



Homeland
Security

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CBP Officer and Agriculture Specialist

Preparation Manual for the In-Basket Job Simulation

**Personnel Research and Assessment Division
Office of Human Resources Management**

PREPARATION MANUAL FOR THE IN-BASKET JOB SIMULATION

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PREPARATION MANUAL FOR THE IN-BASKET JOB SIMULATION

INTRODUCTION

The In-Basket Job Simulation

The *In-Basket Job Simulation* is one of the assessments in the Competency-Based Promotional Assessment System. During the *In-Basket Job Simulation*, you will be asked to assume the role of supervisor or manager in a fictional port. You will receive background information about the facility, the staff, and the major issues facing the facility. In addition, you will be presented with a series of voice mail messages and e-mail messages that have accumulated in your in-basket. You must read these materials and then outline your strategies for solving problems, making decisions, developing plans, evaluating progress, delegating responsibilities, setting priorities, and informing others.

After completing your review of the introductory materials and in-basket documents, you must answer a series of multiple-choice questions that ask how you would handle the situations presented in the in-basket materials. Each question addresses one or more of the management competencies described in the next section of this manual.

The Management Competencies

The *In-Basket Job Simulation* measures management skills that are critical for effective performance in supervisory and managerial jobs. The competencies in the management skills cluster include:

Problem Solving and Decision Making - Your ability to identify problems and to gather, interpret, and evaluate information in order to determine its accuracy and relevance; your skill in generating and evaluating alternatives; your ability to make sound and well-informed decisions; and your ability to commit to action to accomplish organizational goals.

Planning and Evaluating - Your ability to organize work, set priorities, and determine resource requirements; your skill in determining objectives and strategies to achieve organizational goals; and your ability to monitor and evaluate progress against goals.

Managing and Organizing Information - Your ability to identify a need for information, determine its importance and accuracy, and communicate it by a variety of methods.

Self-Management - Your ability to show initiative; your skill in setting well-defined and realistic goals; your ability to monitor progress; your motivation to achieve; and your effectiveness in managing your own time.

About this Preparation Manual

This manual is designed to familiarize you with the *In-Basket Job Simulation* and to help you to prepare for it. The manual allows you to test your management skills on a practice exercise that is based on the *In-Basket Job Simulation* that you will complete as part of the Competency-Based Promotional Assessment System. The practice exercise presents a scenario, an organizational chart, and a series of in-basket documents. These materials are followed by multiple-choice questions that ask how you would handle situations presented in the scenario and documents. The last section of the manual provides the answers to the multiple-choice questions and explanations for each answer.

About the Practice Exercise

The practice exercise begins on page 6. You will find that all of the Competency-Based Promotional Assessment *In-Basket Job Simulations* resemble this practice exercise. All assessments present the same basic format of the scenario, propose the same kinds of management problems presented in the documents, and ask the same kinds of questions on the multiple-choice assessment.

After a careful analysis of supervisory and managerial jobs, we selected situations for the practice exercise that would generalize across a variety of supervisory and managerial jobs in U.S Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and across varied geographical settings. In all cases, you will have the information you need to be able to reach appropriate conclusions on the practice exercise using the information that is provided in the scenario and the documents.

The Scenario and Documents

On the following pages, you will find a **scenario** that describes the roles and responsibilities of the staff in a hypothetical port known as the Port of Dillon and that outlines the issues facing them. We have also included an **organizational chart** for the Port of Dillon and **calendars** for July, August, and September. Following the scenario, you will find **documents** 1 through 14 (marked in the lower right-hand corner).

The scenario and documents in this preparation manual, like the scenario and documents in the actual assessment, are based on incidents encountered by supervisors and managers in CBP. These materials simulate job duties and tasks that are considered to be important to CBP supervisors.

The Practice Multiple-Choice Questions

Read the directions for answering the multiple-choice questions on page 26. Then, beginning on page 27, answer the multiple-choice questions that ask how you would handle the situations presented in the documents. When you have completed these practice questions, turn to page 31 and compare your answers to the answers and explanations that we have provided for you. You will receive the greatest benefit from the practice exercise if you first record your answers before examining the answers and explanations.

Each practice question addresses at least one of the management competencies described on page 1. Before you begin the practice exercise, you may find it helpful to review the

competencies. The competency definitions refer to the specific skills and abilities you will need as you attempt to resolve the situations presented in the *In-Basket Job Simulation*.

Preparing for the In-Basket Job Simulation

In this section, we provide some suggestions for approaching the *In-Basket Job Simulation*.

Some General Tips

As you review the documents in the practice exercise, think about how you would apply the four management competencies (see page 1) as you handle each situation. To assist you in your review, we have provided a series of competency-related study questions. You might ask yourself these questions as you are reviewing the documents. These questions are similar to the kinds of questions that appear on the multiple-choice assessment.

When you take the *In-Basket Job Simulation*, it is helpful to keep the following guidelines in mind. First and foremost, plan your time wisely. You will have a set period of time to read the scenario and the documents and to plan your strategies for handling the challenges presented to you. You will have an additional set period of time to answer a series of multiple-choice questions that are based on the scenario and documents. You will be allowed to refer to the scenario, your notes, and the documents while answering the multiple-choice questions.

When answering the multiple-choice questions, choose the one answer that is closest to how you would handle the situation. The answers to the multiple-choice questions were developed and reviewed by senior CBP Officer and Agriculture Specialist managers. These experts also identified the correct answers. In some instances, these experts agreed that there was more than one effective means of handling a particular issue. In such cases, more than one response option may receive full credit. In other instances, the subject matter experts agreed that some response options were satisfactory, but less than optimal. Such response options receive partial credit. **However, you should only select one response option from among the alternatives when answering the questions.**

When answering the multiple-choice questions, ignore any patterns of A's, B's, C's, D's, or E's. The correct answer positions are chosen randomly and there is no way to improve your score by guessing based on a pattern of answers. However, if you are running out of time, do guess. No points are deducted for incorrect answers.

Problem Solving and Decision Making

To solve problems effectively, you must first properly identify them. Then, to the extent that time and the situation permits, gather information. Interpret and evaluate this information and determine its relevance to the situation at hand. Try to generate alternatives for actions that you might take in responding to the situation. Finally, select and commit to the best course of action.

