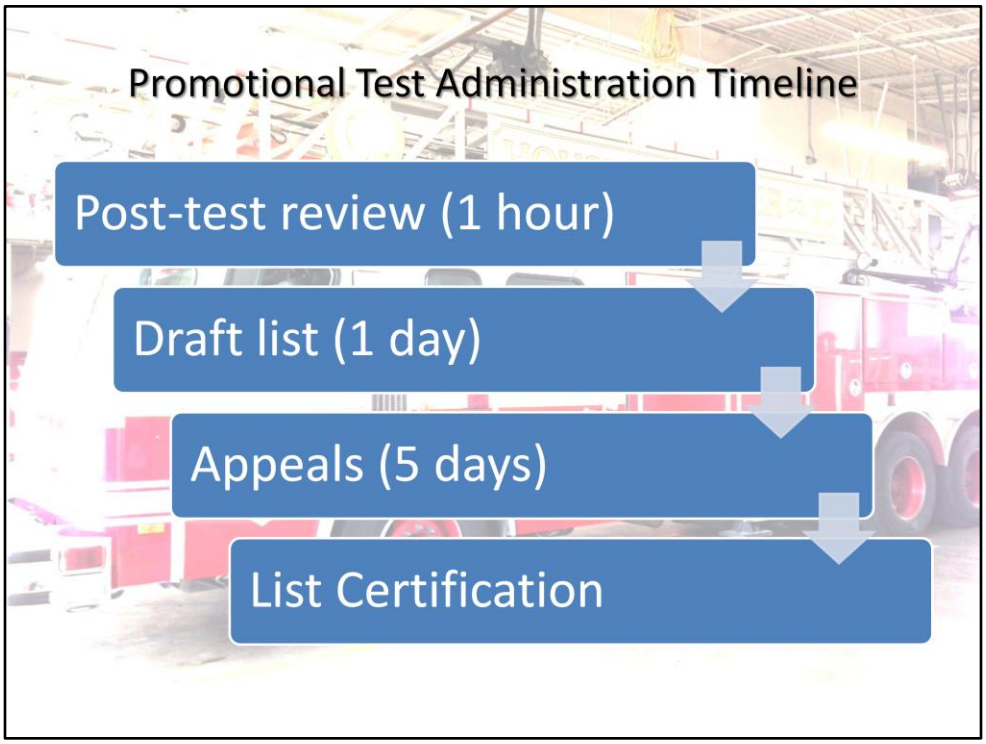
Classified Testing wants to be as transparent as possible. Members are always free to call to learn about the process or any questions regarding Chapter 143 pertaining to testing.

We are here to help HFD learn, grow, and have fair and job relevant tools to use in their selection and promotion processes.

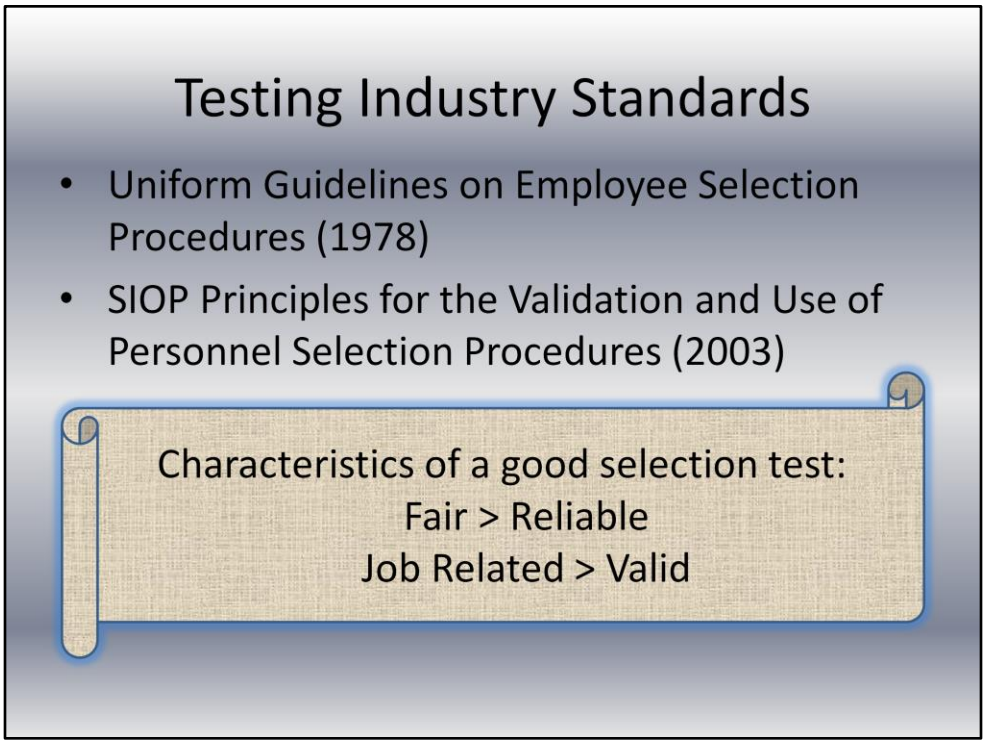
One can look at Classified Testing as a consultant to both HPD and HFD. We are part of Human Resources' Selection Services. We are not HPD nor HFD. This is beneficial as it maintains our objectivity of the process.



