

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Classification Appeal Decision  
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [Name of appellant]

**Agency classification:** Civil Engineering Technician  
GS-802-7

**Organization:** [Appellant's organization/location]  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

**OPM decision:** Engineering Technician (Civil)  
GS-802-7

**OPM decision number:** C-0802-07-03

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Ana A. Mazzi  
Deputy Associate Director  
Merit System Audit and Compliance  
June 16, 2011

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Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate which 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 (Introduction)*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

As indicated in this decision, our findings show the appellant's official position description does not meet the standard of adequacy described in section III.E. of the *Introduction*. Since position descriptions must meet the standard of adequacy, the agency must revise the appellant's position description to reflect our findings. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description within 30 days of the date of this decision to the San Francisco Oversight office.

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action to the San Francisco Oversight office.

**Decision sent to:**

[Appellant's mailing address]

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## **Introduction**

On March 15, 2010, the San Francisco Oversight Office of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [name of appellant]. On April 12, 2010, we received the complete agency administrative report (AAR). The appellant's position is currently classified as Civil Engineering Technician GS-802-7, but he believes his responsibilities warrant upgrading to the GS-8 level. The position is assigned to the [name of appellant's organization/location], Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General issues**

The appellant makes various statements about his agency's review and evaluation of his position. In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of his position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing his current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Because our decision sets aside any previous agency decision, the classification practices used by the appellant's agency in classifying his position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

The appellant and his supervisor do not believe the appellant's current position description (PD) [number] is completely accurate. A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position by an official with the authority to assign work. A position is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by the employee. Classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position 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 position and not simply a PD. This decision is based on the work currently assigned and performed by the appellant.

Our review disclosed the appellant's standard PD describes some duties he does not perform. Specifically, he does not interview contractor employees to ensure that labor laws and regulations are observed, and does not prepare installation drawings or perform drafting duties. Either the installation's Road Manager (GS-802-10) or a professional engineer performs these duties. Furthermore, he does not review project plans and specifications prior to contract advertisement to determine whether materials specified are readily available, and does not attend pre-bid and pre-construction conferences to discuss features and requirements. He also does not review specifications for utilities, construction offices, testing facilities, and storage facilities or inform contractors of requirements for progress reporting, safety, wage and hour law observance, labor relations and payroll records. The Contracting Officer (CO) performs these duties. Therefore, the appellant's PD of record does not meet the standard of adequacy addressed on pages 10-11 of the *Introduction*, and the agency must revise the PD to reflect our findings.

**Position information**

The appellant is responsible for providing technical support for the Engineering unit in the areas of road maintenance and development. He performs inspection functions involving public works and timber sale contracts, sign maintenance, and inspects the condition of forest roads prior to issuance of Road use Permits (RUP) to private users. He provides contract oversight assistance in his capacity as Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) on service contracts, and participates in the development, definition, and documentation of engineering design requirements under the leadership of an engineer. The appellant is also involved in data analysis and presentation for civil engineering projects, including conducting surveys and data collection activities to provide data for civil engineering project designs. Additionally, under the two Participating Agreements between the Forest Service and [names of local counties] correction departments, the appellant is responsible for project monitoring and quality assurance relating to these agreements. He also assists the Grants and Agreement (G&A) specialist by gathering information for annual supplemental partnership agreements.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information provided by the appellant and his agency, including the official PD which, although not completely accurate, we have incorporated by reference into this decision. In addition, to help decide the appeal we conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant, his supervisor, and the G&A Specialist who the appellant works with in his role as program contact for the aforementioned Participating Agreements.

**Series, title, and standard determination**

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Engineering Technical Series, 0802, titling it Civil Engineering Technician, and the appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's selection of series. The Job Family Standard for Technical Work in the Engineering and Architecture Group, 0800 (JFS TW 0800), which covers positions in the 0802 series, specifies the basic title for positions at grade 4 and above is Engineering Technician, and that an appropriate established parenthetical title may be added to the basic title when warranted. Because the appellant works in the area of civil engineering, the parenthetical title of "Civil" should be added to the basic title of his position. Thus the proper title and series of the appellant's position is Engineering Technician (Civil), GS-802. The grade of positions in the 0802 series must be evaluated by reference to the grading criteria in the JFS TW 0800. Our evaluation of the grade of the appellant's position by application of the JFS TW 0800 follows.