Consider the following questions as you review each document:

- What is the most critical issue raised in this document?
- What factors are most important to consider in deciding how to respond to the situation raised in this document?
- What actions are likely to be most effective in dealing with the situation presented in this document?

Planning and Evaluating

Effective planning begins with a careful analysis of your roles and responsibilities. Once you have read the material in the practice exercise carefully, consider what you would like to accomplish, given your role in the hypothetical situation. Consider how your overall objectives relate to organizational goals. Next, establish priorities. Develop a plan that will enable you to meet your goals. If your plan requires a series of steps, make sure that these steps are well organized and logically sequenced. Determine resource requirements and establish deadlines. Finally, consider how you would monitor your plans and evaluate your progress in achieving your goals.

Consider the following questions as you review each document:

- What specific steps would you take to resolve the situation in this document? Which of these steps would you take first?
- Of the factors mentioned in this document, which would create the greatest burden on your organization's resources?
- What resources would you need to resolve the situation in this document? Are there other situations that would compete for these resources?
- What indicators would provide the strongest evidence that the way you dealt with the situation had been successful?

Managing and Organizing Information

On a daily basis, supervisors and managers can easily become inundated with information. A key to maintaining peak effectiveness is the ability to recognize and act upon the important details appropriately while ignoring the unimportant ones.

Consider the following questions as you review each document:

- Does the information in this document provide insight into issues presented in other documents?
- Who else needs the information presented in this document? How soon must you present this information to these individuals?
- What should you do with this document once you have read it? Do you need to transmit it to other individuals in your organization? Should it be filed? Can you discard it?

Self-Management

The ability to manage one's schedule is a prerequisite to effectiveness as a supervisor or manager. Most important is the ability to manage your time wisely. You must be able to recognize vital matters—the ones with a high payoff—and to devote your time and attention to them. Do not be fooled by urgent yet trivial matters.

Success as a supervisor or manager also requires the ability to take initiative. In addition, you must be able to set realistic goals and to follow up on progress toward each goal until it has been achieved.

Consider the following questions as you review each document:

- What priority would you assign to each issue or situation presented in the in-basket?
- When must each situation be handled? Does the situation require immediate attention or can you delay action? If the situation does not require immediate attention, how long can you delay action?
- Is this situation something that you should handle personally? If not, who on your staff should?

THE PRACTICE EXERCISE

Instructions for Completing the Practice Exercise

This practice exercise measures the management competencies that are critical for effective performance as a supervisor or manager. The questions in this exercise measure your ability to delegate responsibilities, set priorities, solve problems, make decisions, develop plans, and evaluate progress. Proficiency in these competencies will enable you to effectively resolve issues that you will face as supervisor or manager. Typical concerns include budget and financial management, program oversight, human resources management, resource management, and public relations.

In this exercise, you will be asked to play the role of the Acting Port Director of a fictitious port of entry. You are presented with 14 documents that a supervisor or manager could expect to find in his or her in-basket. Review these documents and consider how you would handle the issues and problems they raise. When you have completed your review, answer the set of multiple-choice questions that follows the documents. By answering these questions, you will indicate how you would respond to the problems presented in this exercise. Individual questions may address a single document, a group of documents, or the general situation created by the package of in-basket materials. To the extent possible, the multiple-choice questions are arranged in the same order as the documents. Therefore, the documents should be kept in their original order.

As you are reviewing the documents, **do not** prepare responses to them (for example, do not write e-mail messages, letters, or memos). Instead, to prepare for the multiple-choice questions, you may find it helpful to make notes about your strategies for resolving the issues presented in the documents. Consider **what** actions should be taken, **when** the actions should be taken, **who** should perform such actions, and **who** must be contacted while taking these actions. Also, use the calendars that have been provided on page 10 to record appointments and events discussed in the in-basket. You will find this information helpful as you answer the multiple-choice questions.

When you take the in-basket exercise as part of the Competency-Based Promotional Assessment System, the assessment administrator will provide you with paper for making your notes. You may also write on any of the materials provided in your packet (for example, monthly calendars, organizational chart, and documents). While responding to the multiple-choice questions, you will be able to refer to your notes and to the documents. However, your notes will not be considered in scoring this assessment. Only your responses to the multiple-choice questions will be scored.

In this exercise and in the actual assessment, there are no references to any specific year. Calendar dates are given as a month and a day, such as “May 1.” All events have taken place during the current calendar year. Finally, all individuals and situations described in the in-basket materials are fictitious.

Please note that although this practice exercise is similar in content and structure to the actual *In-basket Job Simulation*, you should expect the actual *In-basket Job Simulation* to be longer and more in-depth.

The In-Basket Materials

In the following pages, you will find the **scenario**, an **organizational chart** for the Port of Dillon, and **calendars** for July, August, and September. In addition, you will find **documents** 1 through 14 (marked in the lower right-hand corner) and a series of **multiple-choice questions**. Please complete your review of the introductory materials and the documents before proceeding to the multiple-choice questions.

The Scenario

Your Role

You are **Jessie White**, a team supervisor in the Port of Dillon. As a team supervisor, you are responsible for the day-to-day operational issues confronting your team. However, because you are very experienced, you are often called upon to do special projects that involve broader organizational issues. Your Port Director, **George Hudson**, typically handles longer-range issues and external coordination.

It is now 8:00 a.m. on Monday, August 10. Earlier this morning, George Hudson called you from home. He is on his way out of town due to a family emergency. He will be away from the port for the remainder of the week. He has asked you to act until he returns. He has forwarded his phone to you and arranged for you to have access to his e-mail messages. You have just reviewed his calendar and see that beginning at 8:30 a.m., you are scheduled to be in meetings for the remainder of the day. You have decided to spend the next half hour reviewing Port Director George Hudson's in-basket, e-mail, and voice mail, as well as your own.

About the Port of Dillon

The Port of Dillon serves a multi-state area on the northern border. Although the office is well inland, its jurisdiction covers about 450 miles of the border. Forty-one employees are assigned to work in the port. However, currently five positions are vacant. (See the accompanying organizational chart on page 9.)

