



United States  
Office of Personnel Management

# **DIGEST OF SIGNIFICANT CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS AND OPINIONS**

**No. 11**  
**April 1988**  
**AR-100**

**Office of Merit Systems**  
**Oversight & Effectiveness**

[Main Menu](#)   [Help Screen](#)

## Note to Readers

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at [adomsoe@opm.gov](mailto:adomsoe@opm.gov) [fedclass\\_appeals@opm.gov](mailto:fedclass_appeals@opm.gov).

Digest issues are also available on the Office of Personnel Management's website and electronic bulletin board. The website address is <http://www.opm.gov/classapp> and the ~~electronic bulletin board is OPM ONLINE. Using a modem, dial OPM ONLINE at 202-606-4800. Long distance telephone charges may apply.~~ [OPM ONLINE was discontinued July 1999. The *Digest* can also be found on OPM's CD-ROM entitled General Schedule Position Classification and Federal Wage System Job Grading Standards, which is issued by OPM's Classification Programs Division.]

**Standard:** Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide,  
Part II

**Factor:** Managerial Aspects

**Issue:** Credit for staff supervision or technical  
supervision GS-0460

---

**This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.**

---

**Standard:** Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide,  
Part II

**Factor:** Factor II - Nature and extent of supervisory  
responsibility

**Issue:** Counting subordinate supervisors GS-0460

---

**This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.**

---

**Standard:** [Secretary Series, GS-0318](#) (January 1979)

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Type of work properly included in the GS-0318 Series

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

In an appeal to an Office of Personnel Management region, an appellant requested that her position be classified in the Secretary Series rather than the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-0303. The appellant's position was the only clerical position at a lock and dam facility. The only other positions at the facility were ten lock and dam operators, three lock and dam equipment mechanics, a foreman, and a lockmaster. The appellant's major duties included such clerical functions as typing a variety of reports and correspondence, screening incoming correspondence, responding to telephone inquiries, establishing and maintaining files, and requisitioning supplies. In addition, she communicated with and relayed instructions to crews of commercial and private vessels and to lock personnel to facilitate transit through the locks. She maintained logs of lock and dam operations, encoded river traffic data into the installation's computer system, prepared one-time and recurring reports on lock and dam operations, and kept employees informed of changes in such procedural matters as pay and leave.

### **Resolution**

The primary issue was whether the appellant's position was secretarial or not. The appellant contended that the position belonged in the GS-0318 Series, which requires that any position in the series "must be the principal office clerical or administrative support position in the office, operating independently of any other such position in the office. The duties require a knowledge of clerical and administrative procedures and requirements, various office skills, and the ability to apply such skills in a way that increases the effectiveness of others. The duties do not require a technical or professional knowledge of a specialized subject-matter area."

It was clear that the appellant's position was the only office clerical or administrative support position in the office, operating independently of any other such position in the immediate office. However, the appellant's position did not meet the other requirements for inclusion in the GS-0318 Series. Her work did not have as its purpose assisting the work of one or more persons in an organization. Rather, her work was principally to perform the specialized clerical work associated with the operations of the locks and dam.

Furthermore, the staffing of the project office of which the appellant's locks and dam were a part and the functions of the locks and dam provided little opportunity for the performance of secretarial work. The project office had a clerical position that was the focal point for clerical and administrative support activities of all of the locks and dams within the project office. There was no comprehensive range of clerical or administrative support duties to be performed at the appellant's locks and dam. Finally, the work of the locks and dam did not require the type of coordination of clerical and administrative support duties that is typical of positions in the Secretary Series. The focus of the appellant's position was the performance of a wide range of tasks, not the coordination of those tasks that is typical of positions in the Secretary Series. In short, the organization of work in the project office and at the locks and dam precluded the possibility of a secretary position at the locks and dam.

The appellant's position involved support work that is specialized to the operation and maintenance of the locks and dam. On this basis it was analogous to positions for which there are established subject-matter series and which are explicitly excluded from the Secretary Series, GS-0318. Because there was no subject-matter series for the appellant's work nor did one provide an adequate avenue of recruitment for the mixture of duties performed, the appellant's position was found to be properly classified in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-0303. The grade of the position was determined by the application of the General Grade Evaluation Guide for Nonsupervisory Clerical Positions.

