

U.S. Office
Office of Merit Systems Over
Classification Appeals



Job Grading Appeal Decision
Under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Appellant]

Agency classification: Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader
WL-4749-10

Organization: Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

OPM decision: Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader
WL-4749-10

OPM decision number: C-4749-10-01

/s/

Kathy Day
Classification Appeals Officer

12/14/00

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 and time limits specified in section 532.705(f) of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (address provided in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

Appellant:

[Appellant]

Agency:

[Group Leader, Human Resources
USDA Forest Service]

Ms. Donna D. Beecher
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Introduction

On August 11, 2000, the Atlanta Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a job grading appeal from [appellant]. The appellant is employed as a Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader, WL-4749-10, at the [organization], Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), [location]. The appellant believes that his responsibilities and experience warrant a higher level of compensation than he presently receives.

General issues

This job was previously classified as Maintenance Mechanic, WG-4749-10. The appellant appealed to the Forest Service based on his belief that he was underpaid and that his work was comparable to that of jobs classified as Work Leader (WL). The Forest Service determined that classification as Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader, WL-4749-9, was appropriate. The appeal was then elevated to the USDA. On July 5, 2000, USDA issued a decision classifying the job as Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader, WL-4749-10. The appellant contends that there are positions at the installation graded WL-10 whose occupants do not have the level of technical expertise or the licenses that he possesses.

He believes that he is not being properly compensated for the experience and skills he possesses and the variety of work that he performs since there are no jobs comparable to his, requiring the variety of responsibilities and skills, to use as a basis to establish the actual worth of his job. The Introduction to the Federal Wage System Job Grading System describes how, under Public Law 92-392, enacted by Congress on August 19, 1972, an equitable system for fixing and adjusting the rates of pay for prevailing rate employees of the government was established. One principle of the Federal Wage System (FWS) is that there be equal pay for substantially equal work, and pay distinctions be maintained in keeping with work distinctions. Therefore, the FWS includes job grading standards to provide the criteria for determining the relative worth of jobs in terms of grades. Also included are rules to be applied in those instances where the job, on a regular and recurring basis, involves duties of two or more occupations. Jobs meeting this criteria are considered 'mixed jobs' and are graded in keeping with the regular and recurring duties which involve the highest skill and qualification requirements. The Introduction to the Federal Wage System Job Grading System also states that "the requirement that employees be licensed or certified to perform work...does not in itself affect the grades of their jobs."

Although the appellant compares his job to other jobs in his organization that are classified at a higher grade, by law, we must classify jobs solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines. Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying jobs, we cannot compare the appellant's job to others as a basis for deciding his appeal. In addition, it is the requirements of the job rather than the appellant's personal qualifications and experience that determine the classification.

Job information

The appellant is assigned to job description number [#]. The appellant's supervisor and the agency certified the accuracy of the job description. The appellant did not certify the accuracy of

the job description. He believes that there are duties that he performs that are not adequately reflected in the job description which warrant consideration for grading purposes.

We find the appellant's job description provides very little information regarding the degree of his involvement in the training program. The training responsibilities are a significant component of this job and should be addressed in the job description. For purposes of this appeal, our decision will be based on the official job description of record supplemented by the information provided by the appellant and his agency

The [organization] is an in-residence job training facility consisting of four dormitories, a dining hall/training kitchen, a gymnasium and a number of vocational shops serving approximately 250 [enrollees]. The [organization's] mission is to provide these enrollees formal vocational training that prepares them for trainee or entry level wage grade positions in the skilled trade occupations. Training programs offered at the [organization] include auto mechanics, cooking, welding, carpentry, masonry, advanced forestry, landscaping, building maintenance, and heating and air conditioning.

The appellant performs a variety of duties involving the installation, maintenance and repair of commercial grade air conditioning, heating and food storage refrigeration systems for the [organization]. He is also responsible for the design, installation and maintenance of electrical systems for new and existing buildings. He provides formal training in the areas of heating, air conditioning and electrical power to enrollees and other instructors at the [organization] who desire to acquire skills in these areas. In addition to being a licensed electrician, the appellant is certified by the state of North Carolina to handle refrigerants. The state has authorized him to administer its licensing examination to [members] and instructors at the [organization]. Those who successfully pass this examination are certified to handle refrigerants.