The reporting chain-of-command is the following. **George Hudson**, the Dillon Port Director reports to **Richard Carter**, the Area Port Director. The four team supervisors, **Sally Greer**, **Jessie White (you)**, **Shankar Ganesh**, and **Elise Thornton**, report directly to Port Director George Hudson. **Martha Montgomery** is the Port Director's secretary, and **Gerald Hart** is the Management Program Officer (MPO). MPO Hart handles a broad range of financial and administrative matters for the port.

Facilities. The Port of Dillon shares space in a large federal office building. Although the staff has grown considerably in the past year, your allotted office space has not increased. However, you have been told that the office will be moving to larger quarters within the same building once the space is vacated by another agency. Building management estimates that the move will take place in six months.

Operations. Many officers from the Port of Dillon have been involved in a department-wide anti-terrorism effort. Federal, state, and local authorities have been working together in a wide range of activities. Agency representatives will be meeting in the mayor's office to outline their longer-range activities. The Red Light Working Group, a broad, multi-agency initiative

designed to intercept terrorists and terrorist's weapons from entering the country and setting up operations here, is scheduled to meet at City Hall from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 12, and from 8:30 a.m. until noon on Thursday, August 13. Port Director George Hudson has asked that you attend in his place and has briefed you extensively on the many facets of this new group.

The objectives of the Red Light Working Group are being achieved through a series of activities. CBP Officers and Agriculture Specialists in the Port of Dillon have the lead in the first of these, a specialized training initiative known as AWARE, which is now underway. Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh is responsible for planning and monitoring the day-to-day activities of AWARE. Overall, the initiative is going well due to Team Supervisor Ganesh's experience, organizational skills, and attention to detail.

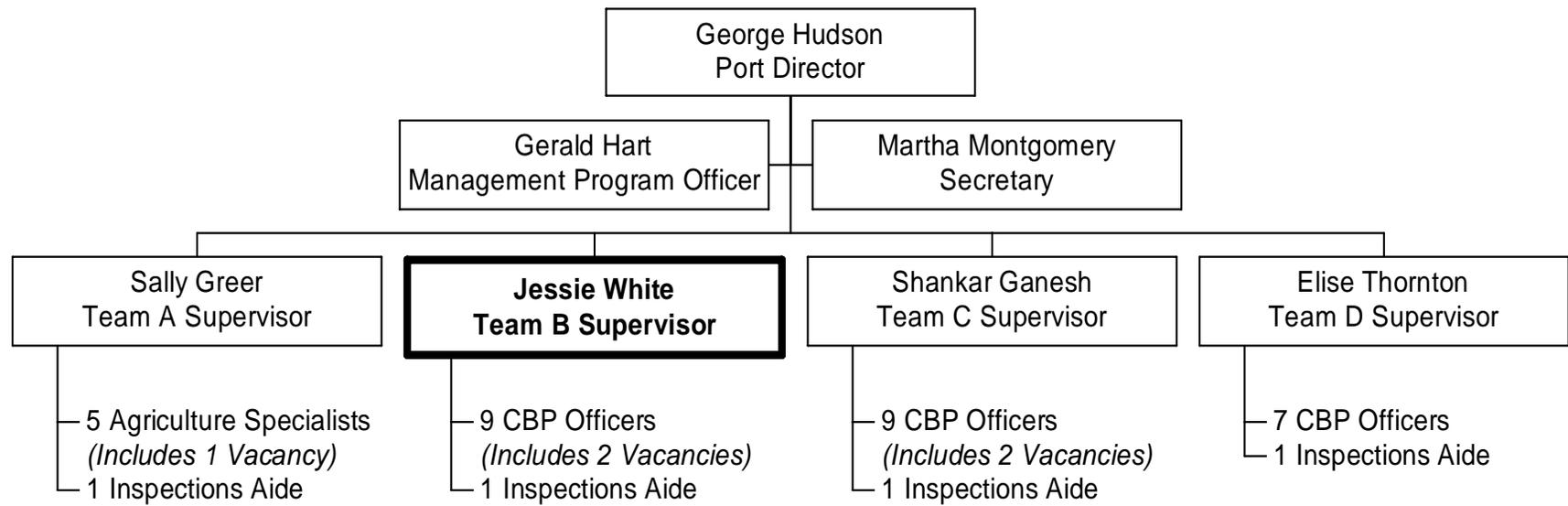
Other Issues. Recently, there have been requests by local authorities to have the activities in the Port of Dillon become more visible to the public. Local authorities would like to inform the public regarding the role of CBP in lessening the threat of terrorism in our country and regarding what role CBP may have should Dillon suffer a terrorist attack.

Summary

- You are **Jessie White**, a team supervisor at the Port of Dillon. Effective immediately, you will be acting for your Port Director, **George Hudson**, who has been called out of town due to a family emergency. It is now 8:00 a.m. on Monday, August 10. Starting at 8:30 a.m., you will be attending a series of meetings that are scheduled to last most of the day.
- The Port of Dillon is located near the northern border. The 41 employees of the port cover a 450-mile section of the border.
- The Port Director, **George Hudson**, reports to **Richard Carter**, the Area Port Director. Reporting to George Hudson are the Management Program Officer, **Gerald Hart**, **Martha Montgomery**, the office secretary, and the four team supervisors, **Sally Greer**, **Jessie White (you)**, **Shankar Ganesh**, and **Elise Thornton**. (See the Organizational Chart on page 9.)
- Later this week, you will be attending a working group meeting to outline longer-range activities of the Red Light Working Group which is a broad, multi-agency initiative designed to intercept terrorists and terrorist's weapons from entering the country and setting up operations here. Your office is taking the lead in the first initiative, AWARE.

Port of Dillon Organizational Chart

6



CALENDARS

July

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 <i>TODAY</i>	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

THE IN-BASKET DOCUMENTS

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:50 AM
Sender: Martha Montgomery, Secretary
To: Jessie White, Team B Supervisor
Priority: Normal
Subject: Your Schedule for Today

Jessie,

I just talked to George. He called me from the airport and said that he was just about to board. He told me that he had reached you earlier and that you would be acting until he returns.

