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

Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242-9968

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

Appellant:	[appellant's name]
Agency classification:	Mechanical Engineer GS-830-11
Organization:	Engineering Division Directorate of Public Works U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armament Command U.S. Army Materiel Command Department of the Army [geographic location]
OPM decision:	Mechanical Engineer GS-830-11
OPM decision number:	C-0830-11-02

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

August 20, 2001

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).

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name and address]

[name and address of appellant's designated representative]

[servicing Civilian Personnel Operations Center]
Office of the Assistant Secretary
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
Department of the Army

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Introduction

The Dallas Oversight Division of the Office of Personnel Management accepted a position classification appeal on June 14, 2000, from [the appellant], submitted through his designated representative, [name]. [The appellant] is employed in the Engineering Division, Directorate of Public Works, U.S. Army Tank-automotive Command, U.S. Army Materiel Command, Department of the Army, at [geographic location]. His position is currently classified as Mechanical Engineer, GS-830-11. The appellant believes his duties and responsibilities warrant classification to the GS-12 grade level. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

In 1998, the appellant's supervisor submitted some revised engineering position descriptions for review by the [servicing] Civilian Personnel Operations Center. The Center found the duties and responsibilities in the proposed position descriptions to be classifiable at the GS-12 grade level. However, the installation commander at [the appellant's facility] holds classification authority for those positions and would not decide on the reclassification until the position management review committee made a recommendation on the proposed actions. The commander had established the committee to review all new and/or changed positions and organizational structures to recommend improved organizational and position structure. After reviewing the proposed actions for the Engineering Division, the committee recommended that the job growth promotions not be approved. The committee also recommended that the appellant's supervisor be directed to become more involved in all of the more complex projects worked by the engineers, to furnish technical guidance and instructions, and to make the decisions which have significant impact on project completion. The commander accepted the committee's recommendation.

After learning of management's decision, the appellant and a GS-810-11 engineer in the Engineering Division filed appeals at the same time with our office. The appellant is still assigned to the original GS-11 position description, number [number].

In reaching our classification decision, an Oversight Division representative conducted telephone interviews with the appellant and the Director of Public Works. We have reviewed the information obtained during the interviews and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description.

Position information

[The appellant's facility] is a large industrial complex that supports combat and tactical systems worldwide. Its maintenance mission includes the repair, rebuild, overhaul, and conversion of tactical wheeled vehicles as well as the light tracked combat vehicle fleet, including the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and their secondary items. [The appellant's facility] also serves as an ammunition storage center where activities include renovation and demolition of conventional munitions and repair and storage of missile systems. The Directorate of Public Works (DPW) provides maintenance and repair support for all facilities, utilities, and equipment at [the appellant's facility]. The Engineering Division is

responsible for coordination of all engineering services, major and minor construction, modification, alteration, and maintenance and repair projects.

The appellant is assigned to the Engineering Division as a member of the Facility Engineers Self-Managed Work Team. The team includes a total of 11 members. There are eight professional engineers, all of whom are at the GS-11 grade level: one GS-801 General Engineer; two GS-810 engineers (one civil and one structural); two Mechanical Engineers, GS-830; and three Electrical Engineers, GS-850. The team also includes an Industrial Engineering Technician, GS-895-9, an Engineering Technician, GS-802-7, and an Office Automation Assistant, GS-326-6. The Director of Public Works, a Supervisory General Engineer, GS-801-14, now supervises the team.

Briefly, the appellant's position involves office and field mechanical engineering duties in development and accomplishment of projects for construction of new facilities and maintenance and modification of existing facilities. He ensures that the buildings' mechanical systems (e.g., heat and air conditioning for administrative buildings, natural gas, water, steam, compressed air distribution, dehumidification, fire extinguishing, and exhaust systems) are in accordance with plans and specifications. He works with users to determine their needs. The appellant prepares designs and cost estimates and determines appropriate sites and layout of facilities and structures, or he may review such information provided by architectural engineering (A&E) contractors or the Corps of Engineers. The appellant collaborates with engineers in other specializations for aspects of assigned projects that require that expertise. He may be designated as the Contracting Officer's Representative for a specific project.

Series, title, and standard determination

The appellant does not question the series or title of his position. We concur with the agency's determination that the position is properly assigned to the GS-830 series and titled *Mechanical Engineer*.

We used the grading criteria in the GS-830 classification standard to evaluate the appellant's position.

Grade determination

The GS-830 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format which uses nine factors for grade level determination. Under the FES, each factor level description describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at the next lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. A point value is assigned to each factor level, and the total number of points for all nine factors is converted to a grade by use of the standard's grade conversion table.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information the engineer must understand to do acceptable work. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required and applied.

