

**U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS OVERSIGHT AND EFFECTIVENESS**

Classification Appeal Decision

Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code

OPM Decision:	Supply Technician, GS-2005-06
Agency classification:	Supply Technician, GS-2005-07
Organization:	Navy Public Works Center Material Department Inventory Management Division
Date:	July 20, 1998

Introduction

On March 4, 1998, an Oversight Division of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted a group appeal for the position of Supply Technician, GS-2005-7 in the Inventory Management Division, Material Department at one of the Navy Public Works Centers (PWC). The appellants are requesting that their position be changed to Equipment Specialist, GS-1670-9.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F. of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General issues

The appellants' position was originally classified by the agency as Equipment Specialist, GS-1670-7. In March 1995, the appellants were notified by their agency that OPM had issued a revised classification standard for the GS-1670 series in November 1994, and that their position must be reevaluated based on the new standard. Their position description was updated and reevaluated with the agency determining that the correct classification is Supply Technician, GS-2005-7. The agency requested an advisory opinion from the Department of Defense Consolidated Personnel Management Service who determined that their position should be properly classified as Supply Technician, GS-2005-6.

The appellants believe their duties and responsibilities are the same as those described in the Equipment Specialist series at grade GS-9. They feel the Supply Technician series does not recognize the specialized equipment knowledge they must possess nor the complexity of their work.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished

by the appellants' representative, the appellants, and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellants and their previous and present supervisors and onsite audits conducted at both job sites.

Position information

The appellants, their supervisors and the agency have certified to the accuracy of the position descriptions.

The appellants are responsible for providing technical advice and assistance concerning ordering and excessing parts and sub-assemblies of the equipment and material used in support of the PWC's mission. Material and equipment include various construction, automotive, electrical, maintenance, and mechanical system items, as well as computer equipment, office furniture and paper products. The appellants review procurement documents to assure proper specifications, part numbers, National Stock Numbers, etc.; recommend substitution, interchangeableness, and modification when exact item is not available; identify incorrectly marked parts and material when procurement documents are missing; identify, inspect, and classify material for turn-in; research catalogs and technical manuals to replace out-of-stock or obsolete items; and review demand history and recommend new stock candidates for inventory. They review contracts and bids for proper specifications and commercial descriptions to ensure that costs are not excessive; prepare technical descriptions of requested items; and determine source of supply and cost estimates of standard and non-standard items.

The supervisor defines objectives, priorities, deadlines, and program goals, but the appellants perform their work independently. The supervisor is available to help resolve unusual problems and approve deviations from standard practice or guidelines if necessary. Their work is reviewed for accuracy of results, compliance with procedures and policy, and attainment of branch mission goals.

Standard determination

Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005, May 1992. Equipment Specialist Series, GS-1670, November 1994.

Series determination

The Equipment Specialist series, GS-1670, includes positions that involve supervision or performance of work that requires primarily an intensive, practical knowledge of equipment and its characteristics, properties, and uses in order to (1) collect, analyze, interpret, and provide specialized information about equipment together with related advice to those who design, test, produce, procure, supply, operate, repair, or dispose of equipment; (2) identify and recommend practical solutions to engineering design and manufacturing defects and recommend use of substitute testing or support equipment when the equipment requested is unavailable; or (3) develop, install, inspect, or revise equipment maintenance programs and techniques. Positions involving primarily a knowledge of supply systems or operations should be classified in the appropriate series of the Supply Group, GS-2000.

The Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005, includes positions involved in

supervising or performing clerical or technical supply support work necessary to ensure the effective operation of ongoing supply activities. It requires knowledge of supply operations and program requirements and the ability to apply established supply policies, day-to-day servicing techniques, regulations, or procedures. Supply clerks and technicians perform work such as overseeing stock maintenance and inventory; receiving and screening documents specifying supplies or materials needed; initiating and processing requisitions; searching catalogs, records, and other data to obtain correct stock numbers or find authorized substitutes for items; contacting customers and suppliers to expedite delivery of urgently needed items; maintaining a supply room, receipts, and records; and providing reports on costs, expendable and non-expendable items, and operating computer terminals to perform record searches.

