



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Study Guide **Public Works Supervision Written Examination**

- The Public Works Supervision exam is required for the following classifications: Maintenance Worker Supervisor I, Maintenance Worker Supervisor II, Assistant Public Works Superintendent, Public Works Superintendent, Tradeswork Supervisor, Mechanical Operations Supervisor, and Mechanical Operations Manager.
- This booklet contains **SAMPLE QUESTIONS ONLY**. Studying this booklet will not necessarily improve your exam score.

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PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS EXAM PREPARATION GUIDE

This guide was developed to help you prepare to take the written exam for the Public Works Supervision Series. It contains general exam-taking advice and also provides specific information related to the exam content. This information includes the subject areas covered by the exam, the kinds of questions to expect, strategies for approaching the questions, and sample questions. Though this information cannot guarantee a higher exam score, it can give you direction for your exam preparation that will assist you in doing your best.

PREPARING TO TAKE THE EXAM

Before the Day of the Exam

- Review this guide to get familiar with the content of the exam. Knowing about the topics and kinds of questions that will be in the exam will ensure that you will not be surprised by the content of the exam or the manner in which it is presented. This can improve your ability to demonstrate your job potential.
- Make sure that you know where the exam will be administered and all of the relevant details, such as where to park, where to report for the exam, and what identification is required.

On the Day of the Exam

- Make sure that you are well rested and have eaten. These things will help your concentration during the exam.
- Plan your day to allow plenty of time to get yourself prepared and get to the exam site. Allow enough time to cope with weather, traffic, parking, etc. Hurrying creates anxiety, so do not put yourself in the position of having to hurry.
- Listen carefully to all instructions from the exam administrator. Make sure that you understand the instructions and carry them out correctly. Ask questions at the proper time before the exam begins if you are unsure of any aspect of what you should do during the exam.

GENERAL EXAM TAKING TIPS

- Use your time carefully. The time limit should provide you with more than enough time if you move through the exam steadily and do not spend too much time on any one question.
- Read the questions and answer choices carefully. Read all of the answer choices before you select an answer.
- If you come to a question that is especially difficult, skip that question and come back to it later if you have time.
- Answer every question. Scores are based on the number of correct answers. You will receive no credit if you leave an answer space blank. It is to your advantage to use your best judgment to make a choice among the answer choices provided.

THE PUBLIC WORKS SUPERVISION SERIES WRITTEN EXAM

The written exam for the Public Works Supervision Series is based upon a job study that identified the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job successfully. These areas include:

- your knowledge of supervision concepts.
- your knowledge of concepts related to oral and written communication skills.
- your knowledge of work planning and management.

All of the exam questions are presented in a multiple-choice format. Each question is identified by a question number that is followed by a question statement. After the question statement, there are between two and four answer choices. You should read all of the answer choices and then choose the best answer. **Each question has only one correct answer.**

EXAM SECTION I: SUPERVISION CONCEPTS

This exam section contains twenty (20) questions to evaluate your knowledge and understanding of effective methods and approaches to supervising employees in the workplace. The best strategy for approaching the questions in this section is to read each question and all of the response choices. Then read the question a second time to ensure that you fully understand the supervisory situation or idea described in the question. Then apply your knowledge and understanding of effective supervision to determine the correct answer choice.

Examples of these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

1. If a supervisor wants to make sure that an employee has understood detailed or complex information that has just been explained, the supervisor should:
 - A. frequently repeat important points.
 - B. speak in a slower than normal speaking voice.
 - C. ask the employee to summarize the main ideas back to the supervisor.
 - D. stop at regular intervals and ask the employee if he or she understands.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #1 is response choice "C". When simply asked whether or not they understand information or instructions, employees may be reluctant to admit that they do not. By having them repeat the essence of the information, the supervisor can be sure that the employee understands. And if there are aspects that were not perceived correctly, they can be clarified immediately. Speaking more slowly or repeating information does not provide assurance to the supervisor that he or she has been understood by the employee.

2. It is important that a supervisor understands that the primary purpose of disciplining an employee is to:
 - A. make it clear who is in charge.
 - B. change the employee's behavior on the job.
 - C. document behavior that may lead to dismissal.
 - D. discourage other employees from the same unacceptable behavior.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #2 is response choice "B". One of the most important responsibilities of every supervisor is to identify and maintain acceptable levels of performance and behavior on the job. Disciplinary action should always be focused on motivating the employee to alter behavior that is ineffective, disruptive, or otherwise unacceptable. And it is important that this purpose be shared with the employee. Lack of understanding of the purpose of disciplinary action may result in the employee assuming one of the negative motivations offered in the sample question. An employee who believes that the supervisor is "flexing his muscles", planning the employee's termination, or making an example of the employee is unlikely to change in the desired direction.

3. In which of the following situations is it most appropriate and effective for a supervisor to include his or her subordinates in decision making?
- A. When the impact of the decision will be minor.
 - B. When such inclusion is likely to improve morale.
 - C. When the supervisor doesn't have time to make the decision.
 - D. When the decision directly involves how the work is to be performed by the employees.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #3 is response choice "D". Employees are closest to the work, so they are typically the best source of ideas on how to get the job done efficiently and effectively. And when employees are included in a decision regarding how the work will be carried out, they are more likely to embrace it as their own and to have a greater commitment to it.