**Grade determination**

The JFS TW 0800 is written in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Positions graded under the FES are compared to nine factors. Levels are assigned for each factor, and the points associated with the assigned levels are totaled and converted to a grade level. Under the FES, each factor-level description describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to fully meet the criteria in a factor-level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level unless an equally

important aspect that meets a higher level balances the deficiency. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. Our application of the nine FES factors to the appellant's position follows.

*Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position*

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts an employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills necessary to apply that knowledge.

At Level 1-5, the employee uses practical knowledge of, and skill in applying, standardized rules or operations requiring substantial training or experience in methods and practices sufficient to perform limited projects involving specialized or complicated procedures; apply a wide variety of test and inspection techniques to various engineering aspects to make on-site determinations; interpret drawings, plans and specifications; identify and correct deficiencies; resolve operational problems not fully covered by precedents; ensure appropriate interaction between components; recommend improved procedures; modify parts, instruments, and equipment; employ a variety of complex precision instruments, gauges, and methods; perform work on critical units or multiple subunits of a system or device; take actions or make recommendations based on preliminary data interpretation or analysis; prepare and present inspection and testing reports and documentation requiring a high-degree of precision and using a variety of projection techniques to portray unusual or complex designs; develop and initiate changes in prescribed procedures to expedite corrective action, and provide continuous operation when required; and work primarily with subsystems that are notably complex by reason of miniature size, density of circuitry, lack of available documentation, etc.

An illustrative work example at Level 1-5 describes a position that requires knowledge of, and skill in applying, specialized rules, procedures, or operations requiring extensive training or experience in engineering methods and practices sufficient to plan and implement ground operations for road management. The employee develops and submits maintenance proposals for construction or repair of ground facilities, such as road surfaces and bridges; maintains records and monitors project construction; performs technical review of contract designs to avoid or correct errors of nonconformance with construction specifications; and ensures work meets contract standards.

At Level 1-6, the employee uses practical knowledge of a wide range of technical engineering methods, principles, requirements, work techniques, and practices of an area of specialization, and skill in applying standardized, analytical, and evaluative methods and techniques sufficient to advise on and/or resolve difficult but well-precedented, factual, procedural, and/or recurring issues; make informed decisions on problems and issues; analyze segments of broader issues or problems (e.g., the impact of change in one area on the entire system); perform installation, maintenance, operation, and testing duties; employ unique and specially designed precision instruments; maintain one-of-a-kind equipment, custom equipment, developmental equipment, or equipment which is continually being modified and adapted and does not usually have adequate documentation; and complete moderately difficult and complex survey work.

An illustrative work example at Level 1-6, describes a position that requires knowledge of, and skill in applying, a wide range of specialized methods, principles, and techniques sufficient to interpret sophisticated and complex testing results; develop and/or review plans, specifications, and estimates for proposed projects; make recommendations concerning adequacy of specified highway construction materials; evaluate proposed material mix designs; review and report on pay quantity documentation and compare test quantities to paid quantities; and verify project pay factors.

The appellant's position meets Level 1-5. Like this level, the appellant uses practical knowledge of, and skill in applying standardized rules or operations requiring substantial training or experience in applying specialized methods and procedures to limited projects such as his work with the Danger Tree Operations and Maintenance Identification and Mitigation Program for the Forest. Like Level 1-5, in this work he applies specialized procedures to identify diseased trees needing to be removed (i.e. trees having rotten roots, fungus or multiple defects) which have the potential of falling and posing a threat to public safety. His duties include documenting the problem, marking the trees, staking out their location, and creating a layout which is included in the contract bid for the tree removal project. Once the contract is awarded, the appellant is responsible for ensuring the work is properly completed according to specifications. Similar to Level 1-5, the appellant interprets drawings, plans, and specifications. For example, prior to county correctional crews going onsite to perform road maintenance work, he participates in pre-work meetings where he reviews plans and specifications with the county crews and their supervisor regarding the assigned road work. The review includes confirming various tasks such as cutting roadway vegetation, logging out and chipping woody material from roadsides, removing brush and logs to reduce high fuel hazards and improve road safety for the public and emergency fire vehicles, culvert cleaning and reconditioning, and ditch maintenance to reduce roadway erosion and ensure proper functioning of culverts.

