



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

Human Capital Leadership  
and Merit System  
Accountability Division

**Job Grading Appeal Decision**  
**Under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellants:** [appellants, et al.]

**Agency classification:** Cook  
WG-7404-4

**Organization:** [Unit]  
[Section]  
[Administrative Section]  
VA Medical Center  
[Health Service ]  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
[city and state]

**OPM decision:** Cook  
WG-7404-4

**OPM decision number:** C-7404-04-02

/s/ Robert D. Hendler

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

December 13, 2006

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Date

As provided in section S7-8 of the *Operating Manual: Federal Wage System*, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in section 532.705(f) of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (address provided in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section H).

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant et al.]  
[Food Service Section]  
VA Medical Center  
[address]  
[city and state]

[vice-president]  
Vice President, Non-Professional Unit  
AFGE Local [#####]  
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## **Introduction**

On April 7, 2006, the Chicago Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a group job grading appeal from Messrs. [appellants], who currently occupy identical additional jobs, hereinafter referred to as job, graded as Cook, WG-7404-4, in the [Unit], [Food Service Section], Administrative Section, VA Medical Center (VAMC), [Health Service], Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), [city and state]. The appellants believe that their job should be graded as Cook, WG-7404-6. [appellant] was designated as lead appellant and [person] was designated as their representative. We received the initial administrative report for the appeal on May 22, and the complete administrative report on November 17, 2006. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

To help decide the appeal, we conducted a telephone audit with the lead appellant and an interview with the first-level supervisor on August 18, 2006. We conducted a follow-up interview with that supervisor on October 17, 2006. In reaching our job grading decision, we have carefully reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellants and their agency.

## **Background**

The appellants' servicing HR office issued a classification evaluation summary on December 15, 2005, based on facts developed during two desk audits conducted on October 26, 2005 and November 9, 2005. The job was graded using the Federal Wage System (FWS) Job Grading Standards (JGSs) for Cooking, 7404, and Motor Vehicle Operating, 5703. The HR office determined there was no evidence to support upgrading the WG-7404-4 jobs occupied by three of the appellants at the time of the desk audits. In addition, on November 17, 2005 and December 25, 2005, two other appellants were downgraded from Cook, WG-7404-6 to Cook, WG-7404-4. Subsequently, the five appellants filed a job grading appeal with their agency. The February 23, 2006, appeal decision sustained the grading of each appellant's job as Cook, WG-7404-4. The appellants then filed an appeal with OPM on March 15, 2006.

## **General issues**

The appellants and their immediate supervisor state the appellants' current job description ([###-###-###-#]) accurately describes the major duties, knowledge, skills, abilities, responsibilities, physical and performance requirements of their jobs, and their organizational relationships. The appellants believe the job merits a higher grade due to their performance of supervisory duties, in the absence of their Supervisor; and performance of grade 6 cook duties when they relieve grade 6 cooks, as needed. However, section II.C.3 of the Job Grading System, Part 1, indicates that duties performed in another employee's absence cannot be considered in grading a job.

They also believe their duties as a motor vehicle operator (MVO) should be graded at a higher grade level because they drive a truck to deliver food trays to another building on the installation. Inherent in the appellants' rationale is the belief they are performing work graded at a higher level in JDs encumbered by other VA personnel. The appellants believe their job as MVO

should be graded at the grade 6 level because of duties and responsibilities, such as: training new employees on truck operations; driving a vehicle having an approximate gross vehicle weight (GVW) of 15,000 pounds; driving trucks with electric brakes; driving in congested areas; operating different types of lift gates; placing cargo in the proper sequence and securing it; performing pre-trip vehicle inspections; and reporting vehicle damage and safety hazards.

By law, job grading decisions must be based solely upon a comparison between the actual duties and responsibilities of the job and the appropriate JGSs (5 U.S.C 5346). Since comparison to standards and guidelines is the exclusive method for grading jobs, we cannot compare the appellants' jobs to the jobs occupied by others as a basis for deciding the appeal. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern was to make an independent decision on the proper grading of the job in question. Therefore, we have considered any statements the appellants have made only insofar as they are relevant to making a comparison to the appropriate job grading standards and guidelines.

