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

Philadelphia Oversight Division
600 Arch Street, Room 3400
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1596

Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5346 of Title 5, United States Code

Appellants:	[appellant's name] et al.
Agency classification:	Materials Examiner and Identifier WG-6912-6
Organization:	[name] Division [activity name] Defense Distribution Center [location]
OPM decision:	Materials Examiner and Identifier WG-6912-6
OPM decision number:	C-6912-06-01

Robert D. Hendler
Classification Appeals Officer

/s/ 3/5/99 Revised 3/25/99
Date

As provided in section S7-8 of the Operating Manual, Federal Wage System, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions specified in section 532.705(f) of tile 5, Code of Federal Regulations (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

PERSONAL
[appellant's name]
[appellant's address]

[name]
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[address]

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Introduction

On November 30, 1998, the Philadelphia Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management accepted a job grading appeal from [appellant's name]. The appeal was accepted in [appellant's name] name for all persons party to the appeal covered by Position Number 50630N. A separate case was docketed under [appellant's name], covering the appellants occupying Position Number 50638N. Positions Number 50630N and 50638N are identical positions. They have been given different position numbers by the installation for administrative purposes. Persons who occupy Position Number 50638N are "testing designated positions" and must periodically undergo drug testing. Because of this, we have joined the two cases.

The appealed jobs currently are graded as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-6. The job was changed from Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-7 to Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-6 by the [activity name][location] on June 22, 1997. In an agency level appeal decision issued by the U.S. Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service on April 6, 1998, the agency concluded the jobs were properly classified as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-6. The appellants believe the jobs should be evaluated as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-7. The appellants work in the [name] Branch [location] and the [name] Branch [location], [name] Division, activity name], [location]. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code.

The job grading appeal process is a de novo review that includes a determination as to the duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the appellant, and constitutes the proper application of job grading standards (JGS's) to those duties and responsibilities. We have evaluated the work assigned by management and performed by the appellants according to these job grading requirements. In reaching our decision, we carefully reviewed the information provided by the appellant and his agency, including the job descriptions (JD's) of record. We interviewed name], Chief, [name] Division, for information on the mission and functions of the organizations to which the appellants are assigned. We conducted a job audit of the appealed jobs on February 8 and 9, 1999. The audit included interviews with [appellant's name] and his supervisor,[name]. In addition, we interviewed Messrs. [names of four co-appellants].

Job information

The appellants examine a wide variety of material received from a number of sources including contractors, vendors, redistribution or customer returns. They visually and physically examine items, verify stock numbers, nomenclature, type size, condition, date and level of pack, quantity and markings to ascertain compliance with contracts, purchase agreements, drawings, technical manuals, supply bulletins and/or stock catalogs. They determine the correct condition code, classification, repairability or non-repairability of items, identify parts required to make items complete, prepare inspection tags and labels, and initiate records documenting receiving and processing discrepancies and material defects. The appellants use precision measuring equipment such as calipers, micrometers, thread and wire gages, scales and other devices to determine whether items examined comply with standards and technical specifications and tolerances.

The appellants receive freight from carriers, verify shipment destination, quantity, cube and paperwork against shipping documentation, and process/log freight that can be handled in bulk into the receiving system and send items to a staging area to be transported to their proper storage area or location. They sort items that require breakdowns by national stock numbers and count, process and log items into the receiving system. They process and independently complete receiving documentation insuring correctness of quantities, identification criteria and labeling. The appellants operate a variety of both manual and automated equipment in the completion of assigned duties such as computers, keypads, optical readers, and scanners. They input into or extract from the computerized supply system information about stored items and their designated storage locations. They repack freight using a limited variety of prefabricated packing containers and cushioning material for storage or shipment.

