

October 1, 2007

RE: David Baker v. Washington State University
Allocation Review Request ALLO-06-008

Dear Mr. Baker:

On June 28, 2007, I conducted a Director's review meeting by telephone conference call regarding the allocation of your position. Present during the telephone conference were you and Kimberly Maupin, Human Resource Consultant, representing Washington State University (WSU).

Background

On May 12, 2006, you submitted a Position Questionnaire (PQ) to WSU's Human Resource Services, requesting that your Maintenance Mechanic 2 (MM 2) position, #79974, be reallocated to the Facilities Operation Maintenance Specialist (FOMS) or Maintenance Mechanic 3 (MM 3) classification. In a memorandum dated June 29, 2006, Steve DeSoer, Executive Director of Human Resource Services, notified you that your position was appropriately allocated to the MM 2 classification. WSU does not believe your position fits the FOMS classification because your immediate supervisor is on shift. Further, WSU asserts your job duties do not rise to the senior or specialist level of work characteristic of the MM 3 class.

On July 27, 2006, the Department of Personnel received your request for a Director's review of WSU's allocation determination.

The following summarizes your perspective as well as your employer's:

Summary of Mr. Baker's Perspective

You assert you are a senior-level mechanic who works independently. While you acknowledge you are assigned a lead worker, you contend you "only report to a lead on paper." You further acknowledge you have a supervisor on shift but state that his shift begins two hours earlier than your shift. As a result, you state you begin your work shift by receiving work orders from a dispatch office, which you retrieve using your computer. In addition to the work orders, you also perform preventive maintenance for various buildings, primarily research facilities. You assert you maintain and repair heating and cooling systems (HVAC) and pumps for domestic water into animal research facilities. You further assert you replace coils and transformers during power outages, perform electrical repairs on items less than 480 volts, and ensure fans and motors are running properly for quality air supply. You contend you are the primary contact for heating/cooling, electrical, and plumbing issues.

Although you do perform maintenance on items such as toilets, sinks, receptacles, and light switches, you contend the utility systems you work on go beyond the MM 2 level. As an example, you assert you make onsite repairs of pumps and motors, while other MM 2 positions typically remove the pump or motor, have a higher-level mechanic perform the repair work, and then reinstall it. Because you perform your own repairs onsite, you believe the level of mechanical work exceeds an MM 2 level. You contend you work independently with little or no supervision and state you have the authority to assess maintenance and repair issues and purchase the parts necessary to make the repairs. As a result, you believe the MM 3 or FOMS class better describes your duties and level of responsibility.

Summary of WSU's Reasoning

WSU contends your position does not fit within the FOMS classification because you report to a lead worker and supervisor on shift. Further, because you have a lead worker assigned to your shop, WSU believes the MM 3 classification is not appropriate for your position since the MM 3 level is also considered a lead position within the series. While WSU acknowledges you perform work independently, the university asserts working independently is characteristic of the MM 2 class. WSU further asserts that in some cases MM 2 positions are authorized to purchase parts needed for repairs within a specified dollar amount. In describing the work at the MM 3 level, WSU asserts that positions perform specialized work, such as fabricating parts for retrofitting equipment in older buildings on campus. WSU disagrees that you independently perform maintenance functions at a specialized level and contends you do not devise methods and processes. In summary, while WSU believes you independently perform skilled work, the university asserts your position has not been assigned the specialized, high-level maintenance work representative of the MM 3 classification.

Director's Determination

This position review was based on the work performed for at least the six-month period prior to May 12, 2006.

As the Director's designee, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, the exhibits discussed during the Director's review meeting, and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Based on my review and analysis of your assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude your position is properly allocated to the Maintenance Mechanic 2 classification.

Rationale for Determination

On your Position Questionnaire (PQ), you describe your position's purpose as ensuring proper operation of building equipment. You state you are dispatched on an emergency basis to deal with mechanical break downs and building system malfunctions to ensure building systems meet the needs of the occupants (Exhibit 3, page 1).

