

Pay Category Appeal Decision
Under section 5103 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Appellant]

Agency classification: Electronics Mechanic Supervisor
WS-2604-12

Organization: [Organization]
[Organization]
[Organization]
Maintenance & Logistics Command
Atlantic
United States Coast Guard
Department of Homeland Security
[Location]

OPM decision: Federal Wage System

OPM decision number: C-2604-00-07

/signed/
Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager
Center for Merit System Accountability

01/16/09
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 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 (Introduction)*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

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Introduction

On March 28, 2007, the Philadelphia Oversight and Accountability Group, formerly the Philadelphia Field Services Group, of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a pay category appeal from [Appellant]. His agency graded his job as Electronics Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2604-12. He believes the job should be classified as a Supervisory Logistics Management Specialist, GS-346. The appellant works in the Electronic Systems Support Detachment (ESD) [Location], Electronic Systems Support Unit (ESU) [Location], Electronics Systems Division, Maintenance & Logistics Command Atlantic (MLCA), United States Coast Guard (CG), Department of Homeland Security, in [Location]. We accepted and decided this pay category appeal under section 5103 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). We received the complete appeal administrative report on July 17, 2007.

To help us decide the appeal, we conducted an on-site job audit with the appellant on October 3, 2007, and a telephone interview regarding additional work documentation provided by the appellant on December 6, 2007. In addition, we conducted a telephone interview with the appellant's supervisor on December 11, 2007. Additional information was requested during the audit and later provided by the appellant. In deciding this appeal, we carefully considered the audit and interview findings and all other information of record furnished by the appellant and the agency.

General issues

In his appeal letter dated March 15, 2007, the appellant stated he disagreed with his agency's audit finding and believes his position is improperly classified in the Federal Wage System (FWS). He stated his position has evolved from a technical position to one of managing a military-based logistics support unit due to the continually expanding role of providing telecommunications, computer, network system administration, and customer service support for the CG. He stated in the nine years he has occupied his position, his crew has increased from 12 to 15 billets, and his computer responsibilities have increased. He stated his management focus is predominately computer systems support. The appellant believes given the complexity, logistics management aspects, and type of work performed at the ESD, GS-346 is a more accurate pay category and series for his position.

On March 7, 2005, the appellant filed a classification appeal with the CG on the grounds his position should be classified into the GS, specifically into the GS-856, Electronics Technician series (now the Electronics Technical series). By decision dated March 5, 2007, the CG determined the appellant's pay plan, title, series, and grade to be unchanged and properly classified as an Electronics Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2604-12.

The appellant is currently assigned to job description (JD) number [#number], Electronics Mechanic Supervisor, WS-2604-12.

The appellant makes various statements about his agency and its evaluation of his job. In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of the job.

The appellant compared his position to a GS-301 position in another ESD. By law, we must make decision solely by comparing his current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5103, 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to JGSs and guidelines is the exclusive method for grading jobs, we cannot compare the appellant's position to other positions in other organizations, which may or may not be properly classified, as a basis for deciding this appeal. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

Like OPM, the appellant's agency must classify positions based on comparison to OPM standards and guidelines. However, the agency also has primary responsibility for ensuring its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions (see 5 CFR 511.612 and *Introduction*, appendix 4, I.). If the appellant considers his position so similar to others that they all warrant the same classification, he may pursue the matter by writing to his agency HQ HR office. In doing so, he should specify the precise organizational location, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the positions in question. If the positions are found to be basically the same as his, the agency must correct its classification to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to him the differences between his position and the others.

In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision based on the proper grading of the appellant's job. A job consists of the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a job, and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities currently assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision grades a real operating job, and not simply the JD. Therefore, this decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant.

