



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
May 2001
Article No. 26-05

Standard: [Introduction to the Electronic Equipment Installation & Maintenance Family 2600 \(January 1999\)](#)

Factor: N/A

Issue: Distinguishing between Federal Wage System (FWS) and General Schedule (GS) positions.

Identification of the Classification Issue

The appellant's job was classified as Electronics Mechanic, WG-2604-11. He performed duties relating to overhaul, installation, modification, maintenance, and repair of nonclinical communication and other electronic equipment at a medical center, utilizing the full range of tools and test devices related to the equipment. The appellant claimed that this work required application of non-trades and crafts electronics knowledge and theory and that his job should be classified in the General Schedule (GS).

Resolution

The *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards* provides guidance for distinguishing between positions in the General Schedule and the Federal Wage System (FWS). This determination is based on the paramount knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the primary duty or responsibility for which the position has been established. If a position clearly requires trades, crafts, or laboring experience and knowledge as a requirement for the performance of its primary duty, and this requirement is paramount, the position is under the FWS.

OPM found that although the appellant's job required knowledge of electronic principles, this knowledge was applied to such trade-based functions as recognizing improper operation, determining

the cause of malfunctions, and correcting the defects by disassembling, assembling, and adjusting the equipment. The work was comparable to the work examples described in the Introduction to the Electronic Equipment Installation and Maintenance Family 2600, including detecting and diagnosing malfunctions, tearing down equipment, repairing or replacing parts or components, and aligning, calibrating, and testing the modified or repaired equipment.

The 2600 Introduction indicates that GS technicians may perform similar repair, maintenance, and installation work. However, this work is done in connection with the paramount engineering functions, such as designing test and repair equipment, developing maintenance standards and procedures, and planning and directing the installation of complex systems. OPM found that these technical electronics engineering activities were inconsistent with the functions of the

appellant's repair and maintenance unit and that his application of electronics principles and theory were for the primary purpose of correcting malfunctions and maintaining optimum performance by application of trades and crafts knowledge and skill. OPM sustained allocation to the FWS.

“Back to the Basics”

FWS electronics mechanics and GS technicians may possess and use similar knowledges to some degree. However, the distinction lies in the manner in which they are applied. The general principle to remember is that if the paramount work performed requires trades, crafts, or manual labor experience and skills, then the job is assigned to the FWS.

Link to [C-2604-11-02](#)