In determining the appropriate series for the appellants' position, it is necessary to determine the most important knowledge required to perform the primary duties of the work, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities identified as important in recruitment and selection of qualified candidates. For example, a supply specialist may need a knowledge of supply systems, sources, reference materials on interchangeableness of items, historical supply data, etc., as a basis for recommending the range and quantity of repair parts and tools necessary to support a component or system of equipment. However, an equipment specialist position may make similar recommendations based on such considerations as equipment operational characteristics and material composition, the accessibility of the equipment components for repair, the availability of tools and facilities to make repairs, and the capabilities of those who use the equipment to make repairs. In other words, for the equipment specialist, the knowledge of the equipment itself, i.e., its maintenance, operational characteristics, properties, etc., is most important, and comes from training and experience in repairing, overhauling, maintaining, constructing or examining equipment.

Although their technical knowledge in the trades, i.e., electrical, plumbing, mechanical, etc., enhances their ability to help clients identify or substitute appropriate materials to meet their needs in the most timely and cost effective manner, there is no evidence to support that the appellants perform the various functions described in the GS-1670, Equipment Specialist, standard, i.e., interpreting, analyzing, and providing information and related advice on the design, development, or testing of equipment; recommending solutions to equipment problems in an engineering design and manufacturing environment; or developing, inspecting, installing or revising equipment maintenance programs and techniques. The primary function of the appellants' position is the acquisition of a variety of items including equipment parts and other material to support the work of the PWC. Because most of the appellants bring prior trades knowledge to their positions, the originators of supply requests often choose the most expedient means of obtaining information which is to ask the appellants for information that should be provided by engineering technicians and other technical experts within their organizations. Both a supervisor and several of the appellants indicated that they were trying to encourage the originators of the supply requests to take responsibility for providing more of the information they should be providing upfront. In addition, the appellants indicated that they can and do go directly to vendors and manufacturers for technical information concerning material characteristics and substitutability of certain equipment/parts. It is important to remember that it is the duties contained in a position that are classified, not the personal qualifications of the employee in that position. Therefore, while most of the appellants rely on their personal trade experience to make their decisions easier and to provide an extra degree of assistance beyond what

would necessarily be expected, the duties of the position itself can be satisfactorily accomplished by an employee without personal trade experience using the normal supply references and resources available. In fact, one of the appellants in this case has no specific equipment specialist background but rather came to the position with extensive supply experience. The appellants' position is properly classified in the Supply Technician Series, GS-2005.

Title determination

Supply Technician is the approved title for all positions GS-5 and above.

Grade determination

The GS-2005 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

Under FES, positions which significantly exceed the highest factor level or fail to meet the lowest factor level described in a classification standard must be evaluated by reference to the Primary Standard, contained in Appendix 3 of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. The Primary Standard is the "standard-for-standards" for FES.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required By The Position:

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge.

Factor Level 1-3 requires knowledge of standardized supply regulations, policies, procedures, or other instructions relating to the specific functions assigned. Most positions require familiarity with one or more automated supply data bases to enter, correct, and retrieve recurring reports and to structure and retrieve specialized reports. Employees use a sound working knowledge of the structure of the local supply organization and the organizations serviced. Employees use this knowledge and ability to perform a range of standard clerical assignments and to resolve recurring problems. Illustrative of this level are tasks concerned with the receipt, storage, issue, and replenishment of a wide variety of supplies, forms, and publications, as well as items such as technical equipment, office

furniture, office machines, and other nonexpendable property.