Once a list expires or a vacancy occurs, the clock starts for Classified Testing and the testing construction process begins.
First, a job analysis is conducted. This entails “ride-a-longs” with Assistant Arson Investigators, interviews with AAI’s, and observations of AAI’s doing their daily routines. The job analysis identifies the most critical job tasks, and these tasks help HFD experts choose source materials that are relevant to the job for the exam.
Once the source materials are selected, then the Test Construction phase starts. Test questions are drafted for each source and prepared for review 2-3 weeks prior to the exam administration.
During the question review period, HFD Subject Matter Experts check that the questions and answers are accurate and pick the 100 question that are most applicable to HFD for the exam. Then Classified Testing edits, triple-checks, and prints the exam for administration.



After the exam, there will be a review that lasts one hour.
A draft list will be produced and posted within 24 hours of the test completion time.
This rank has a 5 day appeal process.
Once all the appeals have been heard and decided by the CSC, we rescore the test if necessary and double-check all scoring to prepare the final list. Then the list goes to the Civil Service Commission to be certified.



The two main standards Classified Testing adheres to are:
The Federal Uniform Guidelines for Employee Selection as well as the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychologists (SIOP) Principles for Validation and Use for Selection. These standards require Classified Testing to deliver reliable and valid tools to our customers, including HFD, so that they can make well-informed hiring and promotion decisions.
Our goal is to make each test or assessment Fair, Reliable, Job Related, and Valid.
By fair we mean that every applicant has the same opportunity to take the test. For example, the EXACT same reading materials should be available to all applicants at the, the EXACT SAME amount of time to study should be available to all applicants, and the same or equivalent tests and test settings should be provided to all applicants. Reliable means that people with the same amount of knowledge of the source materials score similarly on the exam—which means we have to make the test equally challenging for everyone with the same level of knowledge. Just as fairness is related to reliability, test validity is related to how job related the test questions are.
By valid, we mean 1) the test requires applicants to use knowledge similar to knowledge used on the job to answer questions similar to challenges encountered on the job, and 2) how well an applicant scores on the test is strongly related to how much and how well the applicant knows the source materials picked out by HFD specifically for this position.

Study Aide

	To inform your performance of the 5 primary Job Tasks listed below:	Study Source A **Effective Public Manager**	Study Source B **Leader-Managers in Public Sector**	Study Source C **Scientific Protocols for Fire Investigation**	Study Source D **HFD Guidelines Volumes I and IV**	Study Source E **Administrative Procedure 2-2 and Executive Orders**	Study Source F **HFD Accountability Manual**
1	Plans, supervises, and participates in the investigative work and administration of the arson division.	Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10	Chapters 1-8	Chapters 2-6, 8-10	I-01, I-16, I-22, I-30, I-33, I-35, I-36, I-45, Vol. IV	AP 2-2, EO 1-39, EO 1-50	Accountability Manual
2	Coordinates on-scene investigation efforts of multiple alarm fires or fires involving fatalities, including ensuring safety and guideline adherence, expediting tasks, and acquiring resources.		Chapters 5, 7	Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 10	Vol. IV		Accountability Manual
3	Establishes and assigns work priorities, projects, and programs.	Chapters 4, 5	Chapters 2-8	Chapters 2-5, 6, 8-10	I-22, I-25, I-27, I-30, I-41, I-45, Vol. IV	AP 2-2	Accountability Manual
4	Monitors flow of activity, detects patterns and issues, and coordinates with members to resolve problems.	Chapters 2, 10	Chapters 3, 4	Chapters 8-10	I-04, I-06, I-19, I-22, I-30, Vol. IV	AP 2-2, EO 1-18	Accountability Manual
5	Reviews and evaluates work products, methods, procedures, and performance of the arson division for quality assurance.	Chapters 1, 6	Chapters 2-8	Chapters 2-6, 8-10	I-04, I-13, I-16, I-19, I-35, Vol. IV	AP 2-2, EO 1-39, EO 1-50	Accountability Manual
	Estimated number of questions on the Examination from this source:	16	23	25	25	8	3

Example: How does Chapter 1 in Source A give you information you need to know or attend to in order to do Primary Job Task #1?

About this many questions will be on the exam from each source—so it can guide how much of your total study time you spend on each source.

