

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

Chicago Oversight Division  
230 South Dearborn Street, DPN 30-6  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

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

**Appellant:** [Name]

**Agency classification:** Supervisory Electronics Engineer  
GS-855-13

**Organization:** Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic & Atmospheric  
Administration  
National Weather Service  
[Name] Center  
[Name] Section  
[City, State]

**OPM decision:** Supervisory Electronics Engineer  
**GS-855-13**

**OPM decision number:** C-0855-13-01

/s/

---

Douglas K. Schauer  
Classification Appeals Officer

May 31, 2001

---

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

### **Decision sent to:**

**Appellant:**

[appellant's name and address]

**Agency:**

[name and address of appellant's servicing personnel office]

Ms. Debra M. Tomchek  
Director for Human Resources Management  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
14<sup>th</sup> and Constitution, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

## **Introduction**

The Chicago Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from Mr. [Name] on June 22, 2000. Mr. [Name] is a Supervisory Electronics Engineer, GS-855-13, Chief of the [Name] Section, [Name] Center, [Name] Division, Office [Name], National Weather Service (NWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce. Mr. [Name] believes his position should be classified as Supervisory Electronics Engineer, GS-855-14. We accepted and decided the appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

Prior to his submission of a classification appeal to the OPM, Mr. [Name] appealed his position within his agency. In a decision dated February 7, 2000, the Human Resources Advisor for the NWS affirmed the classification of Mr. [Name] position as Supervisory Electronics Engineer, GS-855-13. In June 2000 a new position description was written at the NWS level and classified for the appellant's position. There appear to be some significant changes in the new position description, however, the agency elected to retain the identical position description number as the previous position description. We have chosen to accept this appeal because the issues raised by the appellant are identical when applied to his position regardless of whether he is assigned to either position description.

## **General Issues**

There is no disagreement between the appellant and the agency in utilizing the GSSG to arrive at the proper grade for the position. The appellant disagrees with the assignment of several factor levels by the agency classifier, specifically those assigned for factors 1, 3, 4, and 6. In this evaluation we will compare the position to these factors in the GSSG. We will also address other issues that might have an impact on the assignment of factor levels to include the adequacy of the appellant's position description and those of subordinate employees.

## **Position Information**

The appellant serves as the supervisor of the [Name] Section, comprised of 12 subordinate employees and organized into three functional units each led by an Electronics Technician GS-856-12. The overall responsibility of the [Name] Section is to provide cost effective depot level repair, reconditioning, modification and engineering service for the NEXRAD system equipment utilized by the NWS, by Department of Defense activities, and by the Federal Aviation Administration. The [Name] Section also maintains, repairs, and modifies/upgrades other complex weather radar equipment and electronics test equipment. There are 165 NEXRAD sites in the U.S. and many others located throughout the world. There are also approximately 40 other weather radar sites located around the U.S. for which he is responsible, and the appellant's section is responsible for maintaining and repairing the test equipment used in the maintenance and repair of the meteorological equipment.

Each meteorological system consists of many components most of which are composed of numerous assemblies and sub-assemblies. The [Name] Section has responsibility for repair down to the sub-assembly level.

The appellant performs a variety of non-supervisory duties concerned primarily of engineering-related tasks requiring the services of a qualified Electronics Engineer. These include, making technical engineering decisions, reviewing and commenting on proposed engineering changes and equipment modifications, and representing the organization in meetings with equipment designers, manufacturers and users.

Approximately 50 percent of the work is concerned with planning and managing the work in the [Name] Section and the employees assigned to it. The NOAA Organization Handbook defines the [Name] Section mission: "The [Name] Section performs life cycle depot support for NEXRAD systems for the DOC, DOD, and DOT. The Section performs depot-level repairs and reconditioning, and modifies technical equipment, assemblies, subassemblies and components primarily oriented toward the NEXRAD, WSR-88D. The Section repairs and reconditions meteorological and hydrological equipment for the NWS, other NOAA organizations and other agencies as required in accordance with established standards. It conducts engineering studies to determine the most effective approach (in-house or contract) for repair and reconditioning and, as required, on equipment items exhibiting deficiencies, to recommend appropriate engineering actions." The systems supported include NEXRAD (defined as Doppler radar WSR-88D system), conventional radar, wind profiler, and test equipment.

