

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS OVERSIGHT AND EFFECTIVENESS
DALLAS OVERSIGHT DIVISION
JOB GRADING APPEAL DECISION

Under section 5346(c) of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [the appellant]

Position: Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor, WS-5306-9
Position Number: DO6146

Organization: Facilities Department
Federal Correctional Institution
Bureau of Prisons
U.S. Department of Justice
[location]

Decision: Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor, WS-5306-9
(Appeal Denied)

OPM Decision Number: C-5306-09-01

Approved by:

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon
Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

10/25/96
Date

Copy of decision sent to:

[CCs]

INTRODUCTION

The appealed position is located in the Facilities [Department of Justice]. The position is presently classified as Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor, WS-5306-9. The appellant believes the position should be classified as WS-5306-11. The appellant filed an appeal with the Department of Justice who sustained the current classification.

This appeal was filed with our office under the provisions of chapter 53, title 5 of the United States Code. This is the final administrative decision of the Government, subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, section 532.705.

BACKGROUND AND JOB INFORMATION

The appellant believes that his official position description (position number D06146) is accurate except that it fails to mention the requirement for Freon certification and his recently acquired authority to purchase parts and materials up to \$2,500 using a Government credit card. We considered this information in our evaluation but found the current position description to be adequate for the purpose of classifying the job.

In 1985, the appellant filed an appeal with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). At that time, the appellant's position was evaluated by his agency as Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Foreman, WS-5306-8. OPM upgraded the position to WS-9 based in part on a determination that the level of work supervised equated to WG-9. In their most recent evaluations which applied a revised Federal Wage System (FWS) job grading standard, the Bureau of Prisons and the Department of Justice determined that the level of work supervised by the appellant equates to WG-8 which influences the final grade determination of the appealed position. The appellant believes this determination is incorrect and cites the 1985 OPM decision as a basis for his appeal.

The job information used in the 1985 OPM decision is not current and cannot be considered in evaluating the appellant's current position. Instead, we evaluated the level of work supervised, as well as other relevant factors, according to the duties and responsibilities currently assigned to the position.

[The activity] is a low level security institution that houses approximately 1,200 inmates convicted of violations of criminal laws. In his position as Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor, the appellant is responsible for installing, maintaining, and repairing heating, ventilation and cooling systems for facilities within the institutional fence. He supervises a regular crew of about 14 inmates who have varying degrees of knowledge and skills to perform this type of work. The appellant's position is located in a correctional institution which requires the appellant to be responsible for maintaining security in and control of the work area at all times.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The appealed position is presently classified in the WG-5306 series and titled Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor. The WG-5306 Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic occupation covers nonsupervisory work that is performed to repair and modify a variety of equipment and systems that achieve regulated climatic conditions. This work requires a knowledge of principles of air conditioning, the ability to recognize and determine the best method for correcting malfunctions, and the skill to make repairs to a variety of air conditioning and cooling unit systems.

The appellant accomplishes the work of the unit primarily through supervision of an inmate crew. As such, the appealed position must be evaluated according to the FWS Job Grading Standard (JGS) for Supervisors. The occupational code of an FWS supervisory job is normally the same as the code for the kind of work that is supervised, and jobs are identified by the job title of the selected occupation followed by the title of *Supervisor*.

The appealed position is properly classified as Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor in the 5306 series. The pay system determination (WG or WS) depends on the grade level determination that follows. The appellant does not dispute the title or series.

GRADE LEVEL DETERMINATION

The grade level determination for the appealed position is made by reference to the JGS for Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, WG-5306, dated June 1971, and the FWS JGS for Supervisors dated December 1992. We evaluated both the operational work performed by the appellant and his supervisory duties and responsibilities. Following is our evaluation of both aspects of the appealed position.

Grade Level of Nonsupervisory Work

The grade level of the nonsupervisory work is evaluated by reference to the JGS for Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, WG-5306. Grade levels are based on four factors: *Skill and Knowledge, Responsibility, Physical Effort, and Working Conditions*. The nonsupervisory work has been evaluated by the Department of Justice at WG-10, the journeyman grade for the occupation.

Generally, work at the WG-10 level involves installing, recognizing the cause of faulty equipment, and making repairs on large systems that provide a variety of air conditioning functions such as heating, cooling, humidifying, dehumidifying, cleaning, filtering, and circulating. The systems installed and repaired by WG-10 mechanics are used for different kinds of structures such as warehouses, hospitals, and large office buildings.

These structures may include areas with special air conditioning requirements such as communication centers, operating rooms, and areas with sensitive equipment.

Skill and Knowledge

The WG-10 mechanic applies a knowledge of the refrigeration cycle of a variety of commercial and industrial systems to locate and check elements such as those that control low side and high side pressure, the temperature of the cooling units, the temperatures of liquid and suction lines, and the running time of the various mechanisms. The mechanic knows the principles and theories of air conditioning and refrigeration such as the refrigeration cycle, heat transfer laws, the use of refrigerant tables; how to calculate airflow; and the pressure-temperature characteristics for the different systems in order to locate and repair faulty equipment swiftly.

