

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability
Classification Appeals Program

San Francisco Field Services Group
120 Howard Street, Room 760
San Francisco, CA 94105-0001

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Name of appellant]

Agency classification: Lead Firefighter (Basic Life Support/
Hazardous Materials Operations)
GS-081-7

Organization: [Appellant's organization/location]
Department of Navy

OPM decision: Lead Firefighter (Basic Life Support/
Hazardous Materials Operations)
GS-081-8

OPM decision number: C-0081-08-03

//signed//

Kevin E. Mahoney
Deputy Associate Director
Center for Merit System Accountability

March 10, 2006

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing human resources office (HRO) must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description. Although we have determined that the appellant is operating at a higher grade level, this decision does not constitute a waiver of applicable time-in-grade restrictions, qualification, or other regulatory requirements imposed by either OPM or the agency. In determining whether the appellant is qualified for promotion, the agency must consider all applicable requirements. The agency must determine what action must be taken with regard to the appellant, including the appellant's assignment of work. A Standard Form 50 showing any personnel action taken with regard to the appellant must be included in the report which must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the change in the classification of the position.

As indicated in this decision, our findings show that the appellant's official position description does not meet the standard of adequacy described in section III.E of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. Since position descriptions must meet the standard of adequacy, the agency must revise the appellant's position description to reflect our findings. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description to the San Francisco Field Services Group as part of the compliance report mentioned above.

Decision sent to:

[Name and address of appellant]

[Address of servicing human resources office]

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Introduction

On July 27, 2005, the San Francisco Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [name of appellant]. On November 29, 2005, we received the agency's complete administrative report. The appellant's position is classified as Lead Firefighter (Basic Life Support/Hazardous Materials Operations), GS-081-7, but he believes it should be upgraded to the GS-9 grade level because of a leader base-level determination of GS-8. He works at the [appellant's organization/location] Department of the Navy. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

This decision is based on a careful review of all information furnished by the appellant and his agency. In addition, to help decide the appeal we conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant and his immediate supervisor.

General issues

The appellant and the supervisor believe that the current position description (PD) [number] is an accurate description of his duties. However, that PD is annotated as a "statement of difference" PD from [number] which describes work at the full performance level (FPL) classified as Lead Firefighter (Basic Life Support/Hazardous Materials Operations), GS-081-8. The appellant's PD contains no narrative description of the duties and responsibilities assigned to his position that distinguishes it from the FPL PD. Therefore, the appellant's PD of record does not meet the standard of adequacy addressed on pages 10-11 of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, and the agency must develop a PD to describe the duties and responsibilities assigned at the GS-7 level.

The appellant also believes that he may meet the two-grade interval pattern as numerous times he has acted in the Battalion Chief's position, which is graded at the GS-10 level. However, duties performed in another employee's absence cannot be considered in determining the grade of a position (*The Classifier's Handbook*, page 47).

Position information

The appellant is assigned to lead the work of a group of firefighters on designated shifts at his installation. The employees are assigned to perform structural and airfield firefighting, drive emergency vehicles and operate related equipment, perform basic life support activities, and hazardous materials operations consisting of conducting hazard and risk assessments as part of an initial response. The appellant leads three firefighters whose positions are classified as Firefighter (Basic Life Support/Hazardous Materials Operations), GS-081-7. There is also a Firefighter (Intermediate Life Support), GS-081-8, assigned to his shift.

The results of our interviews and other material of record provide more information about the appellant's duties and responsibilities and how they are performed. Although the appellant's PD of record is incomplete, we have incorporated it by reference into this decision.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Fire Protection and Prevention Series, GS-0081, with a specialty in basic life support/hazardous materials operations, and determined that it meets the coverage requirements to be designated as a lead position under the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG), Part I. Therefore, the position is titled Lead Firefighter (Basic Life Support/Hazardous Materials Operations), GS-081, and the appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's title and series determination.

The appellant spends all of his work time leading firefighters and performing such work of the same kind and level as that done by the team led. As discussed later in this evaluation, the leader work is grade controlling. Therefore, we have evaluated the grade of the appellant's position by application of the grading criteria in Part I of the GSLGEG.

