

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



Dallas Oversight Division  
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22  
Dallas, TX 75242

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

**Appellant:** [The Appellant]  
**Agency classification:** Electrician  
WG-2805-10

**Organization:** Engineering Service  
Administrative Services  
[the Veteran's Administration Hospital]  
South Texas Veterans Health Care System  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
[the location]

**OPM decision:** Electrician  
WG-2805-10

**OPM Decision Number:** C-2805-10-01

\_\_\_\_\_/s/ Judith Frenzel for\_\_\_\_\_  
Bonnie J. Brandon  
Classification Appeals Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
January 28, 1998  
Date

As provided in section S7-8 of the Operating Manual, Federal Wage System, 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 the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section H).

### **Decision sent to:**

[the appellant]  
[the appellant's  
mailing address]

[the appellant's servicing Personnel Officer]  
Chief, Human Resources Management Service  
[the Veteran's Administration Hospital]  
South Texas Veterans Health Care System  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
[exact address, city and state]

Mr. Ronald E. Cowles  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel and  
Labor Relations  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, DC 20420

## **Introduction**

On May 28, 1997, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a job grading appeal from [the appellant] through his servicing personnel office. The appeal was suspended until October 14, 1997, by the Dallas Oversight Division during which time the appellant was asked by letter to verify the accuracy of his job description. He did not provide a written statement, as requested; therefore, his appeal has been adjudicated using job description number 761-0-728-A, dated January 11, 1994, documents provided by the appellant and his agency, and information obtained from interviews with the appellant, his work leader, and the chief of the Maintenance and Operations Section, Engineering Service.

The appellant's position is currently classified as Electrician, WG-2805-10. According to his appeal, the appellant believes his duties warrant a higher grade in that he thinks they call for separate technician or craftsman knowledges in addition to those of an electrician. He did not specify the series or the grade level he believes is correct. The appellant works in the Engineering Service, Maintenance and Operations Section, Electric Shop, at the [the appellant's job location], Department of Veterans Affairs,[specific city, state]. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). In reaching our job grading decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and his agency, both in the written file and during telephone interviews.

## **Job information**

The appellant believes that the complexity of his assignments is greater than his job description portrays. During our interviews, he stated that his job description is accurate except that it does not adequately capture the nature of the work he performs on the uninterrupted power supply (UPS) system, high voltage equipment, various generators (e.g., 1,000 kilowatt, motor), the elevator track system, kitchen and laundry equipment, and other equipment and systems such as pneumatic tubes, hospital lighting, and automatic parking lot gates. According to the appellant, he performed most of the tasks associated with these systems more than six months ago when the Maintenance and Operations Section had no electronics mechanics to perform the work and before the duties were transferred to Biomedical (a unit assigned to another service). He acknowledged that he now performs these tasks when assigned personnel are absent or otherwise unavailable. As 5 U.S.C. 5346 indicates, we can consider only current duties and responsibilities in classifying jobs. Additionally, section II.C.3 of the Job Grading System, Part 1 states that duties that are not regular and recurring cannot affect the grade of a job.

The appellant works in the Electric Shop of the Maintenance and Operations Section with three other electricians. The chief of the Maintenance and Operations Section (the appellant's second-level supervisor) confirmed that job description number 761-0-728-A, dated January 11, 1994, accurately describes the appellant's major duties and responsibilities with one exception. The exception is that the appellant no longer performs work on the trash and linen systems and equipment as stated in section I.C. The second-level supervisor explained the apparent reluctance we noted by the appellant to verify the accuracy of the job description dated January 11, 1994. He stated that management prepared the January 11, 1994, job description in an effort to clarify its expectations about the type

of work included as “other duties as assigned.” This job description differed from the job description dated April 30, 1991, only with regard to the addition of section F.6. Section F.6. states that the incumbent (the appellant) is expected to assist other crafts and trades (as appropriate). Although management subsequently agreed to reinstate the April 30, 1991, job description, the official job description was not formally changed from that dated January 11, 1994.