Malfunctions of larger, more varied and complex systems are difficult to locate because the controls are difficult to balance. For example, these systems may include those with a variety of compressors such as gear, reciprocating, centrifugal, or rotary pump, and a variety of refrigerant controls. A variety of complicated motor controls are also used, such as hermetically sealed motors and pressure controls, thermostatic motor controls, full and semi-automatic defrosting controls, relays, and other controls, to protect against overload or overheating. Various types of power sources are used with different combinations of pulleys, belts, horse power capacity, and tensioners.

The WG-10 mechanic uses more skills than a WG-8 mechanic to make more complete repairs. For example, the mechanic may dismantle, repair, and reassemble units such as pumps, impellers, compressors, chillers, receivers, and evaporators. When making repairs of this nature, the mechanic performs more complex repairs such as installing and fitting connecting rods, crank shafts, piston rings, bearings, and bushings; overhauling valves by adjusting or replacing gaskets, springs, floats, diaphragms, valve fittings, seals, and couplings; and aligning motors and flywheel drives.

The knowledge and skill described at the WG-10 level is consistent with the nonsupervisory work of the appealed position. The knowledge and skill of the appealed position exceeds the WG-8 level where mechanics use a basic knowledge of principles and theories to service units and systems located in single or adjoining areas or otherwise designed so that a few testing techniques will locate worn and broken parts. These systems are used to condition areas and to cool equipment such as water dispensers, commissary coolers and freezers, kitchen equipment, truck vans, railroad cars, and small structures that use unit comfort coolers, window units, and other similar equipment.

The knowledge and skill required for the appealed position do not meet the WG-11 level where repair and overhaul work requires knowledge of the construction characteristics of

various types and models of systems that are designed to reach and maintain critical and extreme conditions under a variety of circumstances. These systems are typically found in laboratories and other experimental or test sites with special-purpose air conditioning requirements.

Responsibility

As described in the standard, mechanics at the WG-10 level receive work assignments from their supervisor orally or through work orders accompanied by building plans, shop sketches, or blueprints. Work is planned and completed with little or no check during the progress of the assignment. Completed work is checked to ensure that it meets accepted practices.

The level of responsibility of the appealed position directly matches the level of responsibility described at the WG-10 level in the standard. The level of responsibility exceeds the WG-8 level in that the systems that the appellant is responsible for are more complex and require more difficult determinations concerning the location of faulty equipment and the kind and type of supplies and repairs needed to repair and balance the systems. The level of responsibility does not meet the WG-11 level where mechanics receive limited instructions for work that must be done to modify equipment to meet more specific and critical climatic conditions.

Physical Effort

The WG-10 mechanic frequently carries and sets up parts and equipment that weigh up to 50 pounds. Repairs and installations are made from ladders, scaffolding, and platforms where the parts of systems worked on are in hard-to-reach places. This is consistent with the physical effort required of the appealed position. The physical effort required of the appellant exceeds the WG-8 level where most of the equipment can be reached from the floor or from ladders. The physical effort required at the WG-11 level is the same as that described at the WG-10 level.

Working Conditions

The working conditions of the appealed position are consistent with those described at the WG-10 level where the mechanic is subject to the same shop conditions as the WG-8 mechanic, but the mechanic is occasionally required to work outside, on top of tall buildings, in drafty attic spaces, and in cramped areas with low overheads. Exposure to toxic refrigerants is also greater at the WG-10 level due to the larger and complex systems. Working conditions at the WG-11 level are generally similar to those described at the WG-10 level.

Conclusion for Nonsupervisory Work

The grade level of nonsupervisory work required of the appealed position is properly evaluated at the WG-10 level.

Grade Level of Supervisory Work

A large majority of the appellant's work time is devoted to supervising inmate workers. The supervisory aspects of the appellant's job are evaluated by reference to the FWS JGS for Supervisors. This standard uses three factors: *Nature of Supervisory Responsibility*, *Level of Work Supervised*, and *Scope of Work Operations Supervised*. Following is our evaluation of the appealed position based on these three factors.

Factor I - Nature of Supervisory Responsibility

This factor considers the nature of the supervisory duties performed, and the type and degree of responsibility for control over the work supervised. The factor describes four basic supervisory situations which depict successively higher levels of supervisory responsibility and authority for scheduling work operations, planning use of resources, directing subordinates in performing work assignments, and carrying out administrative duties. In determining the appropriate supervisory situation to credit, the characteristics of the selected level must be fully met.

The Department of Justice determined that the nature of supervisory responsibility of the appealed position is consistent with Situation #2. The appellant does not dispute this determination.

Our evaluation of the appealed position confirms that Situation #2 adequately describes the nature of supervisory responsibility assigned to the position. Consistent with supervisors in Situation #2, the appellant performs the following:

Planning Activities

- schedules work on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis;
- establishes deadlines priorities and deadlines based on work demands and deadlines set by the General Foreman;
- determines the numbers and types of workers needed to accomplish scheduled and unanticipated assignments;
- prepares resource estimates for completing work;

Work Direction

- motivates, trains, and supervises inmate workers, including evaluating performance on a monthly basis and taking corrective action within delegated authority to correct problems;
- investigates work related problems to determine causes;

Administrative Duties

- completes monthly progress reports on each assigned inmate worker; and
- determines training needs and recommends reassignment when appropriate.

