POSITION EVALUATION STATEMENT

Proposed Title, Series, Grade: Wildland Firefighter (Aviation), GS-0456-09

Position Number: DX05100

Background: This Standard Position Description (SPD) was developed by an Advisory Work Group made up of a team of fire subject matter expert and classification specialist and is representative of fire management work performed.

References: Position Classification Standard for Wildland Fire Management, 0456, June 2022; 5 U.S. Code § 5104, Basis for Grading Positions.

Series & Title Determination: The 0456 Wildland Fire Management series is a single-grade interval series that includes classes of position which involve technical and specialized work on the protection of forest or range lands and resources from fire. This series includes general fire management work which is preparatory to the assumption of technical or specialized assignments, and which is accomplished as a part of specialized functional fire management programs including forest, and range fire prevention, presuppession, suppression, post-suppression, fire research, and other specialized work relating to fire management programs.

The PCS is divided into three parts. Part I contains occupational information applicable to Federal work covered by the PCS without regard to pay plan or classification system. Part II provides the grading criteria for positions classified in accordance with GS grade definitions. Part II- Grading Information, is further broken down into *Part 1* (grade level criteria for Wildland Firefighting Positions), and *Part II* (grade level criteria for Fire Mangement Officer Positions). Part III includes explanatory material about the developement of the PCS.

This is an agency Standardized Position Description (SPD) and serves as a Wildland Firefighter (Aviation) organizationally located within a wildland fire management program within one of the four bureaus of the Department of the Interior within a state/regional or unit setting. The Wildland Firefighter (Aviation), executing an Air Attack role, directs air tactical operations by providing aerial command and establishing priorities for initial attack, extended attack and other aviation duties as required.

The primary purpose of the position is to perform specific segments of the interagency Air Attack program within the assigned Geographic Area (GA) boundaries, and/or well-defined incident airspace and air traffic related projects of lesser scope. This position requires a high level of coordination at the state and regional level with other federal agencies and departmental bureaus including staff from the US Forest Service (FS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Tribal governments, and coordination with state agencies (including state fire and other natural resources agencies), local governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGO).

The basic title for positions that involve technical and specialized work on the protection of forest or range lands is *Wildland Firefighter*. The prescribed a parenthetical title of *Aviation* will

also be applied, which describes work involves performing wildfire related work involving operating and maintaining unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), mixing, and loading of aerial fire retardant to fixed wing aircraft, coordinating and monitoring parking of aircraft and base operations, coordinating incident airspace, managing incident air traffic while coordinating with ground resources engaged in wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire activities. Therefore, this position is appropriately assigned to the 0456 series and titled as a ***Wildland Firefighter (Aviation).***

Grade Determination: The 0456 PCS is written in a narrative format describing the nature of work and level of responsibility for each grade covered by the standard. The classification factors include: (1) guidelines; (2) complexity; (3) personal contacts/purpose of contacts; and (4) supervision received. Part I, Fire Management Position Illustrations of the PCS (under Part II, Grading Information) provides illustrative grade level criteria for nonsupervisory positions in grades GS-3/4/5/6/7, 9, and 11. The grade level information provides a summary of the grade level, followed by specific illustrations of duties and responsibilities characteristic of the grade described loosely in terms of the classification factors identified above. Illustrations vary by grade level and may be described in terms of specialty areas such as Aviation.

The 0456 PCS does not provide grading criteria outside of the grade level illustrations, and illustrations are not inclusive of all specialty areas. The grading information is incomplete making it difficult to provide a comprehensive grade level evaluation; therefore, this evaluation is supplemented with 5 U.S. Code § 5104, Basis for Grading Positions for cross comparison.

5 U.S. Code § 5104 at the GS-09

Grade GS–09 includes those classes of positions the duties of which are: (A) to perform, <u>under general supervision</u>, <u>very difficult and responsible</u> work along special technical, supervisory, or administrative lines in office, business, or fiscal administration, requiring (i) somewhat extended specialized training and considerable specialized, supervisory, or administrative experience which has <u>demonstrated capacity for sound independent work</u>; (ii) <u>thorough and fundamental knowledge of a special and complex subject matter</u>, or of the profession, art, or science involved; and (iii) <u>considerable latitude for the exercise of independent judgment</u>; (B) with considerable latitude for the exercise of independent judgment, to perform moderately difficult and responsible work, requiring (i)professional, scientific, or technical training equivalent to that represented by graduation from a college or university of recognized standing; and (ii)considerable additional professional, scientific, or technical training or experience which has demonstrated capacity for sound independent work; or (C)to perform other work of equal importance, difficulty, and responsibility, and requiring comparable qualifications.

