

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability  
Classification Appeals Programs

Philadelphia Field Services Group  
600 Arch Street, Room 3400  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1596

**Job Grading Appeal Decision**  
**Under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code**

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

**Agency classification:** Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator  
(Industrial Equipment Repairer) Leader  
WL-5408-9

**Organization:** Base Support Division  
Installation Management Directorate  
[name] Arsenal  
Department of the Army  
[location]

**OPM decision:** Utility Systems Repairer-Operator  
Leader  
WL-4742-9

**OPM decision number:** C-4742-09-01

/s/

---

Marta Brito Pérez,  
Associate Director, Division for Human Capital  
Leadership and Merit System Accountability

June 15, 2004

---

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 the conditions and time limits 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:**

[appellant's name]  
[appellant's address]

[name]  
Chief, Customer Focused Division 2  
[name] Civilian Operations Center  
Department of the Army  
Office of the Assistant Secretary  
Manpower and Reserve Affairs  
[address]

Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Civilian Personnel Policy/  
Civilian Personnel Director for Army  
Department of the Army  
Room 23681, Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-0300

Director, U.S. Army Civilian Personnel  
Evaluation Agency  
Department of the Army  
Crystal Mall 4, Suite 918  
1941 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, VA 22202-4508

Chief, Position Management and  
Classification Branch  
Office of the Assistant Secretary  
Manpower and Reserve Affairs  
Department of the Army  
Attn.: SAMR-CPP-MP  
Hoffman Building II  
200 Stovall Street, Suite 5N35  
Alexandria, VA 22332-0340

Chief, Classification Appeals

Adjudication Section  
Department of Defense  
Civilian Personnel Management Service  
1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200  
Arlington, VA 22209-5144

## **Introduction**

On August 29, 2003, the Philadelphia Field Services Group, of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a job grading appeal from [appellant's name]. He occupies a job currently graded as Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator (Industrial Equipment Repairer) Leader, WL-5408-9. He believes that his job should be a higher grade because he and the co-workers that he leads perform grade industrial equipment mechanical duties covered by the Industrial Equipment Mechanic 5352 occupation. The appellant works in the Base Support Division, Installation Management Directorate, [name] Arsenal, Department of the Army, [location]. We received the complete appeal administrative report on September 24, 2003. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **Background information**

The appellant's agency accepted his job grading appeal on March 28, 2003, and issued its decision on June 26<sup>th</sup>. The cover letter transmitting the decision advised the appellant of his right to appeal to OPM but did not inform him of the requirement to file with OPM within 15 calendar days after receipt of the agency decision. A copy of an August 5 e-mail between the appellant and the agency adjudicator also does not show that the appellant was advised of this time limit. For these reasons we accepted the appeal as timely filed.

## **General issues**

In his appeal letter, the appellant disagrees with the agency's analysis of his industrial equipment mechanic work because the agency decision does not discuss them adequately. He points to portions of his job description (JD) (Number [number]) and portions of the 5352 job grading standard (JGS), saying that they show that he is performing grade 10 work in the 5352 occupation.

Our job grading decisions must be based solely upon a comparison between the actual duties and responsibilities of the job and the appropriate JGS's (5 U.S.C. 5346). A JD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position or job by an official with the authority to assign work. A job is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Job grading appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a job and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities currently assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision grades a real operating job, and not simply the JD. Therefore, this decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant and sets aside any previous agency decision.

## **Job information**

The appellant is in charge of the activity wastewater treatment plant. He exercises administrative and technical control over four employees. Three occupy Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator (Industrial Equipment Repairer), WG-5408-9, jobs. One occupies a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator (Industrial Equipment Repairer), WG-5408-10, job. The grade of that job is based on "operator in charge" responsibility. The record shows that the appellant works with two of the

three employees in the grade 9 jobs on the first shift. The other two employees work on the second shift.

