While reporting this week’s cover story “Hosed,” the Voice obtained two FDNY Entrance Exams (identified as “7029” and “2043”). We took all the questions ourselves, and were kind of amazed at how idiotic some of them were.

Answering them, we had to wonder: why shouldn’t minorities be expected to do as well on these questions as white people? But equally troubling was this thought: is answering these questions correctly really going to make someone a good firefighter?

Here are what we considered the 10 most painfully obvious questions. Take them yourself and let us know what you think.

10. A group of firefighters and their officer respond to a fifth floor apartment in a seven-story building. When they arrive at the apartment, they are told that the contents of a wastepaper basket was on fire, and the fire was extinguished prior to their arrival. The officer instructs the firefighters to ventilate, or remove, the smoke from the apartment by first using a method that will not cause damage to property. Which one of the following would be the most appropriate method for the firefighters to use to remove the smoke?

A) Breaking out all the windows with a crowbar.
B) Pulling down the ceiling with a six-foot hook.
C) Cutting through the floors with an eight-pound axe.
D) Manually opening all the windows and removing the screen.

9. Firefighters are required to operate on the subway tracks during emergencies in the subway stations. Which one of the following would present the greatest threat to the safety of a firefighter working on the subway tracks?

A) A subway platform crowded with people.
B) Rubbish burning in a small garbage can located on a subway platform.
C) A subway car entering a station.
D) A maintenance crew working on the track.

8. Firefighters conduct building inspections to locate potential life-threatening conditions in the event there is a fire. Which one of the following would the most-serious threat to life in the event of a fire?

A) An unlocked front door in a building.
7. A fire department instructor is explaining the hazards of operating on a frozen lake to a newly-assigned firefighter. Which of the following is an action that a firefighter should not take in this situation?

A) Put on a personal flotation device.
B) Bring heavy equipment onto the lake.
C) Prohibit civilians from going out onto the lake.
D) Engage firefighter safety line prior to operating on ice.

6. After firefighters are sure that a fire has been extinguished, and that there is no hazard in the building, they begin a salvage operation. Salvage involves moving and covering furniture and other properties, covering broken windows and holes in the building with plastic, and redirecting and cleaning up water to minimize damage. After extinguishing a fire in a high-rise apartment building, firefighters begin salvage operations. Which of the following pieces of property is in the most danger of being damaged?

A) A leather couch that has been burned on one side.
B) A large screen television with a broken screen.
C) An antique painting hanging under a leaking ceiling.
D) A pillow laying [sic] on the floor in a puddle of water.

vivarto

These questions would indeed discriminate against the African Americans, as chances for answering them correctly is correlated with IQ. It is true that the answers to these questions are rather obvious, but they are only obvious to a person with relatively high IQ. To a person with low IQ it is hard to read through the long paragraphs and extract the meaning.

The average IQ of African Americans is a whole standard deviation lower than average for the country and these exams would indeed discriminate against them.

Also, these exams are asking quite obvious common sense questions, and a person who has difficulties answering them is less qualified to be a fire fighter.

E.g. I would not want a firefighter smashing windows if opening them was equally easy.

@vivarto So what you are saying is African Americans cannot be expected to be as smart as other races? That sounds pretty racist to me.