### **Job information**

The [place] VAMC provides primary and secondary medical services, mental health services, and a wide range of nursing home services to its clients. The appellants work under the direct supervision of the Chief, Food Production and Service Unit (whose job is graded as Cook Supervisor, WS-7404-6) who plans, directs, and coordinates food production and patient meal services. The supervisor analyzes and plans staff schedules, assignment coverage, meal preparation and delivery deadlines, production assignments and advises her supervisor of any changes needed to accomplish scheduled work and improve procedures, systems, and workflow. The Chief directly supervises three Food Service Supervisors, WS-7408-6, two Cooks, WG-7404-6, five Cooks, WG-7404-4 (the appellants), and, in the absence of the Food Service Supervisors, may supervise all food service workers.

The appellants perform a full range of simple cooking operations by preparing and cooking items that require little or no processing. They grill, broil, and bake breakfast food items, sandwiches, soups, sauces, gravies, gelatins, and custards from concentrated and/or dehydrated products, prepared convenience entrees, dry mixes, and follow recipes from higher graded cooks or supervisors. As part of their planning process, the appellants are also responsible for completing food inventory records.

The appellants must have a working knowledge of simple food preparation methods and procedures, as well as the skill to apply that knowledge. Food preparation may require them to peel, chop, pare, cut, slice, dice, puree, dredge, flour, or bread. Knowledge required includes regulation of cooking time, familiarity with the characteristics of various foods, mathematical computations to determine quantities of ingredients needed, cross contamination and spoilage control procedures, how to operate and clean food service equipment, as well as skill to enter and retrieve recipes and menus from a computer.

In addition to their cooking duties, the appellants are required on a regular basis to drive a one ton, two-axle food delivery truck (1997 Ford Super Duty Diesel) having hydraulic brakes and listed at 15,000 pounds GVW on the installation. They are required to load and unload tray

carts, secure carts to prevent shifting, follow installation traffic rules and delivery schedules, and perform operator maintenance on the assigned vehicle. The Chief of Production and Services rotates this work. Deliveries are made three times a day. One appellant per shift is assigned driving duties. There are two shifts each day: 6:00 am to 2:30 pm and 11:30 am to 8:00 pm. The five appellants may work on either shift. When assigned driving duties during a work shift, an appellant makes one or two roundtrips from one building to another to deliver food carts. The kitchen and the building where deliveries are made are only about two minutes away from each other driving at 20 mph. The appellants load the carts from Building 7 and deliver them to Building 24, and occasionally to Building 35. They retrieve soiled trays and carts and return them to Building 7. With the assistance of a helper, they load and unload tray carts, and secure their cargo in the back of the truck to prevent shifting. When unloading the carts into the re-therm area at the delivery sites, the appellants ensure they are properly docked. Each cart weighs about 550 pounds and the total cargo weight per trip is around 4,000 to 5,000 pounds. The appellants are required to lift or move objects that weigh up to 40 pounds unassisted, or, occasionally, lift or move objects heavier than 40 pounds with assistance. They are frequently required to stand, walk, bend, reach, push, and pull.

### **Occupational code, title, and standard determination**

*The Introduction to the Federal Wage System Job Grading System* states that a *mixed job* involves performance on a regular and recurring basis of duties in two or more occupations at the same or different grade levels. To assure consistency and equity in the grading of such mixed jobs, the following rules apply: A mixed job should be graded in keeping with the duties that (1) involve the highest skill and qualification requirements of the job, and (2) are a regular and recurring part of the job, even if the duties involved are not performed for a majority of the time. If a job involves regular and recurring duties at the same grade level in two or more occupations, such a mixed job is graded to that same level. Furthermore, duties performed only in the absence of another employee, to meet emergency workloads, or for training purposes to gain qualifying experience for a higher grade position should not be considered as "regular and recurring" duties when grading mixed jobs.