The JD of record, certified as current and accurate by the appellant and both his first- and second-level supervisors, states that the appellant performs his plant leadership duties approximately 25 percent of the time and the same work as his co-workers approximately 75 percent of the time. The appellant's plant leadership duties include passing instructions onto other workers from the supervisor; starting work (e.g., by assigning the immediate tasks to be performed); insuring that needed plans, blueprints, material, and tools are available and that needed stock is obtained from supply locations; and assuring that there is enough work to keep everyone busy. Other leadership duties include checking work in progress and when finished for compliance with the supervisor's instructions on work sequence, procedures, methods, and deadlines; urging or advising other employees to follow the supervisor's instructions and to meet deadlines; demonstrating proper work methods; answering questions regarding procedures, policies, written instructions, and other directives (e.g., technical orders); obtaining needed information or decisions from the supervisor on work problems; providing information to the supervisor on the status and progress of work, causes of delays, and overall work operations and problems such as an individual employee's need for additional on-the-job training; and assuring that safety and housekeeping rules are followed (e.g., machine capacities are not exceeded and tools are properly used).

The appellant's unit operates a wastewater treatment plant to remove wastes. The plant uses three separate processes to treat cyanide, chrome plating, and other acid wastes and soluble oil wastes. It also has mechanical sludge de-watering equipment. They operate and adjust the equipment to properly treat wastewater, making chemical analyses to track and adjust treatment processes. When required, they make changes in treatment processes and/or make temporary repairs to equipment or bypass automatic controls and operate manually to prevent the process from getting out of control and contaminating the river.

The appellant and his co-workers also install, maintain, and repair wastewater treatment systems and equipment. This includes analyzing defects and determining the extent of repairs required on such equipment as pumps, chlorinator heads and gear boxes, chemical feed systems, and treatment tanks. They examine equipment and components for excessive wear and replace as necessary; inspect equipment based on established schedules, adjusting the equipment as necessary; and check control gauges, valves, timers, switches, etc., to ensure safe and efficient operation. When necessary, they install new equipment following manufacturer's manuals and instructions.

In addition to the on-site audit with the appellant, we interviewed his first-level supervisor, [name], on December 11, 2003. Our fact-finding revealed that the plant operates on two overlapping shifts. The employee in the grade 10 job works with one co-worker in a grade 9 job Sunday 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The appellant and two co-workers are on a Monday-Friday shift from 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Therefore, 'the appellant has direct control and leadership responsibility over four co-workers for a preponderance of time that he is working. In addition to the leadership duties discussed in the JD of record, we find that the appellant performs such duties as providing input on co-workers' performance, budget input based on plant equipment and supply needs, a list of repair projects

for the one-week annual plan shutdown, and directly distributing work to the staff on an ongoing basis based on operational needs.

In deciding this appeal, we carefully considered the audit and interview findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency at our request. We find that the JD of record contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellant and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

### **Occupational code, title, and standard determination**

The record shows that the activity determined that the job involved performing and leading 5408 Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator and 5352 Industrial Equipment Mechanic work at the same grade level. Because the wastewater treatment plant duties were most important for recruitment and retention, the activity placed the job in the 5408 series and added the parenthetical title of Industrial Equipment Repairer to recognize the additional qualifications necessary to successfully perform the work of the job. The agency appeal decision adopted this rationale. The appellant believes that the 5352 work that he performs should be evaluated at the grade 10 level and, as a result, the job should be placed in the 5352 occupation and questions the titling determination. The three parties agree that the job is properly covered by the JGS for Leader.

