

120 Howard Street, Room 760
San Francisco, CA 94105



**Job Grading Appeal Decision
Under Section 5346 of Title 5, U.S. Code**

Appellant:	[the appellant]
Job:	Motor Vehicle Operator WG-5703-7
Organization:	[organizational location] U.S. Department of the Army Fort Lewis, Washington
Decision:	Motor Vehicle Operator WG-5703-7
OPM Decision Number:	C-5703-07-01

Signed by Denis J. Whitebook

DENIS J. WHITEBOOK
CLASSIFICATION APPEALS OFFICER

April 11, 1997

DATE

As provided in section S7-8 of the Operating Manual, Federal Wage System, this decision is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions specified in section 532.705(f) of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (address provided in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[CCs]

Introduction

On February 24, 1997, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a job grading appeal from [the appellant]. The appellant's job is currently classified as Motor Vehicle Operator WG-5703-7. However, the appellant believes its grade should be WG-8. The appellant works in [the Department of Army]. We have accepted and decided this appeal under 5 U.S. Code 5346.

General issues

The appellant makes various statements about the agency and its evaluation of his job. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of the job. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing the job's current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S. Code 5346). Therefore, we have considered the statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

The appellant suggests that we conduct an onsite audit of his job. We conduct onsite audits only when the material of record does not provide enough reliable information to allow us to make a sound classification decision. In this case, we find that the record does furnish enough such information. In reaching our decision, we have reviewed all of the information furnished by the appellant and his agency including his official job description (number 86089).

Job information

The appellant operates several motor vehicles used to collect refuse and deliver it to a landfill and incinerator. The appellant's job description and the other material of record provide much more information about his duties and responsibilities and the manner in which they are carried out.

Occupation, title, and appropriate standard

The appellant operates motor vehicles to haul cargo on a Government installation and over public roads. Such work is covered by the occupational definition for the Motor Vehicle Operating Occupation 5703 found on page 73 of the Job Grading System for Trades and Labor Occupations, Part 3. In accordance with instructions on page 2 of the Job Grading Standard for Motor Vehicle Operator, the appellant's job is properly titled Motor Vehicle Operator. Grade level is best determined by reference to the standard for Motor Vehicle Operator. Neither the agency nor the appellant disagrees with our findings for occupation, title, and appropriate standard.

Grade determination

Four factors are considered in grading jobs. These factors are: Skill and knowledge, Responsibility, Physical effort, and Working conditions. All pertinent job facts related to the four factors are analyzed, including the possible relationships among the different elements of the job. A determination is then made as to the most appropriate grade value, overall, of the total job. Our

application of the grading criteria contained in the standard for the Motor Vehicle Operator 5703 occupation follows below.

Skill and knowledge

The nature of the appellant's work is most closely described at the WG-7 level. The WG-7 level (see the top of page 12) includes the operation of trash removal trucks and their associated power equipment to pick up and dispose of trash and refuse on a scheduled route both in a restricted installation environment and on public roads. The WG-7 level includes driving trash removal trucks to the local dump site or incinerator. The appellant's job exceeds the WG-7 level in terms of the size of the equipment driven. However, his job does not fully meet the WG-7 level in terms of driving environment. At WG-7 drivers operate vehicles over a variety of roads including interstate highways, narrow country roads and on steep winding grades. As discussed below, the appellant's driving assignment does not regularly expose him to such conditions.

The tractor-trailer and large refuse collection vehicles in excess of 32,000 pounds gross weight driven by the appellant are typical of the WG-8 level. However, the driving environment faced by the appellant is less complex than described in the standard at WG-8. As noted on pages 2-3 of the standard, this lack of complexity reduces the skill and knowledge required by the appellant's position. Three examples of the reduced complexity of the appellant's driving assignment follow below.

- At WG-8 drivers are expected to evaluate the condition and load limits of bridges, schedule weigh points, and assess traffic conditions and hazards locally and over long-distance routes in unfamiliar geographic areas. The appellant's driving is done almost exclusively on the installation. He leaves the installation for short and repetitive runs over the same stretch of Interstate 5 and adjacent country roads to move refuse from pickup points on the installation to the landfill and the incinerator. The appellant drives on familiar ground. The special challenges posed when driving large vehicles over unfamiliar and challenging terrain are expected at WG-8 but not present in the appellant's position.
- At WG-8 drivers have the knowledge to load, arrange, and secure the cargo in the trailer in order to insure that it is not overloaded or unevenly loaded. The appellant drives vehicles loaded with refuse. We recognize that he is responsible for assuring that the refuse is loaded evenly. However, at WG-8 drivers are expected to load, arrange, and secure a varied cargo when relative weights, tie-down requirements, and unloading sequence must be considered. The loading requirements encountered by the appellant are not equivalent to those described by the standard at WG-8.
- At WG-8 drivers have the skill to remain attentive and maintain a defensive attitude while making interstate drives at highway speeds for extended periods, often at night. The appellant makes short hauls around his installation and nearby points; highway driving constitutes only a small portion of the appellant's assignment. The highway driving that is done is over the same stretch of Interstate 5 adjacent to the installation. The appellant does not drive at night.

