

CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Washington, D.C. 20240

APPELLANT:

[REDACTED]

POSITION:

Telecommunications Specialist, GS-391-11

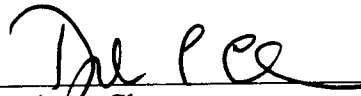
ORGANIZATION:

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico State Office

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

DECISION:

Telecommunications Specialist, GS-391-11
(Appeal denied)



Dolores Chacon
Associate Director of Personnel Policy

NOV 5 1998

DATE

Copy of Decision Transmitted to:

[REDACTED]

Concetta Stewart
BLM Personnel Officer

Wayne Upham
Personnel Officer, New Mexico State Office

INTRODUCTION

In an undated submission, [REDACTED] appealed the classification of his position to the Director of Personnel Policy, Department of the Interior. [REDACTED] is employed as a Telecommunications Specialist, GS-391-11, in the Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

He has appealed for an upgrade of his position to the GS-12 level.

This is the final administrative decision within the Department of the Interior. The appellant may appeal the classification of his position to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in accordance with the procedures described in Appendix 4 of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. Information about submitting an appeal to OPM is included in the decision letter to the appellant.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In deciding this appeal, we considered information from the following sources:

1. The appellant's letter of appeal and attachments, including the letter notifying him of his reassignment to the NMSO, SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action), current and previous position descriptions, and current and previous performance plans.
2. The material submitted by the Bureau of Land Management, including the appellant's current position description and an amendment dated September 1, 1998, evaluation statement, functional statement for the IRM Team and for the Systems Support Team, position listing for the Systems Support Team, position description and evaluation statement for the position held by the appellant's supervisor, [REDACTED], Supervisory Computer Specialist, and position description for the Telecommunications Manager position, held by [REDACTED]
3. Telephone audit of the appellant's position on October 16, 1998, with a follow-up conversation on October 26, and a telephone interview with [REDACTED] on October 26.

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellant performs analytical work involving the planning, procurement, installation, maintenance, and contract administration for radio communications in BLM offices throughout New Mexico and Oklahoma. In addition, he serves as the telecommunications specialist responsible for all radio, data, and telephone communications services for the Farmington Field Office.

The appellant's primary responsibility is to plan and oversee the conversion of the BLM statewide radio communications system in New Mexico to comply with the mandated APCO-25 radio standards by 2005. The appellant is also responsible for radio communications for BLM in Oklahoma, but the Oklahoma offices rely mainly on cellular telephone service. Therefore, the

primary APCO-25 project is in New Mexico. This responsibility includes creating and maintaining the necessary documentation; initiating and supervising contracts for the procurement, installation, and service of radio equipment; and cooperating with other Federal and state agencies in sharing radio sites, radio frequencies, and equipment installation and maintenance.

The appellant works closely with State and Bureau headquarters telecommunications managers in designing systems, and coordinates efforts with the NMSO and field office management in order to keep them informed on the status and progress of the APCO-25 project and other communications initiatives. He ensures that all communication systems are operated in accordance with BLM and Department of the Interior rules and regulations.

The appellant provides input for the annual work plan and the State telecommunications plan regarding projects in the State Office and all field offices. He provides the State Telecommunications Manager with information for various submissions to Bureau headquarters, and he provides input to the annual telecommunications budget for the State Office and field offices.

He contacts, dispatches, and oversees contractors who install or maintain telecommunications equipment to ensure that all telecommunications activities are accomplished in accordance with system specifications, appropriate safety regulations, and contractual requirements. In addition, he installs, troubleshoots, and maintains telecommunications equipment in the Farmington Field Office and radio equipment in mountaintop locations statewide when contract services are unavailable.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The position is properly placed in the Telecommunications Series, GS-391, which includes positions that involve technical and analytical work pertaining to the planning, development, acquisition, testing, integration, installation, utilization, or modification of telecommunications systems, facilities, services, and procedures.

Telecommunications Specialist is the title for all nonsupervisory positions in the GS-391 series involved in the technical work of developing specifications and planning telecommunications programs and projects involving the gathering of materials, coordinating schedules, testing equipment, services and software for performance acceptability, and related work connected with the acquisition, technical acceptance, installation, testing, modification, and replacement of telecommunications equipment, services, and systems. The appellant is assigned these types of responsibilities, and his position is correctly titled Telecommunications Specialist.

