

CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Washington, D.C. 20240

APPELLANT:

[REDACTED]

POSITION:

Information Systems Manager, GS-301-12

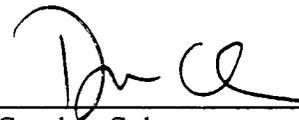
ORGANIZATION:

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Alaska State Office

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

DECISION:

Information Systems Manager, GS-301-13
(Appeal granted, position upgraded)



Carolyn Cohen
Director of Personnel Policy

AUG 28 1998

DATE

Copy of Decision Transmitted to:

[REDACTED]

Concetta Stewart
BLM Personnel Officer

Sandy Larson
Personnel Officer, Alaska State Office

INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 1998, [REDACTED] appealed the classification of her position to the Director of Personnel Policy, Department of the Interior. [REDACTED] is employed as an Information Systems Manager, GS-301-12, in the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, [REDACTED]. She serves as the Chief, Division of Information Systems. [REDACTED] has appealed for a higher grade. In addition, although she has not appealed the series of her position, she has requested that this office review the series. This is the final administrative decision within the Department of the Interior.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In deciding this appeal, we considered information from the following sources:

1. The appellant's memorandum of appeal and attachments, including the current (1996/1997) and previous (1982) position descriptions, evaluation statement, functional statements and organization charts for the Alaska Fire Service (AFS) and the Division of Information Systems, rebuttal to the BLM evaluation, SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action), current performance plan, the position description and evaluation statement for the position held by the appellant's supervisor, and other information related to the appellant's duties and the classification of her position. Additional information obtained from the appellant during the course of the position review included position descriptions for several of the positions under her supervision and a briefing document on the EFF Payroll system.
2. Telephone audit of the appellant's position on August 5, 6, 11, and 13, 1998, as well as brief conversations on other dates.
3. Telephone interviews with the appellant's supervisor, [REDACTED], on August 14, and with [REDACTED] Personnel Management Specialist in the Branch of Human Resource Management, Alaska State Office, on August 4.

POSITION INFORMATION

The AFS provides fire suppression and related support services on BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Native Corporate lands statewide in Alaska, as well as to the State of Alaska and the military in selected areas on a contractual basis. The appellant serves as Chief of the Division of Information Systems, which provides telecommunications planning, technical systems service, ADP services, and radio communication installation and repair for AFS. The Division also provides ADP and telecommunications support for the BLM Northern Field Office (NFO).

There are two branches under the Division of Information Systems. The Branch of Communications provides a statewide communications network that supports the AFS, other BLM programs, other Department of the Interior agencies, the U.S. Customs Service, and State agencies. The Branch develops, installs, and maintains a radio cache to support AFS fire

communications needs; manages cache frequencies; repairs, maintains, and tests equipment; maintains accountability, inventory control, storage, and issuance of all radios and other communication equipment; and ensures prompt dispatch of equipment when needed. The Branch employs five electronic mechanics, an electronic mechanic helper, an electronic mechanic leader, and an electronic mechanic supervisor, who serves as Chief of the Branch.

The Branch of Technical Systems develops, installs, and maintains the statewide fire computer systems. The Branch also provides installation, maintenance, and product support to AFS, State operations, and other Federal agencies. The Branch employs 10 computer specialists (one is a new position which is not yet filled), two telecommunications specialists, a contract employee who functions as a computer specialist, and a supervisory physical scientist who serves as the Branch Chief.

The appellant serves as first-level supervisor over the branch chiefs and three other employees. She serves as second-level supervisor over the nonsupervisory employees in the two branches.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The appellant supervises both Federal Wage System (FWS) and General Schedule (GS) positions. The paramount requirement for her position is not trade, craft, or laboring experience and knowledge, and the primary responsibility is not supervision over such work. Therefore, the position is not exempt from the General Schedule.

The appellant supervises General Schedule employees in the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, and the Telecommunications Series, GS-391, and one subordinate supervisor in the General Physical Science Series, GS-1301. The primary qualifications requirements for the appellant's work include general administration, supervision, and management, in addition to the ability to understand technical work such as that involving computers and telecommunications systems. The position does not require technical qualifications in either the GS-334 or the GS-391 series. In addition, the primary work of the position involves supervision of the employees in the Division and not the performance of technical work characteristic of either of these series. Also, the highest level of work performed is supervisory and managerial in nature, and not work characteristic of the GS-334 or GS-391 series.