*The Introduction to the FWS Job Grading System* states that jobs requiring the performance of work in two or more occupations (mixed jobs) are coded to the occupation which is most important for recruitment, selection, placement, promotion, or reduction-in-force purposes. This is *ordinarily* (emphasis added) the occupation having the highest level of skill and knowledge. However, the FWS has several “mixed” occupations that cover jobs which perform work at the same grade level in two or more trades or crafts. The 4742 Utility Systems Repairer-Operator series, for which there is a published JGS, covers work that primarily involves repairing *and* operating one or more utility systems when such work requires the ability to start, stop, and regulate the system(s) for optimum efficiency and troubleshoot, maintain, and repair them when work in two or more of the occupations is at the same grade level. Based on the grade determination which follows, the appellant’s job is directly comparable to two examples in the 4742 JGS; i.e., a job that operates and repairs boiler plants and a job that operates and repairs air conditioning equipment when the operation and repair work is performed at the same grade level. Because the appellant and his staff perform wastewater treatment plant operator work and repair work on plant equipment at the same grade level, the appellant’s job is properly placed in the 4742 occupation with the basic title of Utility Systems Repairer-Operator.

The record shows that the appellant performs some program planning, work direction, and administrative duties typical of FWS supervisors. Appropriate application of the JGS for FWS Supervisors requires full and careful analysis of all relevant factors. The central requirement in the JGS for FWS Supervisors, i.e., the ongoing requirement that supervisors have substantially full-time and continuing responsibility for the technical and administrative supervision of subordinate workers, is stringent. Established OPM guidance has defined *substantially full-time* as 85 percent or more of the time. The record shows that the appellant spends roughly 25 percent of his time overseeing plant operations and performing administrative tasks in support of the shop and approximately 75 percent of the time performing the journey-level work of the

plant. He clearly does not spend 85 percent of the time overseeing the work of the plant staff in the performance of their work, i.e., he does not spend substantially full-time reviewing work for technical accuracy, taking time and attendance, assessing performance, approving leave, making daily work assignments, taking disciplinary action, etc. To be credited at the grade 9 level, the employees are expected to work independently and once given their assignments, to determine how best to complete them, to coordinate the work with others as necessary, to resolve technical discrepancies, and to recommend solutions to problems. The appellant visits the work sites to personally perform work and to ensure subordinates are following standard safety and technical practices but does not have to monitor the subordinates on a routine basis and expects them to accomplish ongoing assignments without further direction. While the appellant makes the assignments and changes them as necessary to deal with higher priorities, each staff member determines what tools and equipment to use and they plan their work. Therefore, the appellant's job falls short of the threshold required for coverage by the JGS for FWS Supervisors.

When the supervisory responsibilities, i.e., those 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 *typically* is graded under the regular nonsupervisory grading structure and not under the supervisory standard. The 5026 Pest Controller JGS recognizes that pest controllers with responsibility for planning, organizing, directing, and performing complete pest control programs; determining the approaches, methods, and courses of action to take in dealing with program issues; for assuring that methods and results adhere to regulatory requirements; and for advising management on program needs, and who typically oversee the work of one or other employees, exercise a level of responsibility that is graded one full level above the full performance level, and function as Small Shop Chiefs.

The appellant's leadership functions exceed the responsibilities typical of a Small Shop Chief. Because of ongoing wastewater treatment program operating requirements, the appellant has continuing responsibility for proposing, planning, and overseeing major repair projects seeing to it that the plans, blueprints, manuals, materials, tools, and supplies are secured and in-place. The appellant leads these projects, the established preventive maintenance program, and oversees day-to-day equipment repair and overhaul by assigning the immediate tasks, setting the pace, seeing to it that staff that he has assigned to the work is used properly, answering technical questions, and checking the work to see that it meets requirements. He also assigns the staff to accomplish ongoing plant and program operation tasks. For example, he assigns a co-worker to check safety equipment weekly, assures that two people oversee the plant process at all times, and has one co-worker travel to designated activity sites to monitor discharge points and assure that building oil skimming and/or processes are working properly. The appellant also determines who to assign smaller repair tasks, e.g., which two staff members to pull and overhaul a defective pump.

The JGS for Leader is used to grade the jobs of leaders who as a regular and recurring part of their jobs, and on a substantially full time and continuing basis, lead three or more workers to accomplish trades and labor work or train them in the nonsupervisory work of a trades and laboring occupation. Both types of leaders are responsible to their supervisors for assuring that the work or training assignments of the group led are carried out.