GRADE DETERMINATION

The appellant's position is graded by application of the position-classification standard for the

Telecommunications Series, GS-391. The standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions and/or the benchmarks. (The GS-391 standard does not contain benchmarks.) The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the lower point value must be assigned.

The appellant disagrees with the levels assigned by his personnel office for factors 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

The servicing personnel office has credited Level 1-7, but the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 1-8.

At Level 1-7, employees use knowledge of a wide range of communications concepts, principles, and practices or indepth knowledge in a particular functional area of telecommunications to accomplish work processes through the use of telecommunications devices, methods, services, and facilities. Knowledge at this level is also used to review, analyze, and resolve difficult and complex telecommunications problems.

Knowledge is also required of either a broad range or indepth specialized knowledge of some or all of telecommunications operating techniques, digital and analog communications requirements, local and wide area networking, and procedures used by federal and industry organizations. Also required is knowledge of agency policy and, in some cases, policies and practices of other agencies, and knowledge of sources of technical data necessary to evaluate alternative approaches for satisfying communications requirements. This knowledge is used to define, coordinate, plan, and satisfy user requirements for telecommunications equipment, systems, or services, or is used in reviewing, developing, or interpreting communications policies and procedures.

Some employees at this level use an indepth knowledge of contracting procedures and legal requirements to develop wording for proposals and contracts, review proposals for technical adequacy and vendor ability to perform, and/or to monitor vendor performance in fulfilling contractual requirements for equipment and services.

The appellant is required to use indepth knowledge of radio communications to accomplish work

processes through various of types of radio equipment, methods, services, and facilities. He must review and analyze the needs of the NMSO and field offices for radio communications and resolve difficult communications problems, in particular those involving implementation of the APCO-25 standards. By 2005, the radio communications system must be converted to narrowband analog or digital transmission mode from the current wideband analog mode. BLM and other agencies in the State will convert to the narrowband digital mode. The BLM system in New Mexico includes radios in six main offices, four suboffices, and 20 mountaintop sites throughout New Mexico, as well as mobile units and handheld units. To plan and carry out the conversion, the appellant must exercise knowledge of both digital and analog communications requirements and of procedures used by other organizations. He must know BLM and Interior policy and must be familiar with policy of other bureaus and agencies, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Forest Service, because of sharing arrangements that must be worked out as part of the conversion process. He also must know sources of technical data to evaluate options for equipment and site installation and placement. In addition, he must have an indepth knowledge of contracting procedures and legal requirements to develop requests for proposals, review proposals and vendor ability to perform, and to monitor contractor performance, because much of the installation and maintenance of the new systems will be performed by contractors. Thus, the appellant's position meets Level 1-7 in terms of the kinds of knowledge and skills needed and how the knowledge and skills are used in doing the work.

At Level 1-8, employees are expert in a major area of telecommunications specialization or have demonstrated mastery of general telecommunications policy, technology, and programs. They use comprehensive knowledge of communications policy requirements to function as technical authorities in assignments requiring the application of new theories, concepts, and developments to communications problems not susceptible to treatment by accepted methods, technology, or procedures. In addition to mastery of the specialty area, employees at this level use knowledge of their own and other telecommunications specialties to make decisions or recommendations to significantly change, interpret, or develop policies or programs.

In support of his request for credit at Level 1-8, the appellant states that he has extensive knowledge of all wireless systems from trunking and simple repeaters to satellite systems. He states that, while APCO-25 is a well-engineered system, there are questions on range, reliability, and interference. Installing such a system will require reliability in a number of other systems and extensive and complex planning in order to meet the safety and communications requirements of a number of user groups.

(The appellant also indicates that he teaches radio communications and Morse code to individuals seeking amateur radio licenses and leads an amateur radio license examination team. However, these are volunteer activities rather than duties of his official position. The GS-391 classification standard describes the knowledge requirements for the **position** occupied by the appellant, so his volunteer activities are not considered in evaluating this factor (or other factors). The other knowledge requirements he addresses, such as those concerning wireless systems and those involving aspects of the APCO-25 system, are germane to evaluation of the position.)

