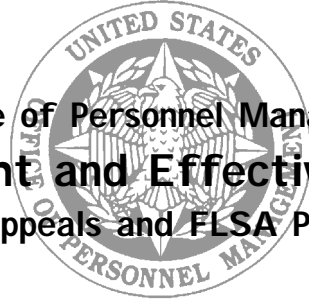


U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness  
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



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

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

**Appellant:** [appellant's name] et al.

**Agency classification:** Materials Examiner and Identifier  
WG-6912-6

**Organization:** [name] Branch [location]  
[name] Division  
[activity name]  
[location]

**OPM decision:** Materials Examiner and Identifier  
WG-6912-6

**OPM decision number:** C-6912-06-02

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

### **Decision sent to:**

PERSONAL

[name]

[activity name]

[name] Division

[name] Branch [location]

[address]

[name]

Personnel Officer

Defense Distribution Center

[address]

Ms. Pamela M. Creek

Executive Director, Human Resources

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8725 John J. Kingman Road, Suite 3630

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Chief, Classification Branch

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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 in the [name], Defense Distribution Depot [location] who were party to the appeal covered by Position Number 43918N. A separate case was docketed for [appellant's name] covering appellants occupying Position Number 43910N in the [name] Division. Positions Number 43910N and 43918N are identical positions. They have been given different position numbers by the installation for administrative purposes. Persons who occupy Position Number 43918N are "testing designated positions" and must periodically undergo drug testing. Based on our fact finding, we have joined the appellants occupying Position Number 43910N in the [name] Branch [location] to this case. Therefore, this decision covers the occupants of both positions in this Branch. A separate decision will cover the occupants of both jobs in the [name] Branch [location].

[appellant's name]'s job is currently graded as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-6. His job was changed from Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-7 to Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-6 by the Defense Distribution Center [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 appellant believes the jobs should be evaluated as Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912-7. 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 appellant 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, Product Receipt and Evaluation Division, and [name], Deputy Chief, [name] Division, for information on the mission and functions of the organization to which the appellants are assigned. In addition, we conducted a job audit of the appellant's job on February 11, 1999. The audit included interviews with the appellant and his supervisor, [name].

## **Job information**

The appellant examines a wide variety of material received from a number of sources including contractors, vendors, redistribution or customer returns. He visually and physically examines items, verifies 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. He determines the correct condition code, classification, repairability or non-repairability of items, identifies parts required to make items complete, prepares inspection tags and labels, and initiates records documenting receiving and processing discrepancies and material defects. He uses 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 appellant receives freight from carriers, verifies shipment destination, quantity, cube and paperwork against shipping documentation, and processes/logs freight that can be handled in bulk into the receiving system and sends items to a staging area to be transported to their proper storage area or location. He sorts items which require breakdown by national stock number and counts, and processes and logs items into the receiving system. He processes and independently completes receiving documentation insuring correctness of quantities, identification criteria and labeling. He operates a variety of both manual and automated equipment in the completion of assigned duties such as computers, keypads, optical readers, and scanners. He inputs into or extracts from the computerized supply system information about stored items and their designated storage locations. He repacks freight using a limited variety of prefabricated packing containers and cushioning material for storage or shipment.

There are several work areas at the Mechanicsburg facility (building 110) covered by the JD's of record. Items are received from trucks, unloaded, and broken down. Items that are less than 55 pounds and less than 4 cubic feet in size are placed in "totes" and sent to the conveyor line. Items that can fit in four totes are considered "multi-tote" items and are also sent to the conveyor line. The larger items are placed in a "bulk" inspection station. Material is also broken down by new procurement and returns. This initial receipt and breakdown of material had previously been done by Materials Handler personnel. However, a reorganization of work now dictates that the materials examiner and identifier jobs perform this work on a rotating basis. After the material is broken down, the totes are routed by conveyor to an inspection station. Material can be source inspected new procurement, customer returns, or redistribution. It can consist of electronic and other components for aircraft and submarines, clothing items such as boots and shirts, textiles such as rolls of cloth, or any variety of the thousands of items arriving at the facility. Customer returns and redistribution are generally inspected in the early morning and source inspected new procurement inspected later when the delivery trucks arrive. Totes arrive at the individual station randomly. The appellant does not know what material will appear in the next tote until he begins the inspection process.