Working leaders in jobs covered by this JGS are nonsupervisory workers who, in addition to the exercise of leader responsibility, perform regular nonsupervisory (i.e., non-leader) trades and labor work as members of the work crews or groups they lead. Typically, the working leader tasks, such as those listed in the JGS, are performed by leaders at various times throughout the work day (or work shift) as needed or as otherwise appropriate. The working "leader" tasks are mingled with the accomplishment of other regular nonsupervisory (non-leader) work and the amount of time spent on leader tasks varies with work situations and operating needs. However, the leader responsibility assigned to a job remains in effect and continues to be exercised even when the leader is personally engaged at various times during the workday (or shift) in non-leader work. Therefore, the percentage of time during a work day (or shift) spent in the performance of "leader" tasks is not in itself considered in determining whether jobs meet the criteria for coverage as leader under this JGS.

We find that the appellant's job meets the threshold for coverage of the JGS for Leader. He leads the work of four employees for a preponderant amount of time on two overlapping shifts for four out of five workdays each week, and he performs the full range of working leader duties described in the JGS. Therefore, the appealed job is allocated as Utility Systems Repairer-Operator Leader, WL-4742.

Working leader jobs are graded on the basis of the highest level of nonsupervisory work led. The resulting leader grade reflects the relative worth of the working leader job being graded in comparison with other working leaders, and its direct pay relationship to the employees led. Because the work led is covered by the 5408 and 5352 JGS's, we must apply these JGS's to the nonsupervisory work performed to determine the level of work led before we may apply the Leader JGS.

### **Grade determination**

#### *5408 JGS*

The agency has evaluated the 5408 work performed to the grade 9 level with which the appellant agrees. Based on careful review of the record, we concur.

#### *5352 JGS*

The 5352 JGS uses four factors to determine grade level: *Skill and Knowledge*, *Responsibility*, *Physical Effort*, and, *Working Conditions*.

#### *Skill and Knowledge*

Grade 8 industrial equipment repairers use test equipment and measuring devices such as levels, feeler gauges, dial indicators, micrometers, tachometers, and calipers to repair, adjust, and test machinery and equipment such as sandblasting machines, degreasers, chain hoists, hydraulic jacks, fire fighting equipment, steam cleaners, rotary blast machines, acid vats, fume separators, fire escapes, guard rails, ladders, catwalks, paint mixing machines, pots, and sprayers, and other nonproduction machinery and equipment of similar complexity. They are also skilled in the use of various portable machine and hand tools, for example, flange facing machines, drills, grinders,



punch presses, and cutting machines to make routine cuts, shapes, bores, and grinds in the installation and repair of these and other equipment and machinery of similar complexity. Their repair operations involve the removal of old or damaged parts and rematching, boring, realigning, and refitting. The work requires the ability to interpret blueprints, diagrams, and other drawings, and the use of arithmetic and standard handbook formulas in performing dimensional measurements and maintaining required tolerances. They are also knowledgeable of the mechanical, pneumatic, and hydraulic operating characteristics of a variety of equipment and machinery and are familiar with the various metals needed for a given repair job as specified in the job order or bill of materials.

In contrast, grade 10 industrial equipment mechanics apply a greater knowledge of installation and repair of more complex equipment and machinery such as engraving machines, exhaust units, caissons, ozalid print masters, reducing valves, and pneumatic tube systems and maintain various types of nonproduction industrial plant machinery, equipment, and systems such as towveyor and conveyor systems, bridge cranes, air compressors, engine and hydromatic dynamometers, and aircraft test blocks, cable drums and pulleys, reduction gears, monorails, pumps, and sluice gates that are technically more complex than types at the grade 8 level. The equipment and machinery have complex interrelationships among components and diagnosis of trouble is more difficult due to various possible causes and combinations of factors that may be the source of trouble. They determine the nature and extent of repairs necessary and make needed repairs by replacing, reworking, or refinishing worn or damaged parts and components.