There are three major work areas at the New Cumberland facility covered by the appellants' JD's. The "bulk" inspection stations receive and process bulk material; i.e., material that is generally more than 2,000 pounds. The bulk stations are organizationally located in the Receipt Operations Branch East (Code EN) of the Product Receipt and Evaluation Division. Messrs. [name sof two appellant's] were assigned to this station at the time of our audit. The "pallet" or "line" inspection stations process material that fits on a pallet, generally material more than 40 pounds or less than 2,000 pounds. [appellant's name] was assigned to the "pallet" inspection station at the time of our audit. The "tote" inspection stations contain material that is generally less than 40 pounds and can fit in a tote. [appellant's name] was assigned to the tote station at the time of our audit. The tote and pallet lines are organizationally located in the Receipt Inspection Branch East (Code EE) of the Product Receipt and Evaluation Division. Material is directed to these inspection stations by mechanical conveyors and arrive at the individual station randomly. The appellants do not know what material will appear in the next "pallet" or "tote" until they begin the inspection process. Material can be source inspected new procurement, customer returns, or redistribution. It can consist of electronic parts for aircraft, automotive parts such as fuel pumps or exhaust pipes, magazines for automatic weapons, or any variety of the thousands of items arriving at the facility. In addition to the three major work areas at the New Cumberland facility, all tires arriving at the facility are directed to Warehouse #54 for inspection. [appellant's name] was assigned to this location at the time of our audit.

Regardless of which work area an individual is assigned, the work process is essentially the same, requiring similar knowledge, skills and abilities. Source inspected new procurement items are verified as to identity and quantity and proper documentation; returned and redistribution (sometimes referred to as "BRAC") items receive a more detailed examination. Based on the examination, one of a number of condition codes may be assigned to the items: serviceable items are assigned codes A, B, C or D; unserviceable items are assigned codes E, F. G, or H; items being suspended are assigned codes J, K or L. Condition code A items are accepted and processed through the system; condition code H items are directed to property disposal; condition codes E, K, and L are directed to the [name] (Code V) for further review and disposition determination. A variety of automated systems are used throughout the examination and identification process. Most technical documentation has been converted to automated databases. The appellants use automated databases to verify procurement data, identify the need for decisions by item managers, determine storage requirements,

and assign storage locations. When discrepancies, omissions, and/or errors are noted by appellants (such as erroneous or missing contract documentation, mismarked material, improperly identified or unidentified items) or if condition codes are modified, a "report of discrepancy" is completed electronically recording the action taken and the reason for the action.

The appellants work independently, receiving only general instructions from a supervisor who provides work assignments and new or revised procedures or specifications. The JD's and other material of record furnish much more information about their duties and responsibilities and how they are performed, and are hereby incorporated by reference into this decision. Individuals, although generally assigned to one work station, regularly move from work station to work station depending on the workload during a particular day or time of day. The job descriptions cover all work situations and are therefore adequate for job grading purposes.

Occupation, title, and standards determination

The primary purpose of the appellants' jobs is to physically and visually identify and examine a wide variety of material from a number of sources to determine the correct condition code, classification and repairability of the items. This function occupies the great majority of the appellants' time and requires the highest knowledge, skill and qualification requirement of the job. Because of the way work is organized and the automated systems used in the inspection process, the appellants also make determinations about storage requirements for the material identified, assign storage locations, or identify material for disposal. They also periodically repack items inspected or pack improperly packed returned items. These latter duties are performed incidental to the inspection process.

The WG-6912 JGS for the Materials Examiner and Identifier occupation is used to grade nonsupervisory work involved in the identification, examination, classification, acceptance, and disposition of materials and equipment. Materials examiners and identifiers determine physical condition, adherence to product specifications, and equipment defects, using shipping documents, contracts, catalogs, drawings, and related documents. The work setting is usually within a warehouse facility, primarily in a receiving or shipping area. We have used that JGS to grade the appellants' identification and inspection work. The WG-6907 JGS for the Materials Handler occupation covers nonsupervisory work involved in receiving, storing, and assembling for issue, shipment, and distribution, a wide variety of bin and bulk supplies, materials, equipment, and commodities. The work requires general knowledge of the methods used in processing, handling, and storing of materials and equipment through a supply facility; and the ability to log receipt, storage, and shipment data. The work also requires the ability to organize, arrange, and remove stock in storage areas according to established procedures. We have used that JGS to grade the appellants' duties associated with determining storage requirements and assigning storage locations. The WG-7002 JGS for the Packer occupation covers nonsupervisory work involved in preserving and/or packing and repacking equipment, parts, tools, materials, and other items in various types of containers to protect them from damage, deterioration, or corrosion during shipment and storage. We have used that JGS to grade the appellants' packing duties.