He asked me to make sure that his phone and voice mail messages were forwarded to you. He also asked me to weed through his in-basket and collect the items that he was unable to handle last week. He said that he had already delegated his electronic mail box to you last week, so you should already have access to it. He asked that you cover the following meetings for him today:

- 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. – Teleconference with area port budget officer to discuss funding for next FY
- 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Meeting with Mayor and Public Relations Liaison to discuss community relations issues
- 1:00 p.m. – Meeting with state and local Homeland Security officials to discuss security for the upcoming Special Olympics Fundraising event
- 3:00 p.m. – Staff Meeting

George also wanted me to remind you that we are hosting the Red Light Working Group meeting on Wednesday and Thursday, and that you will need to clear your schedule so that you can attend in his place.

Shankar Ganesh will be off site conducting the training for AWARE . He can be reached on his cell phone. Sally Greer is scheduled for Specialized Computer Security Training this morning. She's here now, but she'll be away between 8:30 and 11:30. Elise Thornton is here.

I will be in all day. Let me know if you need anything.

Martha Montgomery
Secretary

DOCUMENT 1

Voice Mail Message

George, this is Shankar Ganesh. It's about 7:30 a.m. on Monday. I'm downtown at the Dillon Suites Hotel with several officers who have come in from out of town for the AWARE training. The reservations clerk says she has no record of our reservations. She has a few rooms left at double the per diem rate. I checked with all of the hotels within a 20-mile radius. Same story. None of them seem to have any per diem-rate rooms either. There's some sort of national information technology group in town. Could you give me the go-ahead to approve actual expenses? Give me a call on my cell phone when you get in. The number is 555-9623.

DOCUMENT 2

Voice Mail Message--URGENT

George,

This is Ellen Zerkowski calling from the Public Affairs Office. It's about 7:45 a.m. on Monday August 10. I just got a call from Ted Bachman, a new reporter for the *Dillon Daily Telegraph*. He called to ask for information about two of your Team Supervisors, Jessie White and Shankar Ganesh. He wants to include this information in a story that he's writing about the efforts of the **Red Light Working Group**. He is going to send his draft to me at 10:00 a.m. for comment. I will send it to you. From what I could gather, the story he plans to publish is pretty general. I don't expect any major issues. It should be OK to print once we've gone through it. He asked for our response by 1:00 p.m. today.

However, my sensors went up when he started asking me questions about the AWARE project. He appears to know much more about AWARE than we have released to the public. When I asked how he had acquired so much information, he told me that, of course, he could not reveal his sources.

Give me a call when you get in.

DOCUMENT 3

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:39 AM
Sender: Gerald Hart, MPO
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Normal

Subject: Surplus Communications Equipment

I just got a call from Army Captain Jack Pitts. The Army has some surplus communications equipment and other specialized equipment. Captain Pitts says that it is in relatively good shape. Maybe it might help given our current financial woes and need for equipment.

Captain Pitts said that he is going to dispose of the equipment either by declaring it surplus or by finding another agency that is willing to take the equipment. He said that he plans to call the DEA and the FBI. He knows that a few of the local police departments are also interested in the equipment. He is going to call everyone this afternoon if he does not hear from us.

If you want the equipment, we will need to cover the cost of shipping it. The equipment is at the Fort Evans Army Depot, about 100 miles west of here. Let me know what you want to do. If you want to talk to Captain Pitts yourself, his number is (999) 555-0920.

Gerald Hart
Management Program Officer
Port of Dillon

DOCUMENT 4

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:14 AM
Sender: Elise Thornton, Team D Supervisor
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Normal

Subject: Officer Garcia's Two-Week Notice

Officer Juan Garcia gave me his two-week notice today. He has applied and been accepted for a job in the Port of Grover. His last day of work will be Friday, August 21. Officer Garcia has worked in several ports over his seven years of service and has worked in Dillon for the past 18 months. We are losing an invaluable resource. He is the fifth officer to leave within the past six months.

I spoke with Officer Garcia. He is leaving because of problems here in Dillon. He was frank and told me what he thinks the problems are, and I have heard similar complaints from other officers. He also said several other officers are seeking other jobs because there is no sign that things will improve. Officer Garcia gave three major reasons:

- Inferior Equipment – We seem to be the last to get the equipment we need to support our mission. Our computers are several generations behind. Other electronic equipment is aging and unreliable.
- Poor Working Conditions – Our space was meant to house twenty people, not forty-one. Things will only get worse if we are able to fill our vacancies.
- Lack of Management Support – Upper management in this agency does not seem to care about the needs of its officers. In addition, all officers are overloaded because our five vacant officer positions have still not been filled.

We should look at these issues carefully before we lose any more officers.

Elise

DOCUMENT 5

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:10 AM
Sender: Charlie Hall, Dillon Chief of Police
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Urgent
Subject: Coordination of Joint Operation

George,

Within the past few weeks, we have begun to experience some coordination problems with your staff. While we were completing the final planning stages for this week's AWARE training, there were considerable disagreements over work methods and objectives. There also seems to be some confusion about resource levels.

The training is only the first in a series of activities planned in conjunction with the Red Light Working Group. This initiative is important and I want to give it every opportunity to succeed. However, I believe that we need to resolve some important issues, in private, before the Red Light Working Group meeting on Wednesday.

We do not need to involve the other members of the group, nor should we waste their time. Unfortunately, the only time I will be available before the meeting is between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. today. After that, it will be difficult to reach me.

It is important that I speak with you.

Charlie Hall
Chief
Dillon Police Department
(999) 555-1897

DOCUMENT 6

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:08 AM
Sender: Gerald Hart, MPO
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Normal
Subject: Visit from Richard Carter, Area Port Director

George,

Area Port Director, Richard Carter, wants to meet with us tomorrow, Tuesday, August 11. He is coming to Dillon to attend the Red Light Working Group meeting on Wednesday and Thursday. However, he's arriving a day early because he wants to speak with us about some concerns that he has about the Red Light Working Group prior to the meeting.

I mentioned our equipment and facilities problems here at the port to him. He said that there might be some money available for repairs and renovations. However, he would like to see conditions for himself before committing funds to upgrade our working environment.

I will bring him by as soon as he arrives, which will probably be about 11:00 a.m. We can discuss his concerns about the Red Light Working Group, grab some lunch, tour the office, and be through here in time for his next meeting at 2:00 p.m. His schedule is booked for the remainder of the afternoon.

Let me know as soon as possible if this does not work for you.