**Standard:** N/A

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Small Shop Chiefs

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in a job grading appeal decided by an Office of Personnel Management region and reconsidered by the Classification Appeals Office. The question was whether a Federal Wage System position with "in charge" or quasi-supervisory responsibility for a small shop could be graded higher than the full performance level of work under the position's supervision.

### **Resolution**

The appeal concerned a Medical Equipment Repairer, WG-4805-12, who was responsible for the medical equipment repair function at a medical facility and supervised two other Medical Equipment Repairer positions, WG-4805-11. The position was excluded from coverage by the Job Grading Standard for Supervisors and therefore could not be titled or graded as a foreman because it involved supervision of only two employees performing trades and labor work, rather than the minimum of three such employees.

Because the appellant did not perform nonsupervisory medical equipment repair duties, except on an emergency or incidental basis, it was inappropriate to grade his position by application of the standard for Medical Equipment Repairer, WG-4805. It was determined that the criteria used to grade the position must consider the grade-level worth of program responsibility and oversight and review of the work of other employees.

The following characteristics of the position were considered sufficient for grading the position one grade above the level of work for which the appellant was responsible:

1. Two other employees were assigned to the shop on a permanent basis.
2. The position had sole responsibility for the shop, which was a functional entity, and was completely accountable for all actions concerning the operation of the shop. The appellant was held fully responsible for subordinates including the quality and quantity of their work. Planning, work direction and administration, though somewhat limited by the size of the shop, were as depicted in the Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS) for foremen having the full range of supervisory responsibility.

3. The appellant had no supervisor who could provide technical assistance in planning and overseeing the day-to-day work of the shop.

These characteristics are analogous to a concept described in the Job Grading Standard for Pest Controller, WG-5026. It was recognized that the appellant's work in medical equipment repair bore no apparent resemblance to that of a Pest Controller. In applying the Job Grading Standard for Pest Controller, however, we were showing that the appellant's work, though largely dissimilar to the work described in the WG-5026 standard, nevertheless corresponded to it in some respects.

In particular, the concept described in the Pest Controller standard which is analogous to the appellant's job is that of additional grade-level credit for program responsibility. In this standard, jobs with program responsibility are one grade higher than the full performance level in the occupation. The WG-10 Pest Controller, unlike the full performance WG-9 Pest Controller, is responsible for a complete facility pest control program in installations such as hospitals or smaller military facilities which require a complete pest management program but are not large enough to require a full-time technical supervisor. Pest controllers who must have the skill and knowledge found at the full performance level (WG-9) as well as the skill and knowledge required for planning, accomplishing, and maintaining a facility pest management program, and who have the responsibility for serving as an installation's principal pest controller with only administrative supervision, are graded one level above the full performance level (WG-10).

Accordingly, the principle derived from the Pest Controller standard is that an extra grade may be added to Federal Wage System positions above the full performance level if, in addition to equivalent skill, knowledge, and responsibility to those found at the full performance level, they supervise one or two other employees and have full program responsibility in the absence of any technical supervision.



**Standard:** Pneudraulic Systems Mechanic, [WG-8255](#)  
(December 1986) versus WG-4800 Family

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Series determination

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's processing of a classification appeal. The position involved maintenance (including refills) and repairs of a variety of fire extinguishers. The agency classified the position as Fire Extinguisher Repairer, WG-4801-6. The appellant contended that the position should be allocated to the WG-8255 Series, Pneudraulic Systems Mechanic.

### **Resolution**

The Pneudraulic Systems Mechanic occupation includes jobs involved in the maintenance, modification, and repair of hydraulic and/or pneumatic systems and components that actuate mechanisms or pro- produce, control, and regulate fluid flow. The work requires: a knowledge of the physical principles governing the behavior of fluids (liquids and gases) as they pertain to hydraulic and pneumatic systems or components; knowledge of basic electrical and mechanical principles; the ability to use technical manuals and schematics to test or isolate malfunctions in hydraulic and pneumatic systems or components; and the skill to effect modification, repairs, or the complete disassembly and overhaul of such devices.

A broader look at the WG-8200 Fluid Systems Maintenance Family shows that the most characteristic knowledges and skills required by the work are those of controlling leakage of fluid under pressure, controlling vibration and heating in high speed turbine operation, and understanding the principles, schematics, and sensing mechanisms involved in regulating fluid flow.

The incumbent of the appealed position performed repairs, modifications, and tests of carbon dioxide, Haylon, and dry powder type fire extinguishers. He also emptied, refilled, weighed, sealed, and performed hydrostatic tests on these fire extinguishers.