Level 1-7 requires professional knowledge and abilities applicable to a wide range of duties in a specialty area; ability to modify standard practices and adapt equipment or techniques to solve a variety of engineering problems; ability to adapt precedents or make significant departures from previous approaches; and ability to apply standard practices of related engineering disciplines as they relate to the specialty area. An illustration at this level include knowledge and skills necessary to prepare designs and specifications for utility systems for multistory office buildings, hospitals, etc. Also illustrative of positions at this level is knowledge and skills necessary to develop design features and plans for both repair and improvement projects and design of new systems for a variety of specialized floating plants such as hopper dredges, floating power plants, and oil and water barges.

The appellant's position requires professional knowledge of mechanical engineering concepts, principles, and practices to perform the full range of engineering duties concerned with design and layout of the variety of mechanical systems and equipment of large industrial and office buildings. It also requires familiarity with related engineering disciplines, such as electrical and structural. The appellant's recent assignments included multiple projects for renovation of an existing warehouse. These projects involved replacement of heaters, expansion of the interior administrative space, upgrade of the air conditioning system for the administrative area, and repair and expansion of the parking area. Other projects involve a new exhaust system for a dynamometer test cell building and two projects for heat, air conditioning, and humidity control systems for computer areas. Designs for these projects were accomplished by A&E contractors. The appellant is responsible for working with users to develop a statement of work; coordinating with the A&E contractor; and reviewing and commenting on design proposals at the 35, 70, and 90 percent levels. The actual construction aspects of the contract are usually monitored by the Construction Representatives assigned to the organization. As Project Engineer, the appellant may become involved if problems develop. The knowledge and abilities required for the appellant's position are equal to those for positions at Level 1-7.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-8 where the engineer's knowledge requires mastery of a specialty field to the extent that the engineer applies new developments and experienced judgment to solve novel or obscure problems. At Level 1-8, the engineer is a recognized expert in the field typically serving as a regional authority, evaluating the work of engineers in field offices or providing staff services in a centralized engineering agency. The appellant's position does not require development of new engineering approaches or solution of novel or obscure problems. Further, the appellant's work does not occur within his agency's centralized engineering office that has responsibility for making the agency's policy and resource decisions.

Level 1-7 (1,250 points) is credited.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor measures the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the engineer's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

At Level 2-4, the supervisor sets overall objectives and resources available. The employee and supervisor, in consultation, develop the deadlines, projects and work to be done. The employee is responsible for planning and carrying out the assignment, resolving most of the conflicts that arise, coordinating the work with others, and interpreting policy in terms of established objectives. The employee keeps the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial matters, or far-reaching implications. Completed work is reviewed only from an overall standpoint in terms of feasibility, compatibility with other work, or effectiveness in meeting requirements.

Requests for work orders at [the appellant's facility] are initially directed to the Facility Maintenance Division of DPW. After the requests are entered into the computer, the planners determine those tasks that will be performed in-house, those to be completed by service contract, or those requiring engineering services. Project priorities are determined by the DPW real property planning board. The DPW supervisor makes the final determination on whether a job will be done in-house or contracted with an A&E firm. He gives project assignments for the Engineering Division to the team leader, a member of the self-managed work team. The team leader, a rotational assignment that changes quarterly, serves as a facilitator only. New projects are discussed at weekly meetings. Members of the self-managed work team volunteer to accept projects, based on their engineering specialization and current workload. The assigned project engineer then plans and carries out that work assignment independently, coordinating with users, other engineers, contractors, and others as needed. While the supervisor is available for questions and assistance in resolving any nonroutine problems, the engineering staff is well experienced and generally operates with a high level of independence. A technical review board, which includes the DPW supervisor and fire, safety, and environmental staff, reviews final drawings. The DPW supervisor must approve any modification to a contract and any other documents that obligate government funds. Overall, the appellant's position is comparable to Level 2-4.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 2-5 where the engineer's supervisor provides administrative direction in terms of broadly defined missions and functions. At this level the engineer is responsible for the full program or functional area including final authority over all technical aspects of the work. If the work is reviewed at all, it is reviewed for fulfillment of program objectives, effect of influence on the overall program, or contribution to the advancement of technology. Although the appellant exercises great independence in planning and executing his work, he does not set overall program objectives. His supervisor controls resources and is ultimately responsible for the engineering work in the division.

Level 2-4 (450 points) is credited.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of and the judgment needed to apply guidelines.

Guidelines at Level 3-3 include standard instructions, technical literature, agency policies and regulations, manufacturer's catalogs and handbooks, precedents, and standard practices in the area of assignment. The engineer independently selects, interprets, and applies the guides, modifying, adapting, and making compromises to meet the requirements of the assignments. The engineer must exercise judgment in applying standard practices to new situations and relating new work situations to precedents.

At Level 3-4, guidelines are often inadequate in dealing with more complex or unusual issues. The engineer is required to deviate from traditional engineering methods and practices in situations where precedents are not applicable. This level may include responsibility for development of material to supplement and explain agency headquarters guidelines.

