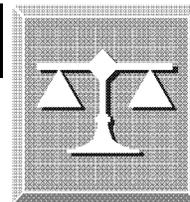


TS-2 October 1970

**General Schedule
Position Classification Standards**



WCPS-2 August 2002

**POSITION CLASSIFICATION
STANDARD
FOR
SURVEYING TECHNICIAN
SERIES, GS-0817**



**Workforce Compensation
and Performance Service**



Surveying Technician Series

GS-0817

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions which require primarily the application of a technical knowledge of surveying methods, equipment, and techniques in the measurement or determination of distances, elevations, areas, angles, land boundaries, and other features of the earth's surface. Specifically included are topographic, hydrographic, geodetic, land, control, and construction surveying.

These standards supersede the standards for the Surveying Technician Series, GS-0817, published October 1959 and revised April 1966.

RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER OCCUPATIONS

1. This series covers only nonprofessional work. Professional work in surveying and mapping may be classified by reference to standards for other series such as the following:
 - a. [Civil Engineering Series, GS-0810](#);
 - b. [Land Surveying Series, GS-1373](#);
 - c. [Geodesy Series, GS-1372](#);
 - d. [Cartography Series, GS-1370](#).

The guidelines for distinguishing between professional and nonprofessional occupations that are included in the [Engineering and Architecture Group, GS-0800](#), are also applicable to surveying.

2. Positions which involve primarily the computation, compilation, and presentation of data using mathematical, graphic, or photogrammetric techniques are classified in the [Cartographic Technician Series, GS-1371](#), or [Mathematics Technician Series, GS-1521](#), as appropriate. However, positions that involve similar work performed in the field as an integral part of a complete survey requiring primarily substantial knowledge and ability in making field measurements are classified in the Surveying Technician Series.
3. Since surveying is a tool in many occupations, positions which involve application of field surveying principles and techniques in combination with knowledge and abilities that characterize other fields should be classified in the subject-matter field reflecting the combination, for example, the [Soil Conservation Technician Series, GS-0458](#); the [Construction Control Series, GS-0809](#); the [Cartographic Technician Series, GS-1371](#); and the [Engineering Technician Series, GS-0802](#). Thus, a position that involves a combination of surveying and engineering design would be classified in the Engineering Technician Series, unless the design work is minor in nature. Also, a position involving a combination of surveying work and cartographic work that involves primarily evaluating, selecting, and classifying topographic data for use in maps would be classified in the Cartographic Technician Series, unless the cartographic work is minor in nature.



Similarly, a position engaged primarily in topographic mapping involving a combination of field surveying, field map completion work, and photogrammetric compilation would typically be classified in the [Cartographic Technician Series, GS-1371](#).

4. Positions that involve primarily manual tasks, such as clearing brush and assembling towers, incidental to the conduct of surveys are excluded and placed under the Federal Wage System. However, when such positions that involve manual tasks also include training in the performance of surveying duties and the work is identified as a step in the surveying technician career ladder, the positions may be classified in the Surveying Technician Series.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Surveying aids and technicians are employed in support of numerous and varied programs and activities such as the following

- a. planning, design, and construction of dams, roads, bridges, buildings, facilities, etc, including related site, route and location surveys, construction inspection surveying, etc.;
- b. establishment of reference points (triangulation stations, benchmarks, monuments) for surveying and mapping purposes;
- c. collection of field data for use in the compilation of nautical charts, aeronautical charts, and topographic maps;
- d. land surveying to establish or locate boundaries.

In all instances, the basic, identifying characteristic of the occupation is the use of surveying methods, principles, and techniques to measure distances, elevations, areas, angles, etc.

Surveying work requires highly proficient operation of instruments and application of techniques to obtain the required skill and accuracy. For party chiefs, instrument men, and some other team members, an understanding of the purpose of the survey is essential. Many of the techniques and procedures used in surveys of various types are applied almost universally. Much surveying practice is standardized. Standardization facilitates rigid control where this is needed. However, other survey techniques and practices are developed within particular agencies and installations for use in specialized types of surveys. In some instances, procedures must be adapted in the field to obtain desired results under the conditions encountered. Technicians select and adapt methods to solve field problems caused by difficult terrain, weather, obstructed vision, time requirements, etc.

