

Federal Wage System Job Grading Standard for Laboring, 3502

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WORK COVERED

This standard covers nonsupervisory work that primarily requires physical effort and ability to perform laboring duties that involve little or no specialized skill or prior work experience. The work typically involves duties such as loading and unloading trucks; moving office furniture, equipment, and supplies by hand or with various moving devices (e.g., dollies and/or hand trucks); mowing lawns and trimming shrubs; washing vehicles; and clearing and digging ditches. These duties are commonly found in a variety of work situations such as roads and grounds maintenance, industrial operations, warehouses, office buildings, printing facilities, supply centers, and production areas.

This standard cancels and supersedes the Job Grading Standards for Laborer, 3502, issued in September 1968.

WORK NOT COVERED

This standard does not cover work that primarily involves:

- Sorting, receiving, and issuing laundry. (See [Job Grading Standard for Laundry Working, 7304.](#))
- Operating forklifts to move, stack and unstack, and load and unload materials. (See [Job Grading Standard for Fork Lift Operating, 5704.](#))
- Gardening procedures that require knowledge of and skill in growing and tending lawns, flowers, shrubs, and trees. (See [Job Grading Standard for Gardening, 5003.](#))
- Operating motor vehicles (e.g., automobiles, trucks, vans, buses) to transport cargo, fuel or passengers. (See [Job Grading Standard for Motor Vehicle Operating, 5703.](#))
- Warehousing duties that require knowledge of storage, restocking, and issue procedures. (See [Job Grading Standard for Materials Handling, 6907.](#))
- Sweeping, scrubbing, and waxing floors; washing windows and walls; dusting and polishing furniture and fixtures; and emptying waste cans. (See [Job Grading Standard for Custodial Working, 3566.](#))
- Operating wheel-mounted tractors having powered take-off and towed or attached equipment such as brush hogs, sprayers, and ganged grass-cutting devices. (See [Job Grading Standard for Tractor Operating, 5705.](#))
- Preparing and serving food. (See [Job Grading Standard for Food Service Working, 7408.](#))

- Applying chemical materials to control and prevent insect and plant pests when such work requires knowledge of effective and environmentally sound preventive measures and techniques of pest control. (See [Job Grading Standard for Pest Controlling, 5026](#).)

TITLES

Jobs graded by this standard are titled *Laborer*.

GRADE LEVELS

This standard describes work typical of grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. It does not describe all possible work situations. If work performed substantially exceeds the skills, knowledge, and work requirements described in this standard, it should be *graded* using the most appropriate job grading standard that describes the work being performed. The work should be *titled* according to the primary purpose of the position. Some positions may be graded by one standard (because of the highest level of work performed) and titled in accordance with another (based on the primary purpose of the work).

NOTES TO USERS

Laborers may be required to perform work incidental to many different occupations, but their work does not require the minimum levels of skills and knowledge required for classification in those occupations. For example, a laborer may be required to lay sod, plant flowers and shrubs, and spray weed-controlling chemicals on a seasonal basis. The limited nature of these duties would not meet the minimum skills and knowledge requirements for the overall coverage in the Gardening, Pest Controlling, or other job grading standards. The limited aspects of these and other similar duties require that such work be evaluated and titled using this job grading standard.

There may be other work situations where laborers are performing incidental duties that may meet the minimum level of skills and knowledge required in other job grading standards. The work may be at the same or at different grade levels. For example, in some work situations, laborers may be required to operate motor vehicles to transport other laborers and/or materials to work sites. Work of this nature is typically performed by laborers at higher grade levels and is considered an ancillary duty in support of the primary purpose of the work. The limited operation of motor vehicles in direct support of laboring duties on Federal facilities *may* have no grade level impact. It may be at the same grade level as the laboring duties.

However, when the minimum skill and knowledge required to operate a motor vehicle exceeds the grade level determined by applying this job grading standard, and such ancillary duties are performed on a regular and recurring basis, the *grade level* of the work should be evaluated using the [Job Grading Standard for Motor Vehicle Operators, 5703](#), and titled according to the primary purpose of the work. When incidental or ancillary duties performed on a regular and

recurring basis support a grade level higher than that of the primary purpose of the work, a parenthetical title may be used to reflect the basis for such grade determination and to clearly indicate the nature of the work. For example, laboring work that requires the operation of a motor vehicle at the grade 5 level in support of the laboring duties should be titled and coded as Laborer, 3502, grade 5 (Motor Vehicle Operating).

In shops and industrial work situations, there may be questions regarding jobs that are in direct support of journey level workers as to whether such work should be evaluated as a "helper" or laborer. The following outlines the criteria to be considered in making classification decisions on such jobs.

