

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



San Francisco Oversight Division
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Carlos A. Torrico
Classification Appeals Officer

9/10/98

Date

Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Appellants]

Agency classification: Automotive Equipment Dispatcher
GS-2151-05

Organization: United States Marine Corps

OPM decision: Automotive Equipment Dispatcher
GS-2151-05

OPM Decision Number: C-2151-05-01

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

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Introduction

On August 14, 1998, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellants]. The appellants work in the [appellants' organizational location] at the [appellants' installation]. Their position is currently classified as Automotive Equipment Dispatcher, GS-2151-5. They believe the classification should be Public Safety Emergency Communications Specialist or Technician, GS-392-7. Prior to appealing to OPM, the appellants filed an appeal with the Department of Defense (DoD). In a letter to them dated November 17, 1997, DoD changed the title and series of their position to Automotive Equipment Dispatcher, GS-2151. The appellants have designated [one appellant] as their representative for purposes related to this appeal. We have accepted and decided their appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

This decision is based on a thorough review of all information submitted by both the appellants and their agency. The appellants and their supervisor have certified to the accuracy of their official position description (number FD 316). The appellants compare the classification of their position to the classification of several other higher graded positions at other Federal agencies which they contend perform similar work. Because of those similarities they feel that their jobs should be upgraded. The appellants also make various statements about their working conditions, including encountering life threatening situations, their organization and the agency's evaluation of their position. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of their position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing the appellants' current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellants' statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

The appellants also point out that their position requires specialized training in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), in handling emergency 9-1-1 telephone calls, and certification as Emergency Medical Dispatchers. They mention that an increase in automation used at the job site has required them to become more knowledgeable or proficient in the use of computers/software, and other equipment for communicating with the hearing impaired, e.g., Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/Telecommunications Type (TTY). Although the appellants have been trained in various tasks, in classifying positions we can consider training only insofar as it is required to perform current duties and responsibilities. To the extent that their training is needed for that purpose, we carefully considered it along with all other information furnished by the appellants and their agency. The appellants also believe that there are no set standards by which to classify emergency communications personnel, and state that emergency dispatchers "do not fit the mold for any of the positions within the Classification standards." Nevertheless, the adequacy of grade-level criteria in OPM standards is not appealable (Section 511.607 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations).

Position information

The appellants perform a variety of assignments related to receiving, prioritizing, documenting and processing emergency communications, and initiating or facilitating, monitoring and documenting responses to emergency requests for assistance. They are the main communications point of contact or liaison between the [appellants' organizational location] at the [appellants' installation], those requesting such assistance, and those who respond to the scene. The work is performed using a variety of communications, monitoring and recording devices including telephones (direct emergency lines as well as an enhanced 9-1-1 system), radios (Citizens Band and VHF), multiple function CRT's (including TDD/TTY for use in communicating with the hearing impaired), a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System, and a Dictaphone two-tier recording system. The appellants assist in coordinating adequate responses to incidents in progress. Main emphasis is in requests for fire, emergency medical, hazardous material, and search and rescue responses, although appellants might be assigned to assist with law enforcement operations in the event of a natural disaster. In addition, appellants inform or notify Military Police in certain instances such as when receiving requests for response to or direct reports of domestic abuse situations. Other duties performed include monitoring a variety of alarm systems, including required testing and maintenance, maintaining records, listings and logs, and assisting in training lower graded and fire suppression personnel as needed.

The appellants' position description and other material of record furnish more information on their duties and responsibilities and how they are carried out.

Series, title and standard determination

Various elements of the duties and responsibilities described in the appellants' position are referenced in more than one occupational series. When this is the case we make our decision based on consideration of many factors, particularly determining what are the paramount knowledges and skills required to perform the work.

The appellants refer to Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 6055.6, dated December 15, 1994, subject: DoD Fire and Emergency Services Program, and suggest this Instruction mandates classifying positions such as theirs as GS-392 or equivalent communications specialists. While this DoD Instruction may influence staffing decisions, it neither substitutes for nor supplements OPM classification standards and guides. In addition, the appellants refer to an outdated (TS-30, dated April 1978) classification standard for the Fire Prevention and Protection Series, GS-081, which addresses positions operating fire communications equipment. As stated in the current standard for the GS-081 series (dated September 1991), such positions are excluded from assignment to the GS-081 series when, like the appellants' position, they do not require specialized knowledge of firefighting techniques, equipment, and procedures.

According to the series definition for the General Telecommunications Series, GS-392 (dated November 1991), that series includes positions that involve performing or supervising miscellaneous telecommunications duties not provided for in other series. Positions in this series do not typically

involve substantial operation of telecommunications equipment to send and receive messages, but do require knowledge of telecommunications techniques to facilitate the flow of messages.