The appellant's assignments, including those involving the APCO-25 installation, do not involve the application of new theories, concepts, and developments to communications problems not susceptible to treatment by accepted methods, technology, and procedures. The appellant's work requires him to solve difficult technical problems in terms of site selection and equipment installation (e.g., some of the current 20 mountaintop sites may be moved or closed, depending on the coverage of the new system). However, these knowledge requirements are consistent with Level 1-7 (reviewing, analyzing, and resolving difficult and complex telecommunications problems). They involve installation of systems, the technical standards of which have already been developed by others. The appellant's difficult technical responsibilities involve planning how best to install the new system so that it will meet the communications requirements for BLM statewide through the use of accepted methods, technology, and procedures. He has significant expertise in wireless communication systems, but the position does not require the incumbent to function as an expert or technical authority. In addition, he does not have the policy and program responsibility described at Level 1-8. As is the case with the technical requirements of the position, the knowledge of policy required of the appellant is consistent with Level 1-7 (knowledge of agency policy to evaluate alternative approaches for satisfying communications requirements).

The illustrative assignments at Level 1-8 help to clarify the overall intent of this level. For example, specialists at this level make decisions and develop policies in very difficult assignments such as planning for significantly new or far-reaching telecommunications program requirements. Similarly, this level may involve planning, organizing, and directing studies to develop long-range studies and forecasts and advising top level agency telecommunications and subject-matter managers on applying new developments and advances in telecommunications. Specialists at Level 1-8 may also evaluate and make recommendations concerning overall plans and proposals for major agency and interagency telecommunications programs, or implement national level guidance in agency standards, guidelines, or policies for major telecommunications programs.

These illustrations clarify what is meant by serving as an expert and technical authority. The appellant's position does not require him to develop policy or to plan and direct studies to develop long-range studies and forecasts. He is responsible for carrying out the systems changes that have been studied and formulated into agency and Bureau policy by specialists at a higher level in the organization. Similarly, while he advises managers in the NMSO, he is not responsible for advising top level agency telecommunications and subject-matter managers on new developments in telecommunications. And he is not responsible for evaluating major agency and interagency programs or for translating national guidance into agency standards and guides. These responsibilities are all found in positions above the appellant's level in the Bureau or the Department. Thus, review of the illustrations supports the conclusion that the position does not meet Level 1-8.

Level 1-7

1250 points

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

At Level 2-4, the supervisor sets the overall objectives and, in consultation with the employee, determines the time frames and possible shifts in staff or other resources required. The employee, having developed expertise in a particular telecommunications specialty area or in general telecommunications requirements, is responsible for planning and carrying out the work, resolving most of the conflicts that arise, integrating and coordinating the work of others as necessary, and interpreting policy on his own initiative in terms of established objectives. The supervisor is kept informed of progress, potentially controversial matters or unusual conditions with far-reaching implications. Completed work is reviewed from an overall standpoint in terms of feasibility, compatibility with other work, or effectiveness in meeting requirements or achieving expected results.

The appellant receives administrative supervision from the Supervisory Computer Specialist, and works directly under the Telecommunications Manager who, as team leader, provides overall objectives and, with the appellant, develops priorities and deadlines. The appellant independently plans and carries out the work, resolves conflicts, interprets policy, coordinates and implements approved plans, and coordinates work with contractors, field offices, and other staff. His work is reviewed for compliance with policies, regulations, plans, and for effectiveness in meeting requirements and objectives. This level of supervisory controls matches Level 2-4 in terms of how the work is assigned, the responsibility for carrying out the work, and the review of the work.

At Level 2-5, the supervisor provides administrative direction with assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or objectives. Within these broad areas of direction the employee has responsibility for planning, designing, and carrying out major studies or projects, and for coordinating with experts both within and outside the organization. Results of the work are considered technically authoritative and are normally accepted without change. If work is reviewed, the review is concerned with matters such as fulfillment of objectives, effect of advice on the overall requirements, or precedents which might apply to other programs. Recommendations for new projects and alteration of objectives are usually evaluated for such considerations as availability of resources, broad goals, or national priorities.

