

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness  
Classification Appeals and FLA. Programs**



Philadelphia Oversight Division  
600 Arch Street, Room 3400  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1596

**Classification Appeal Decision  
Under Section 5346 of Title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [appellant's name]

**Agency classification:** Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic  
WG-2610-13

**Organization:** Guidance and Control Systems Shop  
Avionics Flight  
[number] Maintenance Squadron  
[name] Air Reserve Station  
Air Force Reserve  
[location]

**OPM decision:** Electronics Integrated Systems Mechanic  
WG-2610-13

**OPM decision number:** C-2610-13-03

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert D. Hendler  
Classification Appeals Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
/s/ 8/16/99  
Date

As provided in section S7-8 of the Operating Manual, Federal Wage System (FWS), this decision constitutes a certificate that 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 appendix 4, section H).

### **Decision sent to:**

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## **Introduction**

On April 14, 1999, the Philadelphia Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a job grading appeal from [appellant's name]. [appellant's name] occupies a job (Position Number 79140) currently graded as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610-13. The appellant believes his job should be evaluated as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2610-11. In an appeal decision issued by the U.S. Department of Defense, Civilian Personnel Management Service, on July 3, 1999, the agency concluded the job was properly graded as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic Supervisor, *WS-2610-11. On February 24, 1999, the agency reversed its decision, regrading it as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610-13. The appellant* works in the Avionics Guidance and Control Systems Shop, Avionics Flight, [number] Maintenance Squadron, [name] Air Reserve Station, [location]. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General issues**

In his April 7, 1999, appeal letter to OPM, the appellant said his job was regraded by his agency as Electronics Integrated Systems Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2610 after an in depth telephone interview and an "in depth extensive on site field audit at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama," because it affected jobs occupied by his "counterparts in the C-130 Aircraft world." That decision was subsequently "reversed by the same office, without any other audit or position description change." He stated that his position description (PD) did not recognize some of his responsibilities, e.g., "I am also held directly accountable for \$1,165,647.77 in Electronic Test Equipment assigned to my shop." He disagreed with the agency's use of the Pest Controller, WG-5026 job grading standard (JGS) to evaluate his job because of its age; i.e., "that decision was rendered 11 years ago."

The record shows the appellant certified to the accuracy of his official PD, but also claims that the supervisory duties and responsibilities he performs have not been evaluated correctly. In particular, he stressed his responsibility for the planning, directing, and administering the day-to-day work of his three subordinate Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanics, WG-2892-12. He believes that he is a working supervisor because he performs the same kind of nonsupervisory work as his subordinates as "mandated in written Technical Orders that demand two qualified personnel perform these jobs in the interest of SAFETY. This in itself would more than qualify me for what they call a shortfall of my supervisory time, or in their words 'full time' supervision." The record also shows the appellant believes he is performing supervisory duties more than 25 percent of his time as stated in his PD of record.

By law, we must grade jobs solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM job grading standards (JGS's), guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5346), and instructions. The adequacy of JGS's is neither appealable nor reviewable. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Since comparison to JGS's is the exclusive method for grading jobs, we cannot compare the appellant's job to others as a basis for deciding his appeal, e.g., jobs at Maxwell Air Force Base. The job grading appeal

process is a de novo review that includes a determination as to the duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the appellant, and constitutes the proper application of JGS's to those duties and responsibilities. Because it sets aside any decision previously issued by the appellant's agency, his concerns regarding the agency's job grading appeal process are moot.