The agency placed the appellants' job in the 7404 Cook occupation, titled it Cook, and used the Cooking, 7404, and Motor Vehicle Operating, 5703, JGSs to determine the grade level of the job. The appellants believe their job should be graded as Cook/Driver, WG-7404-6, because in addition to their cooking and food preparation duties, the appellants drive a food delivery truck on a regular and recurring basis. However, the record shows the job's major purpose is to provide cooking skills, whereas the driver duties are secondary and necessary only for delivering the prepared food to the patients. Therefore, the job is properly titled Cook and allocated to the 7404 series.

### **Grade determination**

The Cooking 7404 and Motor Vehicle Operating 5703 JGSs use four delineated factors to grade jobs: *Skill and Knowledge, Responsibility, Physical Effort, and Working Conditions*. Therefore, to determine the overall grade of the appellants' mixed job, we will use the 7404 JGS to grade their cooking duties and the 5703 JGS to grade their driving and delivery duties.

*Evaluation using the 7404 JGS**Skill and Knowledge*

At grade 4, cooks perform a variety of simple cooking tasks that require little or no processing. They prepare food for cooking, weigh, measure, and assemble ingredients for regular and modified diets, maintain and replenish salad bars, mix ingredients according to precisely written recipes, follow safety procedures, and follow an established cleaning schedule and sanitation procedures. Examples of foods they prepare are hot cereals, concentrated or dehydrated soups, sauces, and gravies, broiled meats, cold sandwich fillings, frozen hash browns, fish fillets, grilled hamburgers, and chicken nuggets.

Cooks at this grade level are required to have a working knowledge of the methods and procedures related to food preparation in small quantities, and the skill to apply such information to cook a limited variety of prepared foods or short-order foods. They know how to read and can understand written food service materials and have knowledge of special and modified diets. They perform basic arithmetic computations in multiplying ingredients in a recipe and calculating how many servings a container will hold. They know the various tables of weights and measures and are able to convert from the U.S. standard system to the metric system. Grade 4 cooks regulate cooking temperature and steam pressure, and check for correct cooking time and the condition of the food being cooked. Cooks at this level are knowledgeable of the characteristics of the various foods they prepare such as color, flavor, consistency, texture, temperature, and cooking time required. They are skilled in planning, coordinating, and timing the sequence of steps required to have their menu items ready for serving at mealtime. They are able to season foods according to set procedures, making adjustments when appropriate. They are knowledgeable of infection and spoilage control procedures. At this grade, cooks know how to operate, breakdown, and clean the food service equipment they use such as a meat grinder, coffee urn, griddle, and broiler.

The grade 4 level is met. Similar to duties described at that level, the appellants use grade 4 skills and knowledge to follow recipes and instructions from higher graded cooks and their supervisor, which they retrieve from a computer. Their cooking tasks require little or no processing, as most food items are in the form of concentrates, dehydrated products, or convenience items. As described at grade 4, the appellants plan and coordinate the sequence of steps required to prepare food items so that meals are ready to serve at scheduled times, perform mathematical calculations to determine quantities of ingredients and serving sizes, follow well established instructions for cooking time, cooking temperatures, and seasoning of various foods, and operate and clean standard food service equipment.

At grade 6, cooks prepare and cook a variety of menu items, including regular and special diet entrees and dessert items. While working alone or with a higher grade cook, they roast, broil, bake, fry, boil, steam and stew meats, fish, and poultry. They prepare soups, stocks, broths, gravies, sauces, and puddings without the use of package mixes. They mix and prepare cold sauces, meat glazes, molded aspics, and salad dressings. In addition, they make a variety of dessert items such as Baked Alaska, crepes, and mousses and know how to prepare specialty

sauces, such as béchamel and hollandaise. Cooks at this grade level prepare cold food platters such as ham, salmon, roast beef platters, salads, and hors d'oeuvres. They also have knowledge of food presentation and the skill to carve fruits and vegetables as garnishes. At this level, cooks adjust standardized recipes for the number of servings required in large quantity cooking. They slice meat items by hand conforming to a specific size requirement or weight specification. They maintain the proper temperature for all foods during holding, transporting, reheating, and serving to assure quality control and food safety.