The Miscellaneous Administrative and Program Series, GS-301, includes positions which perform, supervise, or manage nonprofessional, two-grade interval work for which no other series is appropriate. The work requires analytical ability, judgment, discretion, and knowledge of a substantial body of administrative or program principles, concepts, policies, and objectives. The appellant supervises administrative two-grade interval work (in addition to FWS work). No other series is appropriate for the work, which has the types of knowledge and ability requirements typical of the GS-301 series, in addition to the ability to supervise employees and oversee the operation of the Division's programs. Therefore, the GS-301 series is appropriate for the appellant's position.

No titles are specified for positions in the GS-301 series. The current title for the appellant's position, Information Systems Manager, is appropriate. The designation of the position as a manager denotes supervision, and the supervisory prefix is not used in the title. The organizational title is Chief, Division of Information Systems.

GRADE DETERMINATION

The grade of the position is determined by application of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), which provides evaluation criteria for determining the General Schedule grade level of supervisory positions. The GSSG uses a point-factor evaluation method with six factors designed specifically for supervisory positions. A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level definitions. If a position exceeds one level but does not meet the next higher level, the lower level must be credited.

The appellant's supervisor submitted a memorandum of rebuttal to the BLM personnel office in which he disagreed with the levels assigned by the personnel office for factors 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The appellant included a copy of the memorandum in her appeal package and states that she agrees with its contents. Therefore, for purposes of this appeal, the memorandum is considered to have been submitted by both the appellant and her supervisor.

Factor 1, Program Scope and Effect

This factor assesses the general complexity, breadth, and impact of the program areas and work directed, including the organizational and geographic coverage. It also assesses the impact of the work both within and outside the immediate organization. The criteria for both scope and effect must be met in order for a factor level to be credited. The personnel office assigned Level 1-2, and the appellant contends that her position should be evaluated at Level 1-3.

The AFS provides fire suppression and related support services for BLM, FWS, NPS, BIA, certain Native American lands, the State of Alaska, and the U.S. military throughout the State. The Division of Information Systems, under the appellant's supervision, supports the computer systems (hardware and software) for AFS and the NFO. The AFS has about 170 employees and adds more than 200 additional employees in the fire season. The NFO has about 110 employees.

The Division developed and maintains the Initial Attack Management System (IAMS), which is a computer system that combines information needed for the detection, suppression, and subsequent management of fires. The system links interagency and State offices via a switched data communications network. It comprises multiple subsystems, including an Automatic Lightning Detection System (ALDS), fuel information (FUELS), a fire behavior program (BEHAVE), data from Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS), fire resource information (FIRES), and information on FAA Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR). This system is used primarily by AFS, although the Division transfers data in IAMS format to other BLM and Forest Service locations on a monthly basis.

INPROTRAC, which was developed under contract for AFS, is an automated inventory, property management, and tracking system. The Division supports, modifies, and maintains the system.

Emergency Fire Fighter Payroll (EFF Payroll), developed by the Division, is an automated payroll system that captures information regarding the hiring and termination of emergency fire fighters, calculates wages, and cuts paychecks. In addition to supporting the system for AFS, the Division has installed EFF Payroll in multiple BLM locations and BIA sites in the western U.S. The Division provides employee training and support along with installation of the system.

The Geographic Information System (GIS) is a computer-based system which supports both fire and resource needs. The Division employs two contract employees for this system.

The Division installs and maintains the AFS communication systems, including radios, repeaters, satellite systems, Global Positioning System units, and automated aircraft tracking systems. AFS, through the Division, shares this responsibility with NPS, FWS, the U.S. Customs Service, and the State. The AFS primarily maintains the communications system in the northern part of the State, as well as providing communications for fire crews throughout the State. The Division's support of telecommunications for the NFO includes mainly satellite telephone systems, repeaters, and other radios.

The Interior Telecommunication Coordinating Group-Alaska (ITCG-A) is a group of DOI telecommunications managers who administer the combined field maintenance program for the State. The appellant has served as the chair of the group for three years, a position that has now rotated to another agency, and she continues to be a member of the group.

In terms of scope, at Level 1-2 in the GSSG, the program segment or work directed is administrative, technical, complex clerical, or comparable in nature. The functions, activities, or services provided have limited geographic coverage and support most of the activities comprising a typical agency field office, an area office, a small to medium military installation, or comparable activities within agency program segments.

The appellant directs administrative and technical work that provides computer and telecommunications support primarily for the statewide activities of the AFS and for the NFO. Directing a program segment of this type meets Level 1-2, e.g., in providing administrative and technical support for a field office or area office.