The appellant's assignments are made in terms of overall objectives and time frames, rather than merely in terms of broadly defined missions. He does not function with a level of independence of action that is characterized by administrative supervision alone. He performs his assignments with a high level of independence, but not merely within the broad areas of assignment described at Level 2-5. Similarly, his work receives a closer review than is the case at Level 2-5, at which specialists' work is considered technically authoritative. The appellant performs his work with closer constraints than would be case if he functioned as a technical authority.

Level 2-4

450 points

Factor 3. Guidelines

The servicing personnel office has credited Level 3-3, but the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 3-5.

At Level 3-3, guidelines are in the form of agency policies and implementing directives, manuals, handbooks, and locally developed supplements to such guides, such as site plans, equipment specifications, software characteristics, and detailed work procedures and directives that supplement agency directions. The guidelines are not always applicable to specific conditions, or there are gaps in specificity in application to specific telecommunications requirements.

The appellant's guidelines consist of departmental and Bureau policies and procedures, Federal regulations, supplemental guides, and equipment manuals and handbooks. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) manual provides guidance and policy for a wide range of communications matters, such as site construction, radio equipment, and technical considerations such as grounding systems. It covers some additional aspects of APCO-25 systems, such as contracting and acquisition methods. The Interior and BLM manuals cover material that is similar to that in the NTIA manual. The appellant points out that specific instructions on how to acquire and maintain the radio system are not in the manuals and are left to his skills and judgment. For example, integration of digital and analog radios that will be necessary in the dual-use period during the conversion to the new system is not covered in the guides. In addition, maintenance procedures are not covered. These types of guides meet Level 3-3. That is, they include agency manuals with gaps in coverage. However, the nature of the guides used by the appellant is somewhat less comprehensive than that described at Level 3-3 because they include governmentwide manuals that are not supplemented by detailed work procedures.

In terms of the judgment needed to apply the guidelines, at Level 3-3, the employee uses judgment in interpreting, adapting, and applying guidelines, such as instructions for using particular versions of software, security requirements, or variations in available hardware. The employee independently resolves gaps or conflicts in guidelines according to project requirements, consistent with telecommunications program objectives. Because of the wide variation in the hardware for which the appellant is responsible, he must use judgment in interpreting and applying guidelines and in determining the appropriate course of action when there are gaps in the guidelines, such as those covering installation and maintenance of the new radio system. Therefore, while the appellant's position somewhat exceeds Level 3-3 in terms of the nature of the guidelines, his position meets Level 3-3 in terms of the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-4, guidelines provide a general outline of the concepts, methods, and goals of telecommunications programs. Those regularly applied at this level are not specific in how they are to be defined, applied, and monitored. In some cases, available guidelines have been purposely left open to local interpretation in order to allow for variations in local and remote

environmental conditions that affect the nature of communications systems designed to satisfy overall policy direction. Also included at this level are broad guidelines issued by other agencies such as the Federal Communications Commission.

In some respects, the guides available to the appellant are consistent with this level, as they include NTIA guidance, and the departmental and Bureau guides allow local interpretation in the installation of the new systems. However, the appellant's responsibilities for such aspects as planning and arranging the selection, funding, purchase, and installation of the new radio system are covered by more specific guides than those found at Level 3-4, i.e., those which merely outline program concepts and goals. The appellant's work involves tasks that are more standardized than those contemplated at Level 3-4. Level 3-3 includes situations in which there are gaps in the applicability of guidelines to specific requirements, as is the case for the appellant's position. Therefore, the nature of the guidelines does not meet Level 3-4.

In terms of the judgment needed, at Level 3-4 employees use initiative and resourcefulness in researching trends and patterns, to deviate from traditional methods, and to implement new and improved communications methods and procedures. Employees at this level establish criteria for identifying and analyzing developments in telecommunications technologies, and for measuring organizational effectiveness in achieving telecommunications objectives and goals. Assignments at this level may also include responsibility for developing guides for use by telecommunications specialists at the same and lower levels in the organization.

The appellant does not perform work which requires the use of this type of judgment in applying guidelines. Positions that are responsible for researching trends and patterns to implement new and improved communications methods and procedures generally have broader program responsibility than is found in the appellant's position. He does not, for example, develop guidelines for other telecommunications specialists. The appellant is responsible for a variety of types of communications duties, including those involving installation and maintenance of the APCO-25 system. References at Level 3-3 to gaps in guides, and to the requirement for using judgment in interpreting, adapting, and applying guides, are descriptive of the guidelines available for his use.