Like Level 1-5, in his assignments with force accounts (where Forest Service crews perform work) the appellant identifies and corrects deficiencies found on roads. This work involves conducting road assessments including an analysis of road conditions or problems and making recommendations for temporary repair. For instance, the appellant conducted a road assessment of a snow-damaged road with blow down trees and found a sinkhole on a turnout curve. He recommended correcting the problem by back filling the hole with variable sizes of rock and using equipment for compaction. In performing such duties, he is required to complete an Engineering Field Review Report documenting the purpose of his visit to the site, his findings, and corrective actions and recommendations.

Like Level 1-5, the appellant takes action based on preliminary data analysis for civil engineering projects. He is responsible for conducting investigations, road reconnaissance and survey to gather data in the form of field notes and tracking by milepost. To do this work, he uses distance mileage instruments, GPS coordinates, laser distance devices to measure feet, height, vertical and horizontal slope, and a compass to gather data in degrees to identify a cross section of the base line for road surveys and to determine skew of culvert installation. For instance, on a project consisting of a paved, high volume single-lane road with turnouts (14 miles long) with slumps and cracks that needed repair, the appellant conducted an investigation and

survey to gather data (i.e., length, width, and depth) on the site and staked every location by milepost. Subsequently the information was provided to the Project Engineer.

Comparable to the illustrative work example at Level 1-5, the appellant exercises knowledge and skill in applying specialized rules and procedures, and engineering methods and practices sufficient to plan and implement ground operations for road management. For example, based on his onsite analysis of Forest road conditions he develops recommendations for maintenance and repair. He gives these recommendations to the Road Manager or the Forest Service Contracting Officer Representative (COR) for road repair and emergency road fixes. Additionally, he performs technical review of contract design to avoid or correct errors of nonconformance with construction specifications. For example, as COTR for service contracts, the appellant performs technical review of public works contracts to ensure contractors meet design specifications under the Recovery Forest Wide Regulatory Sign Replacement project. His duties on such projects include ensuring sign mountings are posted at the right height, cleared vegetation meets the required height and radius, advance sign placement distances are installed within the required footage, and correct degree configurations are displayed for curve and winding warning signs.

Like the illustrative work example, the appellant maintains records and monitors acceptability of project construction by documenting (in a Contract Daily Diary) the findings and results gathered during his onsite inspections. In addition, he records questions and/or concerns the contractor representative may have for the Forest Service COR. Based on his observations, the appellant documents contractor errors, nonconformance with the contract, and compliance with contract specifications for review by the COR. If the work performed or material being supplied or installed does not conform to contract requirements, he issues a Notice of Non-Compliance, citing the reference in the contract that is unmet. For example, if a "Stop Ahead" sign is installed in excess of a prescribed number of feet as stated in the Sign Installation Guide for Public Safety for all Forest Service Roads, he issues a Notice of Non-Compliance for the sign to be relocated to conform to required distances.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-6. Unlike this level, his work does not require or permit him to apply practical knowledge of a wide range of technical engineering methods, principles, requirements, work techniques, and practices of the civil engineering specialization. Instead, the technical engineering methods he must use are straight-forward (e.g., applying basic surveying techniques), prescribed, and limited to assessing immediate road maintenance requirements, including inspecting materials at the work site and ensuring construction specifications are met. More complex engineering projects such as those involving the construction of buildings or bridges are performed by the Project Engineer. Unlike Level 1-6, his work does not require or permit him to apply standardized, analytical, and evaluative methods and techniques sufficient to analyze segments of broader issues or problems (e.g., the impact of a change in one area on the entire system); perform installation, maintenance, operation and testing duties and complete moderately difficult and complex survey work. Instead, the impact of the road maintenance assessments and tree mitigation changes he proposes are confined to immediate projects rather than affecting the entire Forest's road system or public safety. As opposed to the Level 1-6 work illustration, he does not interpret sophisticated and complex testing results; make recommendations concerning adequacy of specified highway



construction materials; evaluate proposed material mix designs; review and report on pay quantity documentation and compare test quantities for paid quantities; or verify project pay factors as envisioned at this level.