- X If the job serves as a trainee level, where the worker is given on-the-job instruction and is expected to acquire skills and knowledge regarding basic work processes, specific tools and materials, and terminology of the occupation, it should be titled, coded, and graded using the standard for the occupation (e.g., Materials Handler, Plumber, etc.) or the Trades Helper standard with the proper occupational definition.
- X If the job requires knowledge of the specific tools and materials, will enable the worker to advance in the occupation (e.g., Materials Handler, Electrician, Carpenter), the job should be titled, coded, and graded using the standard for the occupation, or the Trades Helper standard with the proper occupational definition.
- X If the duties can be done with little or no prior training or experience, and involve very little or no knowledge of specific trade practices, etc., the job is a laborer, even if permanently assigned to a shop, a warehouse, etc. Such a job should be titled, coded, and graded using this Laborer standard.

Note -- the [Job Grading Standard for Trades Helper](#) is applied *only* when the work supports specific trades performed by journey level employees at grade 9 and above.

LABORER, GRADE 1

General: Grade 1 laborers follow specific instructions to perform simple manual tasks that require no experience and little or no training. The work involves light to moderate physical effort, and normally requires the use of simple hand tools. Laborers at this level open and unpack cardboard cartons by hand and remove contents; lift and carry light- to medium-weight packages, materials, tools, furniture, debris, etc. and place them where directed; use hand trucks and/or dollies to move bulky but relatively light loads (e.g., boxes of copier paper or other office supplies); pick up trash and paper from grounds and working areas; cut grass with push lawn mower (manual); rake leaves; spread mulch; pull weeds; trim and water grass; spray pre-mixed weed and/or insect control solutions; spread abrasives and/or chemicals on icy surfaces; shovel snow; wash motor vehicles; and wipe dirt or grease from hand tools.

Skill and Knowledge: Grade 1 laborers have knowledge and ability to perform simple manual tasks. They have a basic understanding of cleaning, grounds maintenance, and lifting procedures. Laborers at this level have knowledge of the proper use and routine operator maintenance of hand tools and equipment. They know the location and proper storage requirements of the materials, tools, and equipment they handle. Work at this grade level requires the ability to understand common signs and read general instructions, follow oral instructions, work safely, lift and move light- to medium-weight objects. Grade 1 laborers must be able to safely use industrial cleaners (typically used in households) and basic hand and yard tools and equipment such as a rake, pitch fork, wheelbarrow, hand-pump sprayer, hand truck, shovel, push lawn mower (manual), hammer, screwdriver, wrench, and pliers.

Responsibility: Grade 1 laborers receive specific instructions from a higher grade worker or supervisor. Laborers at this level have little or no opportunity to make decisions except simple choices such as selecting the most appropriate tool to accomplish a task. The supervisor frequently checks work in progress on new or unusual assignments but provides little or no supervision on routine work assignments (e.g., picking up all paper and trash around the work site three times a week). Laborers at this level are responsible to identify obvious hazards, malfunctioning equipment, damaged materials and other situations that may impact work operations and report such matters to the supervisor.

Physical Effort: Grade 1 laborers perform work that requires light to moderate physical effort. Tasks typically involve frequent lifting and carrying light- to medium-weight objects of 5 to 14 kilograms (10 to 30 pounds), frequently pushing wheelbarrows of mulch or dirt and carts requiring similar effort, occasionally lifting and carrying moderately heavy objects weighing up to 20 kilograms (45 pounds), and continually walking, bending, stooping, reaching, and standing.

Working Conditions: Grade 1 laborers work inside and outside. When working outside, they are exposed to all kinds of weather conditions. Inside work is often accomplished in office buildings or in well lighted, heated, and ventilated areas such as warehouses, loading docks, or trade shops. They are frequently exposed to weather and temperature extremes, drafts, noise, dust, and dirt. They are exposed to the possibility of bruises, muscle strains, cuts, and scrapes.

Grade 1 laborers follow safety procedures and use standard safety equipment such as gloves, ear protectors, safety glasses and steel-toe shoes to avoid possible hazards in the work area.

LABORER, GRADE 2

General: Grade 2 laborers follow general instructions to perform work that requires moderately heavy physical effort and may involve a number of successive steps or processes. The work involves the use of common hand tools and simple power equipment such as hatchets, hand saws, clippers, buffers, grinders, screwdrivers, weed trimmers, low-pressure sprayers, powered push lawn mowers, powered pavement vacuums, and wet vacuums or steam cleaners. This level differs from the Grade 1 level mainly in the equipment used, and in the physical effort required.

