

CHAPTER VII: JOB GRADING UNDER THE FEDERAL WAGE SYSTEM (FWS)

Background of the FWS

The present Federal Wage System (FWS) dates from 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson initiated the cooperation of the Civil Service Commission (now OPM) and the federal departments in developing a wage system for employees in trades and labor occupations. (See Appendix F.) In 1972, Public Law 92-392 was enacted which provides for the grading and pay for wage grade employees.

Coverage of the FWS

5 USC 5102(7) exempts from the General Schedule (GS-positions) those "employees in recognized trades or crafts, or other skilled mechanical crafts, or in unskilled, semiskilled, or skilled manual-labor occupations, and other employees including foremen and supervisors in positions having trade, craft, or laboring experience and knowledge as the paramount requirement. . . ."

Examples of FWS jobs are those in the occupational families of electrical installation, fabric and leather work, instrument work, machine tool, metal processing, lens and crystal work, plumbing and pipefitting, printing, wood work, general maintenance, plant and animal work, etc.³⁵

The "paramount requirement" in 5 USC 5102(7) consists of the essential, prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the primary duty or responsibility for which the position has been established. If the "paramount requirement" of the assigned duties and responsibilities meets the FWS criteria, the job is graded using Job Grading Standards issued by the Office of Personnel Management.

Difference from Grading Under the General Schedule

The chief difference between "job grading" and "position classification" lies in the definition of what duty or duties are grade-determining. *In the grading of GS-positions, the duties that require the highest level of knowledge and skill determine the grade of the position as a whole, provided that these duties are performed for a significant amount of time.* This "significant amount of time" has come to be accepted by classification authorities as 25% of the time of the position as a whole. *In contrast, under the FWS, the job is graded based on the highest level of skills required to perform any aspect of the job that is "regular and recurring," regardless of the amount of time these duties occupy.* For example, if a job was established to provide for a Truck Driver of light trucks and also for work as an Automotive Mechanic, the job would be graded (and titled) as Automotive Mechanic, WG-10, rather than Truck Driver, WG-5, provided the higher graded work is

³⁵A complete listing of FWS occupations, together with published standards, is available on CD-ROM through the US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 or online by e-mail at: publications@gpo.gov.

performed on a "regular and recurring" basis. This would be the proper grade level regardless of the time spent as a mechanic. If such a position were under the General Schedule, the time spent as a mechanic would have to be a minimum of 25% in order to meet the higher grade criteria.

The grading of a job is determined by comparing the whole job with the appropriate job grading standard which has been developed by OPM for the specific occupation of that job.

Job Grading Standards

Similar to the factors under which General Schedule positions are graded, the Job Grading Standards apply factors that determine the grade level of the work being evaluated. These factors are:

Factor 1: Skill and Knowledge

Factor 2: Responsibility

Factor 3: Physical Effort

Factor 4: Working Conditions

Most job grading standards are developed for specific trades, crafts, and labor "occupations." Other "functional" standards are developed for work that is found in all occupations, such as Helper, Inspector, Leader, and Foreman.

The format of job grading standards is similar to that of narrative standards under the General Schedule and includes the job titles, definition of grade levels, and discussion of the typical duties and responsibilities of the occupation based on the four factors listed above.

The job grading standards do not describe specific work assignments for the occupation; rather, they identify and describe the characteristics of the occupation that are significant for distinguishing the different grade levels.

**Blue-Collar Occupations with 6,000 or More Employees
September 1995³⁶**

Occupation Code	Series Title	1995 Employment
6907	Materials Handler	18,429
3566	Custodial Working	14,045
8852	Aircraft Mechanic	12,604
4749	Maintenance Mechanic	11,938
5803	Heavy Mobile Equipment Mechanic	10,531
2604	Electronics Mechanic	9,545
3806	Sheet Metal Mechanic	8,556
7408	Food Service Working	8,373
5703	Motor Vehicle Operating	8,213
2805	Electrician	7,224
3502	Laboring	6,652
5823	Automotive Mechanic	6,139

³⁶US Office of Personnel Management, *Occupations of Federal White-Collar and Blue-Collar Workers*, p. 142, Table 1 (September 30, 1995).