At Level 1-3, scope includes directing a program segment that performs technical, administrative, protective, investigative, or professional work. The program segment and work directed typically have coverage which encompasses a major metropolitan area, a State, or a small region of several States. At Level 1-3, scope for positions performing support work involves complex administrative, technical, or professional services directly affecting a large or complex multimission military installation or a comparable organization.

According to the BLM functional statement for the AFS, the Division's "Branch of Communication provides a statewide communication network and supports other BLM programs, other DOI agencies, U.S. Customs [Service] and State agencies." The functional statement also states that the Division's "Branch of Technical Systems provides technical systems expertise (including installation, maintenance and interpretation of products) to AFS, interagency and state operations. The Branch develops, installs and maintains the statewide fire computer systems (IAMS, EFF Payroll . . .)."

Responsibility for directing the telecommunications and computer support for the AFS and the NFO, including the statewide responsibility of the AFS for fighting fires in Alaska, does not meet Level 1-3 in terms of scope. The Division provides support services that contribute to the effective accomplishment of the AFS and NFO missions. However, the combined mission and workforce of the AFS and the NFO are quite restricted when compared with a large or complex multimission military installation as defined in the GSSG (for example, a large military installation of over 4000 personnel and a variety of serviced technical functions, or a complex group of several organizations, including at least four comparable to such entities as a garrison, a medical center, a service school, and an equipment or product development center). The Division provides support to approximately 300 employees, and to 500 or more employees in the fire season. This number increases when large firefighting crews are on the rolls, but never approaches the number of employees in a large military installation, i.e., more than 4000. In addition, the AFS and NFO are not comparable to a complex multimission installation as defined in the GSSG.

The appellant's additional responsibility for servicing other agencies does not add significantly to the scope of the work, inasmuch as the appellant does not furnish the primary computer or telecommunications support to the other agencies. Instead, the interagency support the Division furnishes is primarily in support of the AFS responsibility for fighting fires on Federal and State land throughout most of the State and in connection with telecommunications maintenance agreements with other agencies. Assistance the Division provides outside the State, e.g., to install and support the EFF Payroll System at BLM and BIA installations, is also not consistent with scope at Level 1-3. The Division is not responsible for the ADP operations at these sites, and the work does not support the range of services required for credit at Level 1-3. Therefore, scope is evaluated at Level 1-2.

In terms of effect, at Level 1-2, the services or products support and significantly affect installation level, area office level, or field office operations and objectives, or comparable program segments; or provide services to a moderate, local or limited population of client users comparable to a major portion of a small city or rural county. The telecommunications and ADP services provided by the Division support and significantly affect the AFS and the NFO, which are comparable to the types of installations described at this level. Therefore, the effect of the appellant's position meets Level 1-2.

At Level 1-3, activities, functions, or services accomplished directly and significantly impact a

wide range of agency activities, the work of other agencies, or the operations of outside interests. At the field activity level (involving large, complex, multimission organizations and/or very large serviced populations comparable to those listed in the GSSG), the work directly involves or substantially impacts the provision of essential support operations to numerous, varied, and complex technical, professional, and administrative functions.

The services provided by the Division have an effect on certain aspects of the operations of other agencies, including interagency telecommunications support and firefighting activities, but do not significantly impact a wide range of the activities of these agencies. Instead, the effect of the work is in connection with the shared maintenance and repair of telecommunications systems and on a narrow aspect of their ADP operations.

In terms of the field activity example at Level 1-3 (substantial impact on essential support operations at a multimission organization), the third illustration in the GSSG describes a position that directs administrative services (such as personnel, supply management, budget, or facilities management) which support and directly affect the operations of a bureau or a major military command headquarters, a large or complex multimission military installation, or an organization(s) of similar magnitude. The telecommunications and ADP services provided by the appellant's program segment to AFS and the NFO do not substantially impact the multiple, varied type of functions described at this level, i.e., numerous, varied, and complex technical, professional, and administrative functions that would constitute or be equivalent to a major command headquarters or a large or complex multimission military organization. In addition, the services provided by the Division are not equivalent to those cited at Level 1-3, i.e., the full range of personnel, budget, or facilities management services. Therefore, the effect of the work directed by the appellant does not meet Level 1-3.

In summary, both the scope and the effect of the appellant's position are evaluated at Level 1-2. Therefore, this factor is evaluated at Level 1-2.

Level 1-2

350 points

Factor 2, Organizational Setting

This factor considers the organizational situation of the supervisory position in relation to higher levels of management.

At Level 2-2, the position is accountable to a position that is one reporting level below the first SES, flag or general officer, or equivalent or higher level position in the direct supervisory chain.

