Department of Defense (DoD)
Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS)
Field Advisory Services - ***FAS***
Classification Appeal Decision

DoD Decision:	**Construction Representative, GS-809-09**
Initial classification:	Construction Representative, GS-809-08
Organization:	Air Force Base Civil Engineering Squadron Engineering Flight
Date:	April 8, 1998

BACKGROUND

On February 2, 1998, Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service, Field Advisory Services Division accepted a group classification appeal from , who are currently classified as Construction Representative, GS-809-08. The appellants have appealed to be reclassified to Construction Representative, GS-809-09.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Information contained in the appeal file submitted by the appellant
- Information contained in administrative report submitted by the servicing personnel office
- Telephone audit with three of the four appellants
- Telephone interview with appellants' supervisor
- Telephone discussion with servicing personnel office

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellants are assigned to the Civil Engineering Squadron, Engineering Flight, and are responsible for monitoring and controlling the construction operations of a variety of facilities maintenance and construction contracts for the base. Specific duties include reviewing proposed plans, project drawings, and specifications prior to advertisement for bid (as part of the design review team), to assess practicability and constructability of construction portion of projects, and recommending changes or modifications with regard to design, methods, and materials; participating in pre-construction conferences; reviewing shop drawings and material lists submitted by contractor, recommending approval or disapproval to supervisor; conducting daily inspections of construction operations, ensuring that contractor adheres to schedules, methods, and materials agreed upon in contract; resolving technical problems at the job site with contractor; initiating contract changes as needed (including cost estimates); assisting contracting officer in negotiating contract modifications; preparing inspection reports and other associated paperwork; and conducting final inspections prior to close-out of contract. The appellants are supervised by the branch head, a Supervisory Civil Engineer.

The base is home to an Air Force Wing, as well as a number of other tenant commands and associate units. The base has about 800 buildings, including air fields, a hospital, laboratory facilities, family housing, a commissary, office buildings, and other base support structures. According to the appellants and their supervisor, projects range from basic facility maintenance projects to building renovations and alterations. Occasionally, projects involve construction of a building from the ground up. A listing of projects was provided by the appellants (and initialed by their supervisor) dating back to 1995. Of the projects assigned over that time period, the nature of the projects are as follows (approximates):

Renovations: 11.8%

Construction: 7.8%

Repairs to facilities: 42.1%

Utilities projects: 17.1%

Demolition: 10.5%

Airfield projects: 2%

Underground tank replacement: 7.8%

The combined cost of the projects was approximately $27.8 million, and were performed by

a variety of contractors. The projects ranged from a few months duration to about two years, with most of them at a year or less.

Discussion of Position Description

In their appeal package, the appellants have contested the accuracy of their position description, which was revised in October 1997. The record shows that the appellants' supervisor submitted a revised PD to the personnel office in September of 1997, requesting a position upgrade (to GS-09). After conducting a desk audit of the position, the personnel office recommended some minor modifications to the PD, and classified the modified version as a Construction Representative, GS-809-08 in October.

Our review of both the PD of record and the original revised PD submitted by the supervisor revealed that they are essentially identical. There are minor differences in the language describing the complexity of the projects, but those differences do not materially affect the classification of the primary duties and responsibilities. Therefore, Field Advisory Services has accepted the appeal, and has determined that the PD of record is adequate for classification.

STANDARD(S) REFERENCED

- OPM Position Classification Standard for Construction Control Series, GS-809
- OPM Position Classification Standard for Civil Engineering Series, GS-810, Part III - Construction

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The appellants do not contest the series or title of their position. The work is properly classified to the GS-809 series, which covers positions involving the on-site inspection of construction or the monitoring and control of construction operations, requiring practical knowledge of engineering methods and techniques, knowledge of construction practices, methods, techniques, costs, materials, and equipment, and the ability to read and interpret engineering and architectural plans and specifications. The GS-809 authorizes two distinct titles based on the nature of the position's work. "Construction Inspector" applies to positions involving primarily on-site inspection of construction sites to ensure compliance with plans and specifications. "Construction Representative" is the appropriate title for positions involved in broader construction management functions, in addition to the inspection of operations. These functions include review of project plans and specifications (pre-award),

participation in pre-construction and pre-bid conferences, coordinating scheduling requirements with contractors, recommending changes to plans, working with the contractor to resolve technical problems, initiating and recording contract changes, negotiating costs for change orders, and other construction management functions. In this case, the position is involved in both inspection and monitoring of construction operations, and is properly titled **Construction Representative, GS-809**.

GRADE DETERMINATION

The GS-809 standard provides grade level criteria for nonsupervisory construction inspector positions. For positions engaged in construction representative work, the standard points to the classification standard for Civil Engineering Series, GS-810, Part III – Construction, as the appropriate grade level criteria. In this case, the position is clearly performing construction representative functions, as is reflected in the title.

Part III of the GS-810 standard is intended to cover positions concerned with surveillance and supervision of construction operations. While the criteria applies to professional engineering positions, it also applies to nonprofessional positions that perform similar duties and responsibilities, such as reviewing project plans and specifications to determine practicability of construction operations, attending pre-bid and pre-construction conferences to discuss requirements with respect to methods and materials, observing operations to ensure that plans and specifications are complied with, dealing with the contractor to resolve technical problems, initiating contract changes, and other construction management functions. The standard recognizes that many of these functions may be performed by nonprofessional, technical personnel who have a practical knowledge of construction methods and operations.

Part III of the GS-810 standard uses two classification factors to evaluate the grade level of positions: *Level and Kind of Authority Exercised* and *Scope and Complexity of Construction Operations*.