This factor is credited at Level 1-5 and 750 points are assigned.

### *Factor 2, Supervisory Controls*

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility and the review of the work completed. The primary components of this factor are how work is assigned, the employee responsibility, and how the work is reviewed.

At Level 2-3, the supervisor outlines possible problem areas; defines objectives, plans, priorities and deadlines; and provides assistance on controversial or unusual situations with no clear precedents. The employee independently plans and carries out the assignments in conformance with accepted policies and practices. The employee resolves commonly encountered work problems and deviations by exercising judgment in selecting appropriate instructions, policies, guidelines, or accepted practices. The employee brings controversial information and findings to the supervisor's attention for direction. The supervisor reviews completed work for conformity with policy, the appropriateness of the employee's approach, technical soundness, and adherence to deadlines.

At Level 2-4, the supervisor outlines overall objectives and available resources; discusses the projects and timeframes; and determines the parameters of the employee's responsibilities. The employee determines the most appropriate avenues to pursue; decides the practices and methods to apply in all phases of assignments including the approach to take and the depth and intensity needed; interprets regulations or policy frequently on own initiative; applies new methods to solve complex, intricate, sensitive, and/or unprecedented problems and resolves most conflicts as they arise; coordinates projects or cases across units, organizations, or agencies; and keeps the supervisor informed of progress and of potentially controversial matters. The supervisor reviews completed work for soundness of overall approach; effectiveness in producing results; feasibility of recommendations; and adherence to requirements.

The appellant's position meets Level 2-3. Like this level, the supervisor assigns work by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines for projects covered by precedents. The supervisor provides assistance on unusual assignments or those lacking precedents. The appellant independently plans and carries out his assignments, determining the best methods to accomplish tasks and resolving most technical issues that arise. However, controversial information and findings are discussed with the supervisor. For example, if there is a problem with a contractor not meeting the requirements for installation of road signs, the appellant discusses the matter with the supervisor including providing recommendations before issuing a Notice of Non-Compliance. The supervisor is responsible for reviewing the overall soundness of the project as opposed to a detailed review of each aspect of the project and only rarely needs to provide technical insight. For instance, a project might involve twenty miles of road work, but the supervisor or designated employee (i.e. the Road Manager) may only inspect two miles of that

work. Based on the soundness of this work, a determination is made whether additional miles need to be inspected.

The position does not meet Level 2-4. Unlike this level, the supervisor provides more specific instructions concerning defining the scope of projects, planning and prioritizing the appellant's assignments, and establishing deadlines. For instance, the supervisor designates that stimulus package work be done first, or assigns the appellant to a particular project based on his technical engineering certifications. In contrast to Level 2-4 where the employee applies new methods to solve complex, intricate, or unprecedented problems, due to the technical limitations of the appellant's assignments he resolves only commonly encountered work problems. Additionally, unlike Level 2-4 where work is reviewed for soundness of overall approach, the appellant's completed work is reviewed for appropriateness of approach and technical soundness.

This factor is credited at Level 2-3 and 275 points are assigned.

### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

This factor covers the nature and extent of guidelines for performing the work and the judgment needed to apply the guidelines or develop new guidelines. Guidelines either provide reference data or impose certain constraints on the use of knowledge. Guidelines are different from general knowledge, referring specifically to specific operating standards, policies, or methods which are designed for use at the local level.

At Level 3-2, the employee uses a number of established procedures and guidelines directly applicable to assignments. Guidelines prescribe established procedures and provide clear precedents. The employee is familiar with many written guidelines, oral instructions, and other reference material and is expected to exercise judgment in selecting and applying the most appropriate. The employee is expected to be able to determine when minor deviations from the existing guidelines are appropriate.