### **Series and Title Determination**

All of the operating personnel in the [Name] Section are non-professional engineering technicians with one computer specialist. By definition, the work performed by these positions requires application of a practical knowledge of engineering methods and techniques as distinguished from professional knowledge of engineering. As the section chief, however, the appellant performs non-supervisory work in addition to his program management and supervisory duties. This additional work requires the application of knowledge of the principles, techniques, and practices of electronics engineering such as is classifiable to the Electronics Engineering Series, GS-855. The authorized title for positions in this series that meet the requirements for a supervisor is Supervisory Electronics Engineer.

### **Grade Determination**

The agency classification specialist graded the appellant's supervisory duties using the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG). This position classification standard is expressed in terms of six separate factors that are reflected in most supervisory positions. Each factor shows different levels of difficulty or complexity with an associated point value assigned for each level. The total of all points is then compared to a grade conversion chart to arrive at the final grade. The agency assigned levels 2 and 6 for Factors 2 and 5, respectively, of the appellant's position, and he does not disagree. We also concur in that evaluation. We have evaluated factors 1, 3, 4 and 6 as requested by the appellant. Because half of the appellant's time is occupied in performing electronics engineering duties, we have also evaluated the position compared to the GS-855 Position Classification Standard (PCS).

## Comparison to the GSSG

### *Factor 1 – Program Scope and Effect*

This factor assesses the general complexity, breadth, and impact of the program areas and work directed, including its organizational and geographic coverage. It also assesses the impact of the work both within and outside the immediate organization. To be credited at a factor level, the criteria dealing with both scope and effect must be met. The agency assigned Level 1-2 for this factor and the appellant argues that the position meets Level 1-4. This factor contains two elements: Scope and Effect. We discuss each below.

*Program Scope.* This element is itself divided into two sub-elements: type of program segment or work supervised and program or work coverage.

Level 1-2 is applicable to positions whose program segment or work directed is administrative, technical, complex clerical, or comparable in nature. The functions, activities, or services provided have limited geographic coverage and support most of the activities comprising a typical agency field office, an area office, a small to medium military installation, or comparable activities within agency program segments.

Level 1-3 scope is applicable for positions that direct a program segment performing technical, administrative, protective, investigative, or professional work. The program segment and work directed typically have coverage which encompasses a major metropolitan area, a State, or a small region of several States; or, when most of an area's taxpayers or businesses are covered, coverage comparable to a small city. Providing complex administrative or technical or professional services directly affecting a large or complex multi-mission military installation also falls at this level.

Level 1-4 is appropriate when the work directed consists of a segment of a professional, highly technical, or complex administrative program that involves the development of major aspects of key agency scientific, medical, legal, administrative, regulatory, policy development or comparable, highly technical programs; or that includes major, highly technical operations at the Government's largest, most complex industrial installations.

The appellant believes that his position manages a program segment that meets the criteria for Level 1-4. This is not the case. By way of illustrating the intent of Level 1-4, the GSSG provides examples of work at this level. Directing a mission-essential, major operating program or program segment at a large, complex, aerospace, undersea, or multi-mission research and development center qualifies. Directing a program segment in the production department of one of the largest Navy shipyards or the aircraft management directorate at an Air Logistics Center also qualifies. The work directed by the appellant is technical, but it does not involve the development of major aspects of key agency (DOC or NOAA) highly technical programs, nor does it include major, highly technical operations at the Government's largest, most complex industrial installations. His equipment maintenance and repair program segment is only one part of the major program segment managed within the [Name] Center which is itself only a portion

of a larger program managed by the Engineering Division. Level 1-4 is clearly intended for positions directing program segments at an echelon much higher within the agency.

The appellant believes that the work segment he directs involves some of the most complex RADAR, computer processing, and display technologies deployed in any Government program, that is, a highly technical program segment, and that this meets the criteria for Level 1-4. We disagree. The examples of Level 1-4 work directed clearly intend that this level be credited for positions directing activities much more complex than that directed by the appellant. Production activities at a large and complex aerospace, undersea or multi-mission research and development center are considerably more complex than the maintenance and repair of equipment already in the Government inventory. The difficulty and complexity of performing maintenance and repair of existing equipment is not as difficult and complex as production activities concerned with new (i.e., unprecedented) equipment which Level 1-4 specifically includes. The appellant's position does not meet the Level 1-4 criteria for Scope.

