

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and ELSA Programs



Atlanta Oversight Division
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 972
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

**Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Electrical Engineering Technician
GS-802-8

Organization: Utilities Staff
Utilities Department
Navy Public Works Center
[city, state]

OPM decision: Electrical Engineering Technician
GS-802-8

OPM decision number: C-0802-08-01

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

2/13/98

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 representative]

[name]

Director, Human Resources Office

Naval Base

[address]

Mr. William Duffy

Chief, Classification Branch

Field Advisory Services Division

Defense Civilian Personnel Management

Service

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Introduction

On July 8, 1997, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted an appeal for the position of Electrical Engineering Technician, Utilities Staff, Utilities Department, Navy Public Works Center, [city, state]. The appellant is requesting that his position be changed to Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code, (U.S.C.). This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General Issues

This appellant is part of a group appeal from engineering technicians at the Navy Public Works Center who perform work in various specializations. Information furnished with the group appeal compares their GS-9 positions with other engineering technician positions at the same location whom they believe are performing the equivalent work or below but are classified at a higher grade. Copies of position descriptions were provided for two Mechanical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, positions; one Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, position; and one Electronics Engineering Technician, GS-856-11, position. Although the GS-11 position descriptions are certified by a management official, none have a classification certification or a position description number on the Optional Form 8. A certification by a management official certifies the accuracy of the position description which represents the official record of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position. However, a classification certification indicates the position description has been placed in its proper class, title and grade in accordance with the OPM classification standards and guidelines by a person delegated classification authority. Since the GS-11 position descriptions lack a classification certification, the duties and responsibilities are not an official record of duties and responsibilities, have not been properly classified, and are neither reviewable nor appealable under the classification appeal process. Additionally, by law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others as a basis for deciding his appeal.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant, the appellant's representative, and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant and his supervisor.

Position Information

The appellant is assigned to Position Number 7N033. The appellant, supervisor, and agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description.

The appellant's work involves preparing job plans, cost estimates, and construction plans for maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property systems including electrical

communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground), and components; electric power generation equipment; and electric power and distribution.

The appellant receives direction from the Supervisory Production Controller, GS-1152-11, who assigns work identifying major objectives and providing background information and guidance; however, technical guidance and work coordination may be provided by a higher graded engineering technician. Unusual problems are discussed by the appellant and the supervisor. The appellant determines the technical requirements of the job plans, construction plans, methods, components/materials, and cost estimates. Completed work is closely reviewed for quality, timeliness, and adherence with established instructions, guidelines, policies, and procedures.

Standards Determination

Engineering Technician Series, GS-802, June 1969.

Series Determination

The agency placed the position in the Engineering Technician Series, GS-802. The appellant does not contest the occupational series nor the title of the position.

The GS-802 series includes technical positions that require primarily application of a practical knowledge of (a) the methods and techniques of engineering or architecture; and (b) the construction, application, properties, operation, and limitations of engineering systems, processes, structures, machinery, devices, and materials. The positions do not require professional knowledges and abilities for full performance and, therefore, do not require training equivalent in type and scope to that represented by the completion of a professional curriculum leading to a bachelor's degree in engineering or architecture. The work is properly placed in the GS-802 series.

Title Determination

The title Electrical Engineering Technician applies to positions that perform work concerned with systems, plants, equipment, and materials for the generation, transmission, conversion, distribution, control, measurement, or utilization of electrical energy. Included in this specialization are positions which involve the design of electronic installations where the work does not require knowledge of electronics to the extent characteristic of the Electronics Technician Series, GS-856. Since the appellant's work involves preparing job plans, cost estimates, and construction plans for maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property systems including electrical communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground), and components; electric power generation equipment; and electric power and distribution, the position is properly titled Electrical Engineering Technician.

Grade Determination

The grading criteria in the GS-802 standard is written in the narrative format. Grade levels are discussed in terms of two factors: (1) Nature of Assignment, and (2) Level of Responsibility. The position is evaluated as follows:

Nature of Assignment

This factor considers the scope and difficulty of the project, and the skills and knowledge required to complete the assignment.

Engineering Technicians at the GS-8 level independently plan and conduct a block of work which is a complete project of relatively conventional and limited scope or a portion of a large project with diverse components. Assignments require analyses of several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs, and selection of the most appropriate. They generally require consideration of numerous precedents and some adaptation of previous plans and techniques. However, assignments require to only a limited degree the coordination and integration of diverse phases carried out by others. The more complex and critical aspects of problem exploration, evaluation of approaches, and development of new solutions are referred to others.