Element 1. Level and Kind of Authority Exercised

This factor measures the kinds of functions performed or supervised by the position and the relative independence and authority with which those functions are carried out. This element has a range of five degrees, A through E, with corresponding point values. A, C, and E are defined. Degrees B or D may be assigned if the position falls between two levels, i.e., it sufficiently exceeds the description of a lower level but does not quite meet the description at the higher level.

At Degree A, construction representatives are responsible for assignments involving the inspection of construction operations on a shift or surveillance over a limited, specialized phase of a construction project. Assignments involve conducting site surveys, reviewing plans and specifications for clearing of land, excavation, or building of access roads to the construction site; supervising inspection of construction operations for compliance with specifications, conferring with contractor to resolve differences of opinion. At this level, the employee has authority to recommend only, and generally consults with the supervisor or engineer-in-charge prior to any action being taken.

At Degree C, the employee has responsibility for a major portion of a construction project, such as the clearing and building of a reservoir and construction of roads, bridges, railroads, and utilities that have to be relocated in connection with construction of a large dam; construction of the canals for an irrigation system; or the entire field or office engineering functions for the construction activities. At this level, employees have authority to establish detailed inspection requirements, schedules and control methods; interpret specifications to determine whether they meet contract requirements; recommend changes to design, specifications and schedules to accommodate conditions at the construction site, and determine whether construction is progressing in accordance with scheduling requirements. Included at this level is the responsibility for preparing change orders and negotiating cost of minor changes with contractor.

In this case, the appellants are responsible for monitoring and controlling the operations of the assigned projects. This includes reviewing plans and specifications and making recommendations regarding constructability and practicability, conducting daily inspections of the work operations, reviewing shop drawings and materials lists to ensure adherence to contractual requirements, working out technical problems with the contractor, to include authorizing changes up to $5,000. The appellants' authority with regard to overseeing the construction operations exceeds Degree A, at which employees only make recommendations, and must consult a supervisor prior to taking action. The appellants exercise a greater degree of authority, to include resolving minor technical problems with the contractor, negotiating changes to the contract, and authorizing changes (up to $5,000). Although many of the actions require final approval by the supervisor or engineer, the responsibility to independently monitor the operations and make substantive technical determinations is characteristic of a higher level of authority than described at Degree A. Degree C is not met, however. At that level, workers typically have responsibility for a "major portion" of a construction project, as described above. This infers the presence of projects of greater scope and complexity (major construction projects with several phases) than are assigned to the appellants. Also, at Degree C, workers have responsibility for the full range of the field or office engineering functions, to include authority to establish detailed inspection requirements, schedules and control methods, as well as authority to determine

whether construction meets the contract requirements and is progressing on schedule. The appellants, through the inspections and monitoring of operations, make those determinations, but they are not the final authority in the process. Rather, they report to the engineer or supervisor on the progress of the operations (along with recommendations or comments), through daily inspection and progress reports. The project manager is ultimately accountable, and is responsible for making final determinations on any significant actions regarding the project (work stoppage, withholding payment, approving significant changes or modifications to contract, etc.). The appellants, while performing under very general supervision, are limited in their authority.

The position exceeds Degree A, but does not fully meet the description for Degree C; therefore, Degree B is credited. (30 pts.)

Element 2. Scope and Complexity of Construction Operations

This element measures the scope and complexity of the assigned projects in terms of size, technical difficulty, length of time required for completion, and diversity of structures. This factor has a range of seven levels, and provides a description of Levels 1, 3, 5 and 7. Levels 2, 4, and 6 may be assigned if the assigned projects fall between two described levels.

The appellants are assigned projects that include basic facilities maintenance or repair projects, building renovations and alterations, and occasional construction of buildings from the ground up. According to the information provided by the appellants, the majority of the projects involve structural or mechanical repairs to the facilities, such as roofing projects, concrete repair or replacement, building repairs, etc. Other projects include building alterations, renovations, boiler replacements, underground tank removal/replacement, pavement projects, and building demolition. Major construction projects (erection of buildings or facilities from ground up) are assigned occasionally, but are not representative of the complexity of projects which are assigned on a regular and recurring basis.

At Level 1 under this element, projects consist mainly of one or two types of structures, requiring several months to a year to construct, and are accomplished by using standard, commonly used equipment, materials and methods. Projects of this scope generally involve complexities normally associated with small construction projects, and do not require significant deviation from established methods or procedures. Examples of such projects include a rock and earthfill dam with crest 44 feet high and 370 feet long and reservoir of 13,860 acre-feet capacity; or a number of small projects involving a limited number and types of structures or facilities, e.g., small floodwater control structures or barracks. At Level 3, projects include several kinds of structures and facilities, requiring two to three years to complete, and contain some custom-built features or specialized equipment. Examples

include a group of barracks, administration and training buildings with features specially designed to house and support technical training operations and equipment; or a system of sewer forcemains, interceptors and pumping stations for an urban, industrialized area. Construction of these facilities involves a number of problems with foundation, site treatment, and special user requirements, and require close planning and coordination to manage the project.

The appellants' position meets Level 1. Although their projects are varied, the majority are relatively small, facilities repair or minor construction projects that do not involve the types of complexities associated with a full construction project. Generally, the projects take less than a year to complete, and are accomplished using standard methods, materials, and equipment. The projects that do involve greater complexity are assigned on an occasional basis, and are not representative of the normal workload. The scope and complexity of the assigned projects do not exceed Level 1.

Level 1 is credited. (20 pts.)

Grade Level Conversion

According to the grade conversion chart in the standard, the combination of Degree B (30 points) and Level 1 (20 points) results in a GS-09.

DECISION

Based on the application of the grade level criteria in Part III of the GS-810 Civil Engineering Series standard, the appealed position is properly classified as **Construction Representative, GS-809-09**.