Our fact-finding disclosed that unlike positions classified in the GS-392 series, the appellants' position requires comprehensive knowledge of communications equipment, alarm equipment, radio usage and procedures to receive and send information. Indeed, the knowledge about and use of these tools enables the appellants to accomplish the primary purpose of the position which is to receive routine and emergency requests for assistance and dispatch the appropriate personnel and apparatus in response. Therefore, the GS-392 series is not appropriate.

Based on our review, we find that the paramount knowledge required of the appellants is that of vehicle dispatching procedures, requirements, and documentation, location and capabilities of available equipment, and location of all fire department equipment and personnel. Similar to dispatcher positions, the appellants must have complete geographical knowledge of the area served (roads, streets, buildings, organizations, ranges, training areas, impact areas, box alarms and housing areas) within the [appellants' organization] jurisdiction, and sufficient knowledge of surrounding jurisdictions to ensure proper coordination with other agencies.

Based on the preceding discussion, the appellants' position is best assigned to the Dispatching Series, GS-2151. As described in the series definition of the classification standard for the Dispatching Series, GS-2151, dated February 1963, that series includes all classes of positions the duties of which are to supervise or perform work involved in dispatching or scheduling motor vehicles, trains, aircraft or vessels used for the transportation of passengers, mail, equipment or supplies. The duties of these positions are primarily of an office or a clerical nature and involve assigning vehicles, keeping records and reports, and providing route and destination information and instructions to the drivers, engineers or pilots. Similar to positions classified in the GS-2151 series, the appellants dispatch motor vehicles. In their case, the resources dispatched are primarily for firefighting, rescue, medical and/or hazardous materials response. The equipment dispatched is automotive in nature, and self-contained. Of the suggested position titles listed in the GS-2151 standard, the most appropriate title for the appellants' position is Automotive Equipment Dispatcher.

The classification standard for the Dispatching Series, GS-2151, does not include grade-level criteria. When no directly applicable grade level criteria have been published, other standards that cover work as similar as possible are used for evaluation purposes based on cross-series comparison. Guidance within the standard for the GS-2151 series states that the key element in evaluating difficulty and responsibility of dispatcher positions is the extent of the knowledge which the dispatcher must have of the organization and the geographic area served, and of the characteristics and capability of the equipment being dispatched. The guidance provides that grade levels of these positions are also affected by the nature and finality of decisions made and actions taken, and by the nature and extent of control over the work of the operators of the dispatched equipment. The extent to which the dispatcher is required to determine the piece of available equipment best suited for the particular purpose requested and the extent to which the dispatcher is authorized to commit the use of vehicles for extended time and/or distance may be significant considerations.

As described in the standard for the Telecommunications Processing Series, GS-390 (dated November 1991), positions in that series include one grade interval work that involves performing or supervising the operation of equipment in transmitting, receiving, and relaying messages. The work requires knowledge of message-handling procedures and use of computer hardware and software or other equipment to send messages to their proper destinations. The basic purpose of work under this standard is to use a computer system dedicated to telecommunications to get messages promptly and smoothly to their proper destinations, using knowledge of computer operating and message processing procedures. Operators in the GS-390 series distribute incoming messages to the proper addressees, and apply knowledge of computer operation to identify and correct systems problems and operate peripheral devices through the console. This is similar to the primary purpose of the appellants' work which is to receive routine and emergency requests for assistance and dispatch the appropriate personnel and apparatus in response. In doing so the appellants' mission is accomplished through the use of telecommunications equipment including computers, radios, telephones and other devices. For all of these reasons we find the grade level criteria in the GS-390 standard appropriate for use in cross-series comparison for grading the appellants' position.

Grade determination

The standard for the Telecommunications Processing Series, GS-390 uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors for grade determination. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position, Level 1-4, 550 points

The knowledge required meets Level 1-4 (discussed on pages 6-7 of the standard). Similar to telecommunications equipment operators at that level working in a computerized telecommunications center serving a military installation, the appellants employ a comprehensive body of operational knowledge of the communications equipment, alarm equipment and systems, and radio usage and procedures. Appellants are required to have extensive knowledge of vehicle dispatching procedures, resources and capabilities, as well as detailed geographic knowledge of the jurisdiction served. They must have knowledge of the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) system. Appellants must maintain knowledge of standard fire protection and prevention theories, techniques and practices relative to various types of emergencies including hazardous material situations and medical emergencies. They clarify requests for assistance which are incomplete or unclear in order to transmit precise and accurate information to effectively and efficiently dispatch the appropriate response which can be critical to the safety of those responding and those requesting assistance. Similar to telecommunications equipment operators at this level, appellants must be able to assess incoming information (problems presented) in fire, medical and other emergency situations and quickly determine the proper course of action.