The appellant stated that his "counterparts from Colorado Springs, Milwaukee, Youngstown and Niagara Falls were unaffected by the downgrade from WS-2610-11 to WG-2610-13, although their PD's are identical to mine." He did not provide any documentation supporting this claim. The appellant occupies a standardized PD used throughout the Air Force Reserve Command graded as Electronics Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610-13. Therefore, we are unable to reconcile the appellant's claim with the written record. Like OPM, the appellant's agency must classify jobs based on comparison to OPM JGS's and guidelines. Agencies are obligated to review their own job grading decisions for identical, similar, or related jobs to insure consistency with OPM certificates. Thus, the agency has the primary responsibility for ensuring that its jobs are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant considers the appealed job so similar to others that they warrant the same grading, he may pursue this matter by writing to his agency's human resources management headquarters. In so doing, he should specify the precise organizational location, job grading, duties, and responsibilities of the jobs in question. If the jobs are found to be basically the same as his job, or warrant similar application of the controlling JGS's, the agency must correct their grading to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to them the differences between the appealed job and the others.

We have evaluated the work assigned by management and performed by the appellant according to these job grading requirements. In reaching our decision, we carefully reviewed the information provided by the appellant and his agency, including the appellant's PD of record. In addition, we conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on July 6, 1999, and a telephone interview with his supervisor, [name] on July 9, 1999. We also considered information submitted by the appellant; the agency appeal administrative report of April 28, 1999, and its addendum of April 29; and additional information provided by the agency on July 22, 29 and August 10 clarifying the appellant's delegations of authority. We find the PD of record contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the appellant and is hereby incorporated by reference into this decision.

### **Job information**

The purpose of the appellant's job is to serve as Small Shop Chief (SSC) of the Guidance and Control Systems Shop, exercising technical and administrative supervisory responsibility over three employees who occupy identical additional Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610 jobs (Position Number 79975). The appellant receives his assignments from two sources: his supervisor, the Avionics Flight Supervisor (Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2610-12), and flight line discrepancy work orders channeled through Maintenance

Dispatch (also called the Dispatch Center). The appellant pulls these requests from the computer system each morning. The supervisor stated these requirements are usually discussed at daily maintenance meetings so that work can be coordinated with other shops. The appellant will then prioritize the work based on the weekly flight schedule. The Avionics Flight Supervisor also prefers to have the appellant and the head of the Communication and Navigation Systems shop at monthly meetings that are held to discuss the expected flying and maintenance projects.

The appellant then assigns the daily work on a job or project basis to the subordinates. Major systems supported include the autopilot flight control system (FCS 105) and the interrelated flight director system (FD 109). From outside atmospheric readings and radio beacon input, the FCS 105 maintains the correct altitude and permits the aircraft to navigate from point to point automatically. The FD 109 uses a variety of inputs to inform the pilots whether the aircraft is flying straight and level at night when there are no lights on the horizon, and gives headings to take for instrument landing.

Seven C-130H cargo transport aircraft are assigned to the unit. Work is performed on the flight line where the aircraft are parked or in hangers. Flight line work typically involves replacing line replaceable units (LRU's). Old LRU parts are then taken to the shop for bench repair; others are sent out through the supply channel for repair. LRU replacements typically are performed by one person. The majority of the time, however, aircraft are serviced by two-person teams. Technical orders require the two-person crew because the systems are so spread out that one person could not troubleshoot and perform the repair. One person on the flight deck monitors the instruments and reads from the technical order using the aircraft headset, while the other person uses the testing equipment to simulate actual operation. One assigned aircraft is scheduled each month for complete inspection (PHASEDOCK). Approximately 60 percent of this work is performed by two person teams.

The appellant typically assigns one subordinate responsibility for the monthly PHASEDOCK, and will assign a second person to assist when they are available. He frequently works as part of a second two-person team. When he is not performing team work or working alone, he spot checks work in progress. On grounding issues (781A red X), his subordinates will have him verify what they have done, written up, and signed. The appellant then signs off and removes the red X. He will watch an operational check for major repairs that also may require an engine run by the crew chief. He also tracks the quality of completed work.

The appellant currently has three reservists assigned to his shop, a shortfall of about three people from the usual six or seven assigned. At times, he may have more than 12 assigned. They work in the shop one weekend each month or equivalent make-up time during the week. They also come in for 15-day summer camp, although they may be sent to perform that work at another site.