Factor Level 1-4, the highest level described in the standard, requires a thorough knowledge of governing supply regulations, policies, procedures, and instructions applicable to the specific assignment. Employees use this knowledge to conduct extensive and exhaustive searches for required information; reconstruct records for complex supply transactions; and/or provide supply operations support for activities involving specialized or unique supplies, equipment, and parts such as special purpose laboratory or test equipment, prototypes or technical equipment, parts and equipment requiring unusual degrees of protection in shipment and storage, or others that are unique to the organization's mission or seldom handled. This knowledge is also used in positions performing routine aspects of supply specialist work based on practical knowledge of standard procedures, where assignments include individual case problems related to a limited segment in one of the major areas of supply management (e.g., cataloging, inventory management, excess property, property utilization, or storage management). Employees at this level process clearly defined requests from field and overseas activities for the introduction of new items into the agency supply system and a broad range of inquiries relative to the proper identification of items, accuracy of National Stock Numbers, and other miscellaneous inquiries concerning unit of issue, management codes, etc. They obtain technical information from a search of journal cards, supply catalogs, technical bulletins, and manufacturers' catalogs; from personal contacts with operating personnel and supply management; and from correspondence with suppliers and other sources.

Level 1-4 is met. The appellants function in much the same manner as the first illustration in the standard. They have an extensive knowledge of the supply requirements of the PWC. They review requisitions, supporting documents, and reference material to determine priority, supply action required, changes in requirements, acceptable substitutions, available sources, and most efficient and cost effective method of obtaining items. The appellants must conduct extensive searches in some instances to locate items that are not readily available but are needed quickly to maintain mechanical, electrical, plumbing, etc., systems in the various base facilities. For example, an item that is manufactured only once or twice a year may not be available from the manufacturer. The appellants must use their resources and ingenuity to locate other potential users who may have the item and be willing to sell it. They sometimes receive abbreviated descriptions of items from the originating office and must work with the originator of the request to determine exactly what is desired. They rely on a technical knowledge of the material with which they normally work, as well as their knowledge of supply databases, catalogs, vendors, and manufacturers to help isolate the exact equipment part or material that is needed and to help determine which items can be substituted for another. They locate new, commercially available items to be added to the inventory, often based only on an initial vague description furnished by the originator of the request. They work with a variety of items ranging from electrical and mechanical equipment parts to plumbing supplies, construction material, office furniture, paper products, and computer parts. They obtain their information from numerous sources including automated Federal stock systems, catalogs, distributors, manufacturers, operating personnel, technical bulletins, etc.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility for carrying out assignments, and how completed work is reviewed.

At Level 2-2, the work is performed under technical guidance of a supply technician, supply specialist, or supervisor who issues general work assignments, controls flow of day-to-day work, and explains major changes in regulations or procedures. The supervisor provides additional specific instructions for new, difficult, or unusual assignments including suggested work methods or advice on source material available. The employee uses initiative in carrying out recurring assignments independently without specific instruction, but refers deviations, problems, and unfamiliar situations not covered by instructions to the supervisor for decision or help. The supervisor assures that finished work and methods used are technically accurate and in compliance with instructions or established procedures.

At Level 2-3, the highest level described in the standard, the supervisor makes assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines; and assists the employee with unusual situations which do not have clear precedents. In some circumstances, the employee works independently from the supervisor or specialist in a remote location. Contact with the supervisor is infrequent, although usually available by telephone and periodic onsite visits. Continuing assignments are usually performed with considerable independence. The employee plans and carries out the successive steps and handles problems and deviations in the work assignments in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices in the occupation. When the employee assists a supply specialist in performing segments of more complex technical operations, the work may be subject to closer technical guidance and control. Completed work is usually evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements. The methods used in arriving at the end results are not usually reviewed in detail.

The appellants' level of independence exceeds that described at Level 2-2. They work independently using their own initiative to find appropriate guidelines or find solutions to problems based on their technical experience and precedents. Although their supervisors are available to discuss unusual problems, the appellants seldom have a need to consult them. Their work is reviewed in terms of accuracy of results, attainment of mission goals, and compliance with procedures and policies. This level of independence is comparable to Level 2-3.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3 - Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines used, and the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-2, procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available in the form of supply regulations, policies, and procedures. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use some judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures for application and in making minor deviations to adapt the guidelines in

specific cases. At this level, the employee may also determine which of several established alternatives to use. Situations to which the existing guidelines cannot be applied or significant proposed deviations from the guidelines are referred to the supervisor.