In addition, grade 6 cooks must have working knowledge of the planning process involved in cooking an entire meal, including the different preparation methods for various items and their cooking time, to ensure meals are prepared on time. They perform yield testing for selected food items to determine the serving weight or volume after preparation and/or portion cost and gather other test data to assist management in purchasing and menu pricing decisions. They may prepare food production worksheets from computerized recipe files. They have practical knowledge of the methods and procedures necessary for ordering, issuing, and storing food items in accordance with inventory and sanitation requirements. They also know how to operate, breakdown, and clean standard food equipment, such as slicing machines, revolving tray ovens, convection ovens, deep fat fryers, and food processors.

The grade 6 level is not met. The appellants believe their job as cook should be evaluated at grade 6 based on their occasional performance of grade 6 duties, such as acting as a supervisor, relieving the grade 6 cooks; taking inventory, ordering food items and suggesting substitute menu items based on food inventory; performing food handler duties. However, the appellants do not perform the more difficult cooking processes required of a grade 6 cook. They do not: prepare soups, stocks, broths, gravies, sauces, and puddings without the use of packaged mixes; perform yield testing for selected foods to determine serving weight or volume; gather test data to assist management in making purchasing and menu pricing decisions; plan the cooking of an entire meal from scratch; mix and prepare cold sauces, meat glazes, molded aspics, and salad dressings; operate specialized cooking equipment to cook large quantities of food to store for long periods; and order, issue, and store food items in accordance with inventory and sanitation requirements. Although the appellants may have prepared impromptu meals when scheduled menu items have been unexpectedly depleted, the meals they prepared consisted of pre-cooked or dehydrated food items that just needed to be warmed for serving.

Therefore, this factor is credited at the grade 4 level.

### *Responsibility*

At grade 4, cooks receive assignments in the form of written and oral instructions from their immediate supervisor. Instructions typically consist of the cook's worksheet, menus, standardized recipes, and meal schedules. A higher grade cook or supervisor checks to see that the work is being done properly and is available to answer technical questions. The employee is responsible for the proper use and cleaning of equipment, safety practices, personal hygiene, and conformance with food service sanitation requirements. When learning new or more difficult work, cooks at this level receive detailed instructions on cooking methods and use of equipment

from a journey level cook or their supervisor. Work is evaluated by the supervisor or higher grade cook in terms of quality of food cooked and adherence to instructions and time schedules.

The grade 4 level is met. Similar to that level, the appellants receive most of their work instructions from their supervisor in the form of written or computer generated worksheets, menus, and recipes. The appellants are responsible for maintaining strict personal hygiene, clean food service equipment, and performing duties in conformance with special procedures and sanitation principles, such as hazard analysis critical control point. As described in the grade 4 standard, the appellants refer technical questions or questions on new work situations to higher graded cooks, clinical dieticians, and/or their supervisor. Their work is evaluated by their supervisor in terms of accuracy and timely completion of assignments. This closely matches work described at the grade 4 level.

At grade 6, cooks receive work assignments orally and in writing from their immediate supervisor or a higher level cook in the form of worksheets, menus, standardized recipes, meal schedules, and special work orders. They plan, coordinate, and time their work assignments to assure that food items are prepared on time and at the proper temperature. Cooks at this level make judgments about the recipe modifications needed to meet changes in the number of servings required. They adjust the amounts and proportions of ingredients in recipes while maintaining the original balance between ingredient quantities and the number of portions needed. They suggest to a higher level cook or their supervisor adaptations of standardized recipes to allow for differences in the cooking equipment specified in the recipe and the equipment that is available. They assist in training lower grade cooks and advise them on how to improve their work methods. They are responsible for the safe use and care of kitchen equipment. Work at this level is evaluated in process and upon completion by the supervisor or higher grade cook in terms of the timeliness, quality, flavor, appearance of prepared foods, and conformance to sanitation and safety standards.