TITLES

The following titles are authorized:

Surveying Aid is the title for all positions at GS-1, GS-2 and GS-3.

Surveying Technician is the title for all nonsupervisory positions at GS-4 and above.

Supervisory Surveying Technician is the title for all positions which require supervisory qualifications.

CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

Grade levels are defined under two broad classification criteria: *Nature of Assignment* and *Level of Responsibility*. (Qualification requirements are not described separately, but have been reflected under both elements.)

Nature of assignment

This factor includes the complexity of the assignment and the skills and knowledge required to complete it. At lower grade levels, ability to perform tasks involving mainly the use of auxiliary equipment and basic mathematics is required. As grade levels increase, technicians learn to use sighting or electronic distance measuring equipment along with more complex mathematics and increased knowledge of techniques to cope with difficult terrain, precision requirements, boundary problems, etc.

Order of accuracy -- Surveying instruments and procedures to be used in particular surveying assignments are selected so as to attain results of the required accuracy and completeness. Refinement of both instrument and procedure is directly dependent on this requirement, which is usually defined in terms of "order of accuracy" of the survey. There are four orders of accuracy, ranging in decreasing stringency from the first order to the fourth.

The order of accuracy is one of several significant classification considerations in evaluating positions engaged in precise construction surveys and positions engaged in geodetic or other basic control surveys, which are executed with greater precision and accuracy than is typically required for dependent surveys. These positions require specialized knowledge and skill needed to make precision measurements, or to attain the required first or second order of accuracy. For other types of surveys, which may involve the use of highly precise electronic instruments, the order of accuracy is of limited significance.

Chief-of-party positions -- The chief-of-party positions described in the grade-level criteria involve performance of both supervisory and nonsupervisory duties, with grade-controlling responsibilities of a nonsupervisory nature. The work involves responsibility for:

- directing the activities of other party members (usually three to seven crew members);

- setting the pace for the crew, maintaining discipline, and insuring that prescribed survey procedures are followed;
- making decisions involving work priority and safety considerations;
- assuring that the selected equipment and measuring methods are used, corrections applied, and computations made so that accurate data are obtained;
- making important personal contacts with property owners and others in gaining entrance to lands and in securing their cooperation in conducting surveys on their lands;
- making necessary administrative arrangements for the survey.

Illustrative assignments

Illustrative examples of assignments are provided at each level. These examples are not all-inclusive, nor does any one example stand in isolation. Each must be applied in the light of the conditions and controls described under the grade-distinguishing criteria. The presence of an example for a particular surveying specialty at a given grade level should not be interpreted as defining the grade level or as setting a floor or ceiling on surveying work of that kind.

Level of responsibility

The technical judgment exercised by the technician and the supervision he receives, in terms of the intensity of the review of his work as well as guidance he receives during the course of the work cycle, are of particular importance in determining the level of responsibility. The personal contacts made or maintained with others are also considered under this element.

At the lower grade levels the provision or availability of specific and detailed direction and procedures along with the closeness of observation and checking of work are of primary significance.

At intermediate levels the technical judgment exercised and the degree of technical on-site guidance received are usually important. Most situations defined at these levels involve considerable independence from personal, on-site supervision.

Positions at the higher grade levels are characterized by the freedom to plan and execute surveying assignments, to lead and coordinate the work of team members, to make surveying judgments not covered by procedures, or to develop, adapt or change guidelines.

Some positions involve surveying work of an inspections nature in which the surveying technician certifies as to precise placement of equipment or forms by contractors. Since responsibility for the accuracy of the work is inherent in the performance of precision work, additional grade-level credit for certification, per se, would be inappropriate.

EVALUATION NOTES

This series is a one-grade interval series. The grade-level criteria in these standards cover nonsupervisory and chief-of-party positions in grades GS-1 through GS-8. The supervisory duties and responsibilities of positions at higher grades should be evaluated by use of the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#), or by an extrapolation of the criteria provided. standards for the [Land Surveying Series, GS-1373](#), and the [Geodesy Series, GS-1372](#), may be especially useful in evaluating similar nonprofessional positions above grade GS-8, with due consideration given for possible significant differences in the required knowledge and the approach to assignments.