1. How the source material was chosen
    1. A job analysis study was done to determine what tasks, skills, knowledge and abilities are most important to this job within HFD
    2. HFD members helped us link the most used knowledge areas, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to each of the most important tasks and then we limited the test to only those tasks that are the most critical.
    3. Current HFD subject matter experts (incumbents, supervisors, etc.) then picked the source materials they thought most relevant for learning how to do these tasks.
    4. The SMEs reviewed each book and marked on a matrix of tasks, and KSAs exactly which part of that book should help you learn a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to do one or more of these tasks
    5. Books that do not help you learn at least two of the most critical tasks are automatically excluded.
    6. Source materials that relate to more of the most important tasks, or to tasks that are performed more often, are also <u>more</u> represented on the exam.
2. The study aide is just an aide we offer to help guide your reading of the source materials (we may have made typing errors in the aide and left out part of the source for instance…if it is on the announcement, it can still be on the test.)
3. If you have questions about source material… start with CT because CT is using the material to write the test questions.
4. How to use the study matrix
    1. What information in Chapter X might help you learn to do task 1? How would you use the info in Chapter X to do task 1 well?
    2. Use the percentage of Qs on the exam to guide your study time (E.g. 25% of exam is from Guidelines, so study Guidelines 25% of your study time).
    3. Use the matrix to help you make up practice exam questions…

Bloom's Taxonomy

Level	Skill Demonstrated	Test Item Stem
1 – Knowledge	• Recall factual information • Knowledge of dates, events, & places	• List the three major… • What is the definition of…
2 – Comprehension	• Grasp key meanings • Apply knowledge to a different context	• What is the difference between… • Which of the following would occur…
3 – Application	• Use information to solve problems • Apply methods, theories, or calculations	• Apply the concept of X to solve Y… • What are the steps for completing…
4 – Analysis	• Detect patterns • Comprehend in-depth meanings	• Analyze and determine… • Which one of the following would not…
5 – Synthesis	• Make generalizations • Make logical inferences	• What would occur next… • If X, then what happens to Y….
6 – Evaluation	• Detect biases • Diagnose deeper issues • Pick the most effective solutions	• Rank order the proposed solutions… • Describe the factors that should be considered…

1. How to build practice tests for yourself?
    1. Use Bloom's Taxonomy or the Levels of Knowing to ask yourself questions at each level of thinking related to the job.
    2. AAIs do about 33% of thinking at the Analysis level, 33% at the synthesis level, and 33% at the evaluation level on the job—the test questions will follow a similar pattern.
2. Study tips
    1. Read 3 times, once for an overview understanding, the second time to build your own test questions, and the third time to answer and verify your own test questions.
    2. Each time you read, change up the order of the materials-Example: If you read the Guidelines first last time, read them third the next time.
    3. Ask yourself questions that mix and combine multiple materials, topic areas, and issues.
    4. Make up funny mnemonics or create interesting visual associations to help you remember technical material and procedures with multiple steps.
    5. Ask current AAI's how they use the information you are currently studying—this will help you rehearse the information and also help you catch errors in your understanding of the information… Just be careful to ask more than one person before you decide that must be the way it really is, as opinions and experiences differ.

Sample Test Questions

1. Regardless of any other exits provided, assembly buildings must also have a main entrance and exit that is capable of accommodating how much of the total occupant load?

A. One-half of the total occupant load.

B. Two-thirds of the total occupant load.

C. All of the total occupant load.

Source: Fire Prevention: Inspection and Code Enforcement, Chapter 7, Page 119.

2. In the event of severe inclement weather or emergency situations, who issues the proclamation that would suspend non-emergency services?

A. Fire Chief.

B. Personnel Assignment Office.

C. Mayor.

Source: HFD Guidelines Vol. I, Reference I-22, Section 6.07B.

3. Your supervisor makes a decision with which you disagree. Which of the following options deviates furthest from the HFD Accountability Manual?

A. Comply with the decision and keep the disagreement to yourself.

B. Comply with the decision, but express your disagreement to your colleagues.

C. Comply with the decision, but express your disagreement to the supervisor in private.

Source: HFD Accountability Manual, Section Rules of Conduct, Page 39.

4. Which statement about small power distance is correct?

A. Employees are hesitant to question their supervisor or even offer up ideas.

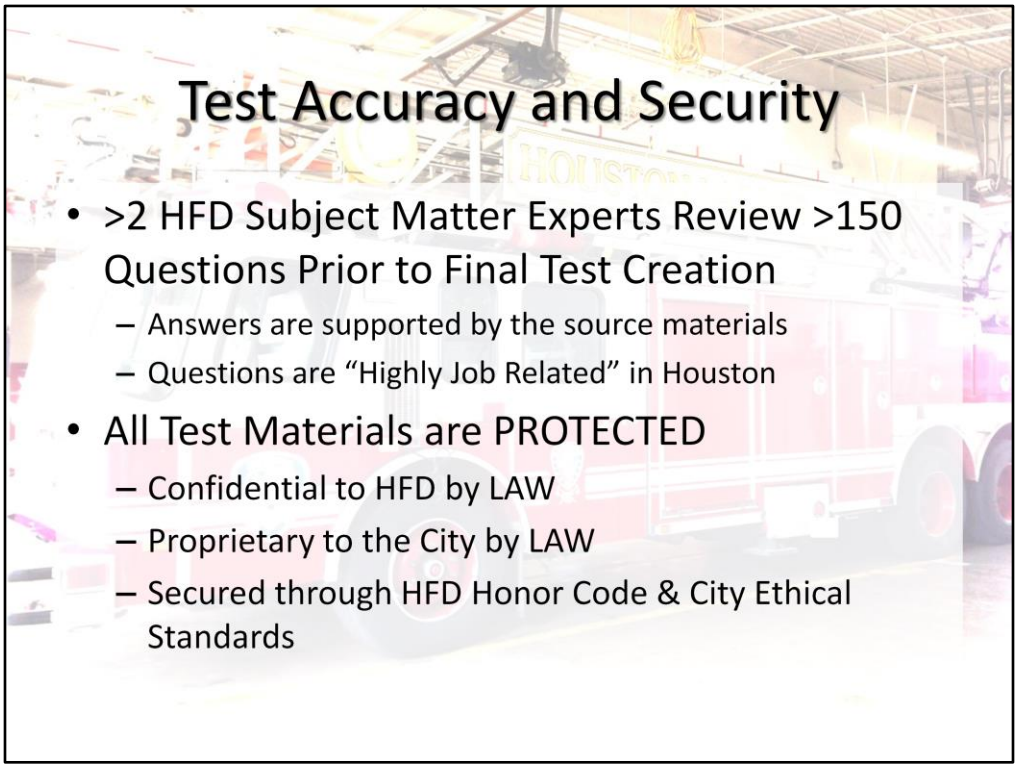
B. A person's title and rank is socially significant, and greatly impacts interpersonal relationships.