Gerald Hart
Management Program Officer
Port of Dillon

DOCUMENT 7

Voice Mail Message

Hi George. This is Terry Hanlon over at the Port of Windermere. It's late Friday evening and I just wanted to touch base with you before I left the office. We are about to begin a training program that has many similarities to the AWARE training initiative. Our situation here in Windermere, as we begin to build our anti-terrorism taskforce, is in need of additional expertise.

I had the pleasure of working with Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh on several occasions before I left the port there at Dillon three years ago to become the Port Director here in Windermere. Ganesh is well respected for his experience and skills. I would like to use him to train the folks who will be administering our training here at Windermere. We know that we would benefit greatly from his insight and experience. I would like to arrange to detail Ganesh to Windermere for the two-week period beginning August 24 and ending September 5. We will pay all related expenses.

I know this is short notice; however, we would appreciate your decision no later than COB on Monday, August 10. Thank you in advance for your consideration. Talk to you soon.

DOCUMENT 8

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:00 AM
Sender: Sally Greer, Team A Supervisor
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Normal
Subject: New Job

George,

I am at the same time very excited and sad to be leaving Dillon for my new position as a Program Officer at Headquarters. As you know, I am expected to report for duty there on September 8. As we discussed, I will be taking one week of annual leave beginning on September 1.

I will miss everyone here at Dillon, but will especially miss the working relationship that we have developed over the past year. We have accomplished a lot together. Your support and guidance has enabled me to grow into my new duties. I wish you the best in your career and hope that our paths will cross in the not too distant future.

Sally

DOCUMENT 9

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/7 8:15 AM
Sender: Fran Brown, Inspections Aide, Team D
To: George Hudson, Port Director
CC: Elise Thornton, Team D Supervisor
Priority: Normal

Subject: Lack of Cooperation

Director Hudson,

I would like to bring your attention to a matter that is undermining the effectiveness of this office. As the Inspections Aide on Team D, my responsibilities require a great deal of interaction with the officers. In recent weeks, several officers have refused to cooperate with me. Further, they have been rude and disrespectful when I have asked them for their assistance. I am concerned because I cannot accomplish my job without the full cooperation of the officers.

I have gone to Team D Supervisor Elise Thornton and tried to resolve the situation directly with her, but have been unable to do so. At present, I am preparing an additional memorandum to document all pertinent details.

Please let me know when we can meet to discuss this issue.

DOCUMENT 10

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/10 7:15 AM
Sender: Gerald Hart, MPO
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Normal
Subject: No Air Conditioning Today

George,

A supervisor from building maintenance was here when I got in this morning to begin work on the ventilation system. He said that the window units are blocked by systems furniture and he could not work on them until we reconfigure the furniture. This has been a problem since we got the systems furniture three years ago, but they've ignored it until now. He pulled all of the fuses, so at this point we no longer have air conditioning and the temperature is expected to go up to 95 degrees today. Thinking ahead, unless this is fixed, we will not have heat either.

Twelve units are affected. I need to call the systems furniture people in to get a good estimate of what this will cost. Based on past experience, I estimate that reconfiguration will run at least \$1,000 per unit. I know that we are running low on funds. I have rechecked our budget, and we do not have the money to cover this expense.

How would you like to proceed?

Gerald Hart
Management Program Officer

DOCUMENT 11

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/7 10:45 AM
Sender: Sally Greer, Team A Supervisor
To: George Hudson, Port Director
Priority: Normal

Subject: Extended Medical Leave

George,

I thought I should alert you about some extended leave that I have just approved because it will, of course, put extra demands on my small staff. One of my Agriculture Specialists, Steven Owens, has asked for extended leave for foot surgery to correct damage to the nerves on both feet. His doctor feels that this surgery is necessary for him to be able to continue to perform his job duties.

He has tentatively scheduled surgery for August 26. The expected recovery period for this surgery is 4-6 weeks, during which he must stay off his feet as much as possible. He will require at least 3 weeks of bed rest. After that, he should be mobile. He will be requesting 3 weeks of sick leave beginning August 25. His leave balance is sufficient to cover this request.

He has provided me with a note from his physician and a completed form SF 71.

Thanks,
Sally

DOCUMENT 12

Electronic Mail Message

Date: 8/03 6:39 AM
Sender: Marjorie Palmer, Training Officer
To: Jessie White, Team B Supervisor
Priority: Normal
Subject: Specialized Computer Security Training

This is to confirm your enrollment in Specialized Computer Security training. You have elected the following session:

Course Name: Specialized Computer Security Training
Date: Thursday, August 13
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: **Area Port Office, Room 107**

It is mandatory for all officers in the Dillon port to attend this Specialized Computer Security training. If you are unable to attend this session, please notify me immediately by phone or e-mail. We will be offering this training through the end of August on Mondays and on Thursdays at 9:00 a.m. All training must be completed by September 1.

Marjorie Palmer
Training Officer
Phone: 555-2590

DOCUMENT 13

Voice Mail Message

Jessie, this is Shankar Ganesh. It's about 7:35 Friday evening. I'm downtown at the Dillon Suites Hotel checking out the facilities for the training for AWARE. I was looking at the agenda for the training and wanted to remind you —while I was thinking about it—that I have you on the agenda Monday from 10:00 until we break for lunch around noon. Your input will fit appropriately into the agenda at that point. Lucky that you and Elise had that training at FLETC last month. The timing couldn't have been better for this program. Give me a call on my cell phone when you can. There are a few things I'd like to go over with you. The number is 555-9623.

The In-Basket Job Simulation

Practice Questions

Directions

The questions in this exercise measure your ability to make decisions, solve problems, plan, manage information, and use your time and resources effectively. The questions ask you to respond to the problems and issues presented by the in-basket materials in the first part of this exercise.

Each question presents several alternative actions. Your task is to review these alternatives and to select the one answer that is closest to the action that you would take acting for the Port Director at Dillon. There are 16 questions in the practice exercise.

It is to your advantage to answer every question. Your score on the actual assessment will be based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for guessing—you will not lose points for an incorrect answer. Therefore, when you complete this practice exercise, and when you take the assessment, answer every question, even if you are not sure of the correct answer.