SURVEYING AID, GS-0817-01

Nature of assignment

GS-1 surveying aids learn the basic methods, techniques, and procedures for one or a few simple tasks. They learn how to set up, hold, and mark a rod, how to pace off distance, and where to stand for most useful readings. In addition, GS-1 aids serve as helpers for higher grade aids or technicians by performing the simplest manual tasks. For example, they drive stakes and cut brush. GS-1 aids are not required to apply experience or familiarity directly related to specific technical tasks.

Level of responsibility

As trainees, GS-1 aids receive very close supervision. Detailed instructions are furnished. Procedures, methods, and techniques are demonstrated. The aid's work is continuously observed, spot-checked, and checked upon completion, as appropriate.

SURVEYING AID, GS-0817-02

Nature of assignment

Surveying Aids GS-2 perform a limited variety of simple, repetitive tasks requiring a knowledge of simple work procedures performed in a fixed or prescribed sequence. GS-2 aids receive training to acquire specific subject-matter knowledge or skills of the type applied by GS-3 aids. By comparison, GS-1 aids do not apply prior knowledge of procedures.

The following tasks are illustrative:

1. Holds a rod or range pole in a perpendicular position on designated points, in accordance with directions or signals from an instrument man or chief-of-party, and uses a plumb bob or leveling bubble as necessary; moves rod or target as directed and, when pertinent, reports readings to recorder.

2. Carries steel or metallic tape; holds the end of the tape at designated points or, under guidance of another party member, establishes points at the forward end of the tape; maintains tension; sets taping arrows; reads and reports tape measurements.
3. Records on prescribed forms readings called out by others; observes and records time when directed; and makes simple arithmetic calculations.

Level of responsibility

Surveying Aids GS-2 receive supervision which is initially as close as is typical of the GS-1 level, but which lessens as tasks recur. New methods, procedures, and techniques are demonstrated or are written out in detail. Guidelines are specific, detailed, and fully applicable. Unlike GS-1 aids, GS-2 aids performing repetitive assignments are expected to select and apply the appropriate procedures from those they have used. Assistance is readily available when problems arise. As routine tasks recur, supervision diminishes to the point where work is spot-checked in progress and upon completion.

SURVEYING AID, GS-0817-03

Nature of assignment

Positions at this level differ from those at GS-2 in that the work at GS-3 is characterized by (a) required knowledge of detailed procedures which are either established and repetitive or which are specified by the supervisor at the time of initial performance, (b) some readily acquired skill or subject-matter knowledge based on experience, and (c) the ability to carry through independently a sequence of operations.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Serves as rodman on surveys requiring special rodding procedures, using any of various types of rods, and selecting measuring or turning points in consideration of terrain and demands of the type of survey involved.
2. Serves as pacer of a leveling party, going ahead of the party and determining in advance the positions rod crew will occupy so that shots will be balanced and instruments can be kept level.
3. Serves as head chain crew on surveys of third or fourth order of accuracy. Typically, selects measuring points in consideration of terrain, necessity for balancing shots, and demands of the type of survey involved; directs work of other chainmen; uses clinometer to measure slope and levels tape with the use of a hand level or by sighting through an instrument already set up; and pulls tape to proper tension based on judgment or using a tension scale.
4. Serves as light keeper under a variety of conditions. Typically, locates station and orients position from reconnaissance sketch; erects signal lights and levels stand; and in

the course of observing stations, points lights at observing stations, adjusting brightness, focus, and direction of lights according to directions of observers by radio or light signals.

5. Takes soundings in hard bottom areas with a lead-line or sounding pole or operates a sweep bar in sweeping operations, calls readings to recorder, with responsibility for calling at a rate appropriate to the rate at which the depth is changing and for notifying the recorder of the location of obvious obstructions.

Level of responsibility

GS-3 aids receive complete and explicit oral instructions at the beginning of each new or changed task, covering work methods, available equipment, procedures, guidelines, etc. These are more complex and voluminous than is typical for positions at GS-2. The supervisor is available for instruction and guidance at any time. GS-3 aids are expected to perform recurring tasks under supervision which gradually lessens until the more routine, recurring tasks are only infrequently spot-checked or occasionally observed. The less routine tasks are occasionally checked in progress or upon completion. At GS-2 the supervision received is more intensive.