Level 3-3

275 points

Factor 4, Complexity

The servicing personnel office has credited Level 4-3, but the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 4-5.

At Level 4-4, employees perform assignments consisting of a variety of telecommunications duties involving many different and unrelated processes and methods applicable to well-established areas of telecommunications installation, operations, planning, and administration. Typically, such assignments involve broad telecommunications program requirements or a

specialized area, requiring analysis and testing of a variety of established techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives and arrive at decisions, conclusions, or recommendations. The results of analysis may have to be coordinated with other organizations and telecommunications systems to assure compatibility with existing and planned systems and demands on available resources.

The appellant performs a variety of telecommunications assignments involving many different and unrelated processes, including analysis, evaluation, installation, and maintenance of equipment. His testing, evaluation and analysis must be made to determine that the system will meet the needs of a number of different users, including those involved in grazing, oil and gas, archeological, law enforcement, fire suppression, and geodetic survey programs. He must evaluate a wide variety of aspects of the proposed system, including the type and cost of equipment, selection of contractors, site selection, propagation analysis, equipment installation, interconnection of existing and new systems during installation, and compatibility of multiple types of equipment, including base stations, repeaters, trunk systems, mobile equipment, and handheld units, as well as other equipment such as antennas, towers, and coaxial cable. His work must be coordinated with the telecommunications systems of other bureaus and agencies in the state, including BIA, the Forest Service, and New Mexico State agencies, and will involve mandated sharing arrangements for equipment installation and maintenance. Thus, the nature of the appellant's assignments meets Level 4-4.

In deciding what is to be done, at Level 4-4 the employee typically assesses situations complicated by conflicting or insufficient data which must be analyzed to determine the applicability of established methods, the need to digress from normal methods and techniques, the need to waive particular standards, or whether specific kinds of operating waivers can be justified. The APCO-25 system is characterized by insufficient data, thus increasing the difficulty in deciding what needs to be done in planning and installing the new radio system. The appellant must resolve questions of coverage, interference, and reliability because of the transition from wideband analog to narrowband digital mode, and the sharing arrangements that must be developed with other agencies add increased difficulty to the decision-making process. Methods and techniques that apply to the wideband analog system will not necessarily apply in the new system. Thus, this subfactor is evaluated at Level 4-4.

In terms of the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work, at Level 4-4 employees take actions based on their interpretation of considerable data and the application of established telecommunications methods, equipment, techniques, and objectives. The appellant must interpret extensive data regarding such matters as propagation, site selection, evaluation of whether to retain or replace existing antennas and other supporting equipment, interconnection of digital and analog equipment, compatibility of various types of equipment in six main offices, four suboffices, 20 remote sites, and in mobile installations, and integration of the system with those of other agencies. For the most part, established methods and techniques are used, although they may be different for analog and digital systems. Level 4-4 is credited for this subfactor.

At Level 4-5, employees perform assignments involving various projects, studies, or evaluations requiring the application of many different and unrelated processes, differing regulatory criteria and procedures, and significant departures from established practices. Typically, there are conflicting requirements, the problems are poorly defined or require projections based on variable information or technological development, or some degree of change must be anticipated in mission requirements, related telecommunications systems, or funding requirements. The work typically involves evaluating and introducing advanced equipment and techniques for which new criteria and guides must be developed.

The appellant's projects involve many different and unrelated processes, as credited at Level 4-4, but substantial complications from differing regulatory criteria and significant departures from established practice are not characteristic of most of his assignments. Digital systems are new to the NMSO, but the problems themselves are not poorly defined, as contemplated at this level. Furthermore, the appellant is not called upon to evaluate advanced equipment and develop new criteria or guides. Therefore, the nature of the appellant's assignment does not meet Level 4-5.

In deciding what needs to be done, at Level 4-5 employees reach decisions and plan actions to develop and implement new methods and techniques that satisfy policy and operational requirements. At this level, employees make recommendations for changes in basic policy issuances and for implementing instructions covering established communications techniques, practices, and methods based on personal analysis of very general policy directives and objectives. Many other factors may require extensive analysis and coordination to implement telecommunications plans and programs, such as conflicting requirements or objectives that may be imposed by other agencies.

