



## United States Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
August 1993  
No. 18-04

**Standard:** [Fire Protection and Prevention Series, GS-0081](#) (September 1991)  
**Factor:** N/A  
**Issue:** Identifying "typical" supervisory positions under Part I

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of an appeal from two supervisory employees. The two appellants functioned as "shift supervisors," and each worked three 24-hour days each week. Each supervisor directed two firefighting crews on each shift, as well as other firefighters who supported ancillary operations, i.e., an ambulance service and the transportation of equipment and supplies used to control hazardous materials. In accordance with instructions in Section III of Part I of the standard, the installation had classified the positions as station chiefs and graded them one grade above the crew chiefs, i.e., at the GS-8 level. The appellants contended that they were assistant chiefs and that their positions should be evaluated two grades below that of the fire chief, or at GS-9. The region considered the guidance in Section III of Part I of the standard for classifying typical supervisory positions.

### **Resolution**

The region's factfinding revealed that the appellants exercised full first-level supervision over employees engaged in fighting fires, providing ambulance service, and responding to incidents involving hazardous materials. Four fire protection inspectors performed duties involving fire inspection, internal training on fire protection and prevention, and a client information program. The inspectors reported directly to the fire chief who retained direct managerial authority over these programs, as well as overall program planning and approval authority, including the authority to approve bi-weekly and longer work schedules.

### **Station Chief Positions**

Guidance on Section I of Part I of the standard describes the typical organizational environment in which station chief positions exist. According to that guidance, station chief positions are typically found at larger installations (with three or more stations) where the fire chief and assistant chief are unable to provide immediate oversight and direction of day-to-day activities. Each station typically has two or more crews on a shift. The standard indicates that station chief positions typically do not exist when there are only one or two stations. In the instant case, the region found that the Fire Department, as a whole, operated as a single station with two firefighting crews on each shift. The fire chief retained full authority for the technical and administrative direction of the day-to-day activities of the entire Fire Department. Because of the relatively simple organizational environment in which the positions were located, the region concluded that the appellants did not function as station chiefs, despite the fact that they exercised full first-line supervisory authority. Because the positions did not operate as "typical" station chiefs, they could not be evaluated by applying the guidance Section III of Part I of the GS-0081 standard.

### **Assistant Chief Positions**

The region sought an advisory opinion on identifying "typical" assistant chief positions. The Office of Classification advised that "the typical assistant chief is either at the second or third organizational level of the firefighting force and is *delegated program or administrative duties and responsibilities from the fire chief.*" The Office of Classification further advised that, in a department located at a single station:

a supervisor over two crew chiefs that has been delegated administrative responsibilities for planning and coordinating such functions as: inspection, training, hazardous material handling, or fire prevention in addition to day-to-day supervisory responsibilities would be considered an assistant chief for grading purposes. On the other hand, the same supervisor with only day-to-day supervisory responsibilities and no program or administrative responsibilities would be considered an atypical supervisor.

The region concluded that retention of overall program and administrative authority by the fire chief did not permit the appellants to exercise the range of administrative and/or program management responsibilities required for evaluation as typical assistant chief positions. Thus, the guidance Section III of Part I of the standard was not applied in evaluating their positions.

Since the appellants' positions were not appropriately evaluated under the guidance for "typical" supervisory positions, they were evaluated by applying generic evaluation criteria for General Schedule supervisory positions. Application of the supervisory grading criteria resulted in a grade of GS-8.