C. There is more two-way communication between those in authority and subordinates.

Source: Diversity Consciousness, Chapter 7, Page 234.

These questions are examples from the last inspector's exams (that we will never use again), but they give you a good idea of how questions are structured. Let's read over number 2 together…As you can see, some questions are near verbatim from the materials and simply ask you to recall factual information at the Knowledge level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Now let's read over number 1 together… Questions like this one are supported by the source material, but **are not verbatim** recall. First you have to remember that assembly buildings are special cases, and then define the total occupant load according to exit requirements (all of these facts are explained on page 119 of that source). While not verbatim, the question is entirely factual in nature and asks you to comprehend the information given in the source materials to identify the correct answer.

1. All questions have only one **best or most correct** answer
2. Section 143 states FD promo exams must be multiple choice and on a 100 point **scale**
3. We pick 100 items to make scoring and understanding your score easy
4. We give three answer options, because the research on how to build tests shows that 3 choices work better than 2 choices, and just as well as 4 or 5 choices.
5. It is better for you if questions are NOT verbatim--If everyone answers all the question correctly, then giving a test is no better than flipping a quarter—it's a competition for a limited number of spots, and the idea is that the people smartest about the knowledge used on the job win the competition.
6. If you find yourself reading a test question and think that there are two answer or no correct answer, consider this a red flag and re-read the question to be sure you understand exactly what the question is asking.



How we verify question accuracy and applicability to HFD

1. We know the source materials aren't 100% correct and don't apply perfectly to any job—so we also double check to make sure the question is truly knowledge someone in this job with HFD would actually use and that the right answer is not contradicted within the exam source materials themselves or by HFD guidelines. We have at least 3 HFD members in that rank or above review, edit, and match the answers back to the source materials for each question. In fact, we make these folks review at least 150 questions and only keep the best, most job related 100 for the test.

Why test security is so important to you personally and how you can help keep it secure

1. As you can imagine, we make anyone who looks at possible test questions sign a confidentiality agreement and an honor code acknowledgement. Test security is important to us because it does take a culmination of 6 months or more of work by many people to make each test. Test security should also be important to you because it is a competition…giving away any test question on this exam could make someone you are going to compete against in a future exam a better test taker—and could be the difference between you or that person getting a promotion on a future exam. It is also important to you because the US and Texas governments recognize testing as a business and these tests as proprietary business products—like the recipe for Coca Cola. If you compromise the security of promotional test, or cheat the quality of the testing process—you are committing a crime and could be fined, imprisoned, and sued for damages to other test takers and the city.

Additional Points

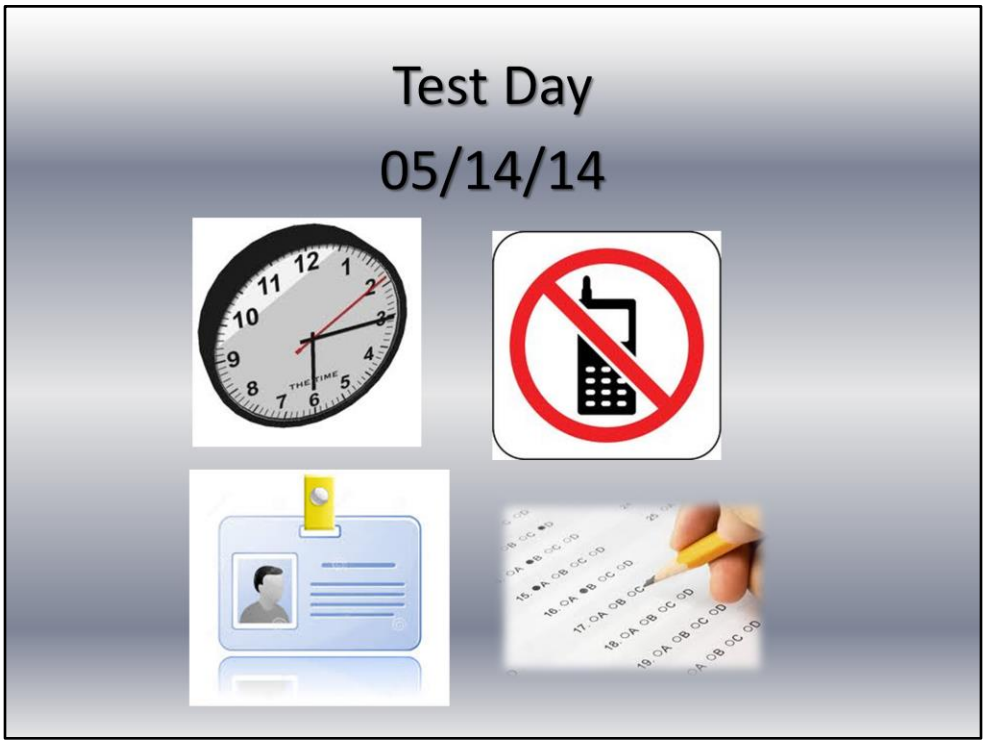
- Calculating Points – Based on Relevant CBA for each Position
- **YOUR** Responsibility to Verify them!
- Deadline for Point Verification: 04/14/14