According to the second-level supervisor, at one time, two electronics mechanics were assigned to the appellant’s section, but about two years ago, both left and were not replaced. During an 18-month period ending June 1, 1997, the appellant and the other electricians in the shop performed what work they could to cover for the electronics mechanics vacancies; but in situations where they lacked the expertise, other skilled employees and outside contractors were called in to complete the electronics portion of the tasks. A memorandum dated June 25, 1997, from the appellant’s immediate supervisor, documents the fact that the work of the electronics mechanics along with their positions transferred to the Biomedical Section on June 1, 1997. The tasks Biomedical assumed included responsibility for the fire alarm system, electric doors, the trash and linen system, and the pneumatic tube system. The appellant and the other electricians in his unit continued to help out after the transfer primarily by serving as helpers within their level of knowledge. Currently, the appellant and his co-workers provide little or no assistance to other crafts outside their shop. They have no contact with Biomedical. The second-level supervisor stated that: the appellant’s duties are limited to installing circuits, stringing lines, and working with all kinds of power distribution; he works with some appliances (e.g., toasters, ovens); his only involvement with solid state parts is to remove them and reconnect replacements; and, he commonly uses voltmeters and a device called a wedgie to check power in lines.

The work leader’s comments are compatible with and support those of the second-level supervisor. The work leader stated that he, rather than the electricians, handles all high voltage maintenance when it is needed. The appellant and the other electricians are expected to maintain units up to 600 volts. Outside contractors handle problems that occur with the 1,000 kilowatt generator, e.g., the generator does not start. The work leader is mainly the one who troubleshoots and maintains the motor generator. Since Biomedical took over the UPS system, the work leader stated that neither the appellant nor other electricians in the shop are involved with that system. He also indicated that a laundry mechanic, assigned to a different unit in the Engineering Service, is permanently assigned to take care of all laundry equipment. The Electric Shop is involved only in disconnecting and reconnecting electrical power. As for maintaining the hospital’s kitchen equipment, the appellant works exclusively with the electrical part of the equipment, e.g., wiring new equipment, changing breakers, and repairing switches.

Work assignments (mostly work orders) for the appellant and the other electricians come from the assistant foreman for maintenance (the appellant’s first-line supervisor) through the work leader. Each electrician has different capabilities and work preferences which the work leader takes into account when he assigns work orders. The appellant prefers construction-related electrical tasks, so the work leader assigns these to him for the most part. The appellant is responsible for determining the best methods of installation and repair of electrical systems.

The servicing personnel office must revise the job description to incorporate those changes in the duties of the position that have occurred subsequent to the agency’s decision on the appeal. These

changes are reflected in a memorandum dated June 25, 1997, signed by the supervisors and managers of the Engineering Service.

### **Occupation determination**

Because of differences in duties, skills, knowledges, and other aspects of trades and labor jobs, standards are developed mainly along occupational lines. The 2800 Electrical Installation and Maintenance family of jobs includes occupations involved in the fabrication, installation, alteration, maintenance, repair, and testing of electrical systems, instruments, apparatus, and equipment; and the 2600 Electronic Equipment Installation and Maintenance family of jobs includes occupations involved in the installation, repair, overhaul, fabrication, tuning, alignment, modification calibration, and testing of electronic equipment and related devices such as communications equipment, fire control, and electronic computer systems and equipment.

Within these job families, the following occupational series were considered in determining the correct series of the appellant's job: Electronics Mechanic 2604; Electronic Industrial Controls Mechanic 2606; Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic 2610; and Electrician 2805. The Electronics Mechanic 2604 occupation includes jobs involved in fabricating, overhauling, modifying, installing, troubleshooting, repairing, and maintaining ground, airborne, and marine electronic equipment, such as: radar, sonar, microwave, micro-computers and peripherals, laser, industrial x-ray, TV receiver, and similar devices. The work requires knowledge of electronic principles; the ability to recognize improper operation, locate the cause, and determine the best method to correct the defect; and the skill to disassemble, assemble, and adjust electronic equipment. The Electronic Industrial Controls Mechanic 2606 occupation includes jobs involved in the installation, troubleshooting, repair, and calibration of electronic controls and systems used on industrial machinery or engines. Characteristically, this work requires a knowledge of electronics as applicable to power, timing, motion control, program timing controls, and pulse and counting mechanisms. The Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic 2610 occupation includes jobs involved in maintaining integrated electronic systems, such as fire control, flight simulators, and flight/landing control systems.

The appellant's duties, as described in his job description and as established during our interviews with him, his work leader, and his second-level supervisor, are not appropriately classified in any one of these 2600 family of jobs. Work, such as the appellant performs, which involves installing, modifying, and repairing electrical systems in buildings, where the primary knowledge and skill is of electrical circuitry and electrical principles are not part of this family of jobs.

The job grading standard for Electrician 2805, dated June 1989, applies to jobs involved in the installation, maintenance, troubleshooting, and repair of electrical wiring systems and associated fixtures, controls, and equipment in industrial, institutional, office, and residential buildings. Since this job grading standard most closely describes the primary purpose, duties, and responsibilities of the appellant's job, it is the standard that is most appropriate for classifying it.