Laborers at this level use shovels to dig ditches where grading and sloping is not required; fill holes with dirt and level bumps using shovels, hand tampers, and rakes; and dig holes for plants and posts. They use simple powered push lawn mowers, edgers, trimmers, etc., that do not require very heavy physical effort. Grade 2 laborers water grounds, lay sod, and clear small trees and bushes using hand tools. They perform a variety of duties in different work settings. Grade 2 laborers move and arrange furniture as directed and empty garbage cans. In some work situations, grade 2 laborers stack, sort, or arrange supplies and materials onto pallets as directed; and load, unload, and move heavy boxes, bulky supplies, and materials to and from trucks, loading platforms, packing lines, etc., by hand or with the use of hand trucks and dollies.

Skill and Knowledge: Grade 2 laborers demonstrate manual skill to lift and move moderately heavy objects. They also have manual skill and knowledge to safely operate simple power equipment such as powered push lawn mowers, leaf blowers, weed trimmers, shrink-wrapping machines and low-pressure sprayers. Laborers at this level also have the ability to use basic hand tools such as hatchets, handsaws, and clippers. Laborers at this level have basic knowledge of routine maintenance procedures for power equipment operated that include a visual check of the equipment, limited lubrication, cleaning/replacing air filters, and refueling. Use of tools and equipment at this level involves a degree of physical ability and attention higher than that needed at the grade 1 level.

Responsibility: Grade 2 laborers receive specific oral and written instructions regarding what to do and when to do new tasks. Instructions are given by the supervisor or higher grade worker. Other grade 2 laborers perform regularly assigned duties within designated time frames or schedules. Laborers at this level may complete duties involving several distinct tasks or steps independently (e.g., unloading supplies, moving them to a specified location, and stacking them). Grade 2 laborers are responsible to check and perform simple maintenance of the equipment that they use. Maintenance repairs that require disassembly or alignment (e.g., blade replacement on lawn mowers) are reported to the supervisor. They are responsible for following proper safety procedures due to the nature of the work, the type of tools and equipment used, and the weight of objects handled. The supervisor normally checks completed work for compliance with instructions and established practices.

Physical Effort: Grade 2 laborers exert moderately heavy physical effort in doing such tasks as occasionally lifting and carrying heavy objects weighing up to 23 kilograms (50 pounds). They frequently lift and carry moderately heavy objects weighing up to 18 kilograms (40 pounds); and frequently push heavy furniture on dollies, loaded carts, etc.

Working Conditions: Working conditions at this level are similar to those described at the [grade 1 level](#).

LABORER, GRADE 3

General: Grade 3 laborers follow general instructions to perform tasks that require prior work experience or training, and some degree of manual skill. Work at this level involves very heavy physical effort. Grade 3 laborers perform limited roads maintenance work. They use concrete, gravel, and/or asphalt to fill and level holes in damaged roads.

Laborers at this level may also be required to break up pavement using jackhammers and clear sidewalks using large, industrial-type, powered snow blowers. Grade 3 laborers perform grounds maintenance on grades or slopes; dig ditches and trenches with picks and shovels where dirt is hard and compact. In some work situations, grade 3 laborers operate large power tillers (walking- or riding-type) to prepare flower beds and lawn areas for sod and bedding plants. They operate large, industrial, walking-type power mowers (e.g., one or more cutting decks, mechanical controls, and attachable implements) and/or simple riding-type mowers (e.g., a fixed or floating cutting deck(s) with limited adjustments). Grade 3 laborers manually adjust blades for cutting height, prepare gasoline/oil mixtures for powered equipment, and clean and lubricate mowers. They cut trees, using axes or chain saws. Other work situations may require laborers to wash buildings using a high-pressure sprayer; separate, stack, carry, and load/unload materials, supplies, and packages. In other situations, grade 3 laborers may lift and move very heavy furniture, equipment, supplies, etc., through confined spaces.

Special Note: Some laboring jobs involve very heavy physical effort, but do not require the skills and knowledge in operating equipment, etc., as described at this grade level. For laboring jobs to warrant a grade 3 in the absence of skills and knowledge and other grading criteria regarding the operation of equipment, etc., a laborer must perform duties that continually involve extremely heavy physical effort. Effort of this degree is typical of constant lifting and carrying items weighing 36 to 45 kilograms (80 to 100 pounds) or more.