The knowledge required by the appellants' position falls short of Level 1-5 (pages 7-8). While the appellants are required to be competent and knowledgeable in basic and routine maintenance and operation of communications equipment, their duties do not require in-depth knowledge of computer operating systems, procedures and diagnostic or troubleshooting techniques and knowledge of precedent situations to isolate and solve unusual and complex problems, nor do they use nonstandard controls to isolate and solve problems.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-4 and 550 points are credited.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls, Level 2-2, 125 points

Supervisory controls over the appellants' position are properly credited at Level 2-2 (page 8). The appellants are provided general instructions concerning established practices, policies and procedures to cover anticipated situations, problems and special circumstances. They are expected to work independently within these guidelines and policies, and may make minor deviations as needed based on their experience. The appellants may be required to exercise judgement and quick decision making when dealing with public safety emergencies under stressful conditions without the benefit of time for supervisory consultation. The supervisor periodically observes work in process, receives feedback from service users and providers, and reviews completed work such as logs, reports and forms for clarity and content, adequacy of technical decisions, timeliness, and compliance with department policies, regulations and procedures.

The factor cannot be credited at Level 2-3 (pages 8-9) because the appellants do not normally encounter high priority, unusually complex problems that cannot be addressed through standard procedures.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-2 and 125 points assigned.

Factor 3, Guidelines, Level 3-2, 125 points

This factor is properly credited at Level 3-2 (page 9). Like that level, the appellants apply specific instructions on how the work is to be performed. Guidelines are extensive but standard and detailed, and cover all significant aspects of the position. Appellants select and apply the appropriate operating procedure, manual or guidelines to fit the situation.

This factor does not meet Level 3-3 of the standard (page 9). Unlike that level, the appellants' guidelines are specific and detailed, and the appellants are not required to modify or deviate from established policies and guidelines to solve unusual problems.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-2 and 125 points are credited.

Factor 4, Complexity, Level 4-2, 75 points

The complexity of the appellants' work is best credited at Level 4-2 (pages 9-10). Similar to that level, the appellants encounter a variety of problems and situations that may require immediate response under stressful conditions. They follow very detailed operational guidelines and use related sets of procedures to determine severity and priority of the situation, including where to route and relay the information and what resources and equipment to dispatch in response. Decisions depend on such things as priority of messages and capabilities of equipment and other resources.

The appellants' work does not meet Level 4-3 (page 10) of this factor because they are not required to solve unusual operational or system problems with nonstandard procedures, and they do not alter existing equipment configurations or operating procedures to make decisions.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-2 and 75 points are credited.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect, Level 5-2, 75 points

The scope and effect of the appellants' work meets Level 5-2 (pages 10-11). Like that level, the purpose of the work is to operate communications equipment to send and receive messages in accordance with established procedures. The work affects the accurate and reliable transmission of medical, fire, rescue and other types of emergency information.

This factor is not credited at Level 5-3 (page 11) because that level requires message traffic to a worldwide system.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-2 and 75 points are assigned.

Factors 6 and 7, Personal Contacts & Purpose of Contacts, Levels 6-2/7-a, 45 points

These two factors are analyzed and combined in the standard to produce the appropriate levels.

The appellants' personal contacts are credited at Level 6-2 (page 11) which is the highest level for this factor described in the standard. Similar to that level, contacts are with users of the telecommunications system outside the immediate center such as civilian and military employees and residents of the [installation], contractor personnel, and with employees and representatives of public safety agencies in neighboring jurisdictions and communities, state and local agencies, and other installations.

Purpose of contacts is credited at Level 7-a (page 11). The purpose of the contacts is to obtain and provide factual information necessary to initiate and complete appropriate responses to requests for assistance, report emergencies, and to conduct such activities as maintenance and training. The position does not meet Level 7-b (page 12) where contacts are made for the purpose of solving telecommunications or software problems.

Factors 6 and 7 are evaluated at Levels 6-2 and 7-a and a total of 45 points is credited.

Factor 8, Physical demands, Level 8-1, 5 points

This factor is credited at Level 8-1 (page 12) which is the only level for this factor described in the standard. Like that level the appellants’ work is usually sedentary while working at a CRT console, but may involve some standing and walking. This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1 and 5 points are credited.

Factor 9, Work environment, Level 9-1, 5 points

This factor is credited at Level 9-1 (page 12) which is the only level for this factor described in the standard. Like that level, the work is normally performed in an office or classroom environment that is temperature controlled and well-lighted. This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 and 5 points are credited.

Summary

We have evaluated the appellants’ position as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-2	75
6. Personal contacts and	6-2	
7. Purpose of contacts	7-a	45
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
Total points:		1005

The appellants’ position warrants 1005 total points. Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table on page four of the standard, the position is properly classified at GS-5.

Decision

The appellants’ position is properly classified as Automotive Equipment Dispatcher, GS-2151-5.