Job information

The record shows almost all CG electronics systems and equipment are standardized, for particular applications/uses on common types of vessels, at land-based sites and/or on water-based aids to navigation. Therefore, within the CG there are a number of higher-level program offices, headquarters (HQ) and parent organizations with electronics engineers and technicians whose primary missions are to plan, design and develop equipment, develop and maintain equipment standards, and/or oversee the installation and testing of complex electronic systems, e.g. the CG-6, Assistant Commandant for Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Information Technology; C2CEN, Command and Control Engineering Center; TISCOM, CG Telecommunications and Information Systems Command; NAVCEN, HQ Navigation Center; and MLCA, the ESU and ESD parent command.

The Electronic Systems Division of MLCA consists of the Resources Branch, Equipment Branch, Platform Branch, Systems Branch, and six ESUs including ESU [Location] and its subordinate ESDs. Electronic computer and telecommunications projects are planned, budgeted, and executed by the Division, or by one of the ESUs and coordinated with the MLCA, HQ units of other major CG Atlantic electronics units and/or CG HQ as appropriate.

The ESD's mission and functional statement indicates the detachment is to provide timely installation, repair, modification, and maintenance of all electronics, telecommunications, and

computer systems on all CG ashore and afloat units. The organization provides services from Rockland to Eastport to Caribou, Maine.

The appellant works in a field-level ESD. The detachment performs systems corrective and preventive maintenance, responds to and resolves casualties (equipment failures, outages and/or breakdowns), installs equipment per field change orders, provides quality oversight on maintenance contracts, monitors and manages electronics systems-related projects, consults with and provides assistance to customer units concerning electronic equipment issues, performs inspections and tests equipment performance, and maintains telecommunications cabling. The primary products and services of the ESD involve the installation, repair, maintenance, and ensuring the operability of electronic equipment and systems developed and produced by others. ESDs do not install all electronic equipment or systems, but they are responsible for maintaining them. Installations may occasionally involve entirely new equipment, but most are replacements-in-kind or upgrades to existing equipment or systems.

The ESD [Location] is responsible for electronic equipment located at 26 lighthouses, more than 300 buoys, and aboard boats and larger vessels co-located with ESD [Location] and at three other CG stations including: an over 100-foot ice breaker, an over 100-foot ocean-going buoy boat, 55-foot and 49-foot buoy boats, two 65-foot tug boats, four 47-foot patrol/law enforcement boats, two 41-foot patrol boats, four 25-foot fast-response boats and various land sites. Contractors perform all significant boat repairs and maintenance. The appellant is responsible for performing and managing timely installation, repair, modification, overhaul, troubleshooting, and maintenance of fielded and approved standardized C4 (Command, Control, Communications, and Computers) electronics, telecommunications systems, and computer systems aboard all CG commands within the ESD's area of responsibility. The types of equipment include complex electronic equipment; radio transmitters and receivers; single-side band and frequency shift keying radios; facsimile machines; radio navigation equipment; electronic countermeasures and Identification-Friend or Foe; sonar navigational equipment including scanning, underwater telephone, and depth findings; various navigation equipment including long-range and guidance positioning systems, navigation beacons, electronic cryptographic devices, electromechanical servo systems; pneumatic, hydraulic, and mechanical and electric motor systems for antenna controls and other audio power and test equipment, and various Very High Frequency and Ultra High Frequency receivers. The ESD also services workstation servers; desk and laptop computers; telephone and public address systems; and local- and wide-area network hardware. The work is accomplished through a civilian electronics mechanic, WG-2604-12; one contractor; two reservists; and ten enlisted military personnel. Since we received this appeal, ESD [Location] hired an additional civilian electronics mechanic and a clerk.

The ESD's primary function is to respond to C4 unscheduled outages and breakdowns. CG customers will call to report trouble with communication, computer, and/or electronic equipment and systems failure or malfunction. The appellant or an ESD crew member is expected to be at the site of the trouble as soon as possible. Customers expect the ESD to get the downed equipment or system up and running promptly. Resolutions frequently involve repairing the equipment through the use of on-board spare parts or components, or substituting other equipment. Generally, problems are resolved in one or two days.