At Level 3-3, the employee uses a variety of guidelines, manuals, and standard reference materials; however, they are not completely applicable to the work or have gaps in specificity. The employee uses judgment and initiative in interpreting and adapting guidelines, such as agency policies, regulations, precedents, and work directions for application to specific cases or problems. The employee analyzes results and recommends changes.

The appellant's position meets Level 3-2. Like this level, the appellant uses established procedures and guidelines directly applicable to assignments. For instance, the appellant performs his road maintenance work in accordance with pre-established guidelines, policies and procedures. He refers to specific guidance in the U.S. Forest Service Region [name of region], Policies on Forest Service Transportation Management, Maintenance Prescription Guidelines and other written procedures covering maintenance of traveled ways, roadway vegetation, upkeep of drainage facilities, roadside clean up, structure maintenance, and installation of traffic services. When drafting participating agreements concerning work with county crews, he also uses prescribed instructions from the USDA Forest Service [name of region] Fire and Protection and Suppression Prevention Measures. He uses specific instructions from the Regional Roads

Maintenance Specifications and Standard Specifications for Construction, Roads and Bridges for Federal Highway Projects (FP03) when working with public work contracts. In addition, when doing sign installation inspections he refers to guidance in the Field Guide for Sign Installation and Safety Guidelines. Specific guidance in the Field Guide for Danger Trees Identification and Response, and the Region [name of region] Danger Tree Roadside Policy governs his work pertaining to removal of dangerous trees.

Like Level 3-2, the appellant exercises judgment and initiative in selecting and applying the most appropriate guideline. He determines when minor deviations from the guidelines are appropriate. In situations where guidelines are inapplicable to his work, particularly when reviewing contracts, he uses judgment, documents the issue, refers to clauses or specifications in the contract that most closely apply and forwards the issue to the Contracting Officer (CO) or supervisor as appropriate for further direction. For example, in the event that sensitive plants are found among invasive weeds, he uses judgment and cites the clause in the road maintenance contract (i.e., sensitivity category/C clause) which allows the contractor to bypass the area until an agreement is reached as to how the problem will be handled.

The position does not meet Level 3-3. Unlike this level, the appellant's guidelines are directly applicable to his work and clearly prescribe procedures and precedents. For instance, the road maintenance contracts he uses to determine contract compliance contain detailed specifications and procedures which must be followed by the contractor. Unlike Level 3-3, he does not interpret or adapt guidelines, and is not permitted to significantly deviate from or adapt them to situations encountered.

This factor is credited at Level 3-2 and 125 points are assigned.

#### *Factor 4, Complexity*

This factor covers the nature, number, variety and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes or methods of the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work. The primary components of this factor are: Nature of Assignment, What Needs To Be Done, and Difficulty and Originality Involved.

At Level 4-3, the work consists of a number of different and unrelated processes in completing assignments or projects. The employee analyzes the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment to: adjust or deviate from standard work methods based on work situations and conditions at a field or work site; and coordinate and plan phases of the assignment. The employee exercises independent judgment and skill to interpret and analyze considerable data, plan work, or refine methods and techniques to determine the best course of action for problem resolution.

At Level 4-4, work consists of many different and unrelated processes and methods requiring ingenuity and skill to resolve a broad range of problems. The employee analyzes, selects, and adapts appropriate methods from a wide range of alternatives to: assess unusual circumstances; evaluate operations, equipment, and activities; and apply qualitative and quantitative analytical

techniques. The employee exercises seasoned judgment and skill to interpret considerable, incomplete, or conflicting data.

The position meets Level 4-3. Like this level, the appellant's work consists of a number of different and unrelated processes in completing assignments or projects. For instance, the appellant provides general direction and monitors the work performed by the [names of local counties] correction crews which perform a variety of different processes to carry out road maintenance work including cutting of roadway vegetation, fuel reduction, chipping, logouts, dangerous tree removal and culvert cleaning. To review and approve this work, he must be thoroughly knowledgeable of the procedures to perform the maintenance, and serves as the program contact working with the county crew supervisor to schedule work and ensure it is correctly completed. He assists the G&A specialist in drafting the Supplemental Project Agreement between the county crews and the Forest Service which consists of a general project description covering project title, project location, duties and tasks to be performed, anticipated project staffing and duration, financial plan, and party responsibilities. The appellant's role in the financial planning process of the agreement is primarily to review draft documents to ensure they reflect the number of county crew work days, describe the work to be completed, and accurately show estimated costs.