The Multiple-Choice Practice Questions

1. Document 3 is an urgent voice mail message from Ellen Zerkowski from the Public Affairs Office. What is the **MOST** critical issue raised in this document?
 - A) Reporter Ted Bachman's preparation of a story on the Red Light Working Group.
 - B) The nature of the information reporter Ted Bachman has requested.
 - C) Ellen Zerkowski's request for comments on reporter Ted Bachman's article.
 - D) The questions that reporter Ted Bachman asked about project AWARE.
 - E) Reporter Ted Bachman's refusal to divulge his source of knowledge about project AWARE.

2. In his e-mail message (Document 4), MPO Gerald Hart informs you that U.S. Army Captain Jack Pitts has surplus equipment available. Which course of action would you be **MOST** likely to take as your first response to Captain Pitts' offer?
 - A) Contact Captain Pitts and ask him to send the equipment to you.
 - B) Meet with the other Team Supervisors and ask them whether the equipment would be useful for the port.
 - C) Arrange to get more information about the type of equipment and its condition from Captain Pitts.
 - D) Ask the members of the Red Light Working Group during the upcoming meeting whether the equipment would be useful to this joint effort.
 - E) Contact Captain Pitts and tell him that you will not need the equipment.

3. In her e-mail (Document 5), Team Supervisor Elise Thornton raises a number of issues that are affecting the morale of officers in the port. Suppose that in response to this memorandum, you decide to develop a proposal for improving morale to present to Port Director George Hudson upon his return. Which of the following activities would you perform **FIRST**?
 - A) Investigate options for improving the quality and quantity of equipment available to officers in the port.
 - B) Conduct a meeting of all personnel in the office to discuss issues that are affecting morale.
 - C) Discuss this with the Area Port Director during his visit.
 - D) Meet with the Team Supervisors to examine and prioritize issues that are affecting the morale of personnel.
 - E) Prepare your proposal based the information raised in Team Supervisor Elise Thornton's memorandum and a follow-up discussion with her about these issues.

4. In his e-mail message to Port Director George Hudson (Document 6), Dillon Chief of Police Charlie Hall expressed concern about the coordination of joint operations. Which course of action would you be **MOST** likely to take in response to this message?
- A) Send Chief Hall an e-mail message explaining that you are acting for the Port Director and are unavailable to speak with him today. Ask him if there is any other time to discuss the matter before the meeting.
 - B) Send Chief Hall an e-mail message explaining that you are acting for the Port Director and that this issue can be handled when he returns.
 - C) Send Chief Hall an e-mail message explaining that you are acting for the Port Director, but are confident that these issues can be resolved during the working group meeting.
 - D) Telephone Chief Hall at your earliest possible convenience before 11:00 a.m. today to discuss the issues or to select another meeting time.
 - E) Leave Chief Hall a voice mail message later today and reassure him that the coordination issues will work themselves out.
5. In his e-mail message (Document 7), MPO Gerald Hart states that the Area Port Director, Richard Carter, wants to visit the port on Tuesday. Which action would you be **MOST** likely to take in response to this e-mail message?
- A) Meet with Area Port Director Richard Carter and personally accompany him during the visit; reschedule any pre-existing appointments.
 - B) Meet with Area Port Director Richard Carter and personally accompany him during the visit; ask Team Supervisor Elise Thornton to handle any pre-existing appointments.
 - C) Handle any pre-existing appointments yourself; ask MPO Gerald Hart to reschedule Area Port Director Richard Carter's visit for later in the day.
 - D) Handle any pre-existing appointments yourself; ask Team Supervisor Elise Thornton to meet with Area Port Director Richard Carter and accompany him during the visit.
 - E) Explain to Area Port Director Richard Carter that you have a preexisting appointment and ask him for his recommendation on handling the visit.

Assume that arrangements are made for the Area Port Director, Richard Carter, to visit the Port of Dillon. You decide to list a number of issues to be discussed with Richard Carter.

6. Which of the following issues would be **MOST** appropriate to raise during this meeting?
7. Which of the following issues would be **LEAST** appropriate to raise during this meeting?
- A) Status of AWARE (Introduction)
 - B) Request for additional funds for AWARE (Document 2)
 - C) Availability of surplus equipment (Document 4)
 - D) Morale issues in the port (Document 5)
 - E) Coordination concerns within the Red Light Working Group (Document 6)

8. In Document 8, Port Director Terry Hanlon asks whether Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh can be detailed to the the Port of Windermere. Which of the factors listed below would carry the **MOST** weight in this decision?
- A) Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's performance at the Port of Dillon.
 - B) The impact of this detail on the workload and staffing at the port.
 - C) Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's qualifications for the detail.
 - D) The dollar cost of this detail to the port.
 - E) The impact of this detail on Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's career goals.
9. Document 10 presents an e-mail from Inspections Aide Fran Brown regarding tensions on her team. How would you handle her request for a meeting to resolve this issue?
- A) Respond to Inspections Aide Fran Brown's e-mail sometime today and inform her that Port Director George Hudson is on leave and that she will have to wait until he returns since this issue should be handled by him.
 - B) Meet with Inspections Aide Fran Brown as soon as possible after your last scheduled appointment today.
 - C) Forward the e-mail to MPO Gerald Hart and ask him to meet with Fran Brown as soon as possible.
 - D) Forward the e-mail to Team Supervisor Sally Greer and ask her to meet with Fran Brown as soon as possible.
 - E) Forward the e-mail to Team Supervisor Elise Thornton and ask her to meet with Fran Brown as soon as possible.
10. In Document 11, MPO Gerald Hart describes the problem with the ventilation and air conditioning system. You would be **LEAST** likely to handle this message by:
- A) sending an urgent e-mail message to the area port office requesting funding to resolve the problem.
 - B) asking MPO Gerald Hart to formulate a funding request to transmit through proper channels.
 - C) calling building management to ask them to replace the fuses immediately.
 - D) asking MPO Gerald Hart to get you more information about the problem and alternatives for its resolution.
 - E) asking Secretary Martha Montgomery to call an outside contractor to service the units immediately.
11. Document 13 notifies you of a previously scheduled training course. How would you handle this engagement?
- A) Attend the training as scheduled.
 - B) Send Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh in your place.
 - C) Send MPO Gerald Hart in your place.
 - D) Reschedule the training.
 - E) Cancel the training without rescheduling.

Each response option listed below describes an issue presented in the in-basket.

