

**U.S. Department of Energy**  
**Washington, D.C.**

**ORDER**

HQ 3511.1

6-6-86

SUBJECT: POSITION CLASSIFICATION

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1. PURPOSE. To establish the Department of Energy (DOE) Headquarters policy on position classification when considered in conjunction with DOE 3511.1A.
  2. SCOPE. The provisions of this Order apply to all Headquarters Elements, excluding the Office of Inspector General. The provisions of this Order also apply to all employees in General Schedule positions up to and including GS/GM-15 and all Federal Wage System jobs in Headquarters.
  3. REFERENCES. The following references are available in the servicing personnel office:
    - a. DOE 3510.1, POSITION MANAGEMENT, of 8-8-85, which governs position management in DOE.
    - b. DOE 3511.1A, POSITION CLASSIFICATION, of 10-1-84, which governs position classification in DOE.
    - c. "A Guide to Writing Position Descriptions," prepared by the DOE Office of Personnel.
    - d. "How to Write Position Descriptions Under the Factor Evaluation System," published by the Office of Personnel Management.
  4. DEFINITIONS.
    - a. Classification or position classification means the analysis and evaluation of a position's duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements, and the assignment of a title, series, and grade to the position under the position classification system or title, code, and grade under the Federal Wage System, by an official to whom position classification authority has been delegated.
    - b. Classification Appeal is a written request by an incumbent for the reclassification of his or her position or job.
    - c. Desk Audit refers to an interview with an employee to verify or collect information about a position's duties, responsibilities, and supervisory

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relationships. The information so obtained is normally supplemented and verified by interviews with the supervisor.

- d. Detail means temporary assignment of an employee for a specified period of time to duties and responsibilities different from the ones permanently assigned, after which the employee is expected to return to his or her regular duties.
- e. DOE Personnel Management Evaluation Certification is an order requiring the implementation of a specific classification decision, resulting from an inspection.
- f. Evaluation Statements are written documents which address the rationale for the classification of a position.
- g. Identical-Additional Position designates a position, the duties, responsibilities, qualification requirements, and supervisory relationships of which are identical in all respects to those of another position so that a single position description may be used.
- h. Maintenance Review refers to an annual review to be made by supervisors, managers, and position classification specialists of all positions in an organization to ensure that the positions are needed; that assignments are consistent with the objectives of position management; and that positions are accurately and adequately described and correctly classified. The desired result of a maintenance review is to abolish unnecessary positions and correct inaccurately described positions and classification errors.
- i. Major Duties include regular, recurring duties that each occupy 10 percent or more of the incumbent's time or the performance of which plays a part in governing the qualification requirements of a position.
- j. Minor Duties comprise duties which generally occupy a small percentage of time, are not the primary duties for which the position was established, and are not significant in determining qualification requirements or the classification of the position. Such duties are normally not included in position descriptions.
- k. Misassignment refers to the assignment of work other than that covered by the official position description of record in which the individual is employed, unless the assignment is temporary in nature and authorized by an official detail.
- l. Office of Personnel Management Certification is an OPM order requiring the Department to implement a specific OPM classification decision, usually as a result of an appeal or inspection.

- m. Position means work consisting of the duties and responsibilities assigned by appropriate authority to an employee.
- n. Position Classification Survey describes an in-depth study of all or most of the positions in an organization, such as when a majority of the substantive positions in the organization have changed as a result of changes in organization, functions, programs, assignments, or other matters. This may also apply to all positions in an occupation (e.g., when applying new classification standards issued or approved by the OPM) .
- o. Position Description is an official written statement of the major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory and organizational relationships of a position. In the interest of brevity, this term also refers to job descriptions under the Federal Wage System.
- p. Position Description Amendment is an official written statement of changes in the duties and responsibilities of a position currently described and classified. Amendments are attached to and become a part of the official position description.
- q. Position Management refers to the process of designing positions to combine logical and consistent duties and responsibilities into effective, efficient, and productive organizations to accomplish agency mission.
- r. Post Audit describes a review, usually including a desk audit, of a classification decision already in effect to determine the accuracy and completeness of the official position description and the correctness of the classification of the position.
- s. Reclassification is a change in the classification of a position, the duties and responsibilities of which have not materially changed since it was last classified. The basis of a reclassification may be either (1) the correction of a classification error, or (2) a change in the classification standards.
- t. Standard Position Description is a generic description of duties and responsibilities representative of identical or substantially identical positions that can occur in a number of organizational units.
- u. Supervisory Audit refers to an interview with the supervisor of a position to verify or collect information about the subordinate position's duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships, usually done when the subordinate position is new or vacant.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES.a. The Director of Headquarters Personnel Operations (MA-205) shall:

- (1) Administer and develop the position classification program and the personnel management aspects of the position management program throughout Headquarters; and
- (2) Review and evaluate the position classification program and the personnel management aspects of the position management program throughout Headquarters for adequacy, effectiveness, and conformance with governing laws, regulations, procedures, and policies.

b. The Chief of Forrestal Position Classification (MA-205.3) and the Chief of Germantown Operations (MA-205.4), in addition to those responsibilities listed under paragraph 5d of DOE 3511.1A, shall:

- (1) Advise managers, supervisors, and employees of the provisions of this Order and assure its implementation;
- (2) Assess the effectiveness of the position classification program and the personnel management aspects of the position management program and initiate improvement as warranted;
- (3) Evaluate and assign an appropriate pay plan, grade, title, and series to each position by reference to criteria in published OPM position classification standards and guides, and in accordance with delegated classification authority;
- (4) Plan and conduct periodic position classification surveys;
- (5) Review proposed new positions, actions to fill vacancies, and changes in the duties or organizational relationships of existing positions before final classification action is taken;
- (6) Ensure that positions are adequately and accurately described;
- (7) Apply new Opposition classification standards and guides to covered positions in a timely manner and reclassify such positions as appropriate;
- (8) Assist supervisors and managers in addressing classification issues in planning and implementing reorganizations and in establishing new positions; and
- (9) Develop and promulgate Headquarters policies, guidelines, and procedures concerning position classification.

c. Supervisors and Managers, in addition to those items listed in paragraph 5c of DOE 3511.1A, shall:

- (1) Prepare and maintain current, accurate, and adequate descriptions of subordinates' assignments and adhere to position classification and position management principles;
- (2) Assist the position classification specialist in the successful conduct of position classification and position management reviews and surveys;
- (3) Assign duties to positions and ensure that position structures are consistent with the principles of sound position management;
- (4) Take corrective action when the results of position management reviews indicate a need for improvement in structure;
- (5) Inform employees under their supervision of the employees' duties and responsibilities;
- (6) Ensure that subordinate employees receive adequate information regarding classification principles, policies, and rights of appeal; and
- (7) Provide information and assistance to OPM or the Office of Personnel in the development of new standards and guides.

6. POSITION DESCRIPTIONS.

- a. Purpose of Position Descriptions. Position descriptions provide official records of the duties and responsibilities management has assigned to positions. Their main purpose is to ensure that employees are properly compensated for the duties they perform, but they are also essential for effective staffing, sound organizational planning, implementation of reorganizations, position management, budgeting, effective employee utilization, performance evaluation, and so forth.
- b. Responsibility of Management. Management is completely and exclusively responsible for assigning duties and responsibilities to each subordinate position and for adding, removing, or changing assignments at any time. It is management's responsibility to prepare current, accurate, and adequate position descriptions and to ensure that position descriptions are updated within 30 days after permanent changes in individual assignments occur to preclude misassignments. The time limitation for providing position descriptions to implement reorganizations will be provided with the reorganization approval. Temporary changes in assignments are to be documented by details.

- c. Standard of Adequacy. A position description is adequate if it states the major duties, responsibilities, knowledge, skills, abilities, supervisory relationships, and other required job factors of a position clearly enough to provide information necessary for classification, position management, and placement purposes, when considered by one familiar with the occupational fields involved and the application of pertinent classification standards, and when supplemented by readily available and current information on the organization, functions, programs, and procedures concerned. This standard of adequacy is a minimum standard established by OPM which the Department's position descriptions are required to meet. It is a standard against which position descriptions are tested by DOE personnel staff and by OPM during on-site reviews.
- d. Preparation of Position Descriptions. Position descriptions shall be prepared by, or under the direct supervision of, each employee's immediate supervisor. It is advisable to obtain the opinions and comments of the affected employee(s). Upon receiving a classification request, the position classification specialist will determine whether the position description is adequate for evaluation and will ascertain its accuracy based on existing knowledge, readily available information, or data developed in considering the request.
- e. Form. Position descriptions for all positions in grades GS-1 through GS/GM-15 and all Wage Grade jobs are to be typed on plain bond and attached to a properly executed DOE F 3200.5, "Position Description," by the initiating office.
- f. Supervisory Certification. Immediate supervisors shall certify to the accuracy of the position description by signing the following statement, which is preprinted on the DOE F 3200.5, for each position description submitted for classification action:

"I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of this position and its organizational relationships, and that the position is necessary to carry out Government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes, relating to appointment and payment of public funds, and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations."

