

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel

To: Administrative Service Directors
Human Resource Managers

Date: September 16, 2002

From: Sharon Barton, Director

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Subject: HR Classification Study
Alaska Marine Highway
System Dispatcher

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Attached herewith is the final class specification for the new Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) Dispatcher job class. The class specification is effective September 1, 2001, pursuant to LOA 01-KK-048 as amended.

HISTORY

The State of Alaska and the Confidential Employees Association entered into Letter of Agreement (LOA) 01-KK-048 as part of the 2000 – 2003 collective bargaining agreement. The LOA required the State to conduct a classification study of Human Resource job classifications placed primarily within the Confidential Unit. The study was to include, but was not limited to, the following job classes:

Human Resource Manager I, II, III
Personnel Officer I, II
Personnel Specialist I, II, III
Personnel Assistant I, II
Employee Resource Consultant Specialist
Employee Resource Consultant Manager
Labor Relations Specialist I, II, III
Personnel Manager I, II

The Labor Management Committee (LMC) established by the contract identified the following problems and concerns to be addressed:

Personnel Assistant I:

- Difficulty exists in recruitment and in the interpretation of the qualifications.

Human Resource Managers:

- Range 19 (HRM I) is obsolete.
- Criteria established at all levels to not seem realistic distinctions of complexity.
- Is this a separate job class series or an extension of the Personnel Officer?
- The level of influence on department/“change element” influence.

Salary Ranges for all HR jobs:

- New factors – delegation and federal mandates
- Retention and recruitment
- Increased liability

Career Tracks:

- Generalist vs. Specialist positions
- Inequity
- No range 16 exists in the generalist – either as a technician or entry professional.

Centralized vs. Delegated:

- Equity in job classes available
- Overtime exemption inequity

The Department of Administration solicited bids to conduct the study and develop new class specifications. A contract was awarded under the procurement rules and the contractor met with the Committee several times, held group interviews with selected incumbents, and produced draft specifications. After several unsuccessful attempts to improve the quality of the work product, the State cancelled the contract. A Working Group composed of the union members of the LMC and several Division of Personnel (DOP) staff members began anew and completed work on the study. The State contracted with Cooperative Personnel Services (CPS) to study the Human Resource Manager and Personnel Manager job classes. The consultant interviewed the incumbents and issued a report and recommendations to the Director of Personnel in July 2002.

All Position Descriptions (PDs) were read and reviewed. A list of duty statements representative of the various HR functional areas and levels of work was developed and distributed to the Human Resource Managers (HRMs). The HRMs categorized the tasks as clerical, technical, or administrative. Responses from each department were compiled and reviewed; the Working Group assigned the category when there was no consensus among the department responses.

Teams of interviewers from the Division of Personnel and the departments conducted position interviews with the incumbents of most positions in the departments and in DOP. The results of the interviews were reported to the Working Group and used, along with the PDs and function lists, to develop and clarify the class specifications.

The consultant interviewed all Human Resource Managers and Personnel Managers as planned, and requested additional interviews with the Classification Manager and the Employee Programs Manager. From those interviews and from information supplied by each department, the consultant prepared a report of findings to the Director of Personnel.

The LMC and the Division of Personnel hosted a briefing in late July at which CPS consultant Rick McWilliams presented his report and recommendations regarding the Human Resource Manager and Personnel Manager class series. Draft specifications were distributed for the other human resource series included in the study. Reallocation of positions in classifications covered by the study was suspended effective August 1, 2002, to allow for completion and implementation of the study.

A formal comment period followed the briefing during which departments were invited to make specific remarks and suggestions about all but the Human Resource Manager, Human Resource Officer and Personnel Manager job classes. All comments were collected by the Division of Personnel and forwarded to the Working Group, which considered and made a determination regarding each recommendation. Reports summarizing these decisions will be distributed to agencies following implementation of Phase One. While the comment period was underway, two general meetings were held to discuss questions raised by agency representatives. The first meeting addressed the technical series; the second meeting addressed the professional series. Both meetings were well attended, with representation from most departments.

Whereas Phase I of the study was scheduled for implementation on September 16, 2002, the Working Group imposed a deadline of August 1, 2002, for revised PDs to be considered part of the study.