The appellant's work involves preparing job plans, cost estimates, and construction plans for maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property systems including electrical communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground), and components; electric power generation equipment; and electric power and distribution. The appellant works under the technical guidance of an engineering technician. The appellant completes small, routine assignments independently; however, large, unusual, and complex problems are discussed with the supervisor or a higher graded engineering technician and are usually completed with the assistance of the engineering technician. The appellant uses established procedures and guidelines in completing his work. The vast majority of the work is repair by replacement, and the appellant has state of the art electrical engineering principles and systems information for reference, as well as the engineering technician. Guidelines generally available to the appellant include Public Works Center and NAVFAC instructions, technical directives, procedures, engineering drawings, sketches, specifications, manufacturer's literature, precedents, and files of previous similar projects when applicable (these files may be available from the Base Civil Engineer, the Engineering Division, or the customer). All projects must conform to the National Electrical Code and any applicable local codes. These assignments are comparable to the GS-8 level.

At the GS-9 level, engineering technicians typically perform a variety of work relating to an area of specialization that requires the application of a considerable number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques. Assignments usually involve independent responsibility for planning and conduct of a block of work which is a complete conventional project of relatively limited scope, or a portion of a larger and more diverse project. Assignments require study, analysis, and consideration of several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs, and

selection of the most appropriate. This generally requires consideration of numerous precedents and some adaptation of previous plans or techniques. Often changes or deviations must be made during the progress of an assignment to incorporate additional factors requested after commencement of the project or to adjust to findings and conclusions which could not be predicted accurately in the original plans. The GS-9 assignments typically require coordination of several parts, each requiring independent analysis and solution. When phases or details of the project are performed by other groups or personnel outside the organizational unit, the technician reviews, analyzes, and integrates their work. In addition, assignments at this level require a good understanding of the effect that recommendations made or other results of the assignment may have on an item, system, or process and its end-use application.

The GS-9 level is not met. Larger and more complex projects generally go to the engineering technician. The majority of the work for this position involves assisting higher level engineering technicians and preparing plans and estimates under the technical direction of a higher level engineering technician.

GS-8 is assigned for Nature of Assignment.

Level of Responsibility

This factor considers the nature and purpose of person-to-person work relationships, and the supervision received in terms of intensity of review of work and of guidance received during the course of the work cycle.

At the GS-8 level, 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 prior review. Significant deviations from guides require approval.

The GS-8 level is met. The appellant's work is assigned by the supervisor and time frames are discussed. The appellant consults with the supervisor or engineering technician in cases involving significant deviations from standard procedures. However, the appellant independently selects and applies guidelines for routine and recurring projects. The appellant sets up appointments; reviews the job; determines the requirements for sketches or drawings; prepares the sketches and drawings; prepares the job plan, funding estimates, and scoping estimate for minor or specific jobs. Contacts are with the customers, facility managers, project managers, shop supervisors and tradespeople/mechanics, engineers, and vendors.

At the GS-9 level, the supervisor provides information on any related work being performed, and furnishes general instruction as to the scope of objectives, time limitations, priorities, and similar aspects. The supervisor is available for consultation and advice where significant deviations from

standard engineering practices must be made. The supervisor observes the work for progress and for coordination with work performed by other employees or other sections and for adherence to completion and cost schedules. Standard methods employed are seldom reviewed, but review is made for adequacy and for conformance with established policies, precedents and sound engineering concepts and usage. Personal work contacts typically are more frequent and demanding and are primarily to resolve mutual problems and coordinate the work with that of personnel in related activities. Some contacts are made with using agencies for whom work is done and with contractors and architecture-engineer firms. The contacts are made to clear up doubtful points, to advise as to discrepancies found in meeting contract terms, to consider recommendations for acceptable substitutes, and to promote adherence to agency standards and concepts of good engineering. Contacts outside the agency are generally arranged under supervisory guidance.

The GS-9 level is not met. The appellant is required to consult with the supervisor or higher level engineering technician in cases involving significant deviations from standard procedures. The scope of his projects is somewhat limited in that the larger more complex projects are assigned to higher level engineering technicians.

GS-8 is assigned for Level of Responsibility.

Summary

Both factors are evaluated at the GS-8 level.

Decision

This position is properly classified as Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-8.