The appellants' jobs are mixed jobs. The Job Grading System for Trades and Labor Occupations states that a mixed job involves performance on a regular and recurring basis of duties in two or more occupations at the same or different grade levels. Such a job should be graded in keeping with the duties that (1) involve the highest skill and qualification requirements of the job, and (2) are a regular and recurring part of the job, even if the duties involved are not performed for a majority of the time.

As discussed in the grade level analysis that follows, the appellants' materials handling and packer work is evaluated properly at grade levels below that of their material examining and identifying work. Therefore, we find the appealed jobs are allocated properly as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912.

Grade determination

Evaluation using the WG-6912 JGS

The WG-6912 JGS uses four factors for grade determination: *Skill and Knowledge, Responsibility, Physical Effort,* and *Working Conditions.*

Skill and Knowledge

Grade 6 materials examiners and identifiers are familiar with a wide range of materials and equipment as well as numerous procedures, supply catalogs, technical manuals, and equipment drawings required for product and equipment verification. They receive, examine, identify, and verify a wide variety of materials, complete equipment items, technical components, parts, and commodities. When working in depot receiving and shipping facilities, grade 6 examiners identify materials and equipment such as electronic equipment and automotive assemblies. They assign receiving classifications, and compare contract documents and bills of lading against materials received using reference manuals, remote computer terminals, microfiche files, bar code identifiers, printouts, and equipment specifications to verify the accuracy of receiving and shipping documents with actual type, quantity, and quality of materials or equipment being processed. Their duties include examining items to determine characteristics and verify item measurements, disassembling equipment as required for appropriate examinations, and making positive identifications using technical manuals, working drawings, and blueprints. Where product discrepancies are identified, they prepare itemized discrepancy reports for action by depot or supply center product and item specialists. In addition, they have an in-depth knowledge of depot warehousing or property reutilization and disposal procedures and plans. In depots and supply centers, they are able to interpret complex equipment and subjective materials specifications when examining, identifying, and verifying incoming and outgoing materials such as aircraft engine assemblies and transmitter and radio assemblies at points of warehouse receipt or shipment. They are able to use measuring devices such as calipers, depth, thread, and wire gauges to determine adherence to contract specifications.

We find the appellants' work matches that described at the grade 6 level. During the audit, [appellant's name] received, examined, identified, and verified a wide variety of materials, complete equipment items, technical components, parts and commodities, such as metal panel trays, exhaust

pipes, idlers, fuel pumps, and bearings for automotive equipment, electronic circuit cards, harnesses, stabilizers, amplifiers, inner tubes, and magazines for automatic weapons. There are thousands of items received, issued and stored at the [location] facility and any of those items are likely to be examined by the appellants. They have an in-depth knowledge of depot warehousing procedures and plans and applies that knowledge in accomplishing his work. As at the grade 6 level, the appellants must interpret complex equipment and subjective materials specifications. This is particularly so when receiving returned material that may differ from the shipping documents enclosed with the material, or when receiving BRAC items that may lack proper identification. As at the grade 6 level, the appellants use various measuring devices such as calipers, depth, thread, and wire gauges to determine adherence to contract specifications.

At the grade 7 level, examiners must have a thorough knowledge of the techniques and equipment used in the examination and classification of standard, unusual, and highly specialized items. Unlike the grade 6 examiners who are knowledgeable of a wide range of standard items, they are able to assess independently the condition of highly specialized and complex materials and equipment in order to determine proper disposition. In depots and supply centers, after examination, they may refer equipment to an item manager due to parts missing; return an item to the vendor when improperly sent; or refer an item to quality assurance or maintenance personnel due to an observed defect. They are able to conduct comprehensive searches of manufacturers' catalogs, technical orders, schematics, and computerized data, to identify unique and specialized items or those that lack proper identification or documentation.

