

Adequacy of Position Descriptions in Classification Appeals Adjudicated by the Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS)

GENERAL ISSUES

A position description is a statement of the major duties and responsibilities performed by an employee and the supervisory relationships in a position. Because it serves as the official record of the classification of the job and is used to make many other personnel decisions, a clear and accurate written record of a position is essential to position classification. However, the position description is only a record and is not to be confused with the position itself. The ultimate purpose of classification is to classify the work actually performed in a real operating position or reasonably projected in a vacancy. It is the position that is classified, not the position description.

In the classification appeals process, the appeal package must include a copy of the official position description along with a statement by the employee and the supervisor certifying the accuracy of the position description. Although the accuracy of the position description is included among those issues in 5 CFR 511.607 which cannot be appealed by an employee, there are certain circumstances in which CPMS will accept an appeal when the accuracy has *not* been certified by the employee and/or the supervisor if any of the following apply:

- The discrepancies are minor. For example, minor discrepancies and insufficient elaboration, while undesirable, are not valid reasons for nonacceptance of an appeal.
- There is documented evidence of reasonable effort between the appellant, supervisor and civilian personnel office to resolve discrepancies. This must be evidenced by use of the administrative or negotiated grievance procedures. If the accuracy is still contested by the appellant, CPMS will decide the appeal on the basis of the duties assigned by management and performed by the appellant.
- Management certifies the accuracy of the position description but the appellant does not. Management is responsible for assigning duties and responsibilities to a position. CPMS will adjudicate the position on the basis of the duties assigned by management and performed by the appellant. However, when the employee can substantiate claims of work performed and there is a reasonable expectation of tacit consent, i.e., the supervisor knowingly allows the work to be performed, the appeal will be adjudicated on the basis of the work actually performed.

There are circumstances when the accuracy of the position description has been certified by the appellant and management officials but fact-finding reveals the position description is incomplete or inaccurate in its portrayal of the duties and responsibilities of the position. For example, the position description includes verbatim wording from a classification standard or benchmark that is *not* representative of the work being performed.

- CPMS will decide the appeal on the basis of the duties assigned by management and performed by the appellant. The servicing civilian personnel office will be directed to

revise the position description to completely and accurately portray the duties and responsibilities of the position.

The CPMS will not adjudicate a classification appeal when the following conditions are present:

- The appellant and management official certify that the position description is *not* accurate but there is no evidence of formal efforts to resolve the discrepancies to include filing a grievance.
- Formal grievance procedures to resolve position description accuracy are ongoing.
- The appellant certifies that the position description is accurate. The supervisor/ manager does *not* concur. Since management is responsible for assigning duties and responsibilities to a position, the request for appeal is returned until administrative or negotiated grievance procedures have been completed to resolve the issue of PD accuracy.
- The grade-controlling classification standard has been superseded by a new standard that has not been applied to the appealed position.

This guide refers to positions under the General Schedule and Federal Wage System only.

CPMS subscribes to creating flexible and responsive human resource management systems. If you have concerns whether a position description is adequate for classification for purposes of adjudicating an appeal, please call the Classification Appeals Adjudication Section at (703) 696-6301 or DSN 426-6301.

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For Additional Information call: Field Advisory Services, Classification Appeals Adjudication Section (703) 696-6301 or DSN 426-6301

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