Grade 10 industrial equipment mechanics reassemble and install the equipment, connect the power sources and perform operational and functional tests and make required adjustments in order to ensure proper operation of the entire system. They also install, replace, adjust, and set various regulating or safety devices such as meters, gauges, governors, and automatic alarms. Grade 10 industrial equipment mechanics are more skilled than grade 8 industrial equipment repairers in the use and application of standard formulas, shop mathematics, trade theories, and industry practices in calculating needed materials and problem solving; and in the use of various test equipment and measuring devices such as alignment scopes, verniers, micrometers, precision levels, transits, strobe tachometers, bearing bridge gauges, flow meters, hydrostatic testers, and vibration analyzers. They make the necessary templates, jigs, and other fixtures required for repair or installation utilizing a knowledge of materials and their versatility.

The appellant states that he and his staff work on equipment, machinery, and systems described at the grade 10 level; i.e., pumps, chlorinator heads and gear boxes, chemical feed systems, and treatment tanks. He points to the plant workload that includes installing and rebuilding transfer pumps; rebuilding evaporators/sulfonators used for the distribution of sulfur dioxide, rebuilding regulator valves, replacing gauges and temperature controls; rebuilding air compressors, replacing pistons, rings, bearings, and intake and exhaust valves; rebuilding mixer/scrapper gears, replacing gears, gear drives, bearings and shafts; making repairs to measuring devices such as electronic flow meters, pH meters and liquid measuring devices, and installing, replacing, and adjusting meter gauges and automatic alarms on operating boards; and installing, repairing and replacing piping.

Implicit in the appellant's rationale is that he and his staff maintain, repair, and install certain types of system machinery and equipment discussed at the grade 10 level in the JGS such as air

compressors and pumps; operationally test it; use test and measurement equipment described at that grade level such as verniers, flow meters, and hydrostatic testers; and install, replace, adjust, and set various regulating or safety devices such as meters and gauges as described at that level. However, the JGS also recognizes that a variety of individual pieces of equipment and machinery are maintained, installed, and repaired. For example, although pumps are listed as equipment at the grade 10 level, the JGS also states under Notes to Users “jobs specializing in the repair, installation, and maintenance of utility service systems, pumps, and valves only are graded in the Plumber occupation” for which the recognized journey level is grade 9. Grade 9 plumbing work includes planning, laying out, and installing complete utility, supply, and disposal systems, fixtures, and equipment such as sewage, water, gas, and oil lines, compressed air, vacuum, and acid systems, valves and pumps.

A significant portion of the equipment and machinery serviced by the appellant and his staff does not exceed the grade 8 level in terms of mechanical complexity, e.g., mixers and exhaust fans. Most of the equipment and machinery listed by the appellant, however, exceeds the grade 8 level and approaches that typical of the grade 10 level, e.g., pumps and air compressors, and for which they also install, replace, adjust, and set various regulating or safety devices such as meters and gauges typical of the grade 10 level. However, the wastewater treatment plant systems on which the appellant and his staff work does not fully meet the grade 10 level where mechanics reassemble and install the equipment, connect the power sources and perform operational and functional tests and make required adjustments *in order to ensure proper operation of the entire system*. The appellant’s wastewater treatment plant operations require operator intervention at each major step in the process; mixer, pump, and other equipment breakdowns are recognizable from plant operator surveillance of the water treatment process. Unlike conveyor/towveyer or monorail system malfunctions that require complete system troubleshooting to locate the source of the malfunction and full system testing to determine whether the repairs have been successful, the appellant’s wastewater treatment plant mechanical functions involve dealing with discrete, self-contained pieces of machinery and equipment for which full wastewater treatment functional alignment and testing is neither necessary or required. Automated and/or visual review will surface whether transfer and/or sump pumps are moving liquids properly.