Grade 7 examiners in depots and supply centers are able to use technical specifications, vendor contracts, and product schematics to examine and compare size, condition, coding, stock numbers, and functional operation of items shipped against accompanying shipping documents. They are able to prepare all necessary reports outlining the basis for their coding classifications and cost of repair estimates. They are knowledgeable of special handling techniques and procedures required for processing hazardous and toxic materials, industrial plant equipment, strategic and precious metals, and other sensitive items.

Grade 7 examiners use their skills and knowledge in an environment described in the *"general"* section of the JGS. For example, they independently perform the full range of examining and identifying duties for the most complex categories of materials and equipment, such as those that are toxic, radioactive, perishable, classified, precious/strategic metals, or complex electronic or mechanical equipment, assemblies, and components. They also perform complex searches of shipping and storage records, equipment specifications, and manufacturers' manuals as required for item/equipment identification and advise lower graded workers on specialized procedures. Grade 7 examiners have authority to accept or reject materials, equipment, and complex assemblies *for the facility* based on their knowledge of products, equipment, and procedures as well as ability to determine subtle and inconspicuous defects.

Duties and responsibilities at this level exceed those of the grade 6 level in variety, delegated authority, and item complexity, allowing the examiner to handle and *independently accept or reject* items such as complex electronic and mechanical equipment, assemblies, and components, and

hazardous materials such as explosives, toxic chemicals and flammables, gas cylinders, and classified and high value equipment. They are considered authoritative in examining and determining the condition, handling, and packaging of complex items received on a regular basis, for example, complex assemblies such as communications equipment and jet engine parts, gas cylinders, and other items requiring special documentation processes, safety procedures, and special handling. They often deal with a wide range of installation personnel including quality assurance, production control, maintenance, equipment specialists, and safety representatives in order to make acceptance, rejection, and reutilization decisions on borderline equipment or material condition. Grade 7 examiners use precision measuring tools, such as calipers, micrometers, and multimeters to examine electronic, industrial, construction, and other equipment and materials to determine improper assembly, repair needs, and potential equipment malfunctions.

We find the appellants' work does not match that described at the grade 7 level of the JGS. Although many of the skills and knowledge described at the grade 7 level are applied by the appellants, they are not applied to the extent described at that level in the JGS. For example, although they may initially examine complex electronic and mechanical equipment, assemblies, and components, they do not have delegated authority to independently accept or reject these items. Also, electronic equipment that is serviceable but requires testing, alteration, modification or disassembly (Condition Code D) is sent to the [name] Branch and is not independently accepted or rejected by the appellants. Authority to independently accept or reject hazardous material, classified, and high value equipment is also not delegated to the appellants. Although the appellants may contact or are contacted by item managers or other installation personnel, e.g., to explain in more detail the reason for a report of discrepancy or other similar matter, they do not often deal with such personnel to make acceptance, rejection, and reutilization decisions on borderline equipment or material condition. While the appellants do use precision measuring tools, they use them to make basic measurements and not to determine improper assembly, repair needs, and potential equipment malfunctions. For example, examination of electronic equipment parts may be limited to insuring that connectors are not damaged (bent/broken) rather than to insure they perform as required. Because the full intent of the grade 7 level is not met, this factor must be evaluated at grade 6.

Responsibility

Grade 6 examiners use knowledge of a wide variety of commodities, materials, equipment, and parts to assess and determine discrepancies such as improperly soldered or poorly welded connections, missing components, excessive metal corrosion, and improperly labeled equipment such as worn parts shipped as new or stitching flaws in textile materials. Grade 6 examiners independently determine the accuracy of factual information accompanying the materials and equipment being processed. They receive general supervision consisting of work assignments, oral or written instructions, and assistance on unusual problems. Work is performed in compliance with directly applicable operating procedures. Grade 6 examiners have rejection/acceptance authority for most materials handled. They may consult with higher graded workers or product specialists where subtle discrepancies, such as apparently missing components or unusual welding fusions, require more specialized product or equipment knowledge. Work is spot checked for completeness and compliance with procedures and instructions.