The duties you believe to be outside of the MM 2 classification include inspecting equipment and building systems and initiating corrective action to be taken on a variety of mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and utility systems. You further note that you do all of your own scheduling and parts ordering and that you are consulted when new equipment is purchased for one of the buildings you maintain. You have the authority to determine how to deal with maintenance problems and which parts to order without consulting your supervisor. You have purchasing authority for \$1,000 or less (Exhibit 3, page 2).

You independently perform skilled work in a number of areas including HVAC, electrical, and plumbing, and your related duties and responsibilities are broken down as follows (Exhibit 3, page 3):

- 40% Mechanical repairs and maintenance on equipment such as H.V.A.C. systems, pumps, electrical, and utility systems, which are sometimes performed on an emergency basis.
- 30% Installation and maintenance of plumbing, electrical, and mechanical fixtures/equipment such as lights, faucets, valves, drains, gates, and hydrants.
- 20% Emergency maintenance and/or repairs of electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and utility systems, determining when it becomes necessary to call other shops more suited to perform the repair work.
- 10% Inspection on mechanical, electrical, plumbing, H.V.A.C., determining the proper course of action to take.

Comparison of Duties to Facilities Operations Maintenance Specialist (FOMS)

The FOMS basic function states the following:

Evaluate equipment operations problems and emergencies in buildings on campuses having multiple buildings which are non-contiguous; take appropriate action to return equipment to its normal operating condition; monitor building systems operations to ensure their normal functioning.

The FOMS distinguishing characteristics include responding to emergency calls and reported malfunctions on mechanical, electrical or utility systems and applying journey-level knowledge in associated trades. They also describe the FOMS position as working independently without on-shift supervision and exercising independent judgment to solve problems.

Although you independently perform skilled work, respond to emergency situations, and determine the proper course of action regarding necessary repairs on mechanical, electrical or utility systems by applying journey level knowledge, you do have an on-shift supervisor for the majority of your shift. I recognize you perform your duties with very little supervision; however, you do have a supervisor available, if necessary. Therefore, the FOMS classification is not the best fit for your position.

Both the Maintenance Mechanic classes are included in the Trades Helpers/General Maintenance Occupational Category, which describes positions in the series, in part, as performing general maintenance and repair, utilizing working knowledge of several related skill fields, including electrical, plumbing, and machinist work. As such, incumbents inspect, repair, install, and maintain equipment and may lead or supervise in general maintenance activities. Your position fits within this occupational category.

Comparison of Duties to Maintenance Mechanic 2

The distinguishing characteristics at the MM 2 level describe the class as the journey, working or occupational level of the series. Further, positions perform a variety of skilled work in the operation, maintenance, and repair of facilities, systems, and equipment. Incumbents working in MM2 positions "work independently and utilize a general knowledge of several related skill fields such as plumbing, electrical, welding, carpentry, and machinist work."

Although the examples of work do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification. The following items are included in the examples of work listed at the MM 2 level and are similar to the work you perform:

- Performs preventative maintenance and repairs on all types of mechanical equipment such as electrical drive motors and air-conditioning equipment;

- Performs maintenance, operation and repair of electrical, mechanical and structural systems of buildings and utility distribution;
- Monitor environmental control equipment to ensure the building systems and equipment are operating in a satisfactory condition; respond to service request and secure necessary assistance; take preventative and emergency action to control malfunctions;
- Installs, maintains, and repairs electrical connections, switches, circuits, electrical equipment, and thermostats, and valves.

Comparison of Duties to Maintenance Mechanic 3

The distinguishing characteristics at the MM 3 level note that this is the senior, specialist or leadworker level of the series. Similar to the MM 2 class, incumbents at the MM 3 level perform skilled work in more than one trade or craft. Incumbents typically specialize in one trade or craft but perform journey-level and semi-skilled work in a variety of disciplines, which include plumbing, electrical, welding, carpentry, and machinist work. Some of the examples of work given at the MM 3 level are also similar to the work you perform. However, the primary distinction between the MM 2 and MM 3 is the level of work performed.