The appellant takes time and attendance, and approves leave. This includes asking for planned annual leave so that he can maintain a minimum of two people in the shop at any time. He establishes performance standards, conducts formal performance appraisals of subordinates, and

recommends awards. The appellant has the authority to counsel employees and adjust complaints before they become formalized. He has the authority to resolve minor disciplinary problems and enforces safety rules and regulations. He interviewed and recommended selection of the person who replaced him in his previous position when he was promoted to SSC. He maintains the supervisor's record of employee training, time and leave schedules, and other records as required.

The appellant operates under the general supervision of the Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2610-12, who exercises general supervision over four shops. The supervisor sets overall section and shop priorities, adjusting work to meet mission requirements. The record shows that the supervisor maintains authority over leave, awards, discipline, and all administrative matters, recommending action in cases where authority is reserved at higher management levels.

### **Occupation, title, and standards determination**

The agency has allocated the appellant's job as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, while the appellant states it should be allocated as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic Supervisor.

All aspects of the job grading criteria (i.e., coverage, percentage of time, grading factors, as well as the full intent of the JGS) must be fully met for jobs to be evaluated under the FWS JGS for Supervisors. Appropriate application of the JGS requires full and careful analysis of all relevant factors. The central coverage criteria in the JGS, i.e., the ongoing requirement that supervisors perform supervisory duties on a substantially full-time and continuing basis is stringent. Substantially full-time means performing supervisory/leader duties to such an extent that, for all intents and purposes, it is considered to be comparable to full time or 100 percent. Consequently, jobs that perform supervisory functions on less than a substantially full-time basis (i.e., less than 85 percent) do not meet the basic criteria for coverage and should not be evaluated under the FWS JGS for Supervisors. Although such employees have supervisory responsibilities as a regular and recurring part of their jobs, the supervisory responsibility is not exercised on a substantially full-time basis as required under the supervisory JGS. When such a situation occurs, the job is graded under the regular nonsupervisory grading structure and not under the FWS JGS for Supervisors.

According to the official PD, which the appellant has certified is accurate and complete, the journey level duties comprise approximately 75 percent of the work time and the supervisory duties occupy approximately 25 percent of the work time. However, as discussed previously the appellant claims that he spends significantly more than 25 percent of his time supervising his civilian subordinates.

Duties and responsibilities assigned to a job flow from the mission assigned to the organization in which the job is found. The jobs created to perform that assigned mission must be considered in relation to one another; i.e., each job reflects a part of the work assigned to the organization. Therefore, the duties and responsibilities assigned to the appellant's job and performed by him may not be considered in a vacuum.

The identical additional PD's occupied by the appellant's subordinates contain duties and responsibilities typical of journey level jobs in the Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610 trade. As at the grade 12 level, detailed technical instructions or supervision is not necessary. The subordinates do their own assignment planning and work independently. They receive their assignments with a minimum of accompanying instructions concerning the work methods or the materials to be used. The SSC; i.e., the appellant, is available for advice or assistance on very difficult problems.

Our discussions with the appellant and his supervisor confirmed that the subordinate identical additional PD's are current and accurate, reflecting the need for very little supervision. The journey level concept within the FWS presumes that occupants of such jobs are delegated significant work planning responsibilities. For example, WG-2610-12 employees make decisions and judgments regarding troubleshooting techniques, modification and repair procedures; plan the sequence of work, and select the tools needed; determine the nature of repairs necessary to correct faults; and exercise primary responsibility for checking out the complete integrated systems. If the appellant were to exercise the breadth and depth of supervision necessary to occupy the amount of time claimed in his appeal rationale, the subordinate jobs could not sustain their grading at the journey level. While the appellant may spend a significant amount of time on administrative functions to support the supervisor, e.g., providing for shop facility and other support needs including property accountability, his technical supervision over journey level work should be minimal. Furthermore, with only three civilian journey level subordinates, limited turnover, and no disciplinary problems, very little time would be spent on such activities as advising employees on performance issues, handling disciplinary problems, recruiting, and investigating complaints. Based on the foregoing, we are persuaded that the appellant's job clearly falls short of coverage by the FWS JGS for Supervisors.