In contrast, Grade 7 examiners perform work with a high degree of independence and a minimum of supervision. They are responsible for independent decisions relating to material and equipment disposition such as determining the acceptability of complex mechanical systems by examining components or working parts of equipment. They independently assign coding classifications to the most complex components, items, and equipment and are responsible for insuring all safety procedures and requirements are followed when handling hazardous, explosive, and toxic materials. Unlike the grade 6 examiners, they are delegated authority to make final determinations on acceptability on behalf of the facility for all classes of material and equipment handled, such as aircraft parts, electronic equipment, and automotive and mechanical components and assemblies. They have responsibility for independently handling hazardous materials and insuring that safety standards and requirements are maintained.

We find the appellants' work more nearly matches that described at the grade 6 level. As described above, they use knowledge of a wide variety of commodities, materials, equipment, and parts to assess and determine discrepancies such as improperly soldered or poorly welded connections, missing components, excessive metal corrosion, and improperly labeled equipment. They independently determine the accuracy of factual information accompanying the materials and equipment being processed. Their work is performed in compliance with directly applicable operating procedures. The appellants operate with a high degree of independence and a minimum of supervision as described at the grade 7 level. However, that independence and minimum supervision is tempered by the fact that they do not have other responsibilities described at the grade 7 level. They are not delegated authority to make final determinations on acceptability on behalf of the facility for all classes of materials and equipment handled, as is typical at the grade 7 level. For example, when an item is assigned condition code D and requires additional testing, alteration, modification or disassembly, it is sent to a different area for final disposition. The same is true when other condition codes, such as G or L, are assigned. They do not have authority to independently handle hazardous materials and insuring that safety standards and requirements are maintained. Because the level of responsibility described at the grade 7 level of the JGS is not fully met, this factor must be evaluated as the grade 6 level.

Physical Effort and *Working Conditions* described in the WG-6912 JGS are the same at all defined grade levels.

Based on the preceding analysis, and applying the whole job grade criteria of the Federal Wage System, we find the appellants' materials examiner and identifier work is graded properly at the grade 6 level.

As indicated above, the appellants perform materials handling and packer work incidental to their materials examiner and identifier work. That work is best evaluated using the JGS's for Materials Handler, WG-6907 and the Packer, WG-7002. The highest level of work described in those JGS's is grade 6. The appellants' work in those occupations falls short of the grade 6 level and, therefore, cannot affect the grade of the appellants' jobs. However, we will briefly summarize our evaluation of the work performed in those occupations.

Evaluation Using the WG-6907 JGS

The WG-6907 JGS uses four factors for grade determination: *Skills and Knowledge, Responsibility; Physical Effort, and Working Conditions.*

Skills and Knowledge

Grade 5 materials handlers are assigned a wide variety and range of duties requiring more specialized knowledge of warehouse plan, methods, procedures, and techniques of material handling. They are able to operate mechanized equipment including utility vehicles, standard size fork lifts, mobile stock selectors, and electromechanical automated equipment, such as high rise automated storage and retrieval vehicles, that use remote computer terminals to receive and transmit storage, inventory, and requisition data in automated warehouses. In both automated and nonautomated warehouses they are able to process and independently complete shipping and receiving documents to insure correctness of quantities, identification criteria, and labeling. They may use automated equipment such as optical readers and scanners (bar code wands) and computer keyboards to develop computerized inventory data, access materials, and fill item requisitions. They are skilled in stacking, moving, and arranging items on pallets and must consider height, weight, and special handling requirements. They are able to use pallet measuring gauges and automated devices to insure that proper height, weight, and other load and storage requirements are met and damage in storage or in transit is prevented.