The grade 6 level is not met. As stated above, the appellants clean and sanitize their work areas, follow written and oral instructions, and are expected to work quickly, accurately, and with limited supervision. When faced with new or technical work situations, they seek the guidance of higher graded cooks, clinical dieticians, and their supervisor. The record indicates they do not make judgments about recipe modifications, adjust the amounts and proportions of ingredients in recipes to fit varying portions needed, suggest adaptations of standardized recipes to higher level cooks or their supervisor, or assist with training lower grade cooks.

Therefore, this factor is credited at the grade 4.

*Physical Effort and Working Conditions* are the same at both grade levels. Because they do not have grade level impact, and the appellants' work meets the levels described in the JGS, we will credit both factors as being met and will not address them further.

#### *Summary of 7404 evaluation*

The cooking duties are evaluated at grade 4.  
*Evaluation using the 5703 JGS*

In addition to their cooking duties, the appellants are required, on a regular basis, to drive a truck of 15,000 pounds GVW to deliver food trays to another building on the installation.

### *Skill and Knowledge*

At grade 4, drivers are required to have basic skills for manipulating the controls to start, stop, back up, and drive trucks, vans, and equivalent vehicles typically up to 10,000 pounds GVW. They must have knowledge of the height, width, length, and weight of the vehicle in order to operate the vehicle safely on short runs following limited or prescribed routes *throughout* a Government installation. They also have knowledge of installation traffic rules and regulations and skill to read and understand installation maps and other locator documents for finding various buildings and facilities. The MVO loads and arranges the cargo so it does not shift or fall and damage the material. They have knowledge of the operator's manual for their assigned vehicle and the skill to apply such knowledge to a particular driving situation. They have the knowledge to recognize developing maintenance problems when conducting an inspection of their vehicles, and report technical problems to the supervisor.

At grade 5, drivers have skill in manipulating controls to start, stop, back up, and drive the same types of vehicles operated at the grade 4 level in all types of traffic and road conditions. They have knowledge of the height, width, length, and weight of the vehicle in order to judge overhead and side clearances, the turning radius, braking distance, and the safest distance to be maintained from other vehicles. They have skill to read and understand a road map and determine the shortest and safest route of both short and long runs. They have knowledge of defensive driving techniques, including skills to recognize developing hazardous roads and traffic conditions and the judgment to select alternate routes to avoid potential problems. Drivers at this grade level have knowledge and skills to adjust their driving methods to the practices of the surrounding traffic in order to avoid accidents and to transport cargo and passengers safely. They have knowledge of state and local safety rules and regulations, and the rules of other jurisdictions for operating vehicles; knowledge and skill to load cargo properly onto the vehicle, using appropriate tie-downs such as chains, binders, or straps for transit on public roads at highway speeds or under similar driving circumstances; knowledge of the operator's manual for their assigned vehicle and skill to apply such knowledge to particular driving situations; and knowledge to recognize developing maintenance problems when conducting an operator's inspection of their assigned vehicles, and report technical problems to the supervisor.

Drivers at the grade 6 level operate and perform operator maintenance on one or more motor vehicles including platform trucks, van trucks, stake trucks, dump trucks, ambulances or patient transport vehicles, passenger shuttle vans, and cargo vans which typically have an approximate GVW of more than 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds) and up to 11,700 kilograms (26,000 pounds). Some of these vehicles are equipped with air brakes. Vehicles are driven on the basis of either specific trip assignments or regularly established schedules over public roads (or the equivalent) at highway speeds under the same types of traffic and driving conditions as described at the grade 5 level. Drivers may operate platform, van or stake trucks, and cargo vans to pick up and deliver materials and equipment or tow equipment to various locations and work sites. They maneuver vehicles over uneven terrain, over improved or unimproved roads, and through

congested areas exercising caution when backing to load or unload at docks, ramps, and similar locations. They determine the manner and sequence of loading cargo to achieve load balance and adequate protection for fragile items. The drivers secure the cargo with tie-down ropes or a tarpaulin to prevent shifting and to protect the load, and mark dangerous or protruding cargo with flags, placards, or reflection lights. They check material loaded or delivered against various documents to prevent errors and to certify the condition of the items and obtain signatures from receiving personnel. They drive on public roads at controlled speeds. They adhere to all State, local, and installation traffic laws and ordinances. They are required to maneuver the vehicle in and out of constricted areas including narrow city streets and congested parking lots.

