

## **U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS FLOATING PLANT BACKGROUND**

*Definition of Floating Plant:* Floating plant are self-propelled and non-propelled floating equipment that are used in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to conduct construction, operations and maintenance activities in and along inland navigable waters and coastal waters. Employees working on such floating plant are paid from special USACE floating plant pay schedules and are evaluated by reference to standards approved by the Department of Army (DA) and published by USACE as described in Appendix V. These standards are the Ladder Diagram (LD) and the Department of the Army Manual of Evaluation Standards (DAMES