We find the appellants' work matches the grade 5 level. They process and independently complete shipping and receiving documents to insure correctness of quantities, identification criteria and labeling during the inspection process. The appellants use automated equipment and computer keyboards to access computerized inventory data to route materials to correct locations or storage areas.

Grade 6 materials handlers must have an in-depth knowledge of the overall warehousing plan, documentation requirements, and accepted warehousing methods, procedures, and techniques. As senior workers, they often work independently and may be assigned functional responsibilities for a major commodity segment or equipment group in a larger warehouse, or may serve as the primary materials handler in a small warehouse such as a base or post supply facility. Grade 6 materials handlers usually handle or oversee one or more product lines, a segment of a large warehouse, or serve as the senior employee in a smaller warehouse or supply facility. They may assist the supervisor in developing plans for storing and arranging stock according to agency regulations that determine the configuration setup, movement, rearrangement and traffic flow. Grade 6 materials handlers in larger warehouse facilities typically have responsibility for a storage and space utilization in accordance with agency regulations for a specific commodity or equipment group such as general supplies, construction materials, medical supplies, high value items, or electronic systems, and usually work on their own initiative to consolidate materials, and provide maximum space utilization and protection of materials. They may serve as a senior member of a warehouse project team of materials handlers involved in a special project such as warehouse conversion from manual to automated

systems, relocating a major commodity or equipment group, or setting up a new commodity group area.

We find the appellants' work does not meet the grade 6 level. They do not have functional responsibility for a major commodity segment or equipment group in a larger warehouse nor are they the primary materials handler in a small warehouse. Their responsibility in determining the location of items inspected are more limited in scope than at the grade 6 level. Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the grade 5 level.

Responsibility

At the grade 5 level, materials handlers are responsible for document processing and verification of the quantity and condition of materials and equipment handled. They follow established methods and procedures, and work is spot-checked upon completion for accuracy, adherence to procedural requirements, thoroughness, and results. Grade 5 materials handlers, whether using manual or computerized equipment, are responsible for the processing of documents or data handled. They work independently using computer terminals, keyboards, and optical scanners to develop coding data or with traditional printed shipping and receiving documents, making written entries and verifying data in printed formats.

In contrast, grade 6 materials handlers are generally responsible for performing a full range of warehouse functions in either a major segment of a large warehouse or as the principal materials handler in a small warehouse. They generally work with a high degree of independence in determining sequences of loading and unloading, developing space utilization plans, and implementing the movement of materials from dock to bin or from storage to shipping. In mechanized warehouses they may provide guidance to lower level workers in the operation of specialized equipment. They also provide guidance to lower level workers in accessing and using remote computer terminals and equipment to verify inventory levels, fill orders, place stock, and develop the necessary computerized documentation. In nonautomated warehouses they are responsible for effectively accomplishing all types of warehouse functions as assigned. They are often responsible for directing and guiding the work of lower level workers as well as making determinations as to placement, unloading, timing, and general movement of materials within assigned areas. Grade 6 materials handlers work under the general direction of a supervisor or facility supervisor.

We find the appellants' work matches the grade 5 level of responsibility. They are responsible for document processing and verification of the quantity and condition of materials and equipment handled. The appellants receive general instructions from a supervisor. Assignments are usually completed without guidance on methods, procedures or techniques. Their work is reviewed for compliance with general guidelines and results achieved. We find the appellants' work does not match the grade 6 level of responsibility since they are not responsible for the full range of warehouse functions in a major segment of a large warehouse and do not function as the principal materials handler in a small warehouse. Neither are they responsible for directing and guiding the work of lower level workers. Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the grade 5 level.

Physical Effort and Working Conditions described in the WG-6907 JGS are the same at all defined grade levels.

Based on the preceding analysis, we find the appellants' materials handler work is graded properly at the grade 5 level.

Evaluation Using the WG-7002 JGS

The agency has allocated the appellant's packer duties at the grade 5 level with which they have not disagreed and with which we concur. Therefore, we find the appellants' packer work is graded properly at the grade 5 level.

Summary

The appealed jobs are graded properly as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-6.