The appellant reports to the Manager, Alaska Fire Service, who is one level below the Alaska State Director, whose position is the first SES position in the direct supervisory chain. This reporting relationship matches Level 2-2. The appellant's position does not meet Level 2-3, at which supervisors report to positions at the SES level or equivalent. Her supervisor's position is

classified at the GS-14 level.

Level 2-2

250 points

Factor 3, Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised

This factor covers the delegated supervisory and managerial authorities which are exercised on a recurring basis. To be credited with a level under this factor, a position must meet the authorities and responsibilities to the extent described for the specific level. The personnel office has assigned Level 3-2, and the appellant contends that her position should be evaluated at Level 3-3.

At Level 3-3b, a supervisor must exercise all or nearly all of the supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at Level 3-2c, and at least 8 of 15 supervisory authorities described at Level 3-3b. In abbreviated form, the authorities described at Level 3-2c are as follows: (1) plan work to be accomplished by subordinates, set priorities, and prepare schedules for work completion; (2) assign work; (3) evaluate work performance; (4) give advice, counsel, or instruction on both work and administrative matters; (5) interview candidates and recommend personnel actions; (6) hear and resolve employee complaints; (7) effect minor disciplinary measures and recommend others; (8) identify developmental needs and provide or arrange for training; (9) find ways to improve production and work quality; (10) develop performance standards. The appellant exercises all of these supervisory authorities.

The 15 supervisory authorities and responsibilities listed at Level 3-3b and the appellant's exercise of the authorities are as follows.

1. Using subordinates to supervise the work of others or oversee the work of contractors. The appellant supervises two subordinate supervisors who direct the work of the Branch of Communications (six nonsupervisory employees, plus a leader) and the Branch of Technical Systems (13 nonsupervisory employees). With adjustments for seasonal and WAE employment, the full-time-equivalent nonsupervisory employment is approximately five staff years for the Branch of Communications and 12 staff years for the Branch of Technical Systems, including one contract employee in Technical Systems. Thus, this authority is credited.
2. Exercising significant responsibilities in dealing with officials of other units or organizations, or in advising management officials of higher rank. The appellant has served as chair of the ITCG in Alaska for three years and continues as a member of the group. This responsibility relates to the Division's telecommunications planning and coordination with other agencies. This authority is credited.
3. Ensuring reasonable equity (among units) of performance standards and rating techniques developed by subordinates or assuring comparable equity in the assessment by subordinates of the adequacy of contractor capabilities or of contractor completed work. The appellant reviews the performance plans prepared by the two branch chiefs under her supervision and ensures the

equity of the standards. This authority is credited.

4. Directing a program or major program segment with significant resources (e.g., at a multimillion dollar level of annual resources). The Division's budget varies from year to year, depending on the activity in each fire season, and the current budget is between \$1 million and \$2 million. This level does not meet the requirement for crediting this authority.

5. Making decisions on work problems presented by subordinate supervisors or by contractors. The appellant makes decisions on work problems presented by the two subordinate branch chiefs on matters concerning both employees and program matters. This authority is credited.

6. Evaluating subordinate supervisors and serving as the reviewing official on evaluations of nonsupervisory employees rated by subordinate supervisors. The appellant evaluates the performance of the subordinate branch chiefs. Under the current pass/fail rating system, she reviews only fail ratings proposed by the branch chiefs for any of their staff. This authority is credited.

7. Making or approving selections for subordinate nonsupervisory positions. The appellant makes selections for the nonsupervisory positions that report directly to her and approves selections recommended by the branch chiefs for their nonsupervisory positions. This authority is credited.

8. Recommending selections for subordinate supervisory positions. The appellant will normally make selections for the branch chief positions. However, her supervisor also interviews the candidates for these positions, so the appellant is credited with recommending the selections.

9. Hearing and resolving group grievances or serious employee complaints. There have been no group grievances in the Division, but the appellant has the authority to resolve them, and she has resolved employee complaints that could not be resolved by the subordinate branch chiefs. This authority is credited.

10. Reviewing and approving serious disciplinary actions involving nonsupervisory subordinates. The appellant has this authority and has exercised it in approving disciplinary actions. This authority is credited.

11. Making decisions on nonroutine, costly, or controversial training needs and training requests related to employees of the unit. The appellant has this authority and has exercised it in connection with training approved for new computer and new microwave systems that was costly and involved significant travel. This authority is credited.

12. Determining whether contractor performed work meets standards of adequacy necessary for authorization of payment. The appellant reviews work and certifies for payment as the contracting officers' representative both for contract employees on the Division staff and for

equipment contracts. This authority is credited.

