

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability  
Classification Appeals Program

Philadelphia Field Services Group  
600 Arch Street, room 3400  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1596

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

**Appellant:** [appellant]

**Agency classification:** Electronics Mechanic  
WG-2604-11

**Organization:** Information Technology  
Management Group  
Division of Administration  
[location] National Historic Park  
[location] Region  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
[location]

**OPM decision:** Federal Wage System

**OPM decision number:** C-2604-00-06

/s/

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Robert D. Hendler  
Classification and Pay Claims  
Program Manager

October 6, 2005

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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*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant's address]

Human Resources Officer  
Department of the Interior  
[location] National Historic Park  
[address]

Director, Human Resources  
National Park Service  
Room 2328  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Director of Personnel  
Department of the Interior  
Mail Stop 5221  
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## **Introduction**

On June 14, 2005, the Philadelphia Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a pay category appeal from [appellant]. His job is currently graded as Electronics Mechanic, WG-2604-11. He believes that the job should be in the Information Technology Management Series, GS-2210. The appellant works in the Information Technology (IT) Management Group, Division of Administration, [location] National Historic Park, [location] Region, National Park Service (NPS), Department of the Interior, [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 6, 2005.

## **General issues**

In his appeal letter, the appellant stated that his job description (JD) was revised prior to his reassignment to the IT Management Group, Division of Administration, [national park] in October 2004, and that new duties were added whereby he provides support services to the [national park] network, including the personal computers (PCs) and peripheral equipment connected to the network. Because of his new duties, the appellant believes that the paramount reason for the existence of his job has changed, and as a result, it should be classified as Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210.

The appellant is currently assigned to JD [number], graded as Electronics Mechanic, WG-2604-11. Approximately six months after being assigned to the IT Management Group, the appellant requested that the agency audit his job. The job was audited in March 2005. Based on the audit findings, the agency determined that the job was properly described in the existing JD and properly graded as Electronics Mechanic, WG-2604-11.

A JD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a job by an official with the authority to assign work. A job is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Pay category 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 classifies 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. Our decision also sets aside any previous agency decision.

The appellant makes various statements about his working conditions, his agency, and its evaluation of his job. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of the job. By law we must make that decision solely by comparing his current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5103, 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

## **Job information**

We conducted an on-site job audit with the appellant and interviewed his immediate supervisor, who is the [national park] Systems Administrator, on August 31, 2005. In deciding this appeal, we have carefully considered the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the

appellant and his activity at our request. The appellant's immediate supervisor stated that the JD accurately describes the appellant's assigned major duties, responsibilities and organizational relationships, and the appellant agrees that the JD accurately describes his work. We find that the JD of record contains the major functions and responsibilities assigned to, and performed by the appellant and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

In his appeal rationale, the appellant stated that he has used computers throughout his career. Prior to being moved to the IT Management Group, he used computers to detect equipment problems, isolate and identify required corrective action(s), establish/program or realign sequences and operations, download information and test for proper equipment performance. He stated that work in the 2604 occupation requires the ability to understand and use IT equipment and software to test and troubleshoot equipment that is increasingly IT based, including knowledge of proprietary software to install local area networks (LANs), and that he has a very good knowledge of computers and their programs. He believes that he was moved to the IT Management Group for this reason.

The appellant stated that he spends more than 75 percent of his time working on the [national park] network, associated software, computers and peripheral equipment which he believes to be IT Specialist work. Because of the amount of time spent on these duties, the appellant believes they should be considered paramount for determining the proper pay category and series. He states: "While some of the duties I now perform might be considered GS-335 in nature, the park already has a computer assistant." The appellant agrees that the remainder of his time continues to be spent in the performance of grade 11 work in the 2604 Electronics Mechanic occupation.

