

# Position Classification Flysheet for Sanitarian Series, GS-0688

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## SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions that involve planning, developing, administering, evaluating, and promoting program concerned with the elimination and prevention of environmental health hazards. Also included are positions which involve developing and revising health laws, rules, and regulations. These positions require a broad knowledge of any one or a combination of the health, agricultural, physical or biological sciences sufficient to understand the basic concepts, principles, methods, and techniques of environmental health; and a practical knowledge of health laws, rules, and regulations.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The nation's population growth, increasing urbanization, and industrial expansion have resulted in new and highly complex problems in the physical environment. To attack such problems requires a wide variety of professional and technical skills or expertise in such areas as air pollution, food protection, occupational health, radiological health, water supply and pollution, and other health hazards in the environment.

Among the personnel concerned with protecting man from hazards in his physical environment are: sanitarians, environmental health technicians, industrial hygienists, food and drug inspectors and officers, veterinarians, sanitary engineers, health physicists, etc. Sanitarians are primarily concerned with the overall elimination and prevention of environmental health hazards of whatever kind. Other specialists are concerned with a particular aspect of environmental health or the elimination and prevention of certain hazards within a particular environment. Sanitarians may perform work in such fields as industrial hygiene, community air pollution, and radiological health. However, when such work is included in a sanitarian's position, it is but a part of his overall job and not the primary concern.

Environmental sanitation includes the study, control, and eradication of factors in the environment that adversely affect man's health. These factors include such hazards as contaminated food supplies, air and water pollutants, unidentified viral agents, inadequate or untreated waste, shellfish contaminants, and other environmental hazards that pose a threat to man's health. The job of the sanitarian is to:

- plan and administer projects or programs concerned with eliminating and preventing environmental health hazards. This may also include responsibility for planning or conducting an environmental health education or staff development program;
- develop new (and revise existing) standards, methods, and procedures to aid in developing, improving, and maintaining environmental health programs; or
- evaluate and advise on the operation of environmental health programs administered by representatives of public and private agencies or establishments.

These functions are typically performed in one or a combination of the following or other comparable environmental health areas:

- milk and other dairy products
- food sanitation
- water supply
- refuse and other waste control
- insect and rodent
- shellfish
- recreation, housing, care facilities, or other facilities or institutions.

## **DISTINCTION BETWEEN SANITARIAN JOBS AND RELATED KINDS OF WORK**

### *Environmental health technician*

These positions primarily involve technical support work in the identification, prevention, and elimination of environmental health hazards. They are not usually responsible for developing and revising standards or for planning and administering environmental health programs. (See [Environmental Health Technician Series GS-0698](#).)

### *Public Health program specialist*

Both the work of the public health program specialist who is concerned with environmental health and of the sanitarian involve the promotion of programs designed to eliminate and prevent environmental health hazards. However, the work of the public health program specialist is geared toward assisting public and voluntary agencies in meeting the legal policy requirements involved in grant applications. The work of the sanitarian, on the other hand, involves promoting and advising the general public as well as public and private establishments on all aspects of environmental health. Public health program specialist assignments require a working knowledge of the technical aspects of a specific area of environmental health. In contrast, the work of the sanitarian requires a knowledge of the basic concepts and techniques of a science directly related to environmental health. (See [Public Health Program Specialist Series, GS-0685](#).)

### *Industrial hygiene*

The industrial hygienist identifies conditions at work sites affecting the health and efficiency of employees, eliminates occupational disease hazards, and promotes industrial health programs. The sanitarian, on the other hand, identifies and eliminates hazardous conditions in the environment generally and conducts programs to promote a clean and healthful environment and to prevent the spread of disease. (See the [Industrial Hygiene Series GS-0690](#)).

### *Food and drug inspection and food and drug officer*

The work of the food and drug inspector/officer is in essence a particularized area of environmental health. It requires substantial knowledge of either biology or chemistry, or both, in order to make the necessary evaluations of manufacturing practices to identify contamination, adulteration, misuse of additives and ingredients, and improper labeling of food products. Sanitarian positions, on the other hand, typically represent the broad field of environmental health. They place greater emphasis upon the sanitary and hygienic aspects of food preparation, processing, and serving. (See Food and Drug Officer Series, GS-0695 and [Food and Drug Inspection Series, GS-0696.](#))

### *Veterinary medical science*

These positions require a knowledge of veterinary medicine evidenced by the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. See [Veterinary Medical Science Series, GS-0701.](#))

### *Sanitary Engineering*

Sanitary engineers plan and develop environmental health programs and systems and investigate environmental conditions for the purpose of protecting and improving air, land, and water resources in order to provide a clean and healthful environment. This work requires a knowledge of engineering as well as related aspects of public health. (See [Environmental Engineering Series, GS-0819.](#))

### *Health physics*

Health physicists perform work that deals primarily or exclusively with the protection of the public from hazards of ionizing radiation. Sanitarians, on the other hand, advise on or administer programs designed to protect the public from environmental hazards in general. The sanitarian is required to have a knowledge of the regulations, standards, concepts, and techniques for protection of the public from exposure to ionizing radiation, but is not typically required to have complete knowledge of the techniques used in detecting and measuring it and its sources in the human body and in the environment. (See [Health Physics Series, GS-1306.](#))

### *Food technology*

Food technologists evaluate food products to determine the standards of quality that should be applied, the best methods of processing, or their potential value as a food. The sanitarian evaluates food products to determine the methods of processing, inspection, and regulation for the purpose of safeguarding against dangerous bacterial agents, poisons, or other chemicals. (See [Food Technology Series, GS-1382.](#))

## TITLES

*Sanitarian* is the basic title authorized for all positions in this series.

Positions which include supervisory responsibilities of enough significance to require supervisory qualifications are titled *Supervisory Sanitarian*.

## EVALUATION NOTES

This material does not include grade-level criteria. The following standards and guides may be used to evaluate sanitarian positions.

Supervisory positions should be evaluated by reference to the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#).

Positions that involve developing, evaluating, and promoting environmental health programs administered by State agencies or other public and nonprofit organizations and institutions should be evaluated by reference to the Guide for the Evaluation of Program Specialist Positions.

The [Grade Level Guide for Instructional Work](#), provides classification criteria for positions of sanitarians engaged in education programs.

Positions that involve such functions as (1) planning, organizing, and administering environmental health programs; or (2) evaluating, analyzing, or testing compounds or substances for compliance with standards may be evaluated by reference to standards for such related fields as the [Health Physics Series, GS-1306](#) or the [Chemistry Series, GS-1320](#).