13. Approving expenses comparable to within-grade increases, extensive overtime, and employee travel. The appellant approves within-grade increases, extensive overtime during the fire season, and travel. This authority is credited.

14. Recommending awards or bonuses for nonsupervisory personnel and changes in position classification, subject to approval by higher level officials, supervisors, or others. The appellant recommends awards and promotions for both nonsupervisory employees and the subordinate branch chiefs. This authority is credited.

15. Finding and implementing ways to eliminate or reduce significant bottlenecks and barriers to production, promote team building, or improve business practices. The appellant is responsible for finding and implementing ways to improve the delivery of the Division's ADP and telecommunications services, e.g., through her participation in the ITCG. This authority is credited.

In summary, the appellant's position is credited with 14 of the 15 supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at this level. Because credit at Level 3-3b is provided when at least 8 of the 15 authorities are exercised, the appellant's position meets this level.

The incumbent's position does not meet Level 3-4. Even if the two branches that comprise the Division are considered program segments, the incumbent manages each segment through one subordinate unit, or branch, not through multiple units, as required at Level 3-4a. In addition, she is not responsible for several program segments, as would be required for credit at 3-4a, nor is she responsible for the types of policy and organizational changes contemplated at this level (e.g., in response to legislated changes). Similarly, the appellant does not exercise final authority for the full range of personnel actions and organization design proposals recommended by subordinate supervisors, as would be required to meet Level 3-4b. The authority to decide the wide range of personnel, pay, and organizational design matters contemplated at this level is not delegated to the appellant.

Level 3-3

775 points

Factor 4, Personal Contacts

This is a two-part factor which assesses the nature and purpose of personal contacts related to supervisory and managerial responsibilities. The same contacts that serve as the basis for the level credited under Subfactor 4A must be used to determine the correct level under Subfactor 4B.

Subfactor 4A, Nature of Contacts

This subfactor covers the organizational relationships, authority or influence level, setting, and difficulty of preparation associated with making personal contacts involved in supervisory and managerial work. To be credited, the level of contacts must contribute to the successful performance of the work, be a recurring requirement, have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the position, and require direct contact. The personnel office has assigned Level 4A-2, and the appellant contends that Level 4A-3 should be credited.

At Level 4A-2, frequent contacts include those with higher ranking managers, supervisors, leaders, and staff of program, administrative, and other work units and activities throughout the field activity, installation, or major organization level of the agency. Contacts at this level may also include members of the business community, or technical or operating level employees of State and local governments. Contacts may be informal, occur in conferences and meetings, or take place through telephone, television, radio, or similar contact, and sometimes require nonroutine or special preparation.

At Level 4A-3, frequent contacts may be with high ranking managers, supervisors, leaders, and technical staff at bureau and major organization levels of the agency; with agency headquarters administrative support staff; or with comparable personnel in other Federal agencies. Contacts may also be with contracting officials and high level technical staff of large industrial firms, or with State and local government managers doing business with the agency. Contacts at 4A-3 include those which take place in meetings and conferences and unplanned contacts for which the employee is designated as a contact point by higher management. They often require extensive preparation of briefing materials or up-to-date technical familiarity with complex subject matter.

The appellant's contacts in BLM include other supervisors and managers, such as other division chiefs and zone directors, and with the State Director regarding ITCG activities and other telecommunications matters. She has contacts with the telecommunications managers of the other Interior bureaus who are members of the ITCG in Alaska, with military officers, and with telecommunications managers at higher levels in BLM. She has contacts with military, State and local officials regarding communications interoperability. Her contacts outside government include executives of companies which furnish equipment or services to the AFS, such as repeaters and other equipment. The contacts are typically either informal or in meetings or conferences. Some, such as with BLM telecommunications managers, are by telephone. These contacts meet Level 4A-2 because they are with higher ranking managers and with members of the business community in the types of settings described at this level.

The appellant has some contacts of the types described at Level 4A-3, including State and local government managers regarding interoperability of the communications systems, high ranking technical staff at the bureau level, and managers in other Federal agencies. However, contacts with such individuals in the context described at 4A-3, i.e., in meetings and conferences, and in unplanned situations, are not frequent, as required for credit at this level. Her contacts at these levels are usually by telephone or in the types of settings described at Level 4A-2, which may

include meetings and conferences but without the unplanned representational aspects of 4A-3.