The appellant's guidelines include agency instructions, manufacturer's literature, engineering texts, and precedents for similar situations. Because the guides are not always wholly applicable, the appellant must use judgment in selecting and applying them to specific problems, e.g., when making modifications during construction to eliminate interference with other engineering specializations. Guidelines governing the appellant's position are comparable to those described at Level 3-3.

The guidelines for the appellant's position do not reach Level 3-4 where deviation from or extension of traditional engineering methods and practices is required to develop solutions to complex or unusual problems. Further, the appellant's assignments primarily involve modification and repair of conventional facilities and systems that do not require development of material to supplement and explain agency headquarters guidelines.

Level 3-3 (275 points) is credited.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor measures the nature and variety of tasks, steps, processes, methods involved in the work performed; and the degree to which the engineer must vary the work, discern interrelationships and deviations, or develop new techniques, criteria, or information. The basic unit for measuring this factor is the "complex feature." A complex feature is an individual engineering problem broadly defined, which requires (1) modification or adaptation of, or compromise with, standard guides, precedents, methods, or techniques or (2) special considerations of planning, scheduling, and coordination.

At Level 4-4, assignments typically contain combinations of complex features (e.g., two to five). Such work typically involves application of standard engineering practices to new situations and relating new situations to precedents and modifying or adapting standard guidelines.

Assignments at Level 4-5 are of such breadth, diversity, and intensity that they involve many varied complex features. The engineer must be especially versatile and innovative in adapting standard guides or originate new techniques or criteria. Assignments typically contain a combination of complex features that involve serious or difficult-to-resolve conflicts between engineering and management requirements.

The appellant's assignments are diverse, covering a number of essentially different mechanical systems and equipment, leaving the engineer to adapt and modify conventional practices and apply design criteria to the projects assigned. Problems encountered include interference with other specializations and the need to choose between different approaches used in past projects. The appellant is faced with choices when determining a cost-effective means of modification and repair and when considering the planning and scheduling needed to integrate other aspects of a project and/or provide for continuing use of the facility. The complexity of the appellant's work is comparable to Level 4-4.

Level 4-5 is not met. The appellant's work does not involve the higher level and combination of complex features or involve serious conflicts between engineering and management as described at Level 4-5. Further, the appellant's work does not require the degree of originality that is characteristic of Level 4-5.

Level 4-4 (225 points) is credited.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to investigate and analyze a variety of problems or conditions and to provide or recommend ways of dealing with them. The determinations made affect the design or operation of equipment or facilities with regard to economy, efficiency, and safety of the systems involved.

The appellant's duties require investigation of a wide range of conditions, recommendation of the most effective solution to the problems generated, and responsibility for rendering suitable designs for a variety of systems and equipment. The work affects the efficiency, economy, and safety of the systems and equipment involved. The appellant's position is a direct match for Level 5-3. The scope of the appellant's work does not meet Level 5-4 where work involves the development of criteria, procedures, or instructions for major agency activities and products affect a wide range of the agency's engineering program.

Level 5-3 (150 points) is credited.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

The factor includes face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain.

In addition to intra-agency contacts, the appellant's contacts include A&E contractors and professionals in other agencies. The appellant's contacts are comparable to Level 6-3 where contacts typically include manufacturers' representatives, private A&E firms, and engineers and architects from other Federal agencies.

Level 6-3 (60 points) is assigned.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

The contacts identified in Factor 6 are evaluated in Factor 7 for the purpose of those contacts.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts with agency engineers and managers are to convince them of the merit of solutions other than their own. Contacts with agency technical personnel are to motivate them toward safe use of equipment and to ensure continuing use of pollution controls to comply with regulations. The appellant also participates in negotiation of construction contract costs with private firms and reviews the work of A&E firms and construction contractors. The purpose of the appellant's contacts equates to Level 7-3 where the purpose of contacts is to influence or persuade other engineers to adopt technical points and methods where they are conflicts, to negotiate agreements where there are conflicting interests and opinions, or to justify the feasibility and desirability of work proposals to top agency officials.

Level 7-3 (120 points) is credited.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the engineer by the work assignment.

Similar to Level 8-1, the appellant's work is primarily sedentary with occasional walking, bending, stooping, or climbing during field surveys or inspection of installed equipment.

Level 8-1 (5 points) is credited.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor measures the risks and discomforts that may be imposed by the physical surroundings or job situations.

Comparable to Level 9-1, the appellant performs his work primarily in an office setting, although he makes occasional visits to project sites.

Level 9-1 (5 points) is credited.

Summary

In sum, we have evaluated the appellant's position as follows:

Factor	*Level*	*Points*
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1,250
2. Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts	6-3	60
7. Purpose of contacts	7-3	120
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
	Total	2,540

The total of 2,540 points falls within the grade point range for the GS-11 grade level (2,355-2,750).

Decision

The position is properly classified as Mechanical Engineer, GS-830-11.