The appellant directs a line segment of the NOAA/NWS program of establishing and monitoring NWS national maintenance, procurement, and logistics plans and policies, performing equipment reconditioning and quality control, and developing installation and maintenance standards and policies. The work directed by the incumbent comprises the maintenance and repair work done on a portion of the meteorological equipment utilized by the NWS, FAA (primarily at airports and air traffic control hubs), and DOD (Navy and Air Force flight activities). We conclude that this does not meet the intent of Level 1-3 for Scope. The GSSG provides illustrations for Level 1-3. They include positions that direct the design, oversight, and related services for the construction of complex facilities for one or more agencies at multiple sites. They also include a position that, in providing services to the general public, furnishes a significant portion of the agency's line program to a moderate-sized population of clients. Maintaining and repairing NEXRAD and other meteorological equipment, which is only a portion of the [Name] Center and, in turn, the [Name] Division and Office [Name], is not of a scope comparable to directing (all) the engineering services for the construction of complex facilities at multiple sites. While the services the appellant's program segment provides are furnished to a moderate-sized population of clients, it does not comprise a significant portion of the agency's line program. The position does not meet Level 1-3, and it is credited at Level 1-2 for Scope.

#### *Program Effect*

The impact of the work directed by the appellant also does not meet Level 1-4. At that level the work impacts an agency's headquarters operations, several bureau-wide programs, or most of an agency's entire field establishment; or facilitates the agency's accomplishment of its primary mission or programs of national significance; or impacts large segments of the Nation's population or segments of one or a few large industries; or receives frequent or continuing congressional or media attention. The appellant believes that he meets these criteria because the work keeping the NEXRAD system operational "facilitates the agency's accomplishment of its primary mission or programs of national significance." However, the phrase must be understood in its proper context. As can be seen from the remainder of the paragraph, the work must directly impact activities of national scope, whereas the appellant's work only indirectly impacts an agency program because it is incorporated into the larger mission of one of the agency's

subordinate activities. As shown in the illustrations in the GSSG, in order to be credited at Level 1-4 for Effect, the product segments directed must affect segments of large industries; or receive frequent congressional or media attention; or are essential to major defense, space exploration, or public health programs; or the program segments directed directly affect large segments of the Nation's population or businesses; or they materially shape or improve the structure, effectiveness, efficiency, or productivity of major portions of the agency's primary missions, multi-region programs, headquarters operations, or projects of national interest. To put the appellant's program segment into perspective, his repair and maintenance program directly impacts the mission of the [Name] Center which has a portion of the mission of the [Name] Division which in turn has a portion of the Office [Name]'s mission. The last named organization has a significant portion of the NWS mission, i.e., fielding operational, cost-effective, and efficient equipment for meteorological, oceanographic and associated uses. But the appellant's work segment does not impact the overall success or failure of the Office [Name] or NWS mission. Level 1-4 is not applicable to the appellant's position.

We find that the appellant's work product also does not meet the intent of the Effect element of Level 1-3. The work directly affects the work product of the [Name] Center that in turn directly affects the mission of the [Name] Division and Office [Name]. The work of the Office [Name] directly impacts the weather prediction mission of the NWS, DOD and FAA. An explicit aspect of this factor is that the work directed must *directly and significantly* impact the organization or population serviced as shown in the Scope element. The appellant's position description states that his work "directly affects the ability of the NWS to fulfill its national mission of protecting life and property." We do not find that this statement is entirely true. The appellant's directed program segment indirectly affects the ability of the NWS, DOD, and FAA to predict the weather by maintaining or repairing some, but not all, meteorological equipment in the nation's inventory. This is a portion of the larger agency mission of equipment and systems engineering, design, acquisition, quality control, logistics, facilities maintenance, equipment maintenance, repair, etc. The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-3 for Effect. It is credited at Level 1-2 for Effect.

Since the position matches Level 1-2 for both elements of Factor 1, Level 1-2 is determined to be the appropriate level, and 350 points are assigned.