Level 4A-2

50 points

Subfactor 4B, Purpose of Contacts

This subfactor covers the purpose of the personal contacts credited in Subfactor 4A, including the advisory, representational, negotiating, and commitment-making responsibilities related to supervision and management. The personnel office has assigned Level 4B-2, and the appellant contends that Level 4B-3 should be credited.

At Level 4B-2, the purpose of contacts is to ensure that information provided to outside parties is accurate and consistent; to plan and coordinate the work directed with that of others outside the subordinate organization; and/or to resolve differences of opinion among managers, supervisors, leaders, employees, contractors, or others.

At Level 4B-3, the purpose of contacts is to justify, defend, or negotiate in representing the project, program segment(s), or organizational unit(s) directed, in obtaining or committing resources, and in gaining compliance with established policies, regulations, or contracts. Contacts at this level usually involve active participation in conferences, meetings, hearings, or presentations involving problems or issues of considerable consequence or importance to the program or program segment(s) managed.

The appellant's contacts with other BLM managers and supervisors are for a variety of purposes, including those which are conducted to obtain or commit resources, such as funding and staffing levels, for her Division. She maintains that such contacts involve negotiations, consistent with Level 4B-3. However, these types of contacts are mainly to plan and coordinate the work and to resolve differences of opinion. They do not involve the formal, representational contacts envisioned at Level 4B-3, i.e., participation in conferences, meetings, and hearings to justify, defend, or negotiate for the purpose of obtaining or committing resources.

The appellant states that her contacts with the BLM telecommunications managers and others regarding such matters as the infeasibility of BLM's new safety rules for employees who climb towers are consistent with Level 4B-3. However, these contacts are also to resolve differences of opinion and coordinate the work, consistent with Level 4B-2, and do not involve the formal negotiations described at 4B-3.

The appellant maintains that her contacts with telecommunications managers from other Interior bureaus, especially those through the ITCG, meet Level 4B-3 because they require her to justify BLM's approach and negotiate agreements. In her ITCG contacts, the appellant recommends interagency standards for equipment, maintenance and installation, and outlines division of workload among the agencies involved. These contacts involve joint cost savings proposals, requiring compromise on the part of management in all agencies. While some of these contacts

involve negotiations, most are at the 4B-2 level of providing information and coordinating the work of the Division with that of other agencies. They are not primarily to negotiate and defend.

Similarly, most of the appellant's contacts with State and local officials and corporate executives are for the purposes described at Level 4B-2, and not to conduct negotiations in formal settings. For example, contacts with State and local officials may involve discussions about communications equipment interoperability, and contacts with corporate officials concern equipment purchases made by BLM.

Level 4B-2

75 points

Factor 5, Difficulty of Typical Work Directed

This factor measures the difficulty and complexity of the basic work most typical of the organization directed, as well as other line, staff, or contracted work for which the supervisor has technical or oversight responsibility either directly or through subordinate supervisors. The level credited is the highest grade which best characterizes the nature of the basic nonsupervisory work performed by the organization directed, and constitutes 25 percent or more of the workload of the organization. The personnel office evaluated this factor at Level 5-6 (base level of GS-11), and the appellant contends that her position should be credited with Level 5-7 (base level of GS-12).

The appellant serves as a second-level supervisor over 19 employees (one of whom is a contractor). Seven of the employees are career seasonal or WAE (when actually employed), but they work most of the year, so the appellant serves as the second level supervisor over a workforce of about 17 staff years. In addition, the appellant serves as a first-level supervisor over three nonsupervisory employees, two of whom are contractors.

Two of the nonsupervisory computer specialist positions are classified at the GS-12 level. These positions constitute less than 15 percent of the nonsupervisory workforce. Therefore, GS-12 is not credited as the base level of the work supervised. (Two other positions-- a contract position that reports directly to the appellant and the telecommunications systems planner-- are proposed for classification at the GS-12 level. Even if these two positions were counted at the GS-12 level, the GS-12 work supervised by the appellant would still constitute less than 25 percent of the Division's nonsupervisory workload and therefore would not be credited for base level purposes.)

The appellant maintains that the Chief, Branch of Communications, WS-11, under her supervision should be counted as a GS-12 position for base level purposes because the position was originally classified at the GS-12 level. However, base level is determined by the nonsupervisory work overseen by a supervisor, not by the level of subordinate supervisory positions. In addition, the appellant contends that GS-12 should be credited as base level under a provision in the GSSG for second-level supervisors who supervise a large workload and spend at least 50 percent of their duty time directing work that is above the grade determined to be the

base level by the method described above. However, supervision of two GS-12 employees who operate with considerable independence from supervision and report to a branch chief as their first-level supervisor does not require 50 percent of the appellant's work time.