Although providing rapid response to unplanned/unexpected equipment and system failures and malfunctions is the ESD's highest priority, the appellant's responsibilities also include equipment repair, preventative maintenance, inventory control, and installation and relocation project work. The ESD crew generally handles equipment repairs; however, the appellant can authorize the use of a commercial repair facility when the severity of the repair or crew availability dictates.

As a regular and recurring task, the appellant directs the planning and scheduling of preventative maintenance duties for all electronics equipment and systems in his area of responsibility. Routine maintenance is planned and scheduled weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, and annually as determined by manufacturer's recommendation or requirement, local or higher directive and/or by appellant's direction. Occasionally, a contractor will complete work in accordance with specifications, but the work will cause problems with other related systems or other equipment located nearby. In such cases, the appellant or a crew member diagnoses the nature of the problem using available technical information, blueprints, schematics and test equipment, and coordinates with his superiors and/or other specialists/engineers to identify a solution and correct the problem.

When directed by his supervisor or a higher-level command, the appellant plans, directs, and administers electronics and communication installation and relocation projects. Projects usually involve new or existing shore-side facilities or stations and include installation of C4 system updates and change orders; telephone systems radio equipment, computer local- and wide-area network, and desktop computer stations. The work includes installing, wiring and cabling for data and communication ports and outlets, switching stations and network servers. Initial planning can be weeks or months, depending on the size and complexity of the project. The appellant is responsible for reviewing and providing input to blueprints, wiring diagrams, and installation and support plans. He makes suggestions on alternate methods of installation or construction to better accommodate the placement of communication and/or telecommunication systems or components. The appellant and his crew will work with project managers and procurement staff to obtain the required materials and components.

The record shows in an average year, ESD [Location] performed 4,657 preventative maintenance actions, responded to 315 electronic casualties, eight telephone system casualties, 672 computer help calls, and 34 projects.

The appellant's ESD [Location] crew is primarily responsible for maintaining, repairing, installing or replacing, and testing numerous electronic, computer, and networked equipment and systems and training enlisted CG personnel to perform the work. In addition, the appellant performs quality checks on work done by contractors. The equipment includes: radars, navigation and position equipment communications equipment, cryptographic and voice privacy systems, telephone systems and local- and wide-area network hardware located on land, on fixed-position aids to navigation, and on-board boats and larger vessels.

The appellant's subordinate civilian electronics mechanics delivers formal and on-the-job (OJT) training to ESD [Location] enlisted military personnel. The emphasis is mostly on the full-time personnel, about half of whom typically just completed their basic technical training requirements. Enlisted personnel are supposed to be assigned on a rotational basis for approximately three to four years to receive hands-on training and experience. However,

because of a critical need for CG shipboard personnel, they typically stay only one or two years. As a result, much of the civilian electronic mechanic's work is focused on OJT for enlisted personnel, and the civilian electronics mechanic's job is essential to provide continuity of operations. Most scheduled maintenance work and associated OJT is done during the warmer part of the year and formal training in the winter months. From November to April, the civilian electronics mechanic prepares and presents at least two hours of classroom training a week, requiring about two hours of preparatory time each week. The civilian electronics mechanic also provides trainees 10 hours of OJT per week. OJT may involve working side-by-side in the office to go over the work to be performed and talk through any issues, questions, or anticipated problems. Other OJT includes the electronics mechanic going on-site with the trainee to perform the work. Enlisted military personnel respond to most casualties by themselves based on past experience or previously having discussed the requirements with the civilian electronics mechanic. The civilian electronics mechanic also provides technical advice and assistance to contractor personnel and others in the office, as needed.