The self-contained pneumatic control system and chemical feed pumps, powered by air from the air compressor, requires comparable troubleshooting and repair. Similar to the 5352 JGS’s instructions about the installation, maintenance, and repair of pumps referring the user to the 4602 Plumber JGS, maintenance and repair of pneumatic controls must be considered in the context of the 8255 Pneudraulic Systems Mechanic JGS. The appellant’s work does not exceed that described at the grade 9 level at which mechanics use knowledge of pneumatic, hydraulic, and basic electrical and mechanical principles to diagnose, repair, and test various complex hydraulic and pneumatic components such as hydromechanical fuel control assemblies, pressure regulators, fuel booster pumps, speed controls, and water injection pumps, using the testing and repair instruments necessary to perform that work. Unlike the more complex major pieces of machinery and equipment also repaired and maintained at the grade 10 level, the individual major wastewater system pumps, mixers, mixer/scrapper gears, controls, and measuring devices do not require application of the full range of knowledge and skill required at the grade 10 level.

As discussed in the Grade Levels section of the 5352 JGS, the JGS does not describe all possible levels at which jobs may be established. If a job differs substantially from the skill, knowledge,

or other work requirements of the grade levels described in the JGS, it may warrant grading either above or below the grades described based on the application of sound job grading methods. Because the appellant's work substantially exceeds the grade 8 level, but does not fully meet the grade 10 level, this factor is credited at the grade 9 level.

### *Responsibility*

Grade 8 industrial equipment repairers receive assignments from their immediate supervisor, either orally or in writing. Working from simple plans, sketches, and detailed specifications, they are held responsible for completion of routine tasks and adherence to instructions and accepted trade practices. On routine work, they determine the proper standardized methods, techniques, and procedures required and tools to use. Assignments are subject to review in progress and upon completion. On new or unusual assignments, the supervisor explains in detail the steps to follow and checks frequently for adherence to instructions. When working on projects or work orders involving major systems, grade 8 industrial equipment repairers are subject to close supervision or are usually responsible for only specified segments of major systems.

In contrast, grade 10 industrial equipment mechanics work alone or as part of a team under general supervision of the immediate supervisor, who makes assignments orally or in writing. They troubleshoot equipment to determine the area of difficulty; what parts or materials are required; and the methods, techniques, and procedures to use in completing repairs, and are independently responsible for diagnosing, planning, and completing projects or work orders involving major systems in their entirety. They plan and layout their work using blueprints, sketches, work orders, and other specifications. The supervisor reviews work for adherence to specifications and accepted trade practices

The level of responsibility described at the grade 10 level is based on performing work requiring the level of skill and knowledge described at that level in the JGS; i.e., responsibility for independently diagnosing, planning, and completing work *involving major systems in their entirety*. Although the appellant and his staff regularly perform their 5352 work with the independence and freedom from oversight typically found at the grade 10 level, they are not responsible for doing so on the entire major systems as defined at the grade 10 level. Therefore, as discussed previously, the appellant and his staff are not required to exercise the attendant decision-making functions necessary to fully meet the grade 10 level. Because the appellant's work substantially exceeds the grade 8 level, but does not fully meet the grade 10 level, this factor is credited at the grade 9 level.

*Working Conditions* and *Physical Effort* are the same at all grades level. Because they do not have grade level impact, and the appellant's work meets the levels described in the JGS, we will credit both factors as being met and will not address them further.

Because the 5352 nonsupervisory work equates to the grade 9 level on all four factors, the work is graded properly at the grade 9 level.

*JGS for Leader*

As discussed previously, working leader jobs are graded on the basis of the highest level of nonsupervisory work led. Because the work led is properly evaluated at the grade 9 level, the appellant's working leader duties are properly evaluated at the grade 9 level.

**Decision**

The appealed job is properly graded as Utility Systems Repairer-Operator Leader, WL-4742-9.