Five of the nonsupervisory positions in Branch of Communications are graded as electronic mechanics, WG-2604-11. The appellant agrees with the determination of the personnel office that these employees perform work equivalent to the GS-11 level.

The electronic mechanics install, maintain, test, and repair electronic equipment for over 20 repeaters, 4 microwave sites, about 60 remote automated weather stations, automatic lightning detection systems in the field, handheld radios, dispatch consoles, and telephone systems. The General Schedule equivalence of this work may be estimated by comparison with the standard for the Electronics Technician Series, GS-856.

Electronics technicians at the GS-11 level perform installation, maintenance, operation, and testing duties similar to those described at GS-9. That is, they are responsible for complex electronic systems made up of combinations of components assembled into a configuration designed to accomplish specific objectives (for example, a radio communications system, a weather radar system, a telemetry system).

In addition, technicians at the GS-11 level are responsible for the work on one or more complete electronic systems that are classed as among the most complex by virtue of such characteristics as the following: (1) the great extent to which numerous subsystems are interrelated, (2) the geographical dispersion of many subsystems of the total system, (3) the degree to which malfunctioning or incorrect values anywhere in the system will adversely affect its total operation, (4) incomplete standardization of the system, and (5) the failure of the system in any aspect will be directly responsible for the failure of the mission of which it is a part.

All of these types of complications are characteristic of the systems for which the electronic mechanics in the Branch of Communication are responsible. The subsystems are interrelated, in particular the repeaters, microwave sites, dispatch consoles, and handheld radios; malfunctions in any part of the system affect the total operation of the entire system. The field units are dispersed over a wide area in the State. Portions of the system are not standardized, such as the mountain-top repeaters. The failure of the system may result in the failure of the firefighting efforts of the AFS. The mission of AFS, which depends on the communications and other electronic equipment for which the electronic mechanics are responsible, involves the protection of life and property. Such a high level of system criticality is also a criterion at the GS-11 level. Other characteristics of the GS-11 level are also comparable to the work of the electronic mechanics. Therefore, their work is considered to be equivalent to the GS-11 for the purposes of base level determination.

Approximately 17 staff years of the Division's nonsupervisory workforce of 22 employees are classified at the GS-11 level (or are positions with full performance level of GS-11), or

equivalent to the GS-11 level. These totals consider the work of the three contract employees (GIS coordinator, GIS specialist, and computer specialist) to be equivalent to GS-11. Two of the remaining nonsupervisory positions are at the GS-12 level. There is no indication that any of these positions are assigned substantial amounts of lower-grade work. Most of the work of the electronic mechanics is as described above. In addition, the computer specialists, who constitute most of the rest of the nonsupervisory workforce, perform mostly systems analysis, software development, computer systems management, and user support. Therefore, GS-11 is credited as the base level of work under the appellant's supervision. When the highest level of base work is GS-11, the factor level credited is 5-6.

Level 5-6

800 points

Factor 6. Other Conditions

This factor measures the extent to which various conditions contribute to the difficulty and complexity of carrying out supervisory duties, authorities, and responsibilities. The personnel office has credited Level 6-4, and the appellant contends that her position should be evaluated at Level 6-5.

Level 6-5c is credited to supervisors who manage work through subordinate supervisors who each direct substantial workloads comparable to the GS-11 level. Such base work requires similar coordination as that described at Factor Level 6-4a for first line supervisors.

The appellant manages work through two subordinate branch chiefs, each of whom directs a substantial workload, i.e., sufficient for base level credit, comparable to the GS-11 level. Therefore, Level 6-5c is creditable if the appellant also performs coordination similar to that described at Level 6-4a.

At Level 6-4a, supervision requires substantial coordination and integration of a number of work assignments, projects, or program segments of professional, scientific, technical, or administrative work comparable in difficulty to the GS-11 level. The GSSG lists several types of such coordination, and a supervisor must perform work comparable to at least one of them in order to be credited with 6-4a.

The appellant performs work that matches two of the types of coordination described at this level. First, she is responsible for recommending resources to devote to particular projects or to allocate among program segments. For example, in connection with her work with the ITCG, she recommends interagency equipment standards, maintenance and installation standards, and the division of the workload among the agencies involved. Such recommendations affect the resources that BLM and her Division will devote to equipment installation and maintenance. She makes recommendations regarding such major projects as communications interoperability with the State and other entities, and concerning the conversion to narrow band communication capabilities. She also approves all technical matters concerning the Division's work with regard

to system concepts, design, construction, maintenance, and operational procedures.