The ESD, [Location] crew is occasionally involved in larger and/or longer-term projects. For example, a crew member worked with one of his counterparts at ESD [Location], other CG specialists and engineers, and contractor personnel on a six-month project to establish a new, combined Command and Control Center with responsibility for all of the CG's communications traffic in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. During the year-long project, the team combined all communication high sites, did extensive rewiring, investigated, tested and installed specialized equipment and reconfigured telephone circuits to accommodate the new equipment. The crew member worked closely with ESD [Location], ESU [Location], Verizon personnel and contractors (Allied Communications Technologies and Bayly Communications), and all actions were accomplished without interruption to the daily operations of the existing operations centers. The work involved all radio, audio, phone and data high-site circuits integrated into a multiplexer. CG engineering staff provided equipment and written guidance, but the information was frequently sketchy and difficult to apply because of a variety of problems encountered involving unique situations at particular sites. The crew member worked through numerous problems, coordinating with others to resolve problems with adding and dropping site connections, "ghosts" in the system, antenna-related issues, systems integration, phone line and other equipment connectivity problems.

During 2004, an ESD [Location] crew member spent half his time on the construction and equipment installation for the new Eastport, Maine, CG station. He again served as primary on-site CG technical representative dealing with contractor personnel who were primarily responsible for the work. A significant part of his duties involved providing practical advice and assistance to the contractors based on personal prior experience with such work and various types of equipment including their physical/operational requirements to ensure proper performance and monitoring the quality of the work. He worked through issues not adequately addressed in the contractual statement of work which, at times, required pressing ESU [Location] engineering and management personnel for change approvals. Particularly difficult problems involved the design configuration and location of a communications tower on the backside of a hill, the need for a false floor for the communications center which was not in the original drawings, and numerous wiring issues. The project also required the crew member to participate in occasional meetings between the local commander, contractor, and local officials/interested individuals to provide information and respond to questions.

The record showed C2CEN periodically sends equipment out to the ESDs which is not field ready. For example, there are fog detectors which have been in use for about 10 years which are still unreliable in actual use. An ESD [Location] crew member recommended changes to the placement and configuration of equipment (not circuitry-related modifications) to increase reliability and performance and worked with others to develop standard operating procedures for testing and fixing the equipment. The crew member forwarded information to C2CEN explaining how they locally addressed equipment problems for their consideration in establishing guidance for use throughout CG.

For 10 months during 2005, an ESD [Location] crew member served as CG technical representative to contractor personnel for the gutting and rebuilding of the Jonesport, Maine, CG site and to coordinate the work with ESU technical engineering and management personnel. This project required ensuring the operability of the site during reconstruction, ensuring the quality of contractor work in accordance with established technical requirements, and working through problems to identify practical solutions and coordinate them with all interested parties necessary for approval. While technical drawings, blueprints and statements of work were present, they were not always directly applicable or presented problems due to unforeseen circumstances.

From March 2005 to May 2006 an ESD [Location] crew member worked on the Cooper Mountain Repeater Site project which consisted of finding and establishing a radio communications repeater site for secure (encrypted) transmissions. The CG station Eastport's area of responsibility is surrounded by hills and mountains which block radio transmissions, causing "dead spots" where their boats cannot be contacted. The crew member assisted the station in conducting a radio transmission survey to map out these areas where there was no coverage and investigated tower sites which could be used as a relay point and provide coverage to those areas. He inspected the work of the contractors to establish this site. He selected and purchased the equipment for the site and had local contractors install it.

From October 2007 to February 2008, an ESD [Location] crew member worked on the CG Cutter Moray (an 87-foot patrol boat) transducer project which involved changing out all components of the faulty system, including the wiring. However, the depth sounder still didn't work properly. The crew member worked with the Engineering Petty Officer (EPO) of the CGC Moray, commercial divers, ESD [Location] technicians, ESU [Location] personnel, MLCA, and the Naval Engineering Support Unit (NESU) to solve the problem. The ESD [Location] crew member and EPO discovered a discrepancy in the engineering drawings and once this discrepancy was corrected, the change was distributed to the entire fleet of 87-foot CG cutters. Commercial divers assisted in changing out the transducer several times during which the appellant noticed and addressed several potential safety problems by developing a plan to standardize the operation to ensure the safety of the participants and eliminate risks of damage to the cutter. This dive plan is also to be distributed throughout CG.