### *Factor 3 – Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised*

The appellant's [Name] Section organization is comprised of 12 subordinate employees divided into three functional teams. Each of the teams is led by an Electronics Technician, GS-856-12. The three GS-12 Electronics Technician are not titled "Lead" because their lead work does not constitute a major duty (i.e., it constitutes less than 25% of each incumbent's time per the [Name] Center Chief). The grade of each GS-12 technician is based upon the technical work performed. The supervisor estimates that over 2700 hours per year of GS-12 work exists. Therefore, each of the GS-12s spends approximately half of his work year performing GS-12 level non-supervisory/non-lead work. Despite the fact that the "Lead" technicians perform leader duties only a minimal amount, and in the normal course of events lead no more than three Electronics Technician, GS-856-11s, the appellant believes that this supervisory structure

qualifies his position for Level 3-3 for this factor. Specifically, he believes that his position meets the criteria for Level 3-3b for Factor 3.

In order to credit Level 3-3b, a position must exercise all or nearly all of the delegated supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at the next lower level of this factor, Level 3-2c, and, in addition, at least eight of the fifteen shown for Level 3-3b in the GSSG. Level 3-3b envisions a supervisor who must direct/manage his/her organization through the use of subordinate supervisors or leaders. The appellant has no subordinate supervisors. He utilizes functional “Lead” Electronics Technicians to perform many of the supervisory or leader tasks. In writing the GSSG the standards writers used the plural when referring to supervisors and leaders to indicate more than one, and intended that the designation be formalized, that is, that the subordinate supervisor or leader positions meet the minimum criteria for being so designated. We must determine first whether the subordinate personnel utilized as functional leaders meet the minimum criteria as leaders based on the criteria shown in the GS Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GS Leader GEG).

The GS Leader GEG, Part II is applicable to GS positions that lead the work of subordinate positions graded GS-9 and above. The positions in the [Name] Section lead the work of GS-11 Electronics Technicians and, therefore, meet this criteria. In the coverage paragraph of Part II of the GS Leader GEG, the standard states that it is used to classify positions whose primary purpose is, as a regular and recurring part of their assignment and at least 25 percent of their duty time, to lead a team of other GS employees in accomplishing work that meets at least the minimum requirements of Part II. There are no percentages shown on the position descriptions for the work leaders in the [Name] Section to show how much time is expended in their leader duties. However, in a memorandum written by the [Name] Center Chief in September 1994, Subject: Retitling [Name] Center PDs at the Unit Level, the Chief stated that the individuals “spend less than 25 percent of their time supervising.” Further in the memo the Chief stated that “they also share, to varying degrees, the regular work of the unit (as stated in their PDs), but on a normal day never spend 2 hours (25 percent of their day) in supervision.” This situation would preclude the work leaders in the [Name] Section from coverage by the GS Leader GEG.

To ensure that our decision is correct that the [Name] Section work leaders do not meet the minimum criteria for Leaders as shown in the GS Leader GEG, we compared their work to the additional criteria shown in the standard. The standard provides twenty duties, and in order to meet the minimum criteria for inclusion, team leaders must perform all of the first seven and fourteen of the twenty listed duties.

1. *Ensure that the organization’s strategic plan, mission, vision and values are communicated to the team and integrated into the team’s strategies, goals, objectives, work plans and work products and services.* There is no evidence that the incumbents perform this.
2. *Articulate and communicate to the team the assignment, project, problem to be solved, actionable events, milestones, and/or program issues under review, and deadlines and time frames for completion.* The position description indicates that the employees perform this work.

3. *Coach the team in the selection and application of appropriate problem solving methods and techniques, provide advice on work methods, practices and procedures, and assist the team and/or individual members in identifying the parameters of a viable solution.* While not worded in exactly the same manner, there are indications that the employees perform this duty.
4. *Lead the team in: identifying, distributing and balancing workload and tasks among employees in accordance with established work flow, skill level and/or occupational specialization; making adjustments to accomplish the workload in accordance with established priorities to ensure timely accomplishment of assigned team tasks; and ensuring that each employee has an integral role in developing the final team product.* The employees perform this work.
5. *Train or arrange for the training of team members in methods and techniques of team building and working in teams to accomplish tasks or projects, and provide or arrange for specific administrative or technical training necessary for accomplishment of individual and team tasks.* While the employees are charged with providing or arranging training for new employees and being alert to training and development opportunities for employees, there is no indication that they perform the tasks described in this paragraph.
6. *Monitor and report on the status and progress of work, checking on work in progress and reviewing completed work to see that the supervisor's instructions on work priorities, methods, deadlines and quality have been met.* The employees perform this duty.
7. *Serve as coach, facilitator and/or negotiator in coordinating team initiatives and in consensus building activities among team members.* Nowhere in the employees' position description does it indicate that they perform this work.