12. Which of these issues would be **MOST** critical for you to handle **personally** this morning?
13. Which of these issues would be **LEAST** critical for you to handle **personally** this morning?
 - A) Responding to Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's request about funding to cover lodging for officers involved in AWARE (Document 2).
 - B) Responding to the request to discuss coordination between the Port of Dillon and the Dillon Police Department on joint operations (Document 6).
 - C) Deciding what to do about the Army's surplus equipment (Documents 4).
 - D) Responding to Port Director Terry Hanlon's request to detail Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh to the Port of Windermere (Document 8).
 - E) Addressing the claims made by Fran Brown (Document 10).
14. Which of the following documents would you be **LEAST** likely to retain after you have dealt with the immediate situation or problem it raises?
 - A) Document 5: Team Supervisor Elise Thornton's e-mail
 - B) Document 6: Police Chief Charlie Hall's e-mail message
 - C) Document 8: Port Director Terry Hanlon's voice mail
 - D) Document 10: Inspections Aide Fran Brown's e-mail complaint
 - E) Document 13: Training Officer Marjorie Palmer's e-mail message
15. Which of the following activities would be **LEAST** appropriate to delegate to Secretary Martha Montgomery?
 - A) Contacting Port Director Terry Hanlon about Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's detail (Document 8).
 - B) Initiating paperwork for filling Team Supervisor Sally Greer's position (Document 9).
 - C) Asking MPO Gerald Hart to get more information about the Army's surplus equipment (Document 4).
 - D) Meeting with Fran Brown to discuss her complaint (Document 10).
 - E) Responding to Marjorie Palmer's e-mail message (Document 13).
16. Suppose that you ask Team Supervisor Elise Thornton to help you handle some of the critical issues currently facing the port. You have decided to take five minutes to update her before your meetings begin today. Which of the following issues would be **LEAST** critical to discuss?
 - A) Public Affairs Officer Ellen Zerkowski's voice mail message (Document 3).
 - B) The visit of Area Port Director Richard Carter (Document 7).
 - C) Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's possible detail to the Port of Windermere (Document 8).
 - D) Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's request for approval to use actual expenses at the hotel (Document 2).
 - E) The problem with the ventilation and air conditioning system (Document 11).

Analysis Of The Multiple-Choice Practice Questions

1. Correct Answer: D

Option **D** is the best answer. The most critical piece of information is that reporter Ted Bachman's knowledge of the AWARE project is more extensive than what has been released to the public, suggesting that there has been leak. Ted Bachman's story about the Red Light Working Group (**A**) is less important; he is giving CBP the opportunity to review the story before it is printed. His request for information (**B**) is not problematic because he has not requested sensitive information. His request for comments from the CBP (**C**) is also reasonable; you or one of the more senior people on the staff should be able to complete the review and comments within the proposed time frame. Ted Bachman's refusal to divulge his source (**E**) is also less critical than the implication that that he knows a great deal about AWARE.

2. Correct Answer: C

Option **C** is the best answer. The first thing you should do is get more information about the equipment that U.S. Army Captain Pitts is offering. Getting information about this equipment is essential to making a decision about its value to the office. It will cost money to ship the equipment to the office, and if obtained, the equipment would have to be stored and maintained.

It would be unproductive to call a meeting with the other Team Supervisors (**B**) until you have more information about the equipment. Without this information, they would be unable to evaluate its worth.

Once you have information about the equipment and its potential use to the office or the working group, you can make an informed decision. (See options **A** and **E**.) However, either option is inappropriate as a first step. You don't want useless equipment taking up the port's limited storage space. However, it is also premature to reject potentially useful equipment.

By delaying your response to Captain Pitts until the working group convenes (**D**), you would most probably lose your opportunity to acquire the equipment. By then, Captain Pitts will have offered the equipment to other agencies.

3. Correct Answer: D

Option **D** is the best answer. It would be best to meet with the other Team Supervisors as your first step. You have input from Team Supervisor Elise Thornton on issues affecting the morale of the officers, so further discussion with her (**E**) would not add to your knowledge and the other supervisors should have the opportunity to add their perspectives. Although it is important to get input from the personnel assigned to the Port of Dillon (**B**), it is advisable to talk to the Team Supervisors first. As part of your information gathering, you would also want to investigate concerns about equipment at the port (**A**) but this is not as important as the information you could gather from the other team supervisors. It would not be appropriate to discuss this with Area Port Director Richard Carter before bringing it up with your Port Director (**C**).

4. Correct Answer: full credit, D; partial credit, A

Option **D** is the response that best meets the needs of the situation. Asking Chief Hall to provide an alternate time for a conversation (**A**) is also reasonable. Chief Hall has placed a demand on Port Director George Hudson's time (yours, really since you are acting for him) without considering his time constraints. However, option **A** presents a riskier strategy, since you have no assurance that there is another time that will fit both your schedules.

Loss of Chief Charlie Hall's support could jeopardize an ongoing operation. Therefore, you do not want to ignore him (**E**), nor do you want to wait until after the working group to have his issues addressed (**B**). You also do not want these issues addressed publicly during the meeting (**C**).

5. Correct Answer: full credit, B; partial credit, D

Option **B** is the best answer. You will be attending the Red Light Working Group meeting, and you are in the best position to discuss broader issues with the Area Port Director, Richard Carter. Accompanying him while he visits the Port of Dillon will give you further opportunities to discuss his concerns. Team Supervisor Elise Thornton also has had the FLETC training that Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh refers to in Document 14 and can step in for you at the AWARE training.

Option **D** is also viable, but is not as good as option **B**. Although Team Supervisor Elise Thornton is familiar with many of the issues affecting the Port of Dillon, she has not been as involved with the working group and would have to come up to speed by Tuesday.

Option **A** is not a workable solution. Rescheduling your appearance at the AWARE training would not be appropriate as Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh makes a point of saying that your presentation is placed appropriately in the program.

Option **C** is not a satisfactory solution. Area Port Director Richard Carter, has other meetings scheduled after 2:00 p.m. Option **E** is not a good choice; this problem should be solved without consulting Richard Carter.

6. Correct Answer: A

Of the options listed, it would be **most** appropriate for you to discuss the status of AWARE (**A**). It is part of the Red Light effort and Area Port Director, Richard Carter, is concerned with how it is going.

It would not be inappropriate to discuss the Army's surplus equipment (**C**) with the Area Port Director. However, the value of such discussion will depend on information you receive about the actual nature of the equipment.