Information from the appellant's immediate supervisor indicates that the appellant's job was moved to the IT Management Group because the amount of electronics mechanic work had decreased over time, and at the same time the amount of IT user support work had increased in the IT Management Group. [national park] management recognized that the appellant had acquired knowledge of personal computer (PC) hardware, software, their interactions and many of the common associated problems/issues as a result of his maintenance work in detecting problems, troubleshooting, repairing, resetting and testing various types of electrical equipment, including PCs and peripheral equipment. When the appellant's job moved to the IT Management Group, management added PC user support duties to his JD so that he might apply his skills and knowledge to help meet the increased need for PC user support services while continuing to perform his primary electronics mechanic function. The move was intended to provide effective use of limited [national park] human capital resources while, at the same time, ensuring that the appellant was given sufficient work assignments to continue support for his full time permanent job.

The appellant described the new work which serves as the basis for his appeal as consisting of network support duties including: resolving user identified problems with PCs (i.e., hard drive, mouse, monitor, keyboard, etc.), printers and other peripheral equipment; resetting passwords; installing, configuring and testing new PC hardware, including hard drives; installing and testing commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software such as Norton Securities and Microsoft products; installing and testing NPS developed software in accordance with established instructions; helping users regain access to their files/software; resolving software/hardware interface problems so that they "talk to each other" and the programs work properly; providing answers to common user software application questions, e.g. "how do I do make it do this or that" (note:

manufacturer provided pull-down help screens also provide user assistance for many of these common types of questions); and repairing PCs/components by replacing defective parts and restoring the equipment to proper operating condition.

### **Pay category determination**

Section 5102 of 5 U.S.C. requires that 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 to the Position Classification Standards (PCSs)* 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 Federal Wage System (FWS) regardless of its organizational location or the nature of the activity in which it exists. Contrary to the appellant's assertion, paramount does not rely on percentages of work time.

The appellant's rationale relies on extracts from the definitions of application software, systems administration and customer support as provided for Information Technology Management, GS-2210 work in the Job Family Standard (JFS) for Administrative Work in the IT Group, GS-2200. The appellant believes that he applies knowledge comparable to all three of these distinct types of GS-2210 specialties in performing his work. However, the only work-related example provided by the appellant was a comparison of his duties to the criteria for application software work. He states "I am not doing this on the network side of my job. I have written and debugged code on the control software for five applications still in use at the park." Our fact-finding shows that these assignments occurred approximately eight times over the last five years. They typically involved the installation of new electrical equipment and its associated controlling computer hardware/software. Each assignment required intensive effort over a relatively short period of time, i.e. between one and three weeks, during which the appellant had to learn the applicable manufacturer machine code sufficiently to establish and program control sequences and/or operating parameters into an automated system to control the day-to-day operations of audio/visual exhibits, displays, lighting systems, etc. The equipment manufacturer either provided required information concerning the applicable machine code in the form of an operating manual or identified a specific, common usage machine language to be applied. In the case of common use machine languages, instructional manuals and other information pertaining to such computer/machine languages are readily available either on-line or from off-the-shelf sources.

The appellant stated that he does not perform work of this nature in relation to his network/PC support assignments, but rather that these assignments are part of his 2604 electronic mechanic duties. The relative infrequency, brief duration and purpose of these assignments considered along with the short period of time required to learn and apply the machine languages are not indicative of two grade interval GS-2210 Information Technology Management work. We also

note that these duties would not control the classification of a GS position. The *Introduction to the PCSs* states that work may only be graded controlling if it is assigned to the position on a regular and recurring basis; it is a significant part of the overall position (i.e., occupying at least 25 percent or more of the employee's time); and the higher level knowledge and skills needed to perform the work would be required in recruiting for the position if it became vacant. The duties cited by the appellant are not regular and recurring within the meaning of the position classification process.

The appellant's electronics mechanic duties include responsibility for maintaining: a number of electrical lighting and associated automated control systems throughout [national park]; bell and irrigation systems; audio/visual displays and exhibits; and complex systems such as the [two cited examples of complex systems at the park location]. Day-to-day assignments arise from the problems with particular pieces of electronics equipment identified by [national park] personnel. The appellant is alerted to the situation and acts to resolve the matter as quickly as possible to return the equipment to proper operation. Most assignments take a few hours to one or two days. Occasional longer term assignments involve equipment upgrades/repairs, installing new equipment and/or the modifying/reconfiguring exiting equipment for new exhibits. The work involves troubleshooting problems, identifying appropriate corrective measures, coordinating as necessary with equipment manufacturer representatives and other interested parties, fixing or replacing electronic equipment, resetting parameters and/or control sequences and testing equipment performance to ensure the problem has been fixed. Based on all information of record, we find that the appellant spends approximately 35 percent of his time on the performance of these duties.