In June 2008, an ESD [Location] crew member provided a recommendation to the Civil Engineering Unit in Providence about a security camera system for the CG assets. He consulted with CG stakeholders in determining needs. He suggested four independent cameras at four discrete locations with pan/tilt and zoom capabilities controllable from the viewer's location. He recommended obtaining a digital video controller with associated control, multiplexing and exporting capabilities to be placed at a centrally located secure location to gather the surveillance

video and to distribute it to the end users. He recommended wireless interfacing for two cameras because of their remote location and exposure to extreme weather conditions while the other two cameras would be hard-wired, due to their location within a building. He recommended certain camera models and vendors based on his practical knowledge of the equipment and CG needs.

An ESD [Location] crew member stated he began work on a local project involving the INTRAC system to try to develop a way for two fog horns located two miles apart to operate together using one fog detector and radio signals. INTRAC is an electronic unit used in remote control systems to provide relay closures at remote locations. However, HQ terminated the project prematurely when they realized the prototypical nature of the work.

An ESD [Location] crew member stated he attended training with other CG electronics mechanics, engineers and enlisted chief warrant officers in 2004 or 2005 regarding the new low energy aids to communication system (LEACMS) developed by C2CEN to learn about the system and its requirements. He also visited the prototype site where it was installed to provide local-level, practical feedback and recommendations addressing local operational concerns (based on widely dispersed CG field sites and their extremely diverse temperature, weather and other environmental operating conditions) for consideration by C2CEN prior to CG wide implementation.

ESD [Location] crew members network with other ESD counterparts to discuss problems each are experiencing with standardized equipment and to share their experiences regarding how things have been resolved and/or to brainstorm possible solutions. There is also an established CG process whereby such information is documented and shared between operational sites.

The appellant states he and his crew perform work on new and unique prototype equipment and/or systems. However, the record does not show this to be the case. The examples provided relate to adaptations and/or practical modifications of existing equipment or equipment configurations in response to basic operational requirements, environmental concerns, or to improve their performance. They do not represent or result from groundbreaking, new and unique developmental research or experimental/initial test equipment.

Pay category and occupation determination

The agency assigned the appellant's job to the 2604 Electronics Mechanic occupation which covers nonsupervisory work involved in fabricating, overhauling, modifying, installing, troubleshooting, repairing, and maintaining ground and marine electronic equipment, such as: radio; radar; sonar; cryptographic; satellite; microwave; micro computers and peripherals; laser; infrared; industrial x-ray; marine, aeronautical, and space navigation aid; TV receiver; surveillance and similar devices. Such work requires knowledge of electronic principles; the ability to recognize improper operation, locate the cause, and determine the best method to correct the defect; and the skill to disassemble, assemble, and adjust electronic equipment. The work includes using both manual and automated test equipment and may require the use of a personal computer and various software packages to program or realign components or systems, download information, and detect equipment deficiencies.

Section 5102 of 5 U.S.C. requires a pay category determination be made as the first step in the position classification process. Section 5102(c)(7) exempts from the General Schedule (GS) employees in recognized trades or crafts, or other skilled mechanical crafts, or unskilled, semiskilled, or skilled manual-labor occupations, and other employees in positions having trade, craft, or laboring experience and knowledge as the paramount requirement. The *Introduction* defines paramount requirement as the essential, prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the primary duty or responsibility for which the position has been established. Whether a position is in a trade, craft, or manual labor occupation depends primarily on the duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements; i.e., the most important, or chief, requirement for the performance of a primary duty or responsibility for which the position exists. If a position clearly requires trade, craft, or laboring experience and knowledge to perform its primary duty, the position is under the FWS regardless of its organizational location or the nature of the activity in which it exists. Paramount requirement does not rely on percentages of work time.

The *Introduction to the Electronic Equipment Installation and Maintenance Family, 2600*, provides additional guidance on differentiating between FWS and GS work. This guidance indicates in distinguishing between electronics mechanic (FWS) and electronics technical (GS) work, the differences between the electronics mechanics and technicians are not so much in the types of skills, knowledge, and abilities possessed but in the degree to which they are possessed and the manner in which they are used.