The appellant claims that he is a working supervisor, working side-by-side with and performing the same kind and level of work as his subordinates. Because this work occupies 90 percent of his time, he states that the 85 percent test is met. We do not agree. While he may work side-by-side with his subordinates on two-person team assignments, the FWS system permits only one of those two people to be credited with performing the journey level work of the assignment. For example, while two journey level carpenters may be sent out on a project, only one of them may be credited as exercising the work planning and control functions inherent in journey level work. The WG-2610 JGS states that grade 12 mechanics frequently coordinate work assignments and provide technical assistance to one or more lower grade employees, and that the supervisor relies on grade 12 mechanics to take independent action in resolving problems. The appellant's supervisor confirmed that most of the time the senior person on the team is responsible for writing up and signing off on the work orders. If the appellant is out on a team as the senior shop person, he would be the final authority on all forms. Thus, when the appellant functions as the team lead, we find the supporting subordinate may not be construed as performing the same kind and level of work as the appellant. As a result, the appellant is not functioning as a working supervisor within the meaning of the JGS.

## **Grade determination**

When supervisory responsibilities described in Factor 1 of the JGS for FWS Supervisors are not exercised on a substantially full-time basis (85 percent of the time), the job is graded under the regular FWS nonsupervisory grading structure. FWS grade levels of jobs are not determined by accumulation of grade levels of work performed, but by the highest grade of work that is regular and recurring as defined by established OPM job grading guidance. To be credited, a level in a JGS must be met fully.

The Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610 JGS uses four factors for grade determination: *Skill and Knowledge*, *Responsibility*, *Physical Effort*, and *Working Conditions*. The agency has evaluated the appellant's nonsupervisory WG-2610 work at the grade 12 level with which the appellant has not disagreed. Based on our review of the record, we agree and have so credited the job. Our evaluation of his SSC duties follows:

### *Skill and Knowledge*

The appellant's SSC functions reflect the exercise of skill and knowledge that exceed the WG-12 level entailed in planning, accomplishing and maintaining the shop technical program. To perform that work, the appellant must be able to plan and schedule work for himself and his three subordinates; determine the best way to accomplish shop workload; make sure adequate tools, equipment, and materials are available; and provide input to the supervisor on the full range of shop needs. OPM job grading guidance on SSC jobs refers to the Pest Controller, WG-5026 JGS. That JGS provides grading criteria for jobs that are responsible for a complete facility pest control program requiring a complete pest management program. The program is large enough to typically require the assistance of up to two other pest controllers, but are not large enough to require direction by a full time FWS supervisor. The WG-5026 JGS recognizes that the skill and knowledge demands required to perform this range of program management warrants the addition of one grade above the level of work led. We find the appellant exercises similar skill and knowledge in performing his SSC functions, resulting in evaluation of this factor at the grade 13 level.

### *Responsibility*

The WG-5026 JGS recognizes that pest controllers who plan, organize, direct and perform pest complete facility pest control programs; determine the approaches, methods, and courses of action in dealing with program issues; assure program methods and results adhere to regulatory requirements; and advise management on program needs exercise responsibility graded one level above the full performance level. The appellant exercises similar responsibilities in his SSC functions, resulting in the evaluation of this factor at the grade 13 level.

*Physical Effort* and *Working Conditions* described in the WG-2610 JGS are the same at all defined grade levels.



*Summary*

Based on the preceding analysis, and applying the whole job grade criteria of the FWS, we find the appellant's personally performed work is evaluated properly at the grade 12 level and his SSC work is evaluated properly at the grade 13 level.

**Decision**

Applying established FWS and grading principles, we find the appellant's job is graded properly as Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic, WG-2610-13.