The employees meet only four of the first seven duties required to meet the minimum criteria for coverage by the GS Leader GEG. Our conclusion is that the work leaders in the [Name] Section fail to qualify as leaders as required by the GSSG. This means that for purpose of application of Factor 3 in the GSSG, the appellant has no qualifying subordinate supervisory or leader positions. We return to comparing the appellant's position to the fifteen supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at Level 3-3b for applicability.

*Authority 1* describes a supervisor who uses subordinate supervisors, leaders, or comparable personnel to direct, coordinate, or oversee work. As shown above, the subordinates that the appellant uses as work leaders do not meet the minimum criteria for formal classification as work leaders, and as this definition is required, we cannot credit the appellant with this authority.

*Authority 2* is for a supervisor who exercises significant responsibilities in dealing with officials of other units or organizations, or in advising management officials of higher rank. This is an inherent function in the appellant's position.

*Authority 3* is applicable for a supervisor who assures reasonable equity (among units, groups, teams, projects, etc.) of performance standards and rating techniques developed by subordinates or assuring comparable equity in the assessment by subordinates of the adequacy of contractor capabilities or of contractor completed work. Similar to Authority 1, Authority 3 envisions that these performance standards and rating techniques are developed by at least two subordinate supervisors or leaders. The subordinate work leaders in the [Name] Section are not formal work leaders; therefore, this authority cannot be credited.

*Authority 4* requires direction of a program or major program segment with significant resources (e.g., one at a multimillion-dollar level of annual resources). Since the appellant's [Name] Section program segment manages in excess of \$4.5 million per year, this is credited.

*Authority 5* applies to supervisors who make decisions on work problems presented by subordinate supervisors, team leaders, or similar personnel, or by contractors. This is intended to credit only supervisors who direct at least two subordinate supervisors, team leaders or comparable personnel. Therefore, credit could not be awarded for this authority.

*Authority 6* is for supervisors who evaluate subordinate supervisors or leaders and serve as the reviewing official on evaluations or non-supervisory employees rated by subordinate supervisors. Credit could not be granted for the same reason cited in 5, above.

*Authority 7* applies to supervisors who make or approve selections for subordinate non-supervisory positions. The appellant exercises this authority.

*Authority 8* requires recommending selections for subordinate supervisory positions and for work leader, group leader, or project director positions responsible for coordinating the work of others, and similar positions. Credit could not be granted for the same reason cited in 5, above.

*Authority 9* requires hearing group grievances or serious employee complaints. This is an assigned duty of the appellant.

*Authority 10* concerns reviewing and approving serious disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions) involving non-supervisory subordinates. It is unlikely from the position description whether the appellant has this authority. He is authorized to initiate disciplinary actions.

*Authority 11* is applicable to supervisors who make decisions on non-routine, costly, or controversial training needs and training requests related to employees of the unit. The position description states that the appellant reviews and recommends training requests to the Branch Chief, and has travel requesting authority. This authority is not credited.

*Authority 12* applies to supervisors who determine whether contractor performed work meets standards of adequacy necessary for authorization of payment. The appellant exercises this authority.

*Authority 13* describes a supervisor who approves expenses comparable to within-grade increases, extensive overtime, and employee travel. Evidence indicates that the employee recommends this to the Branch Chief for his approval. This is not credited.

*Authority 14* requires recommending awards or bonuses for non-supervisory personnel and changes in position classification, subject to approval by higher level officials, supervisors, or others. This is a responsibility of the appellant's position.

*Authority 15* is applicable to a supervisor who is responsible for finding and implementing ways to eliminate or reduce significant bottlenecks and barriers to production, promote team building, or improve business practices. As a member of the management team in the [Name] Center, the appellant is charged with aspects of this authority. However, this express authority is charged to the [Name] Center Chief, with assistance from the appellant and his peers. This element is not credited.

Of the 15 supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at Level 3-3b, the appellant's position is credited with six. In order to be credited with this level a supervisory position must meet eight of these fifteen elements. The appellant's position did not match this level; therefore, his position is credited with Level 3-2 and is credited with 450 points.