Following revision of the class specifications based on the comments received and the further deliberations of the Working Group, three test allocation sessions were held. Definitions and Distinguishing Characteristics for the following classes were considered: Human Resource Assistant, Human Resource Technician I-III, Payroll Supervisor, Human Resource Specialist I-III, and Human Resource Officer. The Working Group considered the issues raised in the test allocations and made final revisions to the class specifications. In addition, the Working Group concluded that it needed additional information in order to resolve questions about work performed by positions that provide professional human resource services exclusively to specific divisions or regions, as well as those that act as "seconds" or "assistants" to Human Resource Managers. The Working Group determined that action on the individual positions should be deferred to Phase Two, that audits should be conducted, and that final action on class specifications occur in conjunction with the Human Resource Manager and Personnel Manager job classes. The recommendation was forwarded to the LMC.

The Working Group finalized the class specifications and presented its work product and recommendations to the full LMC on September 3, 2002. At that meeting the Working Group recommended that positions providing comprehensive HR services to regions or divisions, as well as those that serve in the capacity of a "second" or an "Assistant HRM," be given additional scrutiny and that actions on these positions be deferred until Phase Two. The LMC concurred. As a result, DOP staff will audit these positions to develop accurate position information covering the study period. This information will be used to draft Phase Two class specifications and, if appropriate, to recommend revisions to the Human Resource Specialist series to incorporate all or some of the audited work.

The Working Group deferred its review of the consultant's report until after the implementation of the Phase I class specifications on September 16; work on the Human Resource Managers, Personnel Managers, Human Resource Officer, Payroll Manager, and Retirement & Benefits Manager will be completed at a later date.

The Director approved the final class specifications. The following job classes and series are established:

Human Resource Assistant

Human Resource Technician I, II, III
Payroll Supervisor
Payroll Specialist I, II, III
AMHS Dispatcher
Human Resource Specialist I, II, III
Labor Relations Analyst I, II, III, IV

The interview teams reviewed the PDs, interview notes, and any additional information in conjunction with the final class specifications and recommended individual position allocations.

SCOPE

The study was limited to positions allocated to Human Resource (HR) job classifications placed primarily within the Confidential Unit. Positions allocated to job classes shared with other bargaining units were not included (i.e. Analyst Programmers). Departments were invited to submit position descriptions (PDs) of individual clerical positions that they believed might perform work properly allocated to a HR class.

CLASS CONCEPT

Alaska Marine Highway System Dispatchers, under general direction, perform technical duties to schedule, coordinate, and dispatch licensed and unlicensed employees serving on ferries operated by the Alaska Marine Highway System.

Alaska Marine Highway System Dispatchers independently perform technical work as departmental experts on the processes for scheduling and dispatching staff working on AMHS vessels. Incumbents schedule employees to work on specific vessels, notify employees of dispatch, and replace employees on short notice, ensuring the correct number of employees who meet licensing and technical requirements are scheduled or dispatched to allow vessels to sail. Vessel employee dispatches often require rapid decision making that take into account a number of factors, such as licensing requirements, contractual provisions and cost. Incumbents also perform a range of duties related to the dispatching function including determining travel entitlements and auditing expense claims, approving leave requests and auditing time sheets for entitlement to certain premium pays.

Duties require detailed knowledge and application of rules, policies, procedures, guidelines, standard practices, and vessel employee collective bargaining agreements. Incumbents must select, interpret and apply the appropriate rules when it is not readily apparent which guides and precedents apply, or there are conflicts between arguably applicable guides. Errors result in financial liability and may affect the ability of vessels to fulfill schedule requirements. Contacts are primarily with vessel employees to provide information on work assignments, answer questions on contract provisions and compensation, and resolve vessel crewing problems.

ANALYSIS

Historically, positions performing dispatch work for the Alaska Marine Highway System have been classified as either Personnel Assistant I or II. The Working Group considered whether

including these duties in the general technical series continues to be appropriate. Information was collected from position descriptions and study interviews, as well as additional position audits and supervisory interviews. The Working Group concluded that a separate body of advanced technical work could be identified based upon the tests of similarity used to establish job classes and series. With the Division of Personnel's Standard Operating Procedure 07-III-D as its guide, the Working Group concluded that:

1. A separate title more accurately describes the work of AMHS dispatching positions as compared with positions providing advanced technical work in payroll.
2. The minimum qualifications appropriate for positions performing AMHS dispatching are significantly different from those of Human Resource Technicians (HRT) due to the long history of recruitment difficulties into the AMHS positions.
3. The same basic rate of pay is appropriate for HRT III and AMHS Dispatchers based upon internal alignment for advanced technical work.
4. A class combining AMHS dispatch positions with HRT III would not be an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall.