The immediate supervisor shall sign on line 13a of DOE F 3200.5. A higher-level supervisor may also sign line 13b at the discretion of the initiating office. In the absence of an immediate supervisor, certification by a higher-level supervisor is mandatory.

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- g. Classification Certification. The position classification specialist who certifies on line 14 of DOE F 3200.5 that the position is properly classified by pay plan, title, series, and grade shall attempt to resolve any identified questions concerning the accuracy of the position description.
- h. Guides for Preparing Position Descriptions. The duties and responsibilities of positions are described in accordance with the instructions contained in this Order and the following guides:
  - (1) "How to Write Position Descriptions Under the Factor Evaluation System" is used to describe all nonsupervisory General Schedule positions in grades GS-1 through GS/GM-15 in occupations for which position classification standards in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format have been published by the OPM or for which FES standards are used for grade determination purposes.
  - (2) "A Guide to Writing Position Descriptions" is the Headquarters basic guide for writing position descriptions for all positions other than those to which FES standards apply. It prescribes the format to be followed, contains instructions on what should be covered, and includes shortcuts on writing and keeping descriptions current and simple.
- i. Format and Content of Position Descriptions. The following information supplements that contained in paragraph 6d of DOE 3511.1A. All descriptions must provide the following information and must meet the standard of adequacy outlined on page 6, paragraph 6c of this Order:
  - (1) Major Duties. In order for a major duty to be described accurately, it must be actually performed in the normal work cycle of the position encumbered, or if the position is vacant, it must be intended that the duty shall be performed shortly after incumbency. Related tasks shall be grouped together in a limited number (maximum of 10) of major duties. Major duties shall be described in clear, plain language and in some logical order, such as the sequence in which they are performed, the order of importance, or any other pattern that will facilitate description, understanding, and evaluation of the position. This information is also critical to establishing performance standards.
    - (a) The nature and extent of the responsibilities and authorities in the position require clear and specific description. Such terms as "assists in," "participates in," and "prepares," have many meanings and are inappropriate in position descriptions unless followed by a specific description of these terms in the context of the position. All major duties shall be

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described so that knowledge, skills, abilities, scope, complexity, and personal contacts required by the position are clear enough to enable personnel specialists to determine the proper classification of the position and the required qualifications.

- (b) Recurring but occasional or minor duties may be grouped together and very briefly mentioned at the end of the Major Duties section. Generally, they need not be included unless, in the aggregate, they constitute a significant portion of the employee's time; however, a duty that occupies a small amount of time but affects qualifications shall be described.
  - (c) The proposed title, series, and grade of the position shall not be included in the position description. This information can be included on the DOE F 3200.5. In the position description use of the term "the incumbent" is recommended.
  - (d) The administrative supervisory responsibilities of a position are to be incorporated in and described as one major duty. Detailed information concerning the specific tasks to be addressed for the various levels of supervisors can be obtained from the servicing personnel office.
  - (e) The following statement must be included at the end of the Major Duties section on all position descriptions: "Performs other related duties as assigned."
- (2) Federal Wage System (FWS). Job descriptions for FWS employees shall conform to the format and content of OPM job grading standards.
- (3) Shortcut Procedures. The following procedures which supplement paragraph 6d(4) of DOE 3511.1A are encouraged, so long as they do not obscure essential position information:
- (a) Pen-and-Ink Changes. The supervisor must provide the position classification specialist with a memorandum requesting the changes and an annotated copy of the position description. All copies of the description maintained by the personnel operations branches will be identically annotated by personnel staff if the changes are deemed appropriate. The memorandum will be attached to the original organization book copy of the DOE F 3200.5 or its predecessor forms. All concerned parties will be provided with copies of the annotated position description.