The second type of coordination of assignments she performs is her responsibility for leadership in developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving processes and procedures to monitor the effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of the Division. The appellant is responsible for training and operational standards which ensure that communication and technical systems are developed and maintained efficiently and in a cost effective manner. She also leads project development by directing the proper mix of skills, cost and time projections, and long-range effects. In addition, she leads the design, development, modification and other support in response to national interagency computer systems applications.

Because the appellant performs these types of supervisory coordination, as described at Level 6-4a, and manages work comparable to the GS-11 level through subordinate supervisors, as described at Level 6-5c, her position is credited with Level 6-5.

Supervision at Level 6-6a requires exceptional coordination and integration of a number of very important and complex program segments or programs of professional, scientific, technical, managerial, or administrative work comparable in difficulty to the GS-13 level or higher. The appellant does not direct work at the GS-13 level and thus cannot be credited with Level 6-6a. Alternatively, Level 6-6b may be credited to supervisors who manage through subordinate supervisors who each direct substantial workloads comparable to the GS-12 or higher level. Such base work requires similar coordination as that described at Factor Level 6-5a for first line supervisors. The appellant's subordinate branch chiefs direct substantial workloads comparable to the GS-11 level, but do not direct substantial workloads comparable to the GS-12 level. The Chief, Branch of Technical Systems supervises two positions at the GS-12 level, but these positions are not sufficient for base level credit to the Branch Chief and do not constitute a substantial workload. The Chief, Branch of Communications does not supervise any work comparable to the GS-12 level. Therefore, Level 6-6b is not credited to the appellant's position.

Level 6-5 1225 points

Factor Summary

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
1 Program Scope and Effect	1-2	350
2 Organizational Setting	2-2	250
3 Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised	3-3	775
4 Personal Contacts		
4A Nature of Contacts	4A-2	50
4B Purpose of Contacts	4B-2	75
5 Difficulty of Typical Work Directed	5-6	800

6 Other Conditions	6-5	1225
	Total	3525

The total number of points credited, 3525, falls within the range for GS-13 (3155-3600) according to the point-to-grade conversion chart in the GSSG.

In addition to applying the GSSG to evaluate the appellant's supervisory duties, the personnel office has applied the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide to evaluate portions of the work that are considered to be nonsupervisory. The personnel office evaluated these duties, as well as the supervisory duties, at the GS-12 level.

The position description for the appellant's position indicates that her major duties are divided into two main categories: "supervisory responsibilities," identified as comprising 40 percent of the work time, and "nonsupervisory duties," identified as comprising 60 percent of the work time. However, most of the duties identified as nonsupervisory are an integral part of the appellant's supervision of the Division and thus are properly evaluated by application of the GSSG. Examples include the following.

- Advising the Manager, Alaska Fire Service, on the impact of Division programs on national, Departmental, and Bureau programs; weighing Division work month and funding requirements against the requirements of the other Divisions, agencies, and Bureau program needs to assure a successful total program.
- Planning aspects of the total Division workload, assigning projects to the appropriate branch or staff positions, setting priorities, and resolving workload conflicts or problems presented by branch or staff positions.
- Planning, including the annual work plan, affirmative action program, and staffing plans.
- Conceptualizing, setting overall design parameters, and directing the development of computer-based information and telecommunications systems that meet the management requirements of the Bureau's fire management and resource programs and the emergency communications requirements for all risk incidents in Alaska.
- Providing management interface with headquarters and National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) counterparts to realize national goals in the coordination of telecommunications and automation efforts.
- Coordinating Alaska radio cache development with the Manager of the NIFC national radio cache to realize potential system compatibility, maximize radio utilization nationally, supplement the AFS radio system, and lower Bureau radio costs.

-- Acting as a member of the ITCG, recommending interagency equipment standards, maintenance and installation standards, and outlining division of workload among the agencies involved. (Much of her ITCG workload relates to her supervision of the Branch of Communication and the telecommunications systems planner.)

The Office of Personnel Management Introduction to the Position Classification Standards describes the criteria for classifying mixed-grade positions. One of three criteria for a set of duties to be grade controlling is that the duties must occupy at least 25 percent of the work time of the position. The nonsupervisory duties performed by the appellant account for less than 25 percent of her work time and thus cannot be grade controlling. Therefore, it is not necessary to evaluate any of the appellant's duties and responsibilities except for those involving supervision and management of the Division.

DECISION

For the reasons given above, the authorized classification of the appealed position is Information Systems Manager, GS-301-13.