Like Level 4-3, preparing for road maintenance projects requires a number and variety of different processes to complete the project. A significant part of this process requires the appellant to conduct condition surveys and collect data on the maintenance treatments to be performed by the correction crews. He initially meets with the District Ranger and staff, botanists, and fire management for all districts involved to go over concerns and attain agreement for the treatments that will take place. Subsequently, the appellant conducts a pre-work meeting with the correction crews and their supervisor to provide them with a road listing, vicinity and district maps of the road locations, review the specifications of the project, and coordinate required fire emergency plans. The appellant conducts site visits to determine if work is meeting specifications and timelines, is within budget, and fully meets the terms of the agreement. Finally, upon completion of projects he submits reports and photographs of the work to the G&A specialist, reviews final invoices for payment, and helps in verifying that unliquidated obligations are valid or are available for de-obligation.

Similar to Level 4-3, the appellant analyzes issues involved in each assignment to adjust from standard work methods based on work situations and conditions at the work site, and coordinates and plans phases of the assignment. For instance, in working on public works contracts he ensures the contractor installs warning and regulatory signs per specifications on sign placement addressed in "work lists" prepared by the Project Engineer in conjunction with the Sign Coordinator. The contractor must follow the "work list" requirements as well as perform the work in accordance with regulations in the Manual Uniform Traffic Control Device (MUTCD) and Sign Installation Guide for Public Safety. If the contractor is not able to meet all requirements, the appellant documents the issue and develops recommendations on correcting the problem considering the work situation and conditions. Occasionally, the appellant may have to carry out emergency work where he must adjust from standard work method in order to deal with the fixing of a road that is causing safety concerns. For example, in one instance the appellant worked on a slump road having a fill failure issue. The appellant analyzed the

conditions and recommended temporary repairs using materials and equipment immediately available.

Like Level 4-3, the appellant exercises independent judgment and skill to interpret and analyze considerable data and plan work to determine the best course of action for problem resolution. For example, when working with dangerous tree roadside service contracts he must identify hazardous trees on mainline roads and assess if they present an imminent danger to public safety. The process includes evaluating the conditions of certain trees and the danger they may present to public safety. He interprets the information gathered against the appropriate guidelines and criteria to determine the best course of action. Once the tree is marked for removal, the appellant contacts all stakeholders who may object to logging such as district rangers, biologists, fire management staff, and members of the public to discuss and consider their concerns prior to beginning tree removal.

The position does not meet Level 4-4. Unlike this level, the appellant's duties do not require ingenuity and skill to resolve a broad range of problems, requiring that he analyze, select, and adapt methods from a wide range of alternatives. In contrast to Level 4-4, the technical problems he faces focus on road maintenance and removal of forest hazards to public safety which require adjusting or deviating from standard methods and techniques. Engineering alternatives are limited and less complex than Level 4-4, and he is not confronted with unusual circumstances requiring the level of activities and application of qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques found at the higher level.

This factor is credited at Level 4-3 and 150 are assigned.

#### *Factor 5, Scope and effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of work (i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the scope of the work involves applying a considerable number of different basic, but established methods, procedures, and techniques. The work affects the design or operation of systems, programs, processes or equipment, and the timeliness and economy of operations, services or equipment.

At Level 5-4, the scope of the work involves establishing criteria, formulating projects, assessing program effectiveness, or analyzing a variety of unusual conditions, problems or questions. The work affects a wide range of agency activities, industrial concerns, or the operation of other agencies.