At the grade 6 level, the vehicles operated are typically higher, wider, longer, and heavier than those described at the grade 5 level. Therefore, the driver has knowledge to make more difficult judgments concerning loading and arranging cargo, overhead and side clearances, the turning radius, braking distance, and the distance to be maintained from other vehicles. Also, the drivers are selective in determining which routes to take because of the size and weight of the vehicle and the laws restricting the use of some roads by such vehicles. These drivers use side mirrors and respond to the hand signals from a spotter to maneuver the vehicle, and follow the proper procedures for dumping the load to prevent the truck from tipping over. Drivers of ambulance or patient transport vehicles may be required to know basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) techniques to assist medical technicians in treating patients when requested. They are familiar with the medical equipment in the vehicle and can quickly locate such equipment for the medical technicians. They have skill in driving the vehicle in various road conditions to transport patients to their destinations, and know how to properly load and secure litter patients in the vehicle.

The appellants' driving duties do not meet the grade 6 level. While the appellants operate a type of vehicle typical of the grade 6 level, their operation of the motor vehicle does not involve application of the full range of skill and knowledge required at that grade. In contrast, the appellants operate a food delivery truck on a regular basis on installation premises and do not drive the truck off-station while adhering to meal delivery schedules. Because the appellants only follow a single primary route, their work does not require or permit grade 6 route planning or the application of skill involved in driving off-site. While the GVW (15,000 pounds) of the truck is described at the grade 6 level, the predictable amount and type of cargo transported (food carts) does not require application of the full range of load planning skill and knowledge envisioned in grade 6 where drivers operate vehicles over Federal, state, and county roads and city streets in all traffic conditions.

The record also shows the appellants no longer drive the vehicle off installation premises for fuel. This task is now handled by drivers from the installation's Transportation Department. Also, the vehicle is not equipped with air brakes, and it is not driven over public roads (or the equivalent) at highway speeds under the types of traffic and driving conditions as described at the grade 5 and higher levels in the JGS. Furthermore, as noted in the 5703 JGS, in instances where drivers do not use their vehicles on public roads (or the equivalent), a lower grade level than the one depicted for the type of vehicle driven is appropriate. This is primarily because the knowledge and skill required for the driver to operate the vehicle competently and safely is not as high. Typically, this means crediting one grade lower than would be credited in performing

the full range of motor vehicle operations over public roads and at highway speeds. However, in this case, the appellants' driving duties are more limited than even the grade 4 level where, other than for operating vehicles smaller than those driven by the appellants, vehicles are operated *throughout* an installation and such work requires maps and facility locator reading to find various buildings and facilities. In contrast, the appellants' trips are preponderantly to transport food carts from one building to one or two other buildings on the installation. The appellants only need to apply only basic skills for manipulating the controls of a one ton, two-axle food delivery truck at speeds of 20 mph or less in the limited traffic conditions they encounter while driving from one building to another and back on installation premises, once or twice a day. As such, they do not need maps to determine the shortest and safest route for short and long runs, and they are not required to use skill and judgment to select alternate routes to avoid hazardous road and traffic conditions. The highly circumscribed nature of the appellants' motor vehicle operation duties and the limited level of knowledge and skill required to perform this work, therefore, warrant an additional grade reduction from that normally associated with operating vehicles with GVW of more than 10,000 and up to 26,000 pounds. Consequently, this factor is adjusted and credited at the grade 4 level.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the grade 4 level.

### *Responsibility*

At grade 4, drivers receive instructions from the dispatcher or supervisor on the type of vehicles to be operated, the destination, cargo or passengers to be transported, purpose of the trip, deadlines to be met, and any special information needed for a trip. Grade 4 drivers are responsible for the comfort and safe transport of passengers and cargo throughout the installation or establishment. For example, they adhere to installation traffic rules and safe operating practices for moving vehicles; drive carefully to avoid jolting or injuring passengers; and load or assist in loading, unloading, and arranging cargo correctly. They enforce the use of seat belts when the vehicle is in motion. They may use a two-way radio to keep the dispatcher or supervisor informed of the status of job assignments and problems encountered. The MVO's work is regularly checked and evaluated for timeliness, the safe delivery of cargo or passengers, and for following instructions. Trip tickets are examined for compliance with regulations and completeness.