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- (b) Amendments. When a duty has been added to or deleted from a position, the description can be updated by amendment. Amendments can only be used if the change in the position does not result in a change in the classification of the position. The supervisor must provide the position classification specialist with a memorandum requesting the amendment and five copies of the amended position description. The memorandum will be attached to the original organization book copy of the DOE F 3200.5 or its predecessor forms if the amendment is deemed appropriate. All concerned parties will be provided with copies of the amended position description which is to be initialed by the classifier.
- (c) Identical-Additional Positions. When additional positions are found to be identical to an already established position, two copies of the established, classified position description are reproduced without change and used as the official description for identical-additional (IA) positions. The classifier shall record the number and date of established IA positions on the back of the original DOE F 3200.5. One copy of the IA description is provided to the incumbent and one is put in his or her Official Personnel Folder (OPF).
- (d) Standard Position Descriptions. Only two copies of the narrative position description and a properly executed DOE F 3200.5 need to be submitted with each Standard Form (SF)-52, "Request for Personnel Action." Copies of DOE F 3200.5 must be maintained; however, copies of the description need not be. One copy of the description is provided to the incumbent and one is put in the incumbent's OPF. Copies of standard position descriptions are available from the Forrestal Position Classification Branch or the Germantown Operations Branch.

## 7. POSITION CLASSIFICATION.

- a. Standards. All positions must be classified consistently with published OPM standards. Any evaluation decisions of OPM that have been certified to the Department are binding upon all Department officials, and the classification of positions to which they apply may not be changed while the major duties and responsibilities remain substantially the same, unless pertinent new standards are issued.
- b. Determination of Grade, Series, and Title. Proper occupational series, grades, and titles for all positions will be determined in conformance with this Order and published (OPM position classification and job grading standards.

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c. Data Gathering.

- (1) Desk Audits include, in addition to procedures described in paragraph 7f of DOE 3511.1A, interviews by the classification specialist with the employees performing the duties or occupying the positions being assessed and, when appropriate, with the supervisors and subordinates of the employees being audited. It is the position, not the employee, which is being assessed.
- (2) Supervisory Audits are conducted with the supervisor of a position when the position is not encumbered, the incumbent is not familiar with new duties being assigned to the position, or the incumbent is not available for a desk audit. The purposes of a supervisory audit are the same as those described for a desk audit.
- (3) Other Data Gathering may be appropriate and advisable in developing full position information and understanding. Sources of data include, but are not limited to, the use of central files, textbooks and monographs, dockets, publications produced by or about the Department, organization and functional statements, and interviews with employees in related organizations (such as personnel in the budget office when evaluating the budget duty in an administrative position).

d. Conditional or Limited Classifications.

- (1) Projected Positions. When an organization is newly established or an existing organization is assigned major new projects, functions, or responsibilities, a situation may be created in which management must anticipate what duties will be assigned to various positions. Post audits of all projected positions will be done within 120 days of incumbency to ensure the accuracy of the position descriptions and the classification decisions. This timeframe enables the incumbent to assume the duties of the position and is sufficient for the position to stabilize to the extent that the projection can be validated or invalidated. In the event management makes permanent changes to the position prior to the post audit, the position description shall be updated within 30 days of the permanent changes. The fact that a position is projected will be recorded on the DOE F 3200.5, Part III.
- (2) Impact of the Person on the Position. Occasionally positions may warrant classification at a higher than usual grade because the unique abilities of a particular incumbent have significantly enhanced the scope, difficulty, and responsibility of the duties assigned by comparison with applicable classification standards. This type of classification and the name of the incumbent

occupying the position, are to be recorded on the DOE F 3200.5, Part III. Post audits of all such positions will be done bi-ennially to ensure that the original classification and position description are still valid. When this type of position is vacated, it automatically reverts to the normal classification.

- (3) Others. Any other limitations on a position, such as temporary or part-time status, are to be recorded in Part 111 of the DOE F 3200.5. This will serve as notice to the personnel staff, supervisor, and the employee of the conditions or limitations that have been placed on the position.

e. Evaluation Statements.