The appellant's position meets Level 5-3. Like this level, the work involves applying a considerable number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques. For example, in gathering and analyzing data and presenting findings for civil engineering projects he applies well-established engineering design practices and standardized equipment, e.g., laser distance device, compass. In this work, the appellant is responsible for surveying

areas to collect data and make recommendations on how to fix unsafe road systems. He gathers data such as the length, width, depth of site, takes photos and documents the problem in an "Engineering Field Review Report." In addition, he stakes every location by milepost and submits all gathered data to the Project Engineer for review. The engineer determines if more detailed data is needed, and may call a surveyor to complete the field work. The appellant develops road designs using standard practices and techniques, and calculates specifications according to prescribed formulas and handbook tables. He also sketches simple designs and layouts of roads and drainage structures.

Comparable to Level 5-3, the appellant's work affects the design and operation of a road maintenance program. In his work with maintenance contracts, he conducts road surveys and compiles all maintenance needs for the proposed work plan. The maintenance work involves surface maintenance, surface rock replacement, culvert replacement, hazard removal, ditch cleaning and load, haul and placement of timber. Similar to Level 5-3, his work also affects the timeliness and economy of operations and services. For instance, prior to issuance of road use permits to private loggers for hauling on Forest Service roads, the appellant conducts a road assessment of haul routes. This process includes identifying and assessing the condition of proposed roads for hauling, and determining if any maintenance work is needed before issuing permits. By performing these tasks in advance, he helps to eliminate limitations on use of Forest Service roads and ultimately expedites the logging process.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-4. Unlike this level, the appellant's position does not require him to establish criteria, formulate projects, assess program effectiveness, or analyze a variety of unusual conditions, problems or questions. Such activities are performed by higher-level employees in the Forest including project engineers and the Road Manager. Although his work in maintenance and development of roads affects the operation of the road maintenance program, unlike Level 5-4 it does not affect a wide range of agency activities, industrial concerns, or the operation of other agencies.

This factor is credited at Level 5-3 and 150 points are assigned.

#### *Factors 6 and 7, Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts*

These factors cover the type and level of contacts made in carrying out the work. These factors include face-to-face and remote dialogue (e.g., telephone, e-mail, and video conferences) with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under these factors consider what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, the setting in which the contact takes place, and the nature of the discourse. The setting describes how well the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities. The nature of the discourse defines the reason for the communication and the context or environment in which the communication takes place. The JFS instructs the same contacts are evaluated for both Factors 6 and 7.

### Personal Contacts

At Level 2, contacts are with employees and managers in the same agency, both inside and outside of the immediate office or related units, as well as members of the general public in a moderately structured setting. Contacts with employees and managers may be from various levels within the agency, such as headquarters, regions, districts, field offices, or other operating offices at the same location.

At Level 3, contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the agency, including consultants, contractors, vendors, or representatives of professional associations, in moderately unstructured settings. The purpose and extent of each is different. This level may also include contacts with agency officials who are several managerial levels removed from the employee when such contacts occur on an ad hoc basis. The employee must recognize or learn the role and authority of each party during the course of the meeting.

The position meets Level-2 but does not fully meet Level-3. Like Level-2 the appellant meets with employees and managers on his District and Forest both inside and outside his immediate office and in related units, and with members of the general public, e.g., road managers, District Rangers, specialized Forest staff, landowners and loggers. In addition, similar to Level-3 the appellant also has contact with individuals from outside his agency, particularly contractors hired by the Forest Service to perform dangerous tree removal and road repair or maintenance. However, unlike Level-3 these contacts are generally established on a routine basis with meetings regularly scheduled at the appellant's work place including field work sites. Unlike Level-3, his contacts with contractor representatives are made in a moderately structured setting where the role and authority of the person contacted is initially known prior to meeting, and the purpose and extent of each contact is generally the same, i.e., to discuss work progress and adherence to contract specifications. Consequently, because Level-3 is not fully met, Level-2 is assigned for this factor.

### Purpose of Contacts

At Level B, the purpose of contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems by influencing or motivating individuals or groups who are working toward mutual goals and who have basically cooperative attitudes.