In evaluating repair work, performing repairs is considered trades work, while performing similar work in conjunction with such engineering functions as developing and designing test and repair equipment, analyzing present repair practices and developing procedural instructions for use by others on the methods and steps of equipment repair, or conducting engineering evaluations of the adequacy of such things as test and evaluation equipment used in making repairs is GS technician work. In assessing maintenance work, performing preventative and corrective maintenance is considered trades work, while performing similar work in conjunction with such engineering functions as the development of maintenance standards and procedures for use by others, the engineering test and evaluation of new or modified electronic systems, or analyzing the compatibility of interlocking components, systems, and equipment for the purpose of redesign of the equipment to increase compatibility is GS technician work. In evaluating installation work, performing installation and reinstallation is considered trades work, while responsibility for planning and directing the installation of complex electronic systems and associated facilities, particularly where there are problems of site selection and construction, dealing with contractors and public utilities, and modifying the equipment to adapt to novel site characteristics, frequently require engineering competence. In such cases, the nonprofessional employees who perform this coordinative work, with or in lieu of an engineer, are in GS positions. In assessing testing work, performing testing is an inherent part of a trades function such as repair, maintenance, installation, and fabrication. Such trades work includes making measurements to diagnose malfunctions, to align and calibrate equipment, and to assure equipment operates within prescribed standards and tolerances. Positions for which the performance of such testing work is the paramount requirement are trades positions. Performing similar testing work is GS technician work when it is part of engineering functions concerning projects such as developing or evaluating new or modified electronic systems or monitoring of frequency emissions by licensed stations. In these cases, they not only do the testing, but they evaluate the data and form engineering conclusions as to the

acceptability of equipment modifications validity of testing procedures and data, or legality of operations.

Although work performed may, on the surface, appear similar, a basic difference between the technician and the mechanic is in the mental approach to the problem faced. The technician uses electronic theory, mathematical knowledge, etc., as the basis for "new thought" to solve engineering problems in conventional areas of endeavor, e.g., design and construction of amplifier circuits, pulse forming networks, etc. In contrast, the FWS mechanic uses a similar background of electronic theory, mathematics, and experience as the basis for "second thought;" i.e., to follow and understand the design concepts of others, to understand the purpose and operation of parts and circuits, to follow signal flow through assemblies and components and recognize proper wave forms and signal values in order to tune equipment for optimum performance and to locate and correct malfunctions.

This guidance indicates the distinction between FWS and GS work is blurred somewhat by the innovative ability of many experienced electronic mechanics as exhibited in the development of shortcut procedures, the recognition and recommendation of correction of errors in documentation; or recommendations of methods, design changes, etc., to remedy a deficiency. This guidance, however, cautions it is significant to note while the mechanic's performance tends toward that of a technician, it is in response to a random condition or need. It is often valuable to and recognized by the activity, but it is not an ongoing need of the activity; i.e., is not required by management, and its absence is not cause for negative action by the supervisor against the employee. It is a requirement, however, the electronics mechanic exercise journey-level competence in testing, repairing, or other assigned work.

Thus, while installation, maintenance, repairing, and testing are mentioned in GS position classification standards (PCS), e.g., Engineering Technical, GS-802, and Electronics Technical; GS-856, it is the design, development, planning, and acquisition work discussed in these standards which is considered paramount and determines the pay category. Installation, maintenance and other hands-on work covered by these standards is secondary and usually involves an oversight role rather than performing the work.

It is not unusual for engineering organizations which develop and design systems, or which develop maintenance, test, repair, calibration and other procedures, to ask for trades input. Mechanics and other trades employees are the primary users of these published blueprints, schematics, maintenance manuals, and test procedures and can provide valuable input on the impact of the effectiveness of these engineering products within the shop environment. Such input is valuable to and recognized by cognizant CG engineering organizations, but it is not the fundamental underlying reason for the existence of the ESD and does not constitute the primary work of the appellant's position or the reason for its existence. Furthermore, the trades theory and hands-on OJT training provided by crew members in ESD [Location] to CG enlisted military personnel is an inherent part of journey-level trades work; i.e., providing guidance to lower-graded employees and/or to employees less familiar with a particular piece of equipment, including contractor personnel.