Contact:
Jennifer Nolan, HR Specialist
Jennifer.Nolan@HoustonTX.gov
Classified Testing Services
832-395-4836

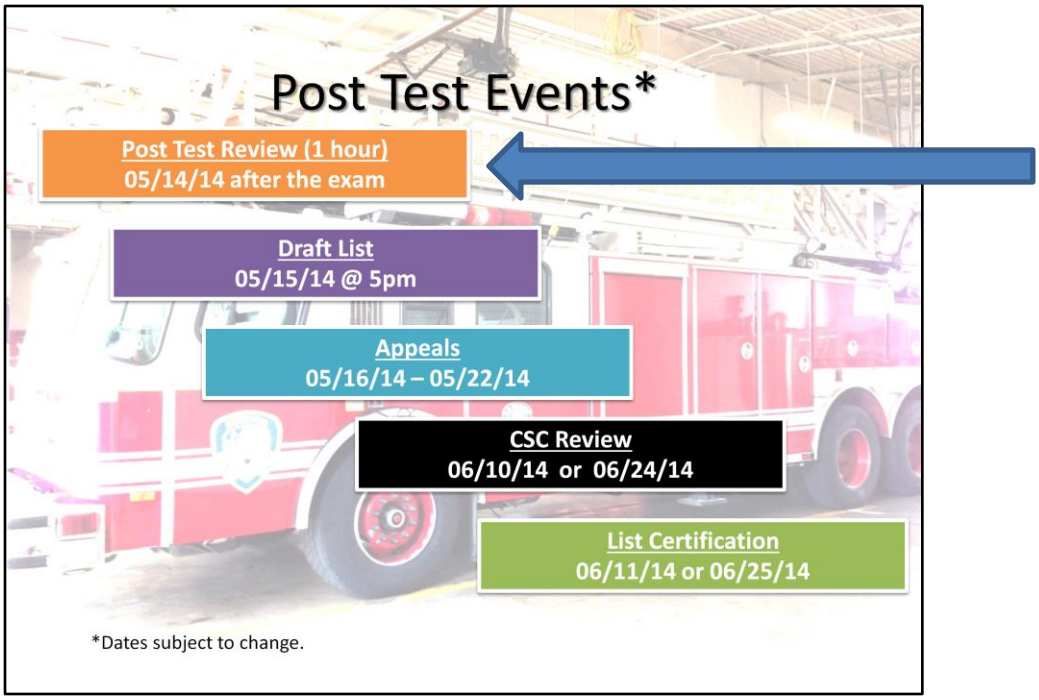
Points for the position of AAI:
Seniority is 0.5 PTS per year, max 10 PTS
Rank is 0.5 PTS per year in rank, max 5 PTS
Education is 1PT for Associates, 2 for BA/BS, 3 for MA/MS
Cert is 1PT for Intermediate, 2 for ADV, 3 for MTS
Maximum Total Points = 21

Seniority points are calculated by the hire date into the Houston Fire Department as a fire fighter trainee. If you worked for another city department prior to working for the fire department as a HFD trainee that time in service will not be calculated. If you worked for the Houston Fire Department in a civilian position prior to you joining as a HFD trainee that time will not be calculated into your time. If you worked as a trainee up until a firefighter and left the department for any reason and came back, your time in service will be calculated accordingly. This means Classified Testing will capture your time when you started up until you left, then bridge your time when you were reinstated until present.

If you fail to acknowledge that you received more points than you should have received based on the examples mentioned - you will be held in violation of the honor code you signed at the time you signed up for this exam. Failure to notify a member of our staff of additional points can lead to disciplinary actions by the fire chief. It's very important that everyone take the time to review your points thoroughly. Each member is ultimately responsible for verifying and correcting his/her own points. Last day to correct points is **4/14/14**.