SURVEYING TECHNICIAN, GS-0817-04

Nature of assignment

Surveying Technicians GS-4 are required to apply some specialized knowledge, skill or judgment to carry out a varied and complex sequence of standardized operations. They make measurements, operate equipment, or perform recording assignments requiring some specialized skill or judgment in the application of knowledge of surveying methods and techniques. By comparison, GS-3 aids perform a simpler sequence of tasks involving readily-acquired skills and requiring very limited judgment to determine the appropriate course of action.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Conducts surveys, typically with an assistant, using hand instruments such as hand levels and compasses. Makes simple traverse surveys using compass and tape. Measures small land areas, using rod, tape and hand level, to obtain rough estimates of yardage to be excavated.

2. Performs recording assignments which require concentration and specialized skill such as that required in making manual computations that involve elementary arithmetic processes made complex by virtue of the number and variety of manipulations involved and the speed with which successive readings are called. Assignments may require ability to recognize inconsistencies in data on the basis of knowledge of standard sequences.
3. Performs recording assignments where the field information to be recorded is generally prescribed, but is of a descriptive nature. Such work requires some knowledge of the use of the data to obtain adequate detail, and requires judgment and ability in estimating distances, in sketching and in composing brief notes.
4. Operates a fathometer, checking depth setting of machine, observing action of recording device, spotting fix points and recording time at such points, and reporting to the chief-of-party instances of inadequate recording because of materials in suspension, aeration, or other conditions.
5. Takes soundings involving use of a lead-line, but requiring some specialized skill and judgment to measure depths in area of sedimentation.

Level of responsibility

The level of responsibility at GS-4 is characterized by the following:

- a. Routine assignments which involve conditions, concepts, and methods familiar to the technician are made in terms of the objectives to be achieved and without explicit instructions as to work methods, if standard work methods can be used; GS-3 surveying aids typically receive instructions on work methods in such cases.
- b. Recurring routine technical problems are resolved on the basis of previous experience without reference to the supervisor. GS-3 aids refer technical problems to the supervisor.
- c. Explicit instructions for solving technical problems involving unfamiliar conditions, methods, or concepts are provided by the supervisor.
- d. The technical adequacy of completed routine work and adherence to instructions are reviewed or checked; nonroutine assignments are reviewed in process.

SURVEYING TECHNICIAN, GS-0817-05

Nature of assignment

Surveying Technicians GS-5 are required to apply a background of knowledge and understanding of surveying methods and techniques based on substantial training or experience. They operate sighting instruments (e.g., transit, level, alidade), or electronic distance measuring equipment (e.g., electrotape, geodimeter, tellurometer), requiring highly developed skill in making accurate measurements on uncomplicated surveys. By comparison, GS-4 technicians do not use complex instruments in making measurements, except in a training capacity. Surveying Technicians, GS-5 apply judgment and skill in selecting and describing field information to provide adequate coverage. By comparison, GS-4 technicians apply a limited background of knowledge of surveying in the performance of standardized tasks requiring a lesser degree of skill and judgment.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Operates a transit on hydrographic surveys involving shore-to-ship triangulation. Such work requires the ability to sight a specific point on a ship -- simultaneously with other observers -- at specified intervals of time, as determined by radio contact with the party chief.
2. Operates transits, levels, alidades, and other instruments on surveys of the third or fourth order of accuracy along clear, accessible routes. Runs short traverse lines from known points along unobstructed routes. Runs level circuits between benchmarks of known elevation following established or clearly designated routes. Measures angles, distances, differences in elevation between stations.
3. Selects and records descriptive data when complete, detailed survey notes are required. Such work requires knowledge of the applicability and use of field information, and use of judgment in the selection and description of appropriate data. Includes information and sketches on relief, drainage, and culture; or records information that will identify a particular station and includes, for use in office computations, information concerning the conditions under which observations were made.

Level of responsibility

The level of responsibility at GS-5 is characterized by the following:

- a. Work assignments, which involve concepts and methods familiar to the technician, are made in terms of the objectives to be achieved and without explicit instructions as to work methods. At GS-4 instructions normally cover nonstandard work methods.