The appellant is not called upon to develop and implement new methods and techniques in response to policy or other requirements, nor is he responsible for recommending policy changes or analyzing policies imposed on his agency by other agencies. These types of responsibilities are assigned to positions at a higher level than the appellant. Instead, he implements these types of decisions after they have been made by those at higher levels. Thus, this subfactor is not evaluated at Level 4-5.

In terms of the difficulty involved in performing the work, at Level 4-5 technical difficulty is exceptional, such as in developing new communications techniques, establishing criteria, or developing new information and approaches to solving problems. Employees who develop and interpret broad communications policies and regulations must consider the total range of existing policies, procedures, laws, and regulations in relation to telecommunications program goals and objectives.

The appellant's work involves assessing and installing a new system, but he does not develop new communications techniques, new approaches to solving problems, or communications policies or regulations. His responsibility lies in carrying out policy decisions made at higher levels rather than making the policy decisions or developing new communications techniques

and approaches himself. Therefore, this subfactor is not evaluated at Level 4-5.

The appellant's position fully meets Level 4-4 in terms of the nature of the assignments, the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, and the difficulty involved in performing the work.

Level 4-4

225 points

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

The servicing personnel office has credited Level 5-3, but the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 5-4.

At Level 5-3, the scope of the work involves resolving a variety of conventional telecommunications problems, questions, or situations, such as those in which the employee is responsible for monitoring established communications systems and programs, or performing independent reviews and recommending actions involving well-established criteria, methods, techniques, and procedures. The purpose of the appellant's work is to assure effective development and use of telecommunications systems throughout the State, including the new APCO-25 system. The problems that he must resolve, such as site selection and equipment compatibility and maintenance, are conventional ones. Thus, the scope of the work meets Level 5-3.

In terms of effect, at Level 5-3, work products, advice, and assistance affect the efficiency and operational effectiveness of established telecommunications systems, and contribute to the effectiveness of newly introduced programs and facilities requiring telecommunications support. The effect of the work is primarily local in nature, although, at this level, some systems may be part of multi facility or nationwide/international networks with interlocking telecommunication requirements. The appellant's work affects the design and operation of the radio system, which has statewide coverage. The system affects the accomplishment of the mission of the Bureau's various programs in the State, including oil and gas, grazing, archeology, fire suppression, and geodetic surveys. Therefore, the effect of the work meets Level 5-3.

At Level 5-4, the work involves investigating and analyzing a variety of unusual telecommunications problems, questions, or conditions associated with formulating projects or studies to substantially alter major telecommunications systems, or establishing criteria in an assigned area of specialization (e.g., establishing telecommunications operating instructions for wide area computer networks in a number of different locations), or evaluating the effectiveness of existing voice, data, and/or video systems. The purpose of the appellant's work is not consistent with this level. He does not formulate projects or studies or establish criteria, and he does not develop operating instructions for system implementation. Furthermore, the State's communications system, while exceeding the local coverage referred to in Level 5-3, is not a "major telecommunications system."

At Level 5-4, the work affects telecommunications operations, installation, and maintenance practices in a number of functional operations within the organization and, to a lesser extent, in vendor operations. It contributes to developing solutions to telecommunications problems and questions, and in developing alternatives and options to meet requirements in a variety of physical and environmental circumstances. Recommendations and technical interpretations affect the level of telecommunications funding required to meet program objectives in subject matter or administrative programs or services. Program and project proposals frequently cut across component or geographic lines within the agency (e.g., across bureaus, commands, regions) and may also affect the budgets, programs, and interests of other Federal agencies or private industrial firms.

The appellant's work affects the operational effectiveness and funding of the Bureau's communications systems in the State, but does not have the broader effect on telecommunications practices in a number of different operations. In addition, he primarily implements solutions to telecommunications problems, rather than developing alternatives and options for such systems. The systems for which he is responsible are within the State and do not meet the broad coverage found at this level, i.e., across bureaus or regions. The cooperative work with other bureaus and agencies will save money for all involved, but he does not make decisions that affect other agencies' budgets and programs. Such decisions, involving cooperative arrangements, are made at higher levels. Because Level 5-3 is fully met in terms of both scope and effect, and Level 5-4 is not met in terms of either aspect of this factor, Level 5-3 is credited.