Please be on time to the test site. It may be a good idea to make a practice drive from your home or where ever you will be coming from to the test site during weekday traffic. You must arrive before 9:00 am to check in and get seated for the exam. The test instructions will be read at 9:00 am, when doors will be closed. Cell phones are strictly prohibited anywhere in the testing area. Please leave your cell phone in your vehicle. You may leave your phone at the registration desk, however we are not liable for ensuring its safe keeping. If a cell phone is discovered in the testing area, regardless of whether it is off or on vibrate, the owner will be asked to leave and they will forfeit their opportunity for testing that day. Be sure to bring a picture ID with you. You need this to check in at the registration desk. Be sure to bubble in the answer you want recorded on your Scantron answer sheet. Any blanks will be counted as wrong answers. Don't spend too much time on any one answer, they all count for 1 point. Periodically check to ensure you are bubbling in the corresponding question number from the test booklet. Bring a jacket, long sleeve shirt, etc. to make sure you are comfortable during the test. Classrooms and assembly hall rooms are usually kept cooler than usual. Proctors and City personnel may assist in bringing sharpened pencil and/or escort you for a bathroom break. They cannot assist in test question comprehension. If you notice a possible typo on a question, ex: "it" should be "at", let Classified Testing know and we will announce the typo to everyone, in order for everyone to have the same comprehension of the test question.



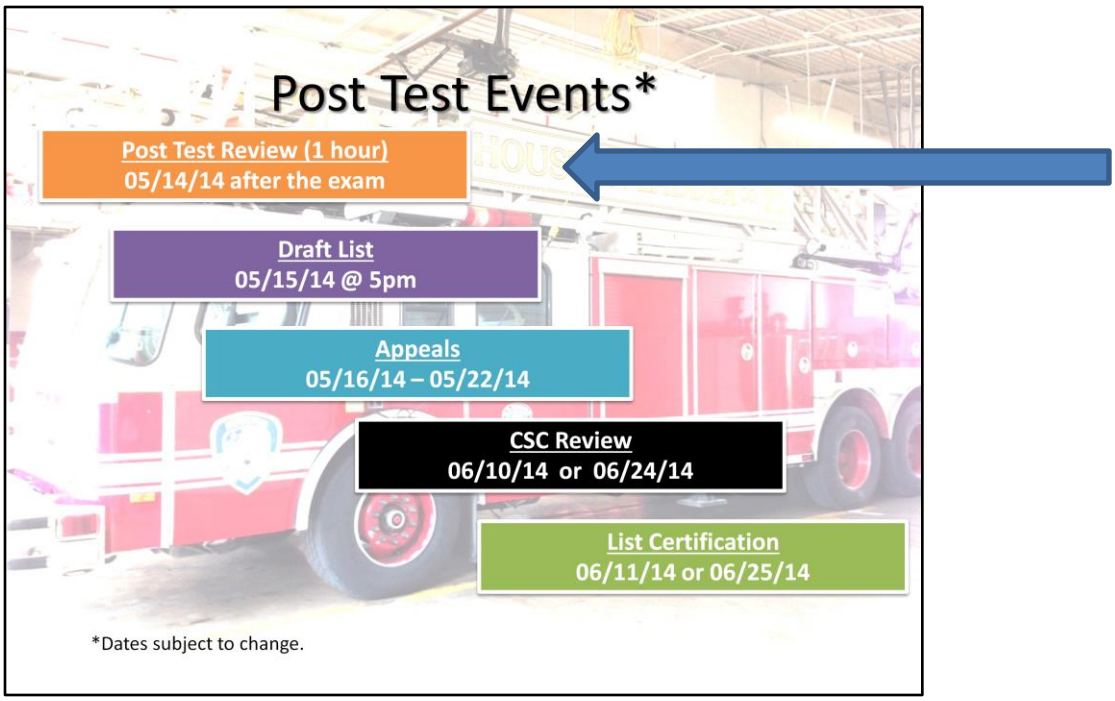
Post Test Review

Once everyone has completed the exam, there will be a review period the same day of the exam. Reviews usually begin 30-45 minutes after the last applicant has finished the exam and we do notify everyone when it is time for the review to start. You will be required to check into the review. You will need to show your ID. You will NOT be allowed to bring your phone or any other electronic device. You may bring your books (but you cannot write in them or on anything). You will be given your test packet and your Scantron. The review only lasts 1 hour. You are not allowed to appeal questions at this review (Classified Testing can no longer make any changes to the exam without the direction and consent of the TRC and CSC). The post test review is simply for you to look at your exam. Remember you are under the honor code. No pencils, pens or recording devices of any type are allowed in the review area. You should not be writing down any test information during the Post Test Review.

Draft lists are posted within 24 hours after the exam at 611 walker, city hall and on our website. Applicants are listed by Random Test Number (Each applicant is given a random test number the day of the exam). CT cannot remind you of your Random Test Number so it is very important to remember this number.