- b. Technical problems of the type previously encountered by the technician in the course of the work are typically resolved independently, but may be referred to others in unusual cases.
- c. Assistance in solving technical problems involving unfamiliar methods or concepts is provided by the supervisor; at GS-4, specific instructions are usually provided in such cases.
- d. The methods applied and technical adequacy of the completed work are reviewed or checked. Nonroutine assignments are typically not reviewed in process as at GS-4.

SURVEYING TECHNICIAN, GS-0817-06

Nature of assignment

Surveying Technicians, GS-6 carry out assignments of substantial variety and complexity. The work is more complex than that typical of grade GS-5 in that GS-6 employees apply a background of knowledge based on intensive training and diversified experience in a particular specialty field; or they apply a background of knowledge based on broad training and diversified experience in several fields of surveying. Some GS-6 technicians as chief-of-party perform planning of surveying assignments of limited scope, where the assignment is substantially similar to precedents which clearly dictate the appropriate approach.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Serves as observer on a geodetic triangulation party. Makes local measurement of azimuth, reference, and station marks; tests observing tower or stand for eccentricity and collimation; observes horizontal and, as necessary, vertical angles to targets; checks abstracts of observations to be sure that observations meet specifications and, if not, reobserves angles to obtain desired first or second order of accuracy.
2. Serves as instrument man on varied nongeodetic surveys, including location, right-of-way, and property surveys; construction control (horizontal and vertical) surveys; surveys for topographic mapping in broken terrain; and surveys for placement of reinforcing steel and imbedded materials, installation of equipment, and setting of structural members.
3. Serves as instrument man on geodetic leveling surveys not complicated by conditions such as river crossings or steep grades requiring deviations from normal procedures. Sets up precise first-order level; takes and checks sights using specialized procedures; directs work of the rodman, umbrella-man and pacer; checks records and computations of the recorder to be sure that observations are in accordance with specifications; checks and, as necessary, corrects marker descriptions; and prepares abstracts of results of observations for each marker.

4. Serves as chief-of-party on simple construction or similar surveys of third or fourth order of accuracy and of limited scope and complexity. Assignments require primarily proficiency in the use of sighting instruments and limited planning or analysis to achieve objectives and resolve problems. Typically, runs traverse lines and level circuits and occasional triangulations from known points along routes which are not impeded by major obstructions or other problems of accessibility and which are already established or are clearly designated in work orders or standard procedures; measures and records, as necessary, angles, distances, and differences in elevation between stations; as pertinent to the purpose of the survey, sets markers and control points, identifies located points on aerial photographs, places targets, stakes lines and grades, and obtains slope and profile data; directs the work of rod crew and chain crew assigned to the party; prepares necessary field notes and computations; and reports instances in which it appears that usual procedures and techniques will not accomplish assigned purpose.

Level of responsibility

The level of responsibility is characterized by the following:

- a. Work assignments which involve concepts and methods familiar to the technician are made in terms of the objectives to be achieved and without explicit instructions as to work methods.
- b. Technical problems involving concepts and methods for which agency guides and precedents are applicable are resolved independently. At GS-5 technical problems solved independently are typically of the type previously encountered.
- c. Assistance in solving unfamiliar technical problems involving methods or concepts not covered in agency guides or precedents is provided by the supervisor.
- d. Completed work is reviewed for technical adequacy. The methods applied by the technician are not normally reviewed as at GS-5.

SURVEYING TECHNICIAN, GS-0817-07

Nature of assignment

Surveying Technicians GS-7 apply initiative and resourcefulness in planning nonroutine assignments of substantial variety and complexity.