Some of the components of fire extinguishers are associated with the work of the WG-8200 family. They contain valves, inlet housings, dial pressure gauges, etc. Similar to the WG-8200 family, the work involves the containment of gases under pressure and controlling

leakage. However, this requires skills and knowledges typical of only one aspect of the several most characteristic knowledges and skills required by the WG-8200 family.

The fluid systems that are covered by the WG-8200 family store, supply, distribute, and move gases or liquids in regulated amounts primarily to produce power, transmit force, and pressurize, cool and condition cabins. Typical of such devices are pumps, governors, regulators, flow control valves, regular valves, air turbines, actuating and slave cylinders, etc. Fire extinguishers of the types repaired and maintained by this position do not constitute a fluid system or, more specifically, a pneumatic system as covered by the WG-8200 family or the WG-8200 series. The WG-8200 family was, therefore, determined to be inappropriate for assignment of the position.

Since there is no other established subject-matter family coverage for work involving these types of fire extinguishers, the decision was that the General Equipment Maintenance Family, WG-4800, was an appropriate family. It includes occupations involved in the maintenance or repair of equipment, machines, or instruments which are not coded to other job families because the equipment is not characteristically related to one of the established subject-matter areas such as electronics, transportation, engines, aircraft, ordnance, etc. Further, because a separate series has not been established for this line of work, the general code (01) for the family is proper. The decision assigned the position to the WG-4801 series. This was in agreement with the agency's decision. Grade level determination was made by reference to the standards for Bowling Equipment Repairer, WG-4819, and Small Arms Repairer, WG-6610, both of which provided points of similarity and contrast for grading purposes. The WG-6 level assigned by the agency was also confirmed.

**Standard:** N/A

**Factor:** N/A

**Issue:** Use of Production Facilitating Pay System

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

The issue of pay system determination arises periodically (see Digest 7, August 1985). This particular issue arose when an appellant sought to have his position classified in the Production Facilitating Pay System (WD) rather than the General Schedule. The appellant's argument was that key Level Definition #9 for Maintenance Scheduler contains narrative which is the same as the wording in his position description.

### **Resolution**

The Office of Personnel Management could not agree with the appellant's appeal for inclusion in the Production Facilitating Pay System for the following reasons:

- a. Key Level Definitions are not classification or grading standards. A classification determination should not be made to change a position from the Classification Act (General Schedule) to the "special production facilitating pay plan," until it is first determined that the position is subject to the Federal Wage System. If it is decided that the position is not subject to the Federal Wage System, the position cannot be subject to a sub-pay plan of that system, e.g., the "production facilitating pay plan."
- b. In making a pay system determination such as this one, it is necessary to make the distinction between General Schedule "production knowledge" versus wage grade "trades and crafts" skills and knowledge. General Schedule production knowledge, (e.g., involving work flow, materials needed, and amount of time needed to accomplish work) is distinct from wage grade "trade knowledge" which requires the ability to perform trades and craft work. General Schedule production knowledge requires a practical knowledge of a variety of shop operations and the ability to translate that knowledge into plans, estimates, and work sequence applications to the services needed. This type of knowledge can be gained on the job in such General Schedule occupations as engineering technician, production controller, industrial engineering technician, and construction inspector as well as from wage grade occupations.

- c. A position is exempt from the General Schedule pay system only if (a) its primary duty or responsibility requires trades or crafts experience and knowledge, and (b) that requirement is paramount. These criteria are not met in this case because: (1) while the agency typically limited recruitment from among journeyman-level carpenters, plumbers, or electricians, the position also required scheduling journeyman-level trade and craft work involving the sheet metal, welding, air conditioning, and masonry trades. Journeyman-level experience in one trade does not qualify someone to perform work in another trade. The capability of scheduling work in trades in which the incumbent had little experience or training showed that a person occupying the position could accomplish the scheduling work without craft experience but with a practical knowledge of shop operations (an appropriate requirement for a General Schedule position); (2) the availability of such guidelines as engineered performance standards and historical data was such that an employee without trade experience could perform the assigned duties and responsibilities; (3) the skill and ability to bring together a number of people (i.e., shop foremen, planner/estimators, and material coordinators) to schedule jobs were more indicative of General Schedule work than Federal Wage System work.

Based on the above rationale, it was concluded that this position was not subject to the Federal Wage System and could not be subject to the "production facilitating pay plan." The position was correctly classified in the General Schedule.