The [organization] Works Program Administrator assigns work to the appellant and reviews projects when they are completed. The appellant manages his day to day responsibilities and oversees the work of some advanced trainees. The appellant's supervisor stated that the level of supervision he provides is typically limited to any work in the appellant's area of expertise. The appellant works independently and resolves problems encountered in carrying out his responsibilities. The supervisor is informed of significant problems.

Standard determination

FWS Job Grading Standard (JGS) for Maintenance Mechanic, WG-4749, May 1974.

FWS JGS for Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, WG-5306, June 1971.

FWS JGS for Air Conditioning Equipment Operator, WG-5415, July 1993.

FWS JGS for Heating and Boiler Plant Equipment Mechanic, WG-5309, November 1992.

FWS JGS for Electrician, WG-2805, June 1989.

FWS JGS for Leader WL/NL, January 1980.

Occupation and title determination

The agency determined that the appellant's job is properly allocated to the Maintenance Mechanic occupation, WG-4749, and the appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's determination.

The FWS JGS for the Maintenance Mechanic occupation, WG-4749, covers nonsupervisory work involved in the maintenance and repair of grounds, exterior structures, buildings, and related fixtures and utilities, requiring the use of a variety of trade practices associated with occupations such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, air conditioning, cement work, painting, and other related areas. The JGS further states that two criteria must be met to place jobs in this occupation: 1) the work requires the application of more than one trade practice, and 2) the highest level of work is performed in at least two of the trades involved. The appellant's job meets both of these criteria. His work involves the installation, repair and maintenance of air conditioning, heating and electrical power systems, as well as the vocational training related to these areas. The work requires the application of four distinct trades and the highest level of work is performed in two of the trades. The job is properly placed in the WG-4749 occupation. The JGS for the WG-4749 occupation authorizes the title *Maintenance Mechanic* for these jobs.

The JGS for Leader positions is used to grade the jobs of leaders who as a regular and recurring part of their jobs, and on a substantially full time and continuing basis, lead three or more workers to (a) accomplish trades and labor work or (b) train them in the nonsupervisory work of a trades or laboring occupation. The appeal record contains documentation reflecting that for the period of September 29, 1999, through March 3, 2000, excluding a student break period, the appellant averaged 3.5 students. The appellant's supervisor stated that the appellant typically averages 3 students for most projects and 4 to 6 students on advanced projects. This position therefore meets the criteria for designation as WL.

Part II of the JGS for Leader positions is used to evaluate training leaders who lead 3 or more workers in performing trades and labor training assignments. Jobs meeting the criteria of this portion of the JGS are authorized the addition of "*Training Leader*" to the job title of the occupation in which the incumbent is qualified to conduct training. The appropriate title and occupational code for the appellant's job is *Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader, WL-4749*.

Grade determination

The appellant's job is mixed since he performs work in four occupations. The grade level of mixed jobs is determined by identifying the duties that 1) involve the highest skill and qualification requirements for the job, and 2) are a regular and recurring part of the job. Determinations of the highest skill and qualification requirements are made through comparison of each type of work performed to the JGS for that occupation.

The appellant does not contest the series or the grade levels of the individual job occupations; therefore, they are only briefly discussed below.

WG-5306, Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic

Using the WG-5306, Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic JGS, the agency determined that the appellant's work equates to the WG-10 level, and we agree.

The appellant is the primary person responsible for the installation and repair of commercial grade air conditioning systems, associated ducting, and food storage refrigeration systems at the [organization]. The [organization's] facilities include a number of dormitories, shops, offices, a gymnasium, a combined training kitchen/dining hall, a data and communications control center, family housing, etc. The temperature and airflow needs and requirements vary for each of these areas and the appellant has responsibility for ensuring that the requirements are met for each particular area. The systems serving the data and communications control center are considered critical and require precise regulation of variations in temperature and humidity. He is independently responsible for ensuring that the equipment functions properly and for repairing any malfunctions that may occur. This activity includes tasks such as checking pressure, temperature and airflow, detecting refrigerant leaks, replacing gaskets and seals, overhauling valves, etc. The appellant is also responsible for installation and maintenance of the [organization's] large capacity refrigeration systems consisting of 1200 cubic foot food freezers and walk-in refrigerators.

WG-5415, Air Conditioning Equipment Operator

Using the WG-5415, Air Conditioning Equipment Operator JGS, the agency determined that the appellant's work equates to the WG-9 level, and we agree.