GS-7 technicians select appropriate guidelines to resolve operational problems not fully covered by precedents. At GS-6, precedents have more specific applicability. Surveying Technicians GS-7 are required to develop revisions to standard work methods and procedures; adapt complex surveying techniques to field situations; select from several surveying alternatives the most

efficient (fastest, cheapest, simplest) which will accomplish the objective; and redirect team effort because of field conditions. Some GS-7 technicians make very exacting measurements requiring highly skilled instrumental techniques applied under difficult conditions.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Serves as chief-of-party on hydrographic surveys involving investigation of sunken objects, shoals, or other materials or conditions reported to be causing hazards to navigation. Locates objects by coordinating two boats in dragging operations, or by sounding with the fathometer, lead-line or similar devices. Coordinates the work of crew members in locating objects on charts; determines size, shape, and nature of objects or materials; determines depth of water over and around items; and develops data used to prepare cost estimates or to establish need for removal and disposal of hazards.
2. Serves as observer and leader of a small, detached observing unit performing first or second order leveling under conditions requiring deviations from normal practices. Such conditions requiring deviations from normal practices. Such conditions may involve unusually heavy urban, rail or highway traffic; steep grades; frequent river crossings; or remote areas where railroads, roads or other normally used routes are unavailable.
3. Serves as chief-of-party performing varied surveys as described in example No. 2 at GS-6. Resolves problems created by ground conditions, crowded and confined work locations, and need for planning sequence of survey work to coincide with successive phases of construction, or other work operations, when surveys are limited in scope.
4. Serves as instrument man on precise construction or installation surveys, such as those involving maintenance of center line, and placement of tunnel supports and lining in tunnel excavation and construction; erection of concrete bridge piers of extreme height in mountain reservoir areas, or installation of hydroelectric turbines. Resolves independently problems caused by crowded and confined work location, rugged terrain, or interference with contractor operations.

Level of responsibility

GS-7 surveying technicians perform assignments which require initiative and resourcefulness in planning and execution. GS-7 technicians independently select, interpret, and apply technical guidelines in situations where precedents are not fully applicable. By comparison, GS-6 technicians independently select, interpret, and apply guidelines where precedents are applicable.

When new or significantly changed assignments are made, GS-7 technicians receive instructions and information or reference material which includes information on unfamiliar practices and problems; and closer than normal guidance is provided. When the work assigned is similar to that previously accomplished by the technician, he is relied upon to select the appropriate guidelines and complete the assignment without explicit instructions as to work methods.

GS-7 technicians have frequent and significant contacts with local residents, officials, and others to obtain information, gain access to areas, explain their presence, etc. By comparison, GS-6 surveying technicians have occasional minor contacts.

As at GS-6, new and significantly changed work aspects are intensively reviewed for technical adequacy. Recurring aspects of work are occasionally observed and subject to only occasional spot checks for technical adequacy. Assignments falling between these extremes are subject to normal review.

SURVEYING TECHNICIAN, GS-0817-08

Nature of assignment

Surveying Technicians GS-8 independently plan the details of assignments which involve precision work. Planning of assignments requires ability to interpret broad guidelines; to work with outdated detailed guidelines (e.g., old maps or plans); or to anticipate the need for working out details in advance. By comparison, GS-7 technicians perform assignments which require ability to select guidelines that are substantially but not fully applicable.

The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Serves as chief-of-party of a precision survey to establish and maintain construction control for a concrete lined canal, and related powerplant, pumping plant, bridge or tunnel construction -- including the placement and setting of structural members, and installation of mechanical and electrical equipment. Makes on-site field determinations as to cross-sectioning requirements, i.e., how many and at what intervals. Plans survey work to follow several phases of construction, adapting to unanticipated changes in contractor's plans.
2. Serves as chief of a field survey party functioning as a single group establishing basic control of the second order of accuracy, involving nongeodetic methods, but providing positions of points to which supplementary surveys will be adjusted. Typically, selects method of accomplishing the survey. Evaluates ground conditions encountered and changes plans as necessary in the light of those conditions.

Level of responsibility

The degree of supervision received by Surveying Technicians GS-8 is similar to that at GS-7 in that the technician receives guidance and instructions in dealing with unfamiliar practices and problems. On familiar types of assignments the GS-8 technician is relied upon to select and adapt appropriate guidelines and complete assignments without explicit instructions as to work methods and precedents. Problems not covered by guides may be solved independently but are typically referred to higher grade employees for review. Significant deviations from guides require approval.

The level of responsibility at GS-8 differs from that at GS-7 primarily in terms of the broader, more complex assignments which include significant responsibility for precision work.