- (1) Evaluation statements, in addition to those purposes listed in paragraph 7g(1) of DOE 3511.1A, provide the process for analyzing, evaluating, and documenting a position factor-by-factor (i.e., in terms of the grade level criteria cited in position classification standards). This reduces the possibility of an incorrect classification.
- (2) Evaluation statements must be prepared in the instances listed in paragraph 7g(2) of DOE 3511.1A and the following instances unless the classification determination is readily apparent:
  - (a) A classification advisory opinion is being requested, either from within the Department or from OPM.
  - (b) The grade exceeds the grade-level criteria in the applicable standard or agency guideline--either a directly applicable standard or one used on a cross-series comparison basis--and it is not self-evident that the grade-level criteria have been exceeded.
  - (c) The classification decision is one that a prudent journeyman classifier would regard as likely to set a precedent; one that would not be readily apparent to another classifier; one that is borderline as to grade, series, or pay plan; or one for which there is good reason to believe that the decision may be questioned later.
  - (d) A request for personnel action is returned when the requested classification is not supportable, unless management has already agreed with the classifier's conclusion. The evaluation may be incorporated into a memorandum or attached as a separate document.

- (e) A standard position description is being prepared.
  - (f) The position is evaluated mainly or completely by reference to factor or point-rating schemes, such as those in the standards for GS-342, GS-963, and GS-1150.
  - (g) The position is a nonsupervisory GS/GM-15 position and the grade is not self-evident.
  - (h) The position has been evaluated by the FES.
  - (i) The position is a mixed-grade or mixed-series position, and the classification determination is not self-evident.
- (3) Evaluation statements may also be advisable when the standard does not cover the type of work, such as in staff advisory versus operating positions.
- (4) Evaluation statements need not be prepared for positions routinely classified using familiar standards on a cross-series comparison basis, even when a specific standard does not exist, as long as the classification is readily apparent and based on common classification practice.
- (5) The original evaluation statement is maintained with the original copy of the position description in the servicing personnel branch and is available to employees, supervisors, and evaluators.
- f. Content of Evaluation Statements. Since the purpose of an evaluation statement is to support the series, title, grade, and occasionally pay plan that the position classification specialist is assigning to a position, it is important that evaluation statements be written so that they reflect all essential information particular to the position evaluated. Evaluation statements provide any background necessary for a full understanding of the position that is not contained in the position description or in other readily available documents; discuss the choice of pay plan, series, and title, to the extent that they are at issue and not self-evident; and analyze the major duties in the light of the grade-level criteria in the classification standards used, to the extent that they are at issue and are not self-evident.

## 8. CLASSIFICATION MAINTENANCE REVIEWS.

- a. The Chief of Forrestal Position Classification and the Chief of Germantown Operations are responsible for ensuring that all encumbered positions and position descriptions are annually reviewed by

management to ascertain their need, accuracy, adequacy, and currentness to enable appropriate personnel to properly classify the positions. To accomplish this, the Chief of Forrestal Position Classification and the Chief of Germantown Operations require that supervisors annually:

- (1) Review the positions and position descriptions of their subordinate employees to identify any changes that are necessary in the position descriptions to reflect current duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships, and to ascertain whether the positions are still required and are structured in the most efficient and economical manner. Forms provided by the Chief of Forrestal Position Classification or the Chief of Germantown Operations shall be completed by management to reflect such decisions. Accurate and current position descriptions will also be certified on these forms. The completed forms will be submitted to the appropriate branch chief by the due date specified each year.
  - (2) For each inaccurate position description reported on the annual maintenance review forms, management will transmit to the Forrestal Position Classification Branch or Germantown Operations Branch the new position descriptions, amendments, or other required changes with completed DOE F 3200.5 within 30 days of completion of the forms.
- b. The Forrestal Position Classification Branch and Germantown Operations Branch will conduct desk audits and reviews as stated in paragraph 6 of DOE 3510.1. If during the course of the review position descriptions certified to be accurate are found to differ significantly from duties actually performed, then the audit sample should be increased as needed to identify all positions in need of redescription. A summary report of the discrepancies found will be provided to management as a basis for preparation of accurate descriptions. Any guidelines, advice, or recommendations will also be provided. Revised position descriptions will be transmitted to the Chief of Forrestal Position Classification or the Chief of Germantown Operations within 30 days of the summary report. Positions chosen for audit should include a significant number at or above the full performance level; positions classified on the basis of projected duties; positions that appear to have been affected by changes in staffing, workload, work methods, and so forth; and any other position that appears likely to require revision or verification of duties actually performed.

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- g. POSITION CLASSIFICATION APPEALS. The right of employees to appeal the classification of their positions and the procedures for filing such appeals are discussed in DOE 3511.1A.



K. DEAN HELMS  
Deputy Director of Administration