The appealed position does not meet Situation 3 where supervisors are responsible for such things as:

- planning work on a quarterly basis or longer,
- determining resource requirements to accomplish long range work schedules,
- analyzing work plans developed by subordinate supervisors,
- assigning and explaining work requirements and operating instructions to subordinate supervisors,
- coordinating work operations with supervisors of other organizations and functions, and
- assuring that subordinate supervisors effectively carry out policies to achieve management objectives.

The nature of supervisory responsibility of the appealed position directly matches Situation #2 as described in the standard.

Factor II - Level of Work Supervised

This factor concerns the level and complexity of the work operations supervised, and their effect on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisor's job. In determining the level of nonsupervisory work to be credited under this factor, we must consider all substantive work for which the supervisor is technically accountable. This involves two steps: (1) identifying the occupation directly involved in accomplishing the work assignments, and (2) determining the grade of the highest level nonsupervisory work accomplished by subordinates.

The Department of Justice determined that the level of work supervised by the appellant is WG-8. The appellant disagrees and believes the level of work supervised is at least equivalent to WG-9. We carefully considered all information from the appellant and his supervisor concerning the level of work supervised and agree with the current evaluation that the level of work required of the inmate workers does not exceed WG-8. This

determination is based on a comparison with the criteria found in the JGS for Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, WG-5306, with the two most significant factors being *Skill and Knowledge* and *Responsibility*. Following is a summary of our evaluation of these two factors.

Skill and Knowledge

The appellant argues that two members of his inmate crew have about 20 years of relevant experience that enables them to perform at the journeyman level. The remaining 12 crew members have varying degrees of skill and knowledge. Due to the nature of the correctional environment, the level of skill and knowledge of the crew fluctuates based on the skills and knowledge of the overall inmate population. Both the appellant and his supervisor admit that the department is *exceptionally* fortunate to have two inmates with the higher degree of skill and knowledge and acknowledge that these two individuals could be released or transferred at any time, requiring the appellant to become more involved in performing the mechanic work. However, the higher level work performed by these two individuals is not representative of the overall level of work supervised. The majority of the work performed by the appellant's subordinate positions requires basic knowledge of the principles and theories of refrigeration cycle, temperature measurement, the properties of several refrigerants, and the knowledge of the construction and operation of a variety of domestic units and systems as found at the WG-8 level. Therefore, the skill and knowledge required of the subordinate positions is appropriately credited at the WG-8 level.

Level of Responsibility

Even when inmate workers possess the skill and knowledge to perform trades and labor duties at journeyman levels, the fact that they perform work under institutional security requirements and control factors limits their ability to perform the full range of duties of a journey level. The security and control features of the work performed by the inmate crew does not permit assignment of work with a level of responsibility exceeding WG-8. At the WG-8 level, the supervisor assigns work through work orders, blueprints, sketches, and other oral and written instructions. WG-8 mechanics select tools, decide on the methods and techniques to use, and complete work with little check in progress. The level of responsibility is properly evaluated at WG-8.

Conclusion for Level of Work Supervised

The level of work supervised is properly evaluated at the WG-8 level.

Factor III - Scope of Work Operations Supervised

This factor considers the scope of the job's supervisor responsibility in terms of: (1) the scope of the assigned work function and organizational authority; (2) the variety of functions the job is required to supervise; and (3) the physical dispersion, work coordination, and location of subordinate employees. This factor is further divided into subfactors and levels with points assigned to each level. The Department of Justice evaluated the scope of work operations supervised as follows:

Subfactor A - Scope of Assigned Work Function and Organizational Authority	Level A-2 (45 Points)
Subfactor B - Variety of Function	Level B-4 (60 Points)
Subfactor C - Workforce Dispersion	Level C-1 (5 Points)

By comparison to the point conversion chart on pages 20 and 21 of the standard, the overall evaluation of this factor by the Department of Justice results in Level B being assigned to the appealed position. The appellant does not disagree with this determination. We carefully reviewed all information related to this factor and find that the current evaluation of this factor and its accompanying subfactors is accurate.

Grade Determination for Supervisory Work

Using the grading tables in the FWS JGS for Supervisors, the initial grade of the appealed position is WS-8. However, the appealed position meets special criteria warranting a single grade increase to WS-9. This increase is based on the appellant's additional responsibility for job design, job engineering, work scheduling, training, counseling, motivating, and maintaining security that is inherent in supervising an inmate crew under the correctional institution environment in which the appellant must function.

CONCLUSION

The nonsupervisory duties of the appealed position are evaluated at WG-10. The supervisory duties are evaluated at WS-9. Although the appellant's nonsupervisory duties are evaluated at a higher grade, the representative rate for WS-9 exceeds that of the WG-10; thus, the appellant's position is evaluated at WS-9. Therefore, the appealed position is properly classified as Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic Supervisor, WS-5306-9.