



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness

Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions

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Article No. 24-07

Standard: Federal Wage System Key Level Definition for Production Facilitating Jobs
(April 1993)

Factor: N/A

Issue: Differentiating positions in the Special Pay Plan for Production Facilitating Positions from positions in the General Schedule (GS)

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in a group of appeals from occupants of Engineering Technician, GS-802, positions. At one time, the appellants had occupied Planner and Estimator (P&E) jobs in the Special Pay Plan for Production Facilitating Positions. The appellants questioned the classification of their current jobs, claiming that they continued to perform work essentially the same as in their previous P&E jobs. In adjudicating the appeals, OPM had to determine the correct pay plan.

Resolution

Differentiating positions in the Special Pay Plan for Production Facilitating Positions from positions in the GS is one of the most difficult pay category determinations. The duties and responsibilities of such positions frequently overlap and in some cases are nearly identical. Jobs covered by the Production Facilitating Pay Plan include P&E's that perform duties virtually identical to the appellants' Engineering Technician, GS-802, positions.

The first requirement for placement in the special pay plan is that the journey-level knowledge of a trade or related group of trades is the paramount requirement for performance of the primary duty. Even if career progression has been from trades positions and the duties are similar to a Key Level Definition, the position is excluded from the special pay plan if journey-level

knowledge of a trade or related group of trades is not the paramount knowledge of the positions, and the employee must utilize this knowledge and experience in performing the assigned duties. Knowledge of trades is considered paramount when the employee is required to have journey-level knowledge and experience in specified occupations. A primary consideration in making this determination is whether the career progression is exclusively from and normally to other trades positions. This exemplifies the fact that the paramount requirement of the position is trade or craft knowledge. Therefore, when an employee in a production planning position satisfactorily performs all assigned functions, but does not meet this requirement, the position is GS.

The second requirement is that duties must match a Key Level Definition. According to the Key Level Definition, a P&E participates in planning for construction, maintenance, repair, or manufacturing projects by determining facilities, equipment, material, and numbers and categories of shop personnel required. From major work requests, engineering plans, and similar information, the P&E estimates costs and prepares job order specifications assigning work to shops or trade groups. This work requires intensive journey-level trades experience.

Assignments for one of the appealed Engineering Technician, GS-802, positions included preparing designs and specifications for various utility systems, e.g., heating, plumbing, and air conditioning; determining operations and methods involved and the time required to complete each phase; determining the types of equipment and material needed; and developing the cost estimates of labor, materials, and overhead. OPM determined that the paramount requirement for this position was not for journey-level trade or craft knowledge and experience, and the normal career progression was not exclusively from a trade or craft background. While trade experience was helpful, the paramount requirement was for general knowledge of shop operations and the ability to translate that knowledge into plans, work sequences, estimates of manpower, and material costs and type. The appellant relied on established engineering and estimating standards rather than intensive journey-level trades skills and knowledge to perform the work. Therefore, even though the duties appeared substantially the same as the Key Level Definition for P&E, the trade knowledge was not paramount. OPM found the position was correctly classified as GS.