He is solely responsible for the efficient operation of multi-ton air conditioning systems which control the climate and humidity in the [organization's] facilities. The work performed by the appellant involves activities such as checking and regulating zone temperatures throughout the buildings and adjusting controls, airflow and cooling fans to maintain appropriate temperatures and humidity levels. He is responsible for normal maintenance activities such as adding refrigerants, monitoring and changing filters, replacing drive belts, lubricating moving parts, conducting tests of water for algae, and repairing or replacing pipes and tubing.

WG-5309, Heating and Boiler Plant Equipment Mechanic

Using the WG-5309, Heating and Boiler Plant Equipment Mechanic JGS, the agency determined that the appellant's work equates to the WG-10 level, and we agree.

He has primary responsibility for the installation, repair, and maintenance of high capacity commercial grade electric and gas furnaces providing heat in buildings at the [organization]. He ensures that these systems operate properly; performs a variety of routine and regular maintenance activities such as inspecting and cleaning burners, replacing and repairing filters, switches, valves and bearings; troubleshoots malfunctions; and performs system overhauls when required.

WG-2805, Electrician

Using the WG-2805, Electrician JGS, the agency determined that the appellant's work equates to the WG-9 level, and we agree.

He is the sole electrician for the [organization] and is responsible for the installation and maintenance of all electrical circuitry and fire alarm systems for new and existing buildings at the [organization]. He is also involved in the development of plans for the electrical systems to be installed during the renovation of buildings. The appellant is responsible for conducting regular inspections of systems to identify actual or potential problems, planning the execution of system installation and repairs, and ensuring that the systems meet the [organization]'s electrical needs. He makes determinations regarding when blueprints and other plans for these systems require modification to ensure proper operation.

Summary

The WG-5306, Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, equates to WG-10; the WG-5415, Air Conditioning Equipment Operator, equates to WG-9; the WG-5309, Heating and Boiler Plant Equipment Mechanic, equates to WG-10; and the WG-2805, Electrician, equates to WG-9. The highest grade level of regular and recurring work is WG-10. Therefore, the correct grade for the appellant's maintenance mechanic duties is WG-10.

JGS for Leader positions

Part II of the JGS for Leader positions is used to evaluate training leaders who lead 3 or more workers in performing trades and labor training assignments.

The appellant's training responsibilities typically involve enrollees who have completed the initial building maintenance course and have been exposed to some aspects of electrical and plumbing work. The heating, air conditioning and electrical training the appellant provides is considered advanced training. His students have been identified as having the potential to benefit from and successfully complete a course of this level of complexity. He also provides refrigerant handling certification training to students and other [organization] instructors. According to the appellant's supervisor, the work program is based on using the enrollees to maintain the [organization's] physical plant as a means of providing training and an opportunity to become proficient/certified in a trade occupation. He stated that a significant portion of the work budgeted for the physical plant consists of projects that the enrollees will complete as part of their training. The classroom and on-the-job training the appellant provides are an important aspect of his work. By his estimate, approximately 60 percent of the training he provides is on-the-job and the rest is classroom training. The appellant utilizes some prepared instructional material and, where necessary for instructional purposes, revises the prepared material or develops his own. The appellant uses the students' classroom performance to determine the level of "hands on" training they are prepared to handle. As part of their training, his students must accompany him on assignments involving the installation, maintenance and repair of any systems for which he is responsible. They observe the steps involved to properly perform the work while he explains what he is doing. In some situations, the students perform the work while the appellant monitors their activity to determine their readiness to move to the next level

of the training process. A significant portion of the training is concurrent with the students working individually on different aspects of a project with the appellant monitoring them. This is a formal program which provides students with the knowledge and skills to perform at the entry level in the heating, air conditioning, or electrical occupations. This meets the criteria for the Type B training leader described in the JGS for Leader positions where the leader conducts training in formal organized programs that cover all phases of a recognized trade or line of work, are designed to progressively improve the student's skills, and combine on-the-job and classroom instruction in the theory and practices of the trade.

The grading of training leader positions is based on the highest level of trade skill and knowledge required by the training leader. Using the Training Leader Grading Table, the highest level of trade skill and knowledge required by the appellant is WG-10 which converts to WL-10.

Decision

We find the appellant's job is properly graded as Maintenance Mechanic Training Leader, WL-4749-10.