At Level C, the purpose of the contacts is to influence, persuade, or control people or groups. Contacts require skill in dealing with fearful, skeptical, or uncooperative people to obtain the desired results. Often the employee must persuade, influence, or gain compliance from others in performing tasks.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts meets Level B. Like this level, his contacts are made to plan, coordinate or advise on work efforts and resolve operating civil engineering problems by influencing individuals or groups (e.g., road maintenance crews, contractor representatives) who are working towards mutual goals and have basically cooperative attitudes. For example, the

appellant must discuss inspected work and contract or agreement requirements with contractors or county representatives to give them feedback as to the acceptability of their work.

The position does not meet Level C. Unlike this level, the appellant does not need to influence, persuade, or control people or groups who may be skeptical or uncooperative to resolve operating problems. Although the appellant meets with a variety of individuals to discuss project concerns and work accomplishment, they are generally cooperative when provided with the criteria and guidelines governing his work decisions.

By application of the Point Assignment Chart in the JFS, a combination of Level-2 for Factor 6 and Level-B for Factor 7 results in a total of 75 points assigned.

#### *Factor 8, Physical Demands*

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and physical exertion involved in the work.

At Level 8-2, the work requires some physical exertion such as long periods of standing; walking over rough, uneven, rocky, or slippery surfaces; recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, climbing, or similar activities.; recurring lifting of light to moderately heavy items weighing less than 50 pound (i.e., 23 kilograms), such as testing or measuring equipment; and/or regular visits to construction, industrial, marine, or other outdoor sites.

At Level 8-3, the work requires considerable and strenuous physical exertion, such as frequent climbing of tall ladders, staging, or scaffolding in dry-dock and vessel areas; working in areas where footing can be treacherous (e.g., on rocky banks of bodies of fast-water, slippery docks, or steep hillsides); lifting heavy objects weighing 50 pounds (i.e., 23 kilograms) or more; and frequent crouching or crawling in restricted areas.

The position meets Level 8-2. Like this level, the appellant's work requires some physical exertion such as walking over rough, uneven, rocky, or slippery surfaces; and regular outdoor visits to field road maintenance sites. The position does not meet Level 8-3 because the work does not require considerable and strenuous physical exertion stemming from working in treacherous areas as described at this level.

This factor is credited at Level 8-2 and 20 points are assigned.

#### *Factor 9, Work Environment*

This factor considers the discomfort and risk of danger in the employee's physical surroundings and the safety precautions required.

At Level 9-2, the work involves regular and recurring exposure to moderate risks and discomforts such as dust, strong odors, or fumes from fuels, chemicals, or engine exhaust; high levels of noise and vibration, dust, grease, electrical hazards, uncovered moving parts of



machinery, moving machinery; or outdoor conditions involving moderate exposure to rain, cold/hot weather, icy streams, and rivers. The work environment requires the employee to stay alert continually and to take special safety precautions including wearing special protective items of clothing

At Level 9-3, the work environment involves high risks of exposure to potentially dangerous situations or unusual environmental stress requiring a range of safety and other precautions where conditions cannot be controlled (e.g., working at great heights under extreme outdoor weather conditions).

The appellant's work meets Level 9-2. Like this level, his work involves regular and recurring exposure to moderate risks and discomforts, such as dust, high levels of noise, and moving road maintenance machinery in outdoor conditions involving moderate exposure to inclement weather. These working conditions require that he remain alert, take special safety precautions, and wear protective items of clothing such as a hard hat and boots.

The appellant's work does not meet Level 9-3. Unlike this level, his work environment does not involve high risk exposure to potentially dangerous situations or unusual environmental stress requiring a range of safety and other precautions to cope with uncontrolled conditions as described at Level 9-3.

This factor is credited at Level 9-2 and 20 points are assigned.

### *Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-5	750
2. Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6.& 7 Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts	6-2/7-B	75
8. Physical Demands	8-2	20
9. Work Environment	9-2	<u>20</u>
<i>Total</i>		1565

A total of 1,565 points falls within the GS-7 range (1355-1600) on the grade conversion table in the JFS. Therefore, the appellant's position is graded at the GS-7 level.

### **Decision**

The appellant's position is properly classified as Engineering Technician (Civil), GS-802-7.