*Factor 4 – Personal Contacts.* This factor is comprised of two subfactors. The nature of the contacts credited under Subfactor 4A, and the purpose of those contacts credited under Subfactor 4B, must be based on the same contacts.

#### *Subfactor 4A – Nature of Contacts*

The appellant has frequent contacts with high-ranking administrators, managers, supervisors, as well as engineers, technicians and others in the NWS, the FAA, the DoD, the Department of Energy (DOE), NASA, Department of Agriculture, and the National Institute for Standards and Technology. Other contacts are with representatives, including engineering and research personnel, of various manufacturers and public service organizations, and with accredited representatives of other nations. This meets Level 4A-3 in the GSSG, as the appellant contends. Level 4A-3 is credited with 75 points.

#### *Subfactor 4B – Purpose of Contacts*

The appellant disagrees with his agency's assignment of his position to Level 4B-2 for this factor. He is active in conferences, meetings, and presentations frequently involving problems or issues important to the NEXRAD program. He states that he commits resources to do modifications, support additional repairs, field support, and program documentation. He states that he has committed significant staffing and financial resources to provide installation and configuration of upgraded systems to support the project. He believes that this meets the

definition for Level 4B-3. This level requires justifying, defending, or negotiating on behalf of the organization with the necessary level of authority to commit resources and gain compliance with established policies of the organization. In order to represent the organization in program defense or negotiations, a supervisor must have the requisite control over resources and the authority necessary to gain support and compliance on policy matters. The appellant participates as part of a team or as the [Name] Center representative at meetings where decisions are made and funds projected. However, he does not have the responsibility and authority to obtain and commit resources as indicated in the standard. This responsibility rests with higher echelons within the agency. The position meets Level 4B-2 and is credited with 75 points.

#### *Factor 6 – Other Conditions*

The appellant contends that he should be credited with Level 6-5. He says that because he manages his workforce through subordinate leaders, his work meets the criteria of Level 6-5c which credits supervisors who manage work through subordinate supervisors who each direct substantial workloads comparable to the GS-11 level. However, he has no subordinate supervisors, and this level cannot be credited. The appellant also believes that he meets at least three of the areas described at Level 6-5a. This level describes a situation that, in order to be credited, a supervisor must supervise work comparable in difficulty to the GS-12 level, and in addition must involve making recommendations which have a direct and substantial effect on the organization and projects managed such as are shown on a listing which follows. The appellant's work does not meet the criteria because he does not supervise work comparable in difficulty to GS-12. We find that the appellant's work meets the criteria for Level 6-4 and is credited 1120 points.

#### Factor Level Point Summary

Factor	Level	Points
1	1-2	350
2	2-2	250
3	3-2	450
4	4A-3	75
	4B-2	75
5	5-6	800
6	6-4	1120
	Total:	3120

The total of points for all six factors is 3120, which falls within the GS-12 range, 2755-3150.

## **Comparison to GS-855**

This standard states that it is the appropriate grading standard for electronics engineering positions engaged in such functions as equipment/systems design, installation, maintenance, standardization and regulation. The standard is expressed in terms of two factors, each of which is addressed below.

### *Nature of Assignment*

This factor is concerned with: nature, variety and purpose of duties performed; scope and difficulty of the assignment; knowledge required and the degree to which experienced judgment is required in evaluating alternative courses of action or diagnosing problems or failures; the extent to which the engineer must define the problem; and originality required.

GS-12 engineers apply deep and diversified knowledge to atypical or highly difficult assignments in a subject-matter or functional area. Precedents for their assignments are sometimes absent, and their assignments are often characterized as having conflicting issues. They are required to comprehend fully the relationships between their assigned and related areas and branches of engineering. Because they usually perform preliminary engineering analyses on large and complicated projects, they must be knowledgeable of research and development activities and technological advances in order to incorporate them into their assignments. GS-12 engineers are relied upon heavily for studies in which they thoroughly evaluate the various alternatives for meeting an objective, and when planning large systems or complexes, they typically conceive several configurations. Their assignments are frequently further complicated by the many operations which the equipment must perform and the many variables the engineer must consider. Coordination with related groups and integration of many design changes or major equipment alterations are also characteristic of GS-12 engineers.