The appellant spends the remaining time on the new computer-related work which involves both: hardware and peripheral equipment installation, maintenance and repair; and providing PC software and network connectivity support services to local computer users. He performs PC maintenance and hardware installation/repair on equipment that is, for the most part, still under manufacturer warranty. Typically a PC user encounters a problem with their desktop computer and/or peripheral equipment and contacts him for help. In most cases, the appellant independently identifies the cause of the problem and makes the necessary repairs. If he determines that replacement parts/components needed are not readily available, he contacts the manufacturer who supplies them under warranty.

The appellant installs, aligns/adjusts the replacement parts then reconfigures the PC hardware/software as needed and tests the equipment to ensure it is functioning properly. He may consult with equipment manufacturer technical representatives for assistance in isolating the cause, and determining solutions, for difficult and/or unique PC problems. The PC and peripheral equipment repair work does not require the use of specialized electronics diagnostic equipment to determine the cause of a problem or to recalibrate/reconfigure equipment. Parts replaced or installed by the appellant are typically self contained integrated circuit boards, RAM chips, etc, or entire components such as hard drives, modems and floppy drives.

The 2604 job grading standard (JGS) for Electronic Mechanic work covers nonsupervisory work involved in modifying, installing, troubleshooting, repairing, and maintaining a variety of electronics equipment including microcomputers; i.e. PCs, and peripherals and similar devices. As discussed in the GS-2200 JFS, under Distinguishing Between Specialist Work and Assistant Work, some single-grade interval Computer Assistant, GS-335, positions may also perform

limited computer equipment installation and repair work such as configuring hardware and software according to instructions, installing small local area networks, and expanding personal computer memory.

The appellant's computer software and network support work involves: adding network users; restoring user connectivity; updating passwords; installing or assisting users in installing COTS software programs; configuring hardware and software according to instructions; running backups; troubleshooting minor problems; providing PC advice and assistance, and responding to less complex user questions. The work requires a practical knowledge of the techniques and guidelines associated with local PC user support and network operations. Assignments are carried out in compliance with existing manuals, publications, manufacturer instructions, security policies/procedures, and NPS/Office of Management and Budget guidance. When issues or problems are encountered that are not specifically covered by available guidance, the appellant may contact the NPS regional IT support center staff for [national park], or his immediate supervisor for technical advice, assistance and/or direction. The appellant's assigned duties do not involve programming using computer languages. Both the appellant and his immediate supervisor informed us that he has been directed not to perform any computer related work beyond those duties specifically assigned and approved by management. As discussed previously, the GS-2200 JFS, which provides evaluation criteria for GS-2210 positions, specifically excludes coverage of this type of work because it does not require regular and recurring application of conceptual knowledge of IT principles, concepts and methods associated with the development, modification, design or operation of IT systems and services. The GS-2200 JFS directs that work of this type is properly classified to the GS-335, Computer Clerk and Assistant Series or other appropriate one grade interval series.

We find the primary knowledge, skills and abilities of the appellant's job which are essential to perform both the previously assigned maintenance and repair work and the new PC related support duties are those associated with his 2604 duties. The ability to perform the new IT support duties flows from, and is directly related to the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired and applied in the performance of the appellant's 2604 work. The appellant's job is a mixed job involving the paramount 2604 electronics mechanic and related GS-335 computer assistant duties. As an electronics mechanic, the appellant utilizes applications software to test installed, modified or repaired electrical equipment, including PC hardware and/or peripheral equipment, to ensure that it is operating properly. Similarly, this knowledge of interrelated computer hardware and software functions and established PC and local network guidance is applied to install and/or correct problems with COTS or NPS software and to perform tests to ensure proper function. The appellant's trades knowledge and experience are essential for the performance of the full range of assigned job functions.

## **Decision**

The appealed job is covered by the FWS.