
Captain California Highway Patrol

Candidate Orientation Guide



*Selection Standards and Examinations Section
Examination Services*

INTRODUCTION

The Candidate Orientation Guide is designed to help you prepare for the Captain, California Highway Patrol (CHP), assessment center. This guide provides important information regarding the examination process that will be used during the assessment center. It is your responsibility to review and study this orientation guide carefully.

This orientation guide is not designed to serve as a study guide for the actual examination, but rather provides a general overview of the assessment center process and the procedures involved. Although it does not cover every aspect of the process, it should serve to provide you with useful information regarding how the assessment center works. How well you perform on the actual examination will be determined by your past training, experience, knowledge base, and how you present this information during the assessment center.

The Assessment Center

The assessment center is designed to gather relevant, job-specific information pertaining to a candidate's ability to perform at the level of a Captain, CHP. Every candidate will receive the same exercises during the assessment center. The examination itself will enable candidates to demonstrate possession of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for successful job performance as a Captain, CHP.

The assessment center exercises were designed to reflect real life scenarios that a Captain, CHP, may expect to encounter on the job. Candidates should respond to examination situations as they actually would on the job as a Captain, CHP. Candidates' responses to individual examination situations will be recorded and documented by trained examination assessors. The assessors will rate only those behaviors displayed by the candidate. Therefore, it is imperative that a candidate respond fully and comprehensively to each examination situation. Candidates must be explicit and specific in their responses and should not expect assessors to make assumptions, draw conclusions, or comprehend implied references. In other words, if a candidate does not say it, it will not be noted by the assessors.

Candidates will be evaluated according to pre-established, structured rating criteria. After the assessors have recorded the candidate's behavior on the various examination situations, assessors will provide a final score for each of the job dimensions, which are described at the end of this orientation guide (pgs. 4-5). For each of the job dimensions within an examination situation, the candidate will receive a score based on a 5-point rating scale, whereas a score of 1 corresponds to the lowest score and 5 represents the highest score.

Prior to examination day, assessors will receive training on how to score candidates. The rating criteria is designed to assess a wide range of acceptable responses and behaviors. In addition to these specific rating criteria, raters are trained to exercise a degree of judgment in making their evaluation decisions. After each candidate has completed the exercise and has been evaluated independently by the assessors, the assessor team will meet to derive a consensus score for each candidate (on each job

dimension). During the consensus session, the assessors will have an opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and the quality of the responses.

Tips for Successful Candidate Performance

Candidates should familiarize themselves with the job dimensions described at the end of this orientation guide (pgs. 4-5). Those candidates who display the behaviors described in these job dimensions will receive higher scores. It is important that candidates respond to each examination situation as fully and comprehensively as possible. The candidate's ability to display a wide range of effective behaviors relevant to each job dimension is critical to their success on this examination.

The exercises in this assessment center were designed to simulate real-life scenarios that a Captain, CHP, may encounter on the job. For examination purposes, a candidate should assume they have already been promoted to the rank of Captain, CHP, and should act accordingly. To some degree, the exercises involved in the assessment center may seem like role playing, but remember, we are placing a candidate in these situations for the purpose of assessing how well they would perform as a Captain, CHP. If a candidate is shy or reluctant to express themselves, their final score will reflect that. The more a candidate is able to project themselves into the assumed role, the better they will perform on the examination overall.

How will the examination be administered?

The examination will consist of three exercises: a Command Analysis Exercise, a Behavioral Interview, and a Presentation Exercise. The exercises will be administered at separate stations, and each candidate will be guided from station to station according to a pre-established schedule.

Who are the assessors?

For each of the three exercises, there will be multiple assessors. Assessors were selected from a pool of internal departmental personnel of proven ability with a thorough understanding of the requirements and demands of the Captain, CHP, rank. All assessors will undergo a training session designed to familiarize them with the assessment center exercises and the examination process. During each exercise, the assessors will individually observe and assess your performance before convening to establish a consensus score.

What should I do and how should I act?

Assessors are not looking for a single particular approach to the examination situation. There are numerous acceptable approaches to the various exercises. In other words, be true to your own personality and leadership style. Do not try to anticipate what the assessors are looking for, or overthink the exercises. Artificial behavior tends to stand out and can be counterproductive. Act naturally — just as you would in a real-life

scenario. Draw from your training and experience and respond to the examination situation in the manner and style that you are accustomed to.