In order to gain a better understanding of the work performed, as well as the level of work performed, I also reviewed the Electrician and Plumber classifications. I reviewed these classes because of the electrical and plumbing work you perform in the course of your regularly assigned duties.

The Electrician classification (class code 5340) notes that incumbents perform “journey-level electrical work.” The distinguishing characteristics for this class note that positions are distinguished by the responsibility to perform “journey-level electrical work in the maintenance, repair, and construction of institution facilities on 750 volt system, or less.”

Examples of the typical work most relating to your position include:

- Alter, maintain, repair or install wiring, cables, switches, controls, fuse boxes, breaker panels, instrument panels, distribution panels;
- Modify, adjust, maintain, repair or install electric motors, electrical equipment, instruments such as pumps, electrical meters, timers, fans, and air conditioners;
- Inspect electrical systems and equipment to detect and correct faulty components or parts;

- Inspect and maintain high voltage power transmission systems including wires, poles, transformers carrying 750 voltage, or less;
- Develop preliminary cost estimates for installations and repairs.

The Plumber classification (class code 5425) notes that incumbents perform “skilled plumbing, pipefitting and steamfitting work.” The distinguishing characteristics for this class note that positions are distinguished by the requirement to perform work in the fields of “plumbing, steamfitting, and pipefitting to alter, repair and maintain buildings, facilities, and equipment.”

Examples of the typical work most relating to your position include:

- Inspect, diagnose malfunctions; repair, maintain, and test plumbing, heating, cooling, and other process piping systems;
- Maintain and repair piping, tanks and pressure vessels for fuels, steam, water, air, gas, and draining systems; install service, repair and adjust pumps, ejectors, valves, and coils;
- Construct various types of pipe joints for high or low pressure systems;
- Order materials and supplies as required.

Similar to the Maintenance Mechanic classes, the Electrician and Plumber classes have higher-level, lead positions. In reviewing the duties and level of responsibility assigned to your position, the work is comparable to the level of work performed by the Electrician and Plumber classifications. However, because you perform work in both areas as it specifically relates to your job of performing skilled work on the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and utility systems in animal research facilities, the Maintenance Mechanic series is a better fit. The level of work you perform fits within the MM 2 class because at the MM 2 level, incumbents independently perform journey-level skilled work.

I recognize that you begin your shift without supervision and that you independently assess the work you need to perform without much supervision. This is confirmed by your supervisor's indications that you have little supervision and devise your own work methods. You do, however, have a lead and supervisor available if necessary. Furthermore, the level of work you perform fits the journey-level, which the Washington State Classification and Pay Administrative Guide defines as follows: “[f]ully competent and qualified in all aspects of a body of work and given broad/general guidance, can complete work assignments to standard under minimal supervision.” Your independent work is also characteristic of the journey-level.

The Washington State Classification and Pay Administrative Guide further states that a position's allocation is based on a review and analysis of the duties and responsibilities of

the position and is allocated **on a best-fit basis** as determined by the majority of work performed. While it is clear you are a highly capable individual who takes the initiative to resolve issues and ensure the facilities you maintain operate effectively, a position review is limited to your assigned duties and responsibilities in comparison with the available job classifications. Therefore, the Maintenance Mechanic 2 classification best describes your position #79974.

Appeal Rights

WAC 357-49-018 provides that either party may appeal the results of the Director's review to the Personnel Resources Board (board) by filing written exceptions to the Director's determination in accordance with Chapter 357-52 WAC.

WAC 357-52-015 states that an appeal must be received in writing at the office of the board within thirty (30) calendar days after service of the Director's determination. The address for the Personnel Resources Board is 2828 Capitol Blvd., P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

Sincerely,

Teresa Parsons
Director's Review Supervisor
Legal Affairs Division

c: Kimberly Maupin, WSU
Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: List of Exhibits