Grade determination

Part I of the GSLGEG is used to classify positions of work leaders who, as a regular and recurring part of their assignment, lead three or more employees in clerical or other one-grade interval occupations in the General Schedule (GS) in accomplishing work. Work leaders also perform work that is usually of the same kind and level as that done by the team lead. Leaders are responsible to their supervisors for ensuring that the work assignments of other employees of the team are carried out by performing a range of duties such as:

- Distributing and balancing the workload, assuring timely accomplishment of workload, and assuring enough work is distributed to keep the team busy;
- Monitoring status and progress of work, making daily adjustments as necessary, and obtaining assistance on problems which may arise;
- Estimating and reporting on expected time of completion of work, maintaining records of work and preparing production reports as requested;
- Instructing employees in specific tasks and job techniques, and making available written instructions, reference materials and supplies;
- Giving on-the-job training to new employees in accordance with established procedures and practices;
- Maintaining current knowledge and answering questions on procedures, policies, directives, etc., and obtaining needed information or decisions from the supervisor on problems that occur;
- Checking work in progress or spot checking work, reviewing completed work to see that supervisor's instructions on work sequence, procedures, methods and deadlines have been met;
- Amending or rejecting work not meeting established standards, referring to supervisor questions or matters not covered by standards and problems in meeting performance standards;
- Monitoring working conditions such as seating, ventilation, lighting, safety;
- Approving leave for a few hours or for emergencies;
- Informing employees of available services and employee activities;

- Resolving simple, informal complaints of employees and referring others to the supervisor;
- Reporting to supervisor on performance, progress and training needs of employees, and on behavior problems; and
- Providing information to supervisor as requested concerning promotions, reassignments, recognition of outstanding performance, and personnel needs.

Interviews with both the supervisor and the appellant indicate that the appellant has been performing all of the above duties on a regular and recurring basis for several years.

According to Part I of the GSLGEG, leader positions are classified one GS grade above the highest level of non-supervisory work led. However, care should be taken to assure that the highest grade reflects the level of non-supervisory work actually led. It notes that the highest level employee assigned to the team may do work in an occupation in which the leader is not fully qualified, and that such work should be used to grade the leader job only where the leader, although not fully qualified, has enough knowledge of the occupation to lead the work involved. It also points out that the highest level employee, although assigned to the team, may receive little or no leadership from the leader in performing his work. In that case, the grade of the highest level employee does not reflect the level of the non-supervisory work actually led, and should not be used as the base level. Thus, in classifying one-grade interval leader jobs, we consider only work where the leader performs substantially the full range of leader duties previously described.

As previously discussed, the appellant leads the work of three employees whose positions are classified as Firefighter (Basic Life Support/Hazardous Materials Operations), GS-081-7, and one position classified as Firefighter (Intermediate Life Support), GS-081-8. We find that the appellant has enough knowledge of the GS-081 occupation and the two specialties of the three GS-7 firefighter positions led, that he can perform the full scope of leader duties over the GS-7s. However, he is not technically qualified and certified to perform the range of leader duties over the GS-8 firefighter, who receives no leadership from the appellant in performing intermediate life support duties. For example, he is not qualified to instruct the GS-8 in specific tasks and job techniques of intermediate life support, provide on-the-job training, maintain knowledge and answer questions on procedures, check work in progress and review completed work for compliance with instructions and procedures, and amend or reject work in that specialty. Consequently, the GS-8 position cannot be used as the base level (thus precluding assignment of GS-9 for the appellant's leader duties), and we find that GS-7 is the highest level of non-supervisory work led. Moreover, although the appellant believes his work should be considered at the GS-9 level, the record shows that his non-supervisory personal work does not exceed the GS-7 grade level. Therefore, by application of the GSLGEG the appellant's position is graded one grade above the GS-7 base level, resulting in a final grade of GS-8.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Lead Firefighter (Basic Life Support/Hazardous Materials Operations), GS-081-8.