Level 5-3

150 points

Factor 6, Personal Contacts and Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

The servicing personnel office has assigned Level 2/b to this combined factor, but the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 3/c.

At Level 6-3, contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting. Typical contacts are with telecommunications specialists and managers from other agencies or with contractors. The appellant's contacts are with Bureau staff in the field offices, NMSO, and Bureau headquarters, and with vendors, contractors, and representatives from other Federal agencies. Contacts with contractors typically involve installation and maintenance of equipment, i.e., determining whether they can provide work to meet the required standards and overseeing their work to ensure that it is accomplished in accordance with system specifications, safety regulations, and contractual requirements. Contacts with telecommunications specialists from BIA, Forest Service, the State of New Mexico, and other agencies are made regarding arrangements to share site, equipment, and maintenance costs. These types of contacts are with individuals outside the Bureau and are not established on a routine basis. Therefore, Level 6-3 is met.

At Level 6-4, contacts are with high-ranking officials from outside the employing agency at national or international levels in highly unstructured settings. The appellant does not have such contacts.

In terms of purpose, at Level 7-b, contacts are to plan, coordinate work, or advise on efforts and resolve operating problems by influencing or motivating individuals or groups who are working toward mutual goals and who have basically cooperative attitudes. The appellant's contacts are made to resolve communications problems, explain complex equipment or technical processes, monitor contracts and agreements for compliance, and discuss and arrange sharing of site, equipment, and maintenance costs with representatives of other agencies. Such contacts match Level 7-b in that they are to plan and coordinate work, provide advice, and resolve problems with individuals who are basically cooperative.

At Level 7-c, contacts are to influence, motivate, interrogate, or control persons or groups who may be fearful, skeptical, uncooperative, or dangerous. The employee at this level must be skillful in approaching the individual or group in order to obtain the desired effect, such as gaining compliance with established policies and regulations by persuasion or negotiation. The appellant seldom has such contacts. He may be called upon on some occasions to motivate contractors or specialists from other agencies, but such individuals are not normally so uncooperative as would be the case at this level because they are working toward the same goals as the appellant. Therefore, Level 7-c is not met and Level 7-b is credited.

Level 6-3/7-b

110 points

Factor 8, Physical Demands and Factor 9, Work Environment

The servicing personnel office has assigned Level 1/b to this combined factor, but the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 2/b.

At Level 8-1, the work requires no special physical demands. It is sedentary and is performed in a comfortable posture. It may involve some walking, standing, bending, or carrying of light items. The appellant's work is mostly sedentary, although some of the physical demands described at this level are present in his work when he visits repeater sites. His work no longer involves tower climbing due to changes in Bureau policy. He seldom lifts heavy objects, such as radios. The work that he performs does not meet the physical demands found at Level 8-2, at which work requires physical exertion such as long periods of standing, walking over rough or uneven surfaces, recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching, and recurring lifting of moderately heavy items. Level 8-1 is met.

At Level 9-b, the work is performed around moving parts, carts, or machines; at construction or other work sites where equipment is being installed and/or removed requiring the wearing of hardhats, safety shoes, or similar situations involving moderate risks or discomforts that require special safety precautions such as wearing protective clothing or gear, such as masks, boots,

goggles, gloves, or shields. The appellant wears protective clothing when visiting remote sites in the winter and wears a hardhat around construction sites. He also must use gloves, rubber aprons, and face shields when working with batteries in the sites in the Farmington area. These types of risks and discomforts are consistent with Level 9-b, which is the higher of the two levels described in the standard. The characteristics of the appellant's work environment do not exceed this level in any aspect.

Level 8-1/9-b

25 points

EVALUATION SUMMARY

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
1 Knowledge Required by the Position	1-7	1250
2 Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3 Guidelines	3-3	275
4 Complexity	4-4	225
5 Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6/7 Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts	6/7-3b	110
8/9 Physical Demands/Work Environment	8/9-1b	25
Total		2485 points

The total number of points credited, 2485, converts to a grade of GS-11 (2355-2750) according to the grade conversion table in the standard.

DECISION

For the reasons given above, the authorized classification of the appealed position is Telecommunications Specialist, GS-391-11.