Less appropriate is Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's request to approve additional funds for AWARE (**B**). This issue needs to be addressed immediately and you have the authority and means to resolve this issue by the time Area Port Director Richard Carter arrives the next day.

Similarly, the value of discussing Police Chief Hall's concerns (**E**) is questionable. It would be best to use discretion and resolve any issues with Chief Hall before alerting officials up the chain of command.

7. **Correct Answer: D**

It would be **least** appropriate to discuss internal morale issues (**D**). Such matters are best resolved internally.

8. **Correct Answer: B**

Given the information presented in the in-basket, the most important consideration is how Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's absence affects the port's workload (**B**). The port is losing one supervisor who will be taking another job and there are several vacancies.

As long as Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's job performance (**A**) is at least satisfactory (and there is no evidence to the contrary), job performance would not be your most important consideration. Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's qualifications for the detail (**C**) may be the Port of Windermere's primary concern; you should be most concerned about the impact on the port. Because the Port of Windermere has offered to cover expenses, the cost of the detail (**D**) is less important than its impact on the port's workload. Although important, Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's career goals (**E**) should not carry the most weight in the decision.

9. **Correct Answer: A**

It would be best for Port Director George Hudson to handle the meeting with Fran Brown and Team Supervisor Elise Thornton personally when he returns.

Because you are also a Team Supervisor yourself, it would be inappropriate for you get involved (**B**).

It would also be inappropriate to delegate this meeting to MPO Gerald Hart (**C**). He would not be the person responsible for resolving conflicts of this nature.

It would be inappropriate for you to delegate this meeting to Team Supervisor Sally Greer (**D**). Even though she is available today, she is not in Inspection Aide Fran Brown's direct chain of command.

Fran Brown has been unsuccessful in attempts to deal directly with Team Supervisor Elise Thornton. An additional meeting with Team Supervisor Elise Thornton (**E**) would serve no useful purpose.

10. **Correct Answer: E**

Option **E**, asking Secretary Martha Montgomery to call an outside contractor is **least** advisable. The units only need the fuses replaced and building maintenance removed the fuses. The issue should be handled with building maintenance.

Options A, B, C, and D are all steps that might be followed in solving the short- and long-range problems. Calling building management (**C**) is an appropriate first response to this message. The expected maximum temperature today would make working in the office untenable. Alerting the area port office with an urgent e-mail message would be another step you might take today (**A**). In the longer range, you would ask MPO Gerald Hart get more information about the problem and alternatives for its resolution (**D**) and to prepare a funding request (**B**).

11. Correct Answer: D

Your best option is to reschedule (**D**) the training course. This is a mandatory training course, but you now have a conflict that prevents you from attending at the scheduled time (**A**). Because the training is mandatory, you cannot send another person in your place (**B** or **C**), nor should you cancel without rescheduling (**E**).

12. Correct Answer: B

It would be most critical to try to touch base with Chief of Police Charlie Hall personally (**B**) since he will be difficult to reach after 11:00 a.m. this morning. He is raising serious concerns and you have time to call him this morning before or between your meetings.

Although important, authorizing expenses for the funding issue (**A**) is less critical. You can delegate this since it can be handled with a quick phone call.

Although a response is needed by this afternoon, someone else could handle the issue of the Army's surplus equipment (**C**).

Responding to Windemere Port Director Terry Hanlon can wait until you have more time to consider the consequences to the staffing situation in Dillon (**D**).

It would be reasonable to initiate action of some kind in response to Inspections Aide Fran Brown's claims (**E**) this morning, but it is not critical.

13. Correct Answer: D

It is **least** critical to provide a response to Port Director Terry Hanlon this morning. Of all the issues compared to the other issues (**A**, **B**, **C**, and **E**) Port Director Terry Hanlon's request has the least direct effect on your operations. Although Port Director Terry Hanlon has requested a response today (**D**) she does not need it this morning; nor does she need to hear from you personally. This may even be a matter that Port Director George Hudson should decide when he returns. A phone call from Secretary Martha Montgomery, the secretary, explaining that The Port Director is on emergency leave might be all that is needed today.

14. Correct Answer: E

Once you have rescheduled the training, there is no reason to retain Training Officer Marjorie Palmer's e-mail message (**E**). You should keep a record of your contact with Chief of Police Charlie Hall (**B**). The other documents (**A**, **C**, and **D**) are useful as documentation of the issues they present.

15. Correct Answer: D

It would be least appropriate for Secretary Martha Montgomery to meet with Inspections Aide Fran Brown. However with sufficient guidance, Secretary Martha Montgomery could contact Port Director Terry Hanlon about Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's detail (A), prepare paperwork for filling the upcoming vacancy (B), ask MPO Gerald Hart to ask get more information about the Army's surplus equipment (C), or reschedule your training (E).

16. Correct Answer: C

In your discussion with supervisor Team Supervisor Elise Thornton, it is least critical for you to discuss Port Director Terry Hanlon's request to detail Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh to the Port of Windermere (C).

It would be reasonable to alert her to the conversation between Public Affairs Officer Ellen Zerkowski and the reporter, Ted Bachman (A). Because of the sensitivity of a potential information leak, this conversation is best had in person. If there is time, you should alert Team Supervisor Elise Thornton that Area Port Director, Richard Carter, will be visiting the office tomorrow (B). Team Supervisor Shankar Ganesh's request for approval to use actual expenses at the hotel needs to be settled today (D), Team Supervisor Elise Thornton will need to know about this if she will be filling in for you. It would be important to discuss the lack of air-conditioning (E) because it could potentially shut down the port office. You would want Team Supervisor Elise Thornton to follow up on this in your absence.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Harvard Business Review on Decision Making. Drucker, P.F., Raiffa, H., Hayashi, A.M., Keeney, R.L. & Hammond, J.S. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001. ISBN# 1578515572.

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The Thinker's Toolkit: 14 Powerful Techniques for Problem Solving. Revised Edition. Jones, M.D. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998. ISBN# 0812928083.

The Time Trap: The Classic Book on Time Management. MacKenzie, R. A., & Dickerson, P. New York: AMACOM, 2009. ISBN# 0814413382.

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Time Management: The Essential Guide to Thinking and Working Smarter. Jones, K. New York: AMACOM, 1999. ISBN# 0814470181.