EXAM SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This exam section contains 20 questions that evaluate your knowledge and ability in communicating oral and written information. Some questions will ask about effective oral communication approaches and techniques. Other questions will be based on review and editing of written correspondence and will evaluate your understanding of proper grammar, word usage, and punctuation.

Examples of these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

4. In effective face-to-face communication, the primary responsibility that the sender of the message has is to:
- A. ensure that the message was understood.
 - B. receive feedback from the receiver of the message.
 - C. include sufficient nonverbal components in the message.
 - D. obtain the undivided attention of the receiver prior to sending the message.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #4 is response choice "A". The other response options are not necessarily relevant to the success of the communication. And in the case of receiving feedback and having the receiver's undivided attention, they are not typically possible for the sender to ensure.

Sample Questions 5 through 7

Some questions will require you to identify the best choice for completing a sentence. For these questions, you will be provided with a written passage that is identified as a piece of correspondence that you must edit. The reading passage will have numbered blanks for which you must select the best alternative for completing the sentence. The alternatives will provide one correct option while the remaining response options are incorrect in some way. Incorrect options will involve errors in punctuation, grammar, or word usage.

Below is a sample piece of text and the corresponding questions.

As you 5 Main Street renovation project should be nearing completion. I was 6 this morning and work on only one of the crossings 7 completed. The contractor told me that the delays last week will impact the completion date.

5. Which of the following is most appropriate to place in the space numbered "5"?
- A. know the
 - B. know, the
 - C. know; the
 - D. know. The

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #5 is response choice "B" (know, the). This is the only correctly punctuated option. All of the other choices result in punctuation errors or produce an incomplete sentence.

6. Which of the following is most appropriate to place in the space numbered "6"?
- A. their
 - B. there
 - C. they're

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #6 is response choice "B" (there). As used in the text passage, the missing word is conveying a location and means "at that place". While pronounced the same, the other two response choices have very different meanings and their use in the passage would be grammatically incorrect and would make no sense in this passage.

7. Which of the following is most appropriate to place in the space numbered "7"?
- A. are
 - B. were
 - C. has been
 - D. have been

Answer: The correct answer for sample question #7 is response option "C" (has been). This choice is the only verb form that is grammatically correct, given both the intent to reflect something that has already occurred and the singular, rather than plural, subject (one). Viewing the sentence without the phrase "of the crossings" makes this singular subject clearer. The sentence then reads "only one has been completed".

EXAM SECTION 3: PLANNING AND MANAGING WORK

This exam section contains 20 questions that allow you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of how to plan and manage work including envisioning outcomes, foreseeing and resolving problems, and prioritizing and coordinating work activities. Some questions will ask about effective planning and work management methods and approaches. Other questions will be based on your responses to work planning situations and scenarios.

Examples of these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

8. The first step in a good work plan is creating a:
- A. list of the reasons that the plan is to be implemented.
 - B. clear statement of the specific goals to be accomplished.
 - C. description of the ways that progress and results will be measured.
 - D. list of potential obstacles or difficulties and ways they will be handled.

Answer: The correct answer for sample question #8 is response option "B". Clearly stating goals and determining their priority and sequence is the first step in any effective work plan. It creates the focus and foundation for all other work plan components and activities.

Use the information below to answer the questions that follow.

Assume that you are a foreman who supervises four (4) employees. At the start of the day, you have received the following job orders intended to be completed today. In consideration of the lunch period and breaks, you should assume that a typical workday allows for six (6) hours of working time.

Scheduled for Today

Job Number	Order	Employee-hours Required	Priority
1		2	Moderate
2		6	Moderate
3		5	High
4		4	Low
5		6	High
6		3	Low

9. If all four of your employees put in 6 hours of working time today, will it be possible to complete all of the job orders scheduled for today?
- A. No.
 - B. Yes.

Answer: The correct answer for sample question #9 is response option "A" (No). With your four employees working 6 hours each, there are a total of 24 employee-hours available today. However, the sum of the employee-hours required for all six of the jobs in the table is 26. Therefore, all of the jobs cannot be completed today.

10. You find out that work on Job #2 will require the stoppage of work operations by other crews. Your supervisor has assured the supervisor of those crews that the stoppage will not be longer than 2 hours. What is the minimum number of employees that must be assigned to Job #2 to accomplish this?
- A. 1.
 - B. 2.
 - C. 3.
 - D. 4.

Answer: The correct answer for sample question #10 is response option "C", 3 employees. The table shows that Job #2 will require 6 employee-hours to complete. In order determine the minimum number of employees that will be needed to complete the job in 2 hours, the number of employee-hours required should be divided by the desired time frame, 2 hours. The answer is the result of that arithmetic: 6 divided by 2 equals 3.

As further illustration, this approach can be applied to other values. For example, if the 6 employee-hours job needed to be completed in one and one-half (1.2) hours, the number of employee-hours required would be divided by the new desired time frame, 1.2 hours. The answer is 4 employees, the result of 6 divided by 1.2.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you feel that you would benefit from more practice, your local library or relevant internet web sites may have reference materials that can be helpful. This is true for all of the subject areas covered by the Public Works Supervision Series written exam.