Whereas three of the four tests of similarity were not met, inclusion in the HRT series is not appropriate and a separate job class was established for AMHS Dispatchers.

SALARY ANALYSIS

For purposes of internal alignment the AMHS Dispatchers were compared with the more general Human Resource Technicians, the Payroll Specialist and the Human Resource Specialists within the Personnel and Employee Relations Family (P14XX). Evaluation of the standard classification factors found:

Nature, variety and complexity of work: The work is complex in the many variables that need to be considered when making scheduling (seniority, leave, days-off requirements, minimum workweek guarantees, dispatch selection form choices, drug testing dates); Dispatchers have little time to make decisions, and they often cannot postpone a decision for consultation with a supervisor.

Nature of supervision received: There is very limited direct supervision most of the time. One position is located in Ketchikan, whereas the supervisor is located in Juneau. All positions work very independently often work from home in the evening or on weekends without access to a supervisor.

Availability of guidelines for performance of work: Dispatchers use the marine contracts and AMHS P&Ps. Factors used in scheduling are contained in several forms (EIS, Dispatch Selection Form, seniority list, phone logs). Dispatchers have to use their own discretion to make independent decisions such as if it is more cost effective to have an employee fly to the port rather than pay someone to remain onboard ship.

Purposes and nature of person-to-person work relationships: Dispatchers often deal with very unhappy or angry employees either in person or via telephone at all hours of the day. (Note: dispatchers are historically and currently on call 24/7 which, although not a classification factor,

does contribute to an understanding of several factors). Licensed employees may be recalled to work while on vacation; unlicensed employees often are upset if they are not scheduled to work, or believe they have been paid incorrectly or dispatched improperly. Dispatchers deal directly with union representatives on a regular basis.

Nature and Scope of recommendations, decisions, commitments, and consequence of error: Scheduling decisions determine if a sufficient crew is present to allow a vessel sailing. There can be a substantial financial impact if an employee/crew is scheduled incorrectly (i.e. a ship that was in dry dock was scheduled a crew two weeks before the vessel was approved for sailing resulting in \$7000 in unearned wages paid). Dispatchers approve vacation requests and participate on the leave committee (granting leave can have an impact on scheduling for weeks). Substantial costs accrue from decisions about how and when an employee travels to or from an assignment.

Nature and extent of supervision exercised over the work of others: Dispatchers do not directly supervise other employees. Juneau Dispatchers review timesheets sent down from the payroll office to verify late arrival pay, call back, overtime, and other situation payroll may question.

Qualifications required: Applicants must be well organized, have a good memory, be able to attend to detail, have the ability to work independently, and to make decisions under pressure.

In internal comparison, the classification factor analysis of the AMHS Dispatchers exceeds that of the Human Resource Technician II performing journey level technical work in personnel and payroll, but does not equal that of the Payroll Supervisor in that positions do not provide technical supervision and management of an agency payroll function. The work performed is not analogous to that of Human Resource Specialists in that positions do not perform professional level analytical and evaluative work on a regular and recurring basis. Allocation at Salary Range 15 is appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The positions that coordinate and dispatch employees for the Alaska Marine Highway System were previously allocated to the Personnel Assistant series. Job analysis indicates the nature of work of the positions is sufficiently different from positions performing typical human resource technical functions in departments and the central agency to warrant creation of a new job class. The limited variation in duties and responsibilities among individual AMHS Dispatchers indicates a single level job class is appropriate. The class specification accurately defines and distinguishes the work performed and provides for a broad pool of qualified candidates. The specifications for other job classes in the Human Resource family will allow for career progression from the new AMHS Dispatcher class.

The Alaska Marine Highway System Dispatcher is assigned salary range 15.

The attached class specifications are established September 16, 2002, and are effective retroactively to September 1, 2001, pursuant to LOA 01-KK-048 as amended.

Attachment