At Level 3-3, the highest level described in the standard, guidelines are similar to the next lower level, but because of the problem solving or case nature of the assignments, they are not completely applicable or have gaps in specificity. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines such as policies, regulations, precedents, and work directions for application to specific cases or problems. The employee analyzes the results of applying guidelines and recommends changes.

Level 3-2 is met. The appellants have a number of guidelines, regulations, and procedures that must be followed. Although they must use judgment to decide which guidelines apply in each case, there is very little need to significantly deviate from the regulations and standard procedures. If such an occasion arises, proposed deviations are discussed with the supervisor. The appellants do not routinely have a need to make their own interpretations of policies and regulations nor are they routinely dealing with the type of cases described at Level 3-3 in which guidelines and precedents do not completely apply and there is a recurring need to deviate from the standard procedures.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 points.

Factor 4 – Complexity:

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-2, the work consists of duties that involve related steps, processes, or methods, including work such as performing routine aspects of technical supply management functions in support of a specialist. The employee decides what to do by recognizing the existence of and differences between a few easily recognizable situations and conditions, and choosing a course of action from among options related to the specific assignment. Actions to be taken by the employee or responses to be made differ in such things as the source of information, the kind of transactions or entries, or other differences of a factual nature.

At Level 4-3, the highest level described in the standard, the work involves unusually complicated or difficult technical duties involving one or more aspects of supply management or operations. The work at this level is difficult because it involves actions that are not standardized or prescribed; deviations from established procedures; new or changing situations; or matters for which only general provision can be made in regulations or procedures. This typically involves supply transactions which experienced employees at lower grades have been unable to process or resolve, or which involve special program requirements for urgent, critical shortage items requiring specialized procedures and efforts to obtain. The employee decides what needs to be done depending on the analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment, and the chosen course of action may have to be selected from many alternatives. Decisions are based largely on the employee's experience, precedent actions, and the priority assigned for resolving the problem. The

methods and procedures used vary based on the circumstances. The work involves conditions and elements that the employee must identify and analyze to discern interrelationships with other actions, related supply programs, and alternative approaches.

Level 4-2 is met. The appellants follow established procedures to process supply requisitions, identify needed parts, locate sources of materials, determine what materials are considered hazardous, add items to inventory, etc. While some of the processes may be more complex than others, the majority of the supply requests involve routine steps to obtain readily available material. They choose a course of action from among several available based on the particular situation and the applicable regulations. Although the appellants handle some critical shortage items or urgent requests similar to the description at Level 4-3, they are not routinely required to deviate from established procedures nor are the decisions they make based primarily on their experience and precedent cases because regulations and procedures do not apply. Therefore, they do not fully meet Level 4-3, and that level cannot be credited.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 5 - Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-2, the work involves the execution of specific regulations, or procedures and typically comprises a complete segment of an assignment or project of broader scope, such as when assisting a higher grade employee. The work or supply service affects the accuracy, reliability, or acceptability of further processes or services in meeting customer requirements in supported organizations and other supply units.

At Level 5-3, the highest level described in the standard, the work involves dealing with a variety of problem situations either independently or as part of a broader problem solving effort under the control of a specialist. Problems encountered require extensive fact finding, review of information to coordinate requirements, and recommendations to resolve conditions or change procedures. The employee performs the work in conformance with prescribed procedures and methods. The results of the work affect the adequacy of local supply support operations, or they contribute to improved procedures in support of supply programs and operations.

Level 5-3 is met. The appellants handle a variety of situations. They review requisitions for accuracy, assist PWC personnel in identifying necessary material to be ordered, provide technical advice, and ensure proper handling of materials. They use extensive fact finding to search for or identify materials as necessary, and they coordinate efforts with a number of individuals to ensure that adequate supplies are available. The results of their work affects the adequacy of PWC supply support.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts and Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts

Factor 6 measures face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. In General Schedule occupations, the purpose of personal contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, and objectives. The personal contacts which serve as the basis for the level selected for Factor 7 must be the contacts which are the basis for the level selected for Factor 6.