The work process is essentially the same at the bulk inspection area or when examining items in totes, 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; and 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; and condition codes E, F, and K are directed to the Inventory Integrity Division (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 appellant uses 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 the appellant (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 appellant works 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 the appellant’s duties and responsibilities and how they are performed, and are hereby incorporated by reference into this decision. The JD’s cover all work situations and are therefore adequate for job grading purposes.

### **Occupation, title, and standards determination**

The primary purpose of the 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 appellant’s 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 appellant also loads and unloads shipments from trucks, makes determinations about storage requirements for the material identified, assigns storage locations, or identifies material for disposal. He also periodically repacks items inspected or packs 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, utilizing 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 appellant’s 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 in accordance with established procedures. We have used that JGS to grade the appellant’s 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 standard to grade the appellant’s packing duties.

The appellant’s job is a mixed job. 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 appellant's materials handling and packer work is evaluated properly at grade levels below that of his 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 appellant's work matches that described at the grade 6 level. During the audit, the appellant received, examined, identified, and verified a wide variety of materials, complete equipment items, technical components, parts and commodities, such as metal panel trays, boots, electronic circuit boards, power transformers, and a variety of other material and items. In addition, we reviewed a sample of documents the appellant collected describing literally hundreds of items examined items by him and other examiners at the Mechanicsburg facility. The appellant has 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 appellant 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 appellant uses 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 which 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 the processing of 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 which are toxic, radioactive, perishable, classified, precious/strategic metals, or complex electronic or mechanical equipment, assemblies, and components and 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, e.g., 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 appellant's 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 appellant, they are not applied to the extent described at that level in the JGS. For example, although he may initially examine complex electronic and mechanical equipment, assemblies, and components, he does 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 E) is sent to the Stock Surveillance Branch and is not independently accepted or rejected by the appellant. Other items or material examined that is placed in condition codes D, E, F and/or K are also sent to the Stock Surveillance Branch for disposition. Authority to independently accept or reject hazardous material, classified, and high value equipment is not delegated to the appellant. Although the appellant may contact or is contacted by item managers or other installation personnel, for example, to explain in more detail the reason for a report of discrepancy or other similar matter, he does not often deal with such personnel to make acceptance, rejection, and reutilization decisions on borderline equipment or material condition. While the appellant does use precision measuring tools, he uses them to make basic measurements and limited technical inspections 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 is evaluated at the grade 6 level.

### *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 appellant's work more nearly matches that described at the grade 6 level. As described above, he uses his 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. He independently determines the accuracy of factual information accompanying the materials and equipment being processed. His work is performed in compliance with directly applicable operating procedures. The appellant does 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 he does not have other responsibilities described at the grade 7 level. He is 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 E or F, are assigned. He does not have authority to independently handle hazardous materials and insure that safety standards and requirements are maintained. Classified material (usually confidential publications) is identified and then referred to a supervisor and examined at a different location. 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 appellant's materials examiner and identifier work is graded properly at the grade 6 level.

As indicated above, the appellant performs materials handling and packer work incidental to his 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 appellant's work in those occupations falls short of the grade 6 level and, therefore, cannot affect the grade of the appellant's job. 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 plans, 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, which 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. In some work situations, they load and unload shipments from trucks and other material conveyances using fork lifts, manual and mechanized pallet jacks, side loaders, stacker cranes, and automated guided vehicles in mechanized warehouses.

We find the appellant's work matches the grade 5 level. He processes and independently completes shipping and receiving documents to insure correctness of quantities, identification criteria and labeling during the inspection process. He uses automated equipment and computer keyboards to access computerized inventory data to route materials to correct locations or storage areas. He loads and unloads shipments from trucks.

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 use according to agency regulations for a specific commodity or equipment group such as general supplies, construction materials, medical supplies, high value items, or electronic systems. They usually work on their own initiative to consolidate materials, and provide maximum space utilization and protection of materials. Grade 6 materials handlers 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 appellant's work does not meet the grade 6 level. He does not have functional responsibility for a major commodity segment or equipment group in a larger warehouse nor is he the primary materials handler in a small warehouse. His 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 grade 5.

### *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.

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

*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 appellant's 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 he has not disagreed and with which we concur. Therefore, we find the appellant's 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.