

## § 551.201

among a broad range of possible actions.

*Work of a specialized or technical nature* means work which requires substantial specialized knowledge of a complex subject matter and of the principles, techniques, practices, and procedures associated with that subject matter field. This knowledge characteristically is acquired through considerable on-the-job training and experience in the specialized subject matter field, as distinguished from professional knowledge characteristically acquired through specialized academic education.

*Workday* means the period between the commencement of the principal activities that an employee is engaged to perform on a given day and the cessation of the principal activities for that day. The term is further explained in § 551.411.

*Worktime*, for the purpose of determining FLSA exemption status, means time spent actually performing work. This excludes periods of time during which an employee performs no work, such as standby time, sleep time, meal periods, and paid leave.

*Worktime in a representative workweek* means the average percentages of worktime over a period long enough to even out normal fluctuations in workloads and be representative of the job as a whole.

*Workweek* means a fixed and recurring period of 168 hours—seven consecutive 24-hour periods. It need not coincide with the calendar week but may begin on any day and at any hour of a day. For employees subject to part 610 of this chapter, the workweek shall be the same as the administrative workweek defined in § 610.102 of this chapter.

*Workweek basis* means the unit of time used as the basis for applying overtime standards under the Act and, for employees under flexible or compressed work schedules, under 5 U.S.C. 6121(6) or (7). The Act takes a single workweek as its standard and does not permit averaging of hours over two or more weeks, except for employees engaged in fire protection or law enforce-

## 5 CFR Ch. I (1–1–01 Edition)

ment activities under section 7(k) of the Act.

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### Subpart B—Exemptions and Exclusions

SOURCE: 62 FR 67247, Dec. 23, 1997, unless otherwise noted.

#### § 551.201 Agency authority.

The employing agency may designate an employee FLSA exempt only when the agency correctly determines that the employee meets one or more of the exemption criteria of this subpart and such supplemental interpretations or instructions issued by OPM.

#### § 551.202 General principles governing exemptions.

In all exemption determinations, the agency must observe the following principles:

(a) Each employee is presumed to be FLSA nonexempt unless the employing agency correctly determines that the employee clearly meets one or more of the exemption criteria of this subpart and such supplemental interpretations or instructions issued by OPM.

(b) Exemption criteria must be narrowly construed to apply only to those employees who are clearly within the terms and spirit of the exemption.

(c) The burden of proof rests with the agency that asserts the exemption.

(d) An employee who clearly meets the criteria for exemption must be designated FLSA exempt. If there is a reasonable doubt as to whether an employee meets the criteria for exemption, the employee should be designated FLSA nonexempt.

(e) There are groups of General Schedule employees who are FLSA nonexempt because they do not fit any of the exemption categories. These groups include the following:

(1) Nonsupervisory General Schedule employees in equipment operating and protective occupations, and most clerical occupations (see the definition of *participation in the executive or administrative functions of a management official* in subpart A of this part);

(2) Nonsupervisory General Schedule employees performing technician work in positions properly classified below GS-9 (or the equivalent level in other comparable white-collar pay systems) and many, but not all, of those positions properly classified at GS-9 or above (or the equivalent level in other comparable white-collar pay systems); and

(3) Nonsupervisory General Schedule employees at any grade level in occupations requiring highly specialized technical skills and knowledges that can be acquired only through prolonged job training and experience, such as the Air Traffic Control series, GS-2152, or the Aircraft Operations series, GS-2181, unless such employees are performing predominantly administrative functions rather than the technical work of the occupation.

(f) Although separate criteria are provided for the exemption of executive, administrative, and professional employees, those categories are not mutually exclusive. All exempt work, regardless of category, must be considered. The only restriction is that, when the requirements of one category are more stringent, the combination of exempt work must meet the more stringent requirements.

(g) Failure to meet the criteria for exemption under what might appear to be the most appropriate criteria does not preclude exemption under another category. For example, an engineering technician who fails to meet the professional exemption criteria may be performing exempt administrative work, or an administrative officer who fails to meet the administrative criteria may be performing exempt executive work.

(h) Although it is normally feasible and more convenient to identify the exemption category, this is not essential. An exemption may be based on a combination of functions, no one of which constitutes the primary duty, or the employee's primary duty may involve two categories which are intermingled and difficult to segregate. This does not preclude designating an employee FLSA exempt, provided the work as a whole clearly meets the other exemption criteria.

(i) The designation of an employee as FLSA exempt or nonexempt ultimately rests on the duties actually performed by the employee.

#### **§ 551.203 Exemption of General Schedule employees.**

(a) *GS-4 or below.* Any employee in a position properly classified at GS-4 or below (or the equivalent level in other comparable white-collar pay systems) is nonexempt, unless the employee is subject to the foreign exemption in § 551.209.

(b) *GS-5 or above.* Any employee in a position properly classified at GS-5 or above (or the equivalent level in other comparable white-collar pay systems) is exempt only if the employee is an executive, administrative, or professional employee as defined in this subpart, unless the employee is subject to § 551.208 (the effect of performing temporary work or duties on FLSA exemption status) or § 551.209 (the foreign exemption).

#### **§ 551.204 Exemption of Federal Wage System employees.**

(a) *Nonsupervisory.* A nonsupervisory employee in the Federal Wage System or in other comparable wage systems is nonexempt, unless the employee is subject to § 551.208 (the effect of performing temporary work or duties on FLSA exemption status) or § 551.209 (the foreign exemption).

(b) *Supervisory.* A supervisory employee in the Federal Wage System or in other comparable wage systems is exempt only if the employee is an executive employee as defined in § 551.205, unless the employee is subject to § 551.208 (the effect of performing temporary work or duties on FLSA exemption status) or § 551.209 (the foreign exemption).

#### **§ 551.205 Executive exemption criteria.**

An *executive employee* is a supervisor or manager who manages a Federal agency or any subdivision thereof (including the lowest recognized organizational unit with a continuing function) and customarily and regularly directs the work of subordinate employees and meets both of the following criteria:

(a) *Primary duty test.* The primary duty test is met if the employee—