Skill and Knowledge: Grade 3 laborers have knowledge and skill in the operation, control, and cleaning of heavy, power equipment (e.g., single-function power lawn mowers with one or more cutting decks and mechanical controls, chain saws, jackhammers). They also know how to work safely with heavy tools (axes, picks, tampers, chain saws, etc.). Laborers at this level have skill in performing routine operator maintenance and adjusting the cutting height of blades on power mowers. In some work situations, laborers at this level may operate weight-handling devices such as electric hand trucks or lifts, pallet jacks, and dollies to move very heavy loads. Significant manual skill may be required to load/unload very heavy items onto weight-handling devices. The nature of the duties and the kind of equipment used also require continual care and attention both to avoid accidents and to complete work according to established schedules. Prior job experience or on-the-job training is normally required to gain this level of manual skill. Laborers at this level also complete assignments involving several familiar processes which require remembering directions and/or sequences (e.g., mixing cement or asphalt to repair walkways).

Responsibility: Grade 3 laborers are given general instructions by the supervisor. They do not require detailed instructions or continual supervision of routine duties. Laborers at this level receive direct supervision for special assignments and are given specific time frames for accomplishment. They are responsible for completing work after getting initial oral or written instructions. Grade 3 laborers are responsible for obtaining assistance or using appropriate equipment or safety devices when lifting and moving very heavy objects. Continual care is required due to the nature of the work, the type of equipment used, and the weight handled. The supervisor checks work on a random basis for timeliness, work practices, and compliance with instructions.

Physical Effort: Grade 3 laborers exert very heavy physical effort in doing such tasks as frequently lifting and moving objects weighing over 23 kilograms (50 pounds), operating heavy power mowers on grades or pushing wheelbarrow loads of cement, etc.

Working Conditions: Working conditions of grade 3 laborers are similar to those described at the [grade 1 level](#). However, in contrast to grade 1, mishandling of the equipment, tools, and tasks involved at this level, may result in more serious injuries.

LABORER, GRADE 4

General: Grade 4 laborers follow general instructions or simple drawings to perform tasks that require significant manual skill, prior work experience or training, and very heavy physical effort. They operate large, complex riding lawn mowers (e.g., multiple and independently-controlled cutting decks) and/or specially designed riding mowers that operate on slopes. Equipment characteristics include single-function performance and components that are independently controlled through various hydraulic and/or mechanical devices.

Note: There is no special provision at this level to warrant a grade 4 based on extreme physical effort. To warrant a grade 4 in this occupation, all grading factors must be fully met as described in the following criteria.

Skill and Knowledge: Grade 4 laborers have the skill and knowledge to operate and control large, complex riding mowers and similar types of specialized mowing equipment. The nature of the duties and the types of equipment operated at this level require a higher level of skill than at the grade 3 level due to the fact that the equipment is typically operated in areas that require constant attention to working space and environment (e.g., equipment height and width when working around trees, trenches, large potholes, slopes, curbs, rocks and other visible obstacles). Grade 4 laborers are skilled in the operation of various controls and levers to maneuver equipment, and lift/lower, adjust, engage/disengage components or attached devices. Attachments are designed to support the function of the equipment and require minimal mechanical knowledge to attach and operate.

In some work situations, grade 4 laborers may also have skills and knowledge to complete all aspects of special assignments involving several steps, phases, or detailed procedures (e.g.,

preparing ground, laying sod, planting flowers or shrubs, and using simple drawings to establish a planting pattern and/or design). Assignments of this nature typically require a practical knowledge of project requirements.

Responsibility: Grade 4 laborers are assigned an area of responsibility by the supervisor. They are directed as to the nature of the work to be done. Laborers at this level independently complete routine assignments in accordance with general policy, past practice, or simple drawings or specifications. Special projects are accomplished with periodic review by the supervisor.

Grade 4 laborers select the most appropriate types of equipment to accomplish each phase of the work in the most productive and cost-effective manner. Laborers at this level must perform duties in the safest possible manner to avoid creation of hazardous situations that may result in personal injuries or property damage. Grade 4 laborers must demonstrate safe and efficient operating techniques in the operation of specialized equipment. They regularly exercise judgment to accomplish work using this equipment. Completed work may be reviewed by the supervisor for overall accomplishment, quality, care of equipment, and fulfillment of project requirements.

Physical Effort: Grade 4 laborers exert very heavy physical effort in operating large, riding mowers on grades and in areas with bushes, trees, and other visible obstacles that require significant maneuvering and lever control. Employees at this level frequently lift and move equipment and components weighing over 23 kilograms (50 pounds).

Working Conditions: At this level laborers work outside in all kinds of weather, and inside in areas that may be dusty, drafty, and noisy. The equipment, tools, and tasks involved at this level frequently require extreme care and use of safety gloves, ear plugs, safety glasses, or respirators to avoid severe injuries.