As you arrive at each exercise station, be sure to carefully read all examination directions. Listen carefully to all verbal instructions. If you need the instructions repeated, please ask the assessor to do so. However, in order to provide everyone the same uniform experience, assessors will be limited in the amount of additional direction or help that they can provide. While participating in the assessment center exercises, please speak clearly. The assessors need to hear and understand you to properly evaluate you. If you have any questions as you proceed through the examination process, be sure to ask at that time.

What will the assessment center schedule be?

Your particular location, time, and date is printed on your Notice to Appear Letter. Each candidate should plan on being at the assessment center site for approximately four hours on your scheduled assessment day.

Please wear professional business attire (no uniforms).

What should I bring to the assessment center?

All materials necessary for participation in the assessment center will be provided for you (e.g., paper, pencils, other office supplies). Do not bring any printed materials, cell phones, PDAs, or any other electronic devices. If you do bring materials to the assessment center, they will be collected by the assessment administrator and returned at the end of the session. Each candidate will be given a short break during the assessment center, please feel free to bring water and/or a snack.

JOB DIMENSIONS

I. Leadership/Management:

Knowledge of and ability to identify and apply management theories and techniques. Knowledge of the Commissioner's priorities and expectations and its goals and strategies. Ability to promote a vision and generate support for directives among the entire Area Command; exercise discretion, justify decisions, reason objectively and prioritize projects accordingly; determine when to delegate; devise methods for achieving Area Command goals and accomplish goals through others; incorporate social, technical, economic, environmental, and political issues into the departmental planning process. Show enthusiasm and a professional demeanor; gain the confidence, cooperation, and respect of the entire Area Command. Ability to effectively contribute to the CHP's Equal Employment Opportunity objectives; objectively identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential in subordinate staff; guide, counsel, and mentor subordinates and maintain discipline. Ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the organization and develop plans to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses. Ability to develop staff to meet the strategic objectives of the CHP.

II. Problem Solving/Decision Making:

Ability to exercise sound judgment, including when making decisions regarding which items to delegate, which to take action on, and which to refer to superiors; anticipate the implications of an action beyond the immediate benefit; recognize and resolve problems; objectively identify all facts and implications related to a situation before drawing conclusions. Ability to analyze written materials, data, charts, and graphs to determine overall departmental effectiveness; make thorough and accurate analysis of routine or emergency situations or data and take appropriate courses of action. Keep well-informed of Department policies and priorities and of internal and external factors in order to make decisions which may affect the organization, other departments, and/or outside stakeholders.

III. Interpersonal Relations:

Ability to establish effective relationships with superiors, peers, subordinates, the public, and external entities; exercise tact in interpersonal relations; act diplomatically; guide and counsel subordinates on problems that affect job performance; represent the Department in a professional manner. Ability to listen attentively to others and elicit/accept feedback; be open-minded and able to separate personal feelings from issues at hand. Ability to effectively communicate with subordinates in unpleasant situations and carry out action as needed; negotiate satisfactory resolutions to conflicts; recognize the needs of uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.

IV. Job Knowledge:

Knowledge of the CHP organizational structure and departmental programs and projects. Knowledge of jurisdiction and departmental policies and procedures; state and federal laws and changes in law affecting departmental operations; knowledge of current laws and proposed legislation as they affect the Area Command's operations; knowledge of headquarters and field organization and operations. Knowledge of operations and policies of allied agencies; knowledge of community group interests and events and regional transportation issues; knowledge of jurisdictions of various government agencies; knowledge of the local community structure and its formal and informal leaders. Knowledge of the resources available to assist in meeting goals and objectives; knowledge of the Commissioner's priorities and expectations and its goals and strategies. Ability to interpret and implement complex laws and policies. Knowledge of the Governor's budget programs and the ability to manage a budget needed for resources.

V. Oral Communication:

Ability to speak in a clear, succinct, and understandable manner; present ideas and communicate effectively with a variety of individuals; speak effectively in public before a variety of audiences. Ability to summarize ideas and justify them effectively; summarize and communicate complex laws and policies to technical and non-technical staff. Adapt communication to the audience; maintain a professional approach and positive image; consider the organizational culture when developing and applying the appropriate communication style.