In addition to these responsibilities for operating vehicles with GVW typical of both the 4 and 5 grade levels, grade 5 drivers are responsible for safely transporting passengers or cargo to their destinations throughout rural or urban areas on public roads in a full range of traffic conditions or the equivalent. In contrast, grade 6 drivers must make route and loading decisions for higher, wider, longer, and heavier vehicles of more than 10,000 and up to 26,000 pounds GVW.

As discussed previously, the nature of the appellants' vehicle operations is limited. While they operate a vehicle typical of the grade 6 level, they are not responsible for safe and proficient operations on the open road at highway speeds found at both the 5 and 6 grade levels. As at all three levels, the appellants receive instructions from the dispatcher or supervisor regarding the purpose of each delivery trip and the deadlines to be met. Similarly, they perform routine inspections and maintenance on their assigned vehicles and report any technical problems to

their supervisors, and their work is assessed by their supervisor for safe and timely delivery of meals carts. They secure their cargo to avoid shifting during delivery trips, and adhere to installation traffic rules and regulations. However, the short trips driven by the appellants, coupled with the predictable amount and type of cargo transported (food carts); do not require application of the full range of load planning responsibility envisioned at grade 5. Because the responsibility required does approach the grade 6 level or fully meet the grade 5 level, this factor must be credited at the grade 4 level.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the grade 4 level.

#### *Physical Effort*

At the grade 4 level, drivers exert light physical effort to reach, bend, turn, or move hands, arms, feet, and legs to operate hand and foot controls. They exert moderate physical effort in the frequent handling of objects weighing up to 18 kilograms (40 pounds), and the occasional handling of heavier objects while loading cargo, with the assistance of other workers or weight handling equipment. In addition to the physical demand described at the grade 4 level, grade 5 driver may exert moderate physical effort in making couplings between the vehicle and towed equipment because safety chains, towbars, and hooks must be lifted and properly secured. Considerable physical effort may be required to change tires and make limited emergency repairs, such as installing an emergency fan belt or replacing an electrical fuse on open highways. In addition to the requirements at the grade 5 level, grade 6 drivers exert greater physical effort to maneuver the longer and heavier vehicles, especially when backing up these vehicles.

While the appellants operate vehicles requiring the greater physical effort described at the grade 6 level, their work does not meet the remaining aspects of either grade 5 or 6 physical effort. Since they drive very short distances on the installation, their work does not regularly and recurringly require them to perform the emergency repairs encountered in highway or other open road conditions. Therefore, because neither the grade 5 or 6 levels are fully met, this factor must be credited at the grade 4 level.

#### *Working Conditions*

At the grade 4 level, drivers work *mostly* outside and operate vehicles in all kinds of weather in a controlled traffic environment throughout a Government installation or establishment. Drivers are exposed to dirt and fumes, and to the possibility of cuts, bruises, and broken bones as a result of accidents while driving, or from falling objects when loading and unloading the vehicle. In addition to the working conditions described at the grade 4 level, grade 5 and 6 drivers operate vehicles in all types of traffic and weather on public roads (or the equivalent), and are exposed to the danger of serious accidents. They drive in heavy traffic and at highway speeds over complicated road and interchange systems.

Consequently, we find the grade 5 and 6 levels are precluded since the appellants do not drive in all types of weather and traffic on public roads (or the equivalent). Their work does not fully

meet the grade 4 level since they do not regularly and recurrently drive throughout the installation as noted previously. Therefore, we credit this factor at the grade 3 level.

*Summary of 5703 evaluation*

Applying the FWS whole job concept, we find the weaknesses noted under Working Conditions are sufficiently offset by the strengthening aspects of the types of vehicles operated to warrant evaluation of their driving work at grade 4.

**Decision**

The appellants' job is properly graded as Cook, WG-7404-4.