The *Introduction* recognizes borderline positions exist where a pay category determination is difficult to make. In such situations, it is necessary to evaluate such factors as: (1) the nature of the work processes or services of the organization; (2) working relationships with other positions in the organization; (3) normal lines of career progression; (4) equitable pay relationships with other positions in the immediate organization; and, (5) management's intent, or purpose, in creating the

position. Because the primary and paramount requirement of appellant's personally performed work and his supervisory work is 2604 and related trades knowledge, his position is not borderline in nature, there is no need to apply the borderline criteria in order to corroborate our findings. We will now address the remaining pay category issues raised by the appellant.

Coverage of the Logistics Management Series, GS-346

The appellant believes his work is properly classified to the GS-346 series which covers work involving coordinating and integration of numerous activities and functions into an overall efficient and effective support effort. Depending on the program being supported, these activities may include such specializations as supply, maintenance, procurement, transportation, inventory management, quality assurance, facilities and property management, production control, property disposal, housing management, food services, and management of test equipment. Characteristic of all logistics management work, however, is the overriding requirement to coordinate the activities of the individual functional areas into a unified program which will meet total support requirements. The work involves identifying the specific requirements for money, manpower, material, facilities, and services needed to support the program and correlating those requirements with program plans to assure the needed support is provided at the right time and place. The record indicates the appellant is not providing logistical management and support because other organizations within the CG are responsible for providing logistical management for the kinds of systems and equipment the appellant supports. For example, the appellant is not planning, coordinating, or evaluating the logistical actions required to provide a cutter with the manpower, provisions, fuel, docking facilities, lifejackets, etc., needed for boat operations. Rather, he maintains the electronic equipment and systems for the cutter. As a supervisor, the appellant plans and provides for the supplies, tools, and equipment his individual crew members will need to accomplish their work.

The record shows the appellant is performing the role of a FWS supervisor by planning the use of subordinate workers, equipment, facilities, and materials. The primary purpose of the appellant's position is not planning for the coordinating and positioning of money, manpower, material, facilities, and services needed to support a variety of operational missions or systems as outlined within the GS-346 PCS. As discussed previously, the primary purpose of the appellant's position is the supervision of employees performing trades and craft work in maintaining, repairing, modifying, and installing electronic equipment and systems.

Number of employees supervised

The appellant stated his responsibilities have increased over the years he occupied his position, and the number of subordinates has increased from 12 to 15. However, the number of subordinates supervised is not germane to determining the proper pay category of a position.

Computer support functions

The appellant stated his computer support responsibilities have increased, and his management focus is predominately computer systems support. He stated the civilian contractor performs work directly related to network services, data management, systems administration, and customer service; and his subordinate military supervisor serves as a Tier 2 Systems Administrator, as well as telecommunications and infrastructure maintenance.

The PCS for the Information Technology (IT) Group, GS-2210, covers two-grade interval administrative positions which manage, supervise, lead, administer, develop, deliver, and support IT systems and services. The series covers only those positions for which the paramount requirement is knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and methods, e.g., data storage, software applications, networking. IT refers to systems and services used in the automated acquisition, storage, manipulation, management movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission, assurance, or reception of information. IT includes computers, network components, peripheral equipment, software, firmware, services, and related resources. However, the record shows the primary function of the organization is to perform systems corrective and preventive maintenance, respond to and resolve casualties, install equipment per field change orders, provide quality oversight on maintenance contracts, monitor and manage electronics systems related projects, consult with and provide assistance to customer units concerning electronic equipment issues, perform inspections and test equipment performance, and maintains telecommunications cabling.

