

Refundable Security Deposit – Explanation

In the last few years, Civil Service has given several promotional examinations and a growing trend has been observed. Candidates are applying to take the exam but are not showing up on exam day. Recently, 45 candidates applied to take the Fire Department's Pumper Engineer examination but only 22 actually showed up for the exam; 51% of the candidates did not appear. Similarly, 81 candidates applied for the Fire Lieutenant exam but only 54 participated in the exam; 33% of the candidates did not appear.

The City of Bridgeport is pleased to offer candidates the opportunity to advance in rank through the exam process. Promotional exams are always offered to all eligible candidates free of charge, but it is expensive to give an exam. Costs are incurred for all candidates who apply to take the exam. When candidates do not show up to the exam, money is spent to reserve spots for those candidates regardless.

Perhaps some candidates don't realize the planning and resources that are devoted to promotional exams. Civil Service exam expenses can include:

- costs for test booklets and exam materials
- rental fees for the facilities and equipment
- payments to assessors and role players
- recording (video/audio) costs
- extra staffing salary expenses

Most of the above costs are calculated per candidate. For instance, we calculate how many candidates can be tested per hour and must rent a facility that can provide us with that many test rooms. We might need 4 rooms for 80 candidates but only 2 rooms for 50 candidates. If we pay \$125 per room, that's a \$250 difference. And, consulting firms require us to purchase the exam booklets up front. We base the purchase on the number of applicants. At \$25 per booklet, when almost 30 people don't show up, the City spends \$750 on unused booklets. In order to process the candidates on the exam days, we need more staffing to process more candidates, and more days for the assessors to review the candidates' performances for a larger group of candidates. All of these contribute to exam expenses on a per candidate basis.

Because we hold the oral portion of the exam right after the written, we must schedule all of the events and test segments based on the number of applicants who apply, not on the number of actual candidates who appear for the written exam. We cannot factor an amount for "no-shows" because every candidate who applies has the right to test. We set up schedules for test times, and give each candidate a "reporting" time. When candidates apply but don't show up, not only do our expenses increase, but also other candidates are affected by the scheduling gaps created by so many no-shows.

For all of these reasons, the Office of the Civil Service Commission is implementing a new policy. While promotional testing will remain free to all candidates who actively sit for an exam, the Civil Service office will now require candidates to submit a refundable security deposit of \$150 for every promotional application. This deposit covers the expenses related to testing and exams **IF** a candidate applies **but does not show up** for the exam. **The security deposit will be fully refunded to all candidates that do show up**, on the last day of the exam.

As always, please feel free to call or email the Civil Service Office with any questions.