## **Grade determination**

The appellant's job is not a mixed job because it does not involve performing duties on a regular and recurring basis in two or more occupations. It is relevant to note that even if the appellant's job were a mixed job, duties performed only in the absence of another employee or to meet emergency workload needs are not considered as "regular and recurring" duties for grading purposes. Based on our interview with the appellant, his work leader, and his second-level supervisor, he does not perform any duties on a regular and recurring basis other than those described in his job description dated January 11, 1994. For this reason, the appropriate basis for determining the grade of the appellant's job is the Electrician 2805 job grading standard. The electrician standard identifies and describes key characteristics which are significant for distinguishing between levels of work. It defines grade levels by considering four factors: skill and knowledge, responsibility, physical effort, and working conditions.

### *Factor I. Skill and knowledge*

At the electrician grade 10 level, the work involves installing, modifying, repairing, maintaining, and troubleshooting new and existing electrical lines, circuits, systems, controls, and equipment. This includes secondary power distribution lines and circuits used to supply a wide range of voltage and frequency requirements to distribution panels, power and control circuits, emergency warning systems, fire alarm systems, lighting protection systems, and related electrical equipment. To perform this work, electricians, at grade 10, must have greater knowledge than lower graded electricians of how various electrical wiring systems, circuits, equipment, and controls are installed and work together to support industrial operations, computer complexes, and similar complex electrical loads. Additionally, some positions require a basic familiarity with electronics to the extent necessary to troubleshoot electrical circuits containing electronic components. Unlike work at the grade 10, electricians at grade 11 must have a thorough knowledge of the construction, installation, operation, and troubleshooting of sophisticated circuitry and controls associated with unique projects. The appellant's work principally involves laying out and installing electrical wiring and associated components; installing switch and outlet boxes including pulling, splicing, and connecting wire and testing circuits for continuity and safety; maintaining and repairing a wide variety of electrical appliances and equipment, such as lighting fixtures, fans, convection ovens, microwave ovens, vacuum cleaners; maintaining, repairing, and installing distribution panels, transformers, and circuit breakers; and locating and diagnosing trouble in lighting systems, rheostats, thermostats, dietetic and laundry equipment. Considering the level of skill and knowledge required of the appellant to do his job and the setting in which the duties are performed, grade 10 is appropriate.

### *Factor II. Responsibility*

Grade 10 electricians are responsible for planning and laying out the routing, placement, and arrangement of industrial or similarly complex systems, circuits, controls, and equipment. They determine and complete installations, modifications, and repairs with little or no check during the progress or upon completion of their work. The supervisor checks overall work to see that it meets accepted standards and is completed in a timely manner. This differs from the responsibility of grade 8 electrical workers who receive specific instructions on how to carry out their work and from grade 11 electricians who often work directly with engineers and scientists to build or modify electrical circuits on the basis of rough notes and desired performance criteria. The appellant receives his

assignments from the work leader based on work orders received by the Electric Shop. Since the shop is responsible for repairs throughout the entire hospital, the appellant is expected to work independently in completing installations, modifications, and repairs to a variety of electrical systems, circuits, and equipment. The tasks he performs are subject to little or no check during the progress of his work. Whenever situations occur in which the appellant is unfamiliar, the work leader and Maintenance Foreman are available to provide necessary guidance. Considering the level of responsibility required of the appellant to do his job, grade 10 is appropriate.

### *Factor III. Physical effort*

This factor has no affect on the grading of the appellant's job. There are no differences in physical effort required at grades 8, 10, and 11.

### *Factor IV. Working conditions*

There are no differences in the working conditions described at grades 8 and 10. Work is performed inside and outside, sometimes in bad weather; in work areas that are noisy, dirty, dusty, and greasy; in close quarters such as attics; and on scaffolding or cranes at heights of 30 feet or more. Incumbents are exposed occasionally to the possibility of injury from electrical shock and rotary devices such as electrical motors, and frequently to the possibility of cuts and bruises. In addition to the working conditions described at grades 8 and 10, grade 11 electricians may be exposed to temperature extremes in test facilities; and to radiation, chemicals, or carcinogens. The working conditions of the appellant are as described at grades 8 and 10.

Based on our evaluation of the factors described in the Electrician 2805 job grading standard, the appellant's job is correctly graded at level 10.

### **Title determination**

Jobs covered by the Electrician 2805 job standard that are evaluated at grade 10 and above are titled Electrician. The appellant's job is correctly titled Electrician.

### **Decision**

The appellant's position is properly classified as Electrician, WG-2805-10.