The list will be sorted in the order determined by the relevant CBA, for example:

1. Total Score (test grade plus points)
2. Raw Test Score
3. Days as an HFD employee
4. Number of questions correct is the 1st quadrant (questions 1-25)
5. Number of questions correct is the 2nd quadrant (questions 26-50)
6. Number of questions correct is the 3rd quadrant (questions 50-75)
7. Number of questions correct is the 4th quadrant (questions 76-100)
8. Alphabetical order



Appeals / Rebuttal Process Rules

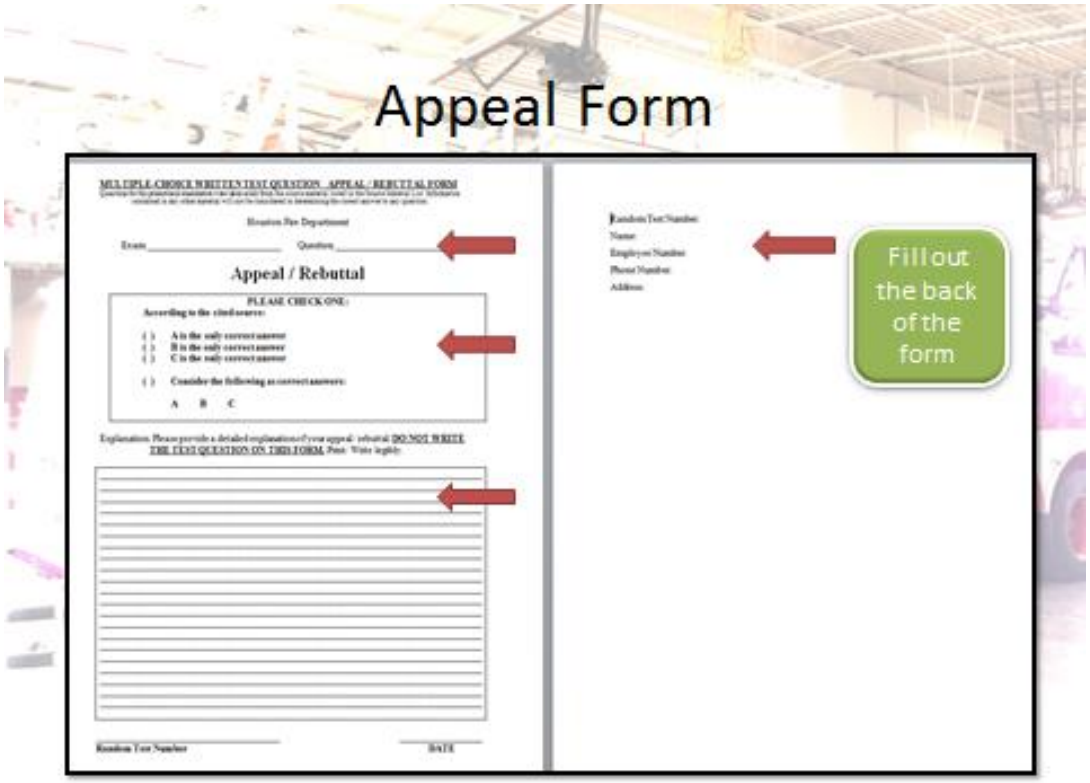
You must make an appointment. No phones or electronic devices allowed. If you have e-books we will provide you with a copy of the source. Phones must be checked in. If you need to use your phone you must do so outside of the review room. You are still under the honor code, representing HFD (act and dress appropriately). You are allowed to bring your books. Classified Testing will provide you will appeal/rebuttal forms, pens and scratch paper and you are only allowed to write on the materials provided to you by Classified Testing. Writing in your book or on any other papers will be a violation of the honor code and could result in indefinite suspension.

CSC/ TRC Review (If TRC, then 2 members of HFD, 2 union members, and1 member that HFD and the Union vote on)

CSC/ TRC is provided with a copy of the exam, appeals, and rebuttals. They review each test question and make a decision and then their decisions are returned to CT and the list is re-ranked (There is not another draft list put out before certification).

List Certification

The CSC meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month (Some exceptions with holidays). Estimated Certification Date is usually 4-8 weeks after the exam is administered. Once Classified Testing receives the certified list from the CSC, it is sent to HFD and posted at 611 Walker, city hall, and on the CT website. Each list is active for 2 years from the day the list was certified. If the list has to be recertified due to point error, the original certification day will remain the start day for the 2 year period.



Appeal / Rebuttal Form

Be sure to 1) Write question number, 2) indicate what you want to happen with the questions 3) give a logical argument or reason why your answer(s) are correct etc. (citing references to support is usually helpful), and 4) fill out both sides of the form.

You cannot write the test question. Only one question per appeal form.

There is no power in numbers (more forms don't equal a better chance).

Proving your point with references and good argument helps the most.

Some useful FACTS about Appeals:

<u>Only</u> the TRC/ CSC decides if an appeal has merit.

The only authority base for determining the right answer to any question is the source material for that exam.

Questions that have no verifiable right answer are usually dropped from the exam—and DO NOT change scores by more than 0.10 points per question (since the new grade becomes the percentage of question correct out of 99 total questions).

Questions that have two verifiable right answers in the source material are usually given dual credit—and change scores by 1 point.