Persons Contacted

At Level 2, contacts are with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. Persons contacted generally are engaged in different functions, missions, and kinds of work, such as representatives from various levels within the agency or from other operating offices in the installation. Contacts at this level can also be with members of the general public as individuals or groups, in a moderately structured setting (i.e., they are usually established on a routine basis at the employee's work place or over the telephone). Typical of contacts at this level are employees at the same level of authority in shipping companies, vendor employees concerned with the status of orders or shipments, etc.

At Level 3, contacts are with individuals from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting (e.g., the contacts are not established on a routine basis, the purpose and extent of each contact is different, and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact). Typical of contacts at this level are supply employees in other departments or agencies, inventory item managers, contractors, or manufacturers.

Level 3 is met. The appellants' contacts are normally with personnel within the agency who are using the services of PWC, as well as vendor representatives, supply personnel in other agencies or businesses, manufacturers, and inventory managers. While many contacts outside the agency are established and the role and authority of the person contacted is known in advance, there is a recurring need for the appellants to contact different manufacturers or track hard-to-find items that are needed through inventory managers at outside agencies or businesses where they do not know the contact person and the relationship is developed as the contact proceeds.

Purpose

At Level a, the purpose of contacts is to obtain, clarify, or exchange facts or information, regardless of the nature of those facts, which may range from easily understood to highly technical.

At Level b, the purpose of the contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems by clarifying discrepancies in information submitted by serviced organizations, resolving automated system problems causing erroneous transaction records, or seeking cooperation from others to resolve complicated supply actions.

Level b is met. In addition to exchanging factual information, the appellants contact personnel in the organizations they service to clarify discrepancies in supply requisitions, determine specific actions that need to occur or try to prevent problems from occurring

again.

The combination of Level 3 for *Contacts* and Level b for *Purpose* equates to 110 points according to the table in the standard.

Factor 6 and Factor 7 are credited with Level 3b for 110 points.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands:

This factor measures the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee in performing the work assignment, including the agility and dexterity required, and the extent of physical exertion.

At Level 8-1, the work is primarily sedentary. The employee may sit comfortably to do the work. There may be some walking, standing, bending, carrying of light items such as papers, books or small parts. No special physical demands are required to perform the work.

At Level 8-2, the work requires some physical exertion such as long periods of walking; walking over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces; recurring bending crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching; or similar activities. This level of physical demand occurs, for example, when employees are regularly assigned to activities such as tracing misplaced items or conducting physical inventories in warehouses, depots, and other storage areas, or when they are regularly involved in stocking and retrieving items.

Level 8-1 is met. The appellants' work is normally sedentary. They are not required to lift or move heavy items. The appellants at Little Creek occasionally get involved in conducting the yearly inventory. There is nothing in the record to support the appellants' work regularly requiring the level of physical demand described at Level 8-2.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9 - Work Environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings? and the safety precautions required.

At Level 9-1, the employee typically works indoors in an environment involving everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical of such places as offices or meeting rooms. Observance of normal safety practices with office equipment, avoidance of trips and falls, and observance of fire regulations is required. The area is adequately lighted, heated and ventilated.

At Level 9-2, the work environment involves moderate risks or discomforts which require special safety precautions, such as working around moving warehouse equipment, carts, or machines. Employees may be required to use protective clothing or gear such as masks, safety shoes, goggles, hearing protection, and gloves.

Level 9-1 is met. Although the appellants are required to wear hard hats when entering the warehouse, this is an occasional occurrence and not their normal work environment. The

appellants regularly conduct their work in an office setting. Therefore, Level 9-2 is not met.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	3b	110
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	1295

A total of 1295 points falls within the range for a GS-6, 1105 to 1350 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-2005 standard.

Decision

The position is correctly classified as Supply Technician, GS-2005-6.