0456 PCS Illustration Wildland Firefighter (Aviation) GS-09

1. GS-9 Wildland Firefighters (Aviation<u>) directs air tactical operations by providing aerial command and establishing priorities for initial attack, extended attack and other aviation duties as required</u>. At this level, Wildland Firefighters (Aviation) receive mobilization information; evaluate aircraft needs to perform air tactical mission; brief pilots on mission requirements and crew resource management; determine navigation requirements; requests location of known

hazards; gathers air space information; identifies available aircraft and estimated time of arrivals; identifies tanker base information; establishes air traffic control ensuring control of aircraft in incident airspace; identifies retardant and foam use restrictions; ***(Contacts)*** *establishes target identification and appropriate tactics and coordinates with appropriate personnel; orders additional air resources as needed; notifies ground crews of incoming aircraft and tactics; coordinates with other incidents; provides intelligence to appropriate personnel; and monitors incident aircraft and pilot flight hour limitations.*

2. ***(Guidelines)*** *GS-9 Wildland Firefighters (Aviation) apply technical methods and procedures related to aviation operations and program management.* ***(Complexity)*** *Incumbents perform a wide variety of aviation operations projects incorporating diverse technical fire management knowledge. GS-9 Wildland Firefighters (Aviation) ensure that risk management processes are applied to aerial leadership and tactics and are reevaluated continually during the operational period.*

3. ***(Supervision)*** *GS-9 Wildland Firefighters (Aviation) exercise initiative in developing solutions to common technical and procedural problems such as changes in priorities, need for extended field time, need for additional equipment or personnel, and other issues. <u>However, the employee may seek direction or decision on the course to follow when encountering significant technical or procedural problems with the work.</u> In such instances, the employee may be expected to develop solutions for resolving the problem. Review of work is usually in the form of an assessment as to how the employee resolved technical and operational problems encountered after the fact in many cases. These reviews emphasize the quality of judgment used by the employee in resolving technical and operational problems noted in reports or identified by those with whom the employee interacted.*

<u>Grade Analysis</u>
While the law does not speak directly to the *nature* or type of **<u>Guidelines</u>**, it may be assumed that the exercise of independent judgment may be extrapolated to the exercise of judgment in *applying* Guidelines. The work of the position fully meets the GS-09 as guidelines are in the form of Department, bureau, and other agency aviation regulations, policies and manuals, instruction memoranda as well as published regulations of the FAA, NTSB and OMB. Guidelines provide a general outline of the program goals and objectives and procedures to be used but are not always directly applicable to specific assignments or projects such as in emergency situations confronted in aerial supervision and in program management e.g., the incumbent is required to make judgment calls in areas such as standard retardant application procedures to meet incident objectives. Like the GS-09 the position has considerable latitude for the exercise of independent judgment in selecting precedents and in interpreting or adapting available guidelines to issues or problems arising in the work, analyzing results and making recommendations to ensure consistency within the Air Attack program.

The work of the position fully meets the GS-09 for **<u>Complexity</u>** as the incumbent performs very difficult and responsible work with considerable latitude for the exercise of independent judgement. Assignments consist of a variety of unrelated duties and projects involving varying types of resources with unique capabilities, unique use constraints, differing mission objectives, limited availability, and contracting complexities as they apply to the aviation and Air Attack

program. Like the GS-09 illustration the incumbent evaluates the selection and application of different methods and procedures to provide recommendations on aerial supervision quality/adequacy and program direction. During incidents and training, duties involve directing aerial suppression aircraft and coordinating with ground personnel, dispatch organizations, and managers.

Personal Contacts involve the difficulty of communication that includes the setting in which contacts take place. **Purpose of Contacts** looks at the nature of contacts ranging from factual exchanges to significant/controversial issues. Like the GS-09 illustration frequent personal contacts are varied within the bureau and DOI. Like the GS-09 illustration the purpose of contacts is to provide tactical information, guidance, assistance, and applying a course of action for tactical aircraft flight crews; a basis to collaborate on program management aviation safety, and training; coordinate work efforts; providing fire and aviation managers with aircraft, suppression and aerial supervision suggestions, strategies and updates on a national scope.

The work of the position fully meets the GS-09 for **Supervision Received** as the law describes the duties as very difficult and responsible work under general supervision. Like the GS-09 the supervisor establishes broad program objectives, goals, or priorities and provides assistance with significant technical or procedural problems, or with situations that do not have clear precedents. The incumbent plans and carries out the work and resolve problems in accordance with standard policy and regulations, applicable precedents, and previous training. The incumbent informs the supervisor of progress and situations which may affect Air Attack and the interagency Air Attack program within the assigned Geographic Area (GA). Like the GS-09 illustration review of work is usually in the form of an assessment of the methods and judgment used by the incumbent to resolve technical and operational problems encountered. Completed work is reviewed for conformance with overall requirements, technical adequacy, and adherence to policy guidelines in supporting the mission and programs of the aviation program.

In summary, the duties fully meet the GS-09 level for all 4 factor levels under the 0456.

FINAL CLASSIFICATION: The recommendation for this position is to be classified as ***Wildland Firefighter (Aviation), GS-0456-09.***