GS-13 engineers are highly knowledgeable specialists in their subject-matter areas, or they may be authorities in functional areas, e.g., standardization or maintenance. Other engineers and managers within their activities often consult GS-13 engineers for advice and assistance within their areas of expertise. Characteristically, GS-13 engineers represent their activities in reaching engineering compromises and agreements with engineers of other organizations and contractors. In addition to a diversity of problems and conflicting issues involved with assignments, GS-13 engineers solve unusual and controversial problems of a decisive nature. They plan and coordinate programs or projects for which they must be innovative and original, and devise methods and procedures which are normally adopted for use and become the activity's established precedent; sometimes they are adopted for use by other agencies. They review, evaluate, and advise on the effectiveness, technical adequacy and suitability of work and proposals of others in resolving complicated and critical problems in the specialized area. At this level they are required to keep abreast of and evaluate new developments that pertain to their subject-matter or functional areas to ensure that their work reflects the latest thinking in the area.

The nature of the appellant's assignment is a match to the GS-13 level. As shown at that level in the standard, the appellant is the agency's subject-matter expert in a functional area, i.e. repair, maintenance and modification, of NEXRAD, WindProfiler, conventional weather radar and related test equipment. Engineers and management personnel both within and outside of the

NWS consult with him on related matters. He is [Name] Center's representative technical expert in relations with the NWS National Severe Storms Lab in [City, State], in the development of generational upgrades of NEXRAD and of next generation meteorological radar. He participates as the [Name] Center or NWS representative in meetings with the NEXRAD using organizations, including the DoD and FAA. This latter activity involves such things as whether to make major modifications to the systems that will be funded by the users. As the professional engineer in his section, he directs efforts to discover the reasons for systemic failures, and personally designs modifications to equipment components, sub-assemblies and assemblies to eliminate maintenance and repair problems. In this respect his decisions are final and his innovations are employed on the equipment for use throughout the world. These are also characteristics indicative of GS-13 level work. Also typical of this level, the appellant plans for the long-range repair and maintenance of systems' configurations and architectures in what is called "obsolescence management." By this self-directed program the appellant plans for repair/replacement parts, assemblies when no longer manufactured by original equipment manufacturers, a frequent occurrence when equipment has a projected life expectancy of in excess of 25 years. Similarly, by serving as the [Name] Center's representative on planning for major modifications and next generation meteorological radar equipment, the appellant provides initial input to developers and evaluates proposals from the standpoint of reparability in the field and within the [Name] Center. The appellant's nature of assignment is a match to the GS-13 level.

#### *Level of Responsibility*

At the GS-12 level engineers receive assignments in the form of objectives or operational requirements that the equipment or system must meet, and they are free to analyze problems and develop their own approaches and work plans. They receive little technical advice or guidance. Technical manuals or specifications pertinent to their assignments are frequently inadequate. They consult with their supervisors when significant unforeseen circumstances are uncovered. Their completed work is reviewed for technical soundness and compliance with broad local or agency policy.

GS-13 engineers have technical responsibility for their assignments and programs. They determine the approaches to be used, and are responsible for results. They keep the supervisor informed as to the status of the work and discuss decisions involving critical changes or major controversial issues in policy and precedent determinations. Their completed work is reviewed for compliance with overall policy and attainment of program objectives.

The appellant's position is a match to the GS-13 level for this factor. His assignments come from the mission of the organization that he heads, rather than as discrete assignments. He has complete responsibility to identify what needs to be done, to plan the work, to identify resources required, including funds, and to complete the work. He keeps his supervisor, the Chief of the [Name] Center, abreast of the status of his organization's work, and may request assistance in dealing with the most senior level of management concerning controversial issues. His work is considered technically authoritative, and he is looked upon within the agency as the subject-matter expert in matters concerned with the mission of his section. His completed work is evaluated from the standpoint of meeting overall mission objectives, compliance with agency

policy, and the satisfaction of the agencies using the equipment/systems whose maintenance and repair he manages. These are all indicative of the GS-13 level.

### **Decision**

Comparison of the appellant's supervisory work, approximately 50 percent of his total work, to the GSSG results in a grade of GS-12. Comparison of his non-supervisory work to the applicable classification standard, however, equates to a grade of GS-13. Since the non-supervisory work is required to be performed, and it constitutes approximately 50 percent of work performed, it is determined to be grade controlling. The grade of the position, then, is determined to be GS-13. The final classification of the appellant's position is Supervisory Electronics Engineer, GS-855-13.