The driving environment encountered by the appellant is not equivalent to that envisioned by the standard at WG-8.

In sum, the appellant's assignment is most closely described at WG-7. His assignment exceeds the WG-7 level in terms of the size of the equipment driven, but falls short of WG-7 criteria in terms of driving environment. The standard cautions on page 3 that the size of the vehicle driven alone is insufficient for determining the grade of the total job. Also, we have found above that the appellant's assignment falls short of the WG-8 level. We find that on balance the appellant's skill and knowledge level is best evaluated at WG-7.

Responsibility

The supervisor provides the appellant with general work instructions and his refuse pickup schedule. The appellant completes his work independently. His work is reviewed in terms of meeting his schedule, and the proper care and maintenance of his vehicles. This level of responsibility meets the WG-7 level described on pages 13 and 14 of the standard.

The manner in which assignments are received is similar at the WG-7 and the WG-8 level. However, drivers at WG-8 manage oversized vehicles on extended trips where a variety of driving situations may be encountered including congested locations, difficult metropolitan traffic, high speed highways, narrow country or mountain roads, and steep winding grades. As discussed in the previous factor, the varied and difficult driving situations typical of WG-8 are not present in the appellant's assignment on a regular and recurring basis. The record contains no evidence that traffic on the appellant's installation is as congested and difficult as would be encountered in a metropolitan area (e.g., downtown Seattle), nor is there evidence that the appellant drives on narrow mountain roads or steep winding grades. Also, the appellant's daily familiarity with his routes reduces the difficulty of his assignment and thus his responsibility. Finally, WG-8 drivers manage their assignments with virtually no supervision, and are responsible for the safe transport of cargo on extended trips. The appellant is subject to daily supervision. He does not make extended trips where supervision is not possible. WG-8 criteria are not met. On balance we find that responsibility is best evaluated at WG-7.

Physical effort

The agency has evaluated this factor at WG-7. We do not agree. The standard describes physical effort at the WG-7 and WG-8 levels as essentially similar. The distinction at WG-8 is that the driver ". . . may exert moderate to heavy physical effort in climbing on tractors to hook up service lines, lower landing gears, and in climbing on the trailer to load or tie down cargo." Page 2 of the appellant's appeal letter provides a description of the steps necessary to unload a refuse container. His description includes several trips in and out of his truck, disconnection and reconnection of a number of hydraulic and electric lines that power the container and its packing unit, and covering the back of the container to assure that refuse does not come loose. This effort is repeated several times a day. We find that the level of physical effort meets WG-8 criteria.

Working conditions

The agency evaluated this factor at WG-7. We do not agree. WG-4 drivers work mostly outside and operate vehicles in all kinds of weather in a controlled traffic environment throughout a Government installation or establishment. In addition to the working conditions described at the WG-4 level, WG-5 drivers operate vehicles in all types of traffic and weather on public roads or the equivalent. At WG-5 drivers drive in heavy traffic and at highway speeds over complicated road and interchange systems. The working conditions at the WG-6, WG-7 and WG-8 levels are the same as at the WG-5 level. The appellant's working conditions fall substantially short of the WG-5 level since he does not operate vehicles over complicated road and interchange systems as discussed in our evaluation of the first and second factors. The appellant's assignment slightly exceeds WG-4 criteria in that for a small, but still regular and recurring, portion of time he operates vehicles on public roads and at highway speeds. On balance, working conditions are best evaluated at WG-4.

Summary

Skill and knowledge, and Responsibility are evaluated at WG-7. Physical effort is evaluated at WG-8. Working conditions are evaluated at WG-4. The standard instructs that the final grade be based on a consideration of the four grading factors as applied to the total job. On careful consideration of all the strengths and weaknesses identified in the above evaluation, the appellant's motor vehicle operator work is best evaluated at the WG-7 level.

Decision

The appellant's job is properly classified as Motor Vehicle Operator WG-5703-7.