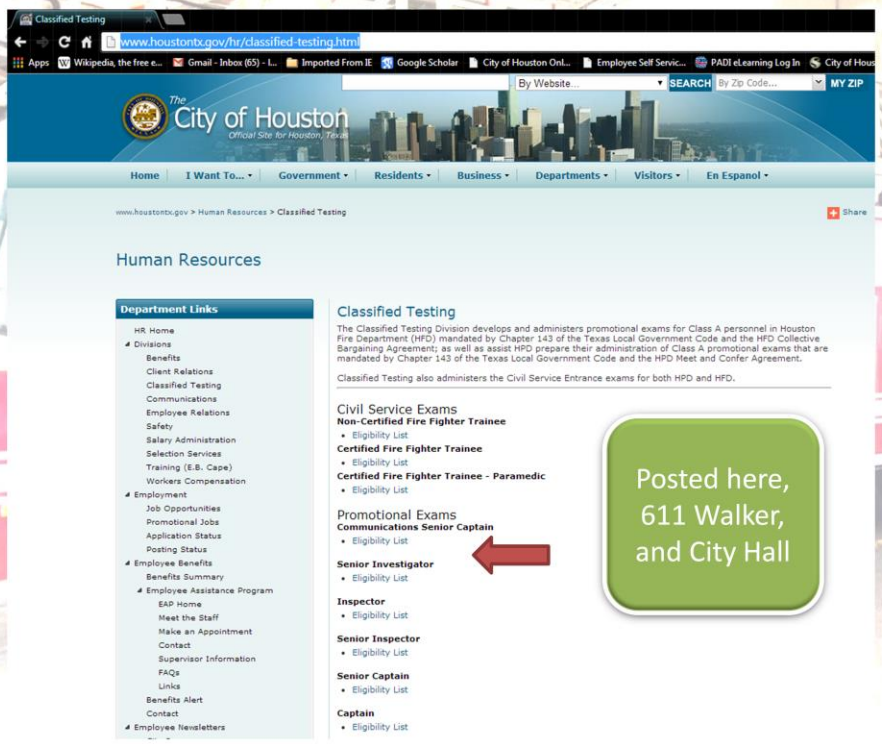
Questions do NOT have to be verbatim from source materials (only verifiable)--likewise typos on tests that do not substantially change the meaning of the answer or question are expected (and don't automatically give merit to an appeal).

Promotions

- Verifying your information
- How vacancies are created
- Position timeframe:
  ref. TLGC 143.036

To ensure HFD has your current contact phone numbers on file, please log into your ESS-employee self service system to check your phone numbers on file. The number on file is the number you will be contacted at. Please make an effort to verify your information.
Positions are created by Retirement, promotion, death, resignation, or an upheld indefinite suspension, and newly created positions (ICT) created by city Timeframe for promotional vacancies: If an eligibility is in existence, HFD has 60 days from the date the vacancy occurred to promote a candidate from an eligibility. This means HFD can choose any date up to the 60th day. If an eligibility list does not exist, according to the TLGC and your collective bargaining agreement, HFD HR has 95 days from the date the vacancy occurred to promote a candidate from the newly certified eligibility list. This means HFD can choose any date up to the 95th day.
*For the classification of **Assistant Arson Investigator**, HFD has 125 days from the date the vacancy occurred to promote a candidate from a eligibility list when an active list was not in existence. (Reference HFD CBA Article 11 Section 1(c) pg. 3)
It's very important that each candidate read the Texas Local Government Code 143.036 and your HFD Collective Bargaining Agreement regarding the rules associated with how vacancies are created and the timeframe HFD-HR has to fill them.

Classified Testing on the Web



Visit our web site for announcements, eligibility lists, and more information.
Via the city web site….
Go to **www.houstontx.gov**
Click on Departments and select Human Resources.
Scroll down to the Division list and select Classified Testing.
Or type in our URL
http://www.houstontx.gov/hr/classified-testing.html

Please ensure you are Eligible for this exam. Knowingly attempting to take an exam in which you are not eligible is a violation of the Honor Code and may result in disciplinary action at a minimum.

Please verify your seniority points. The information Classified Testing has is based on the official city database. There may be some errors within it, therefore it is your responsibility to let us know about any discrepancies. Even if you have too many points, you must correct the error or be subject to disciplinary action.

Utilize the study tips we covered in this presentation to focus your study time and what to study during your study periods.

Maintain strict test security while you are in the test environment and afterward during the appeal and rebuttal phases.

We hope this presentation was beneficial and helpful for you to understand the test process and the role Classified Testing plays for you and within the City of Houston.

Please feel free to call anyone in the Classified Testing Division. The contact information is listed at the end of this presentation.

Thank you for spending time with us, and we hope this review helps!

Classified Testing Services

E.B. Cape Center
4501 Leeland, Houston, TX 77023

Vincent Bejarano
HR Supervisor
(832)395-4850
Vincent.Bejarano@houstontx.gov

Lacey L. Schmidt, Ph.D.
Administrative Coordinator
(832)395-4845
Lacey.Schmidt@houstontx.gov

Jennifer Nolan
HR Specialist
(832)395-4836
Jennifer.Nolan@houstontx.gov

HFD Human Resources Contact
Danielle Page
HR Supervisor
(832)-395-4834
Danielle.Page@houstontx.gov

Thanks again, and Good Luck!