The function of ESD [Location] includes the physical installation and connectivity of cabling and peripheral equipment of computers to a network; the running of propriety software; the use of troubleshooting software to diagnose problems and repair computer equipment. Troubleshooting often involves replacement of a relatively few plug-in-and-switch replacement components or boards. This work is not consistent with the description for GS-2210, but rather is accurately described in and covered by the 2604 JGS.

Impact of contractor-performed work

The appellant stated his agency did not fully consider the impact of the contractor discussed below on the appealed position. His updated JD states he liaises with civilian contractors regarding CG asset management and logistical support issues to provide technical assistance to ensure the proper execution of CG operations. The record shows the contractor performs “help desk” duties. For example, a customer will call, reporting that Palm Pilots are not working. The contractor will determine the equipment drivers are not working. The contractor will then work with the TISCOM to get new drivers loaded in units. Another example is a caller reports the Adobe application is not working properly. The contractor will determine the user is authorized for the application. If so, he makes sure Adobe is installed and operating on the server properly. The contractor may do diagnostic tests on a workstation to determine a problem and to determine if a part is needed. The appellant will then call for the part and install it himself or have another contractor install it. The contractor will respond to calls when the message system has gone down or when computers are not connecting to the network. He is also involved in rebuilding workstation computers by wiping them clean and leading software so they can be used or donated to schools. The emphasis in these examples is on the diagnosis and repair of replacement of hardware parts, connections, or communication links to servers.

Contractors do not require the type of technical supervision, training, or administrative management provided to Federal employees. However, contracts require a subject-matter technical expert verify contractors completed the work they contracted to do. The appellant and the electronics mechanics within ESD Location serve as technical experts in “accepting” the contractor’s work. This further confirms the pay category determination made previously in this decision.

Impact of E7 supervisor

The appellant stated his agency grossly understated the duties of the military supervisor, and his primary duties are administrative in nature. He stated his subordinate military supervisor serves as a Tier 2 systems administrator, as well as telecommunications and infrastructure maintenance. However, the record shows the military supervisor oversees IT duties described as a combination of telephone and computer work. It encompasses installing, modifying, troubleshooting, repairing, and maintaining non-voice communication systems, including local-area network systems. It also involves troubleshooting, installing, modifying, or expanding the local-area network servers which support computer work stations and the infrastructure of cables and switches which connect them. The subordinate military members load new software onto services, install cabling and computers at land and cutter workstations. They are responsible for supporting CG computer systems, analog and digital voice systems, installation and maintenance of the physical network infrastructure. Since the paramount function of the organization is the timely installation, repair, modification, and maintenance of all electronics, telecommunications, and computer systems, the work performed by the military members is closely associated with the 2604 series.

Summary

The record shows the primary and paramount purpose of the appellant's position is to provide administrative and technical direction to workers in trades and craft occupations who perform mission-oriented electronic installation, maintenance and repair work, and who provide hands-on work experience and skills development for CG enlisted military personnel to prepare them to perform the work. The position also provides continuity of operations for an organization where enlisted military personnel rotate in and out of particular developmental work assignments to expand their overall occupational knowledge, skills and abilities. The appellant's work, whether he is managing staff engaged in hands-on equipment repair or overseeing a contractor-performing installation and repair work, requires the application of hands-on trades skill and knowledge, e.g., directing the correction of contractor-made installation and repair work. The appellant's project functions include FWS design support work which is ancillary to the FWS work forming the core and purpose of the position's existence and requires the application of journey-level electronic mechanic skills and knowledge. Consequently, his job is exempt from the GS and falls under the FWS.

The appellant's job is placed in the 2604 occupation within the 2600 Electronic Equipment Installation and Maintenance Family because the maintenance and repair of electronics equipment best reflects the overall nature of the work operations supervised. The job requires a broad practical knowledge of electronic and telecommunication principles, and their application to a wide variety of complex circuitry, systems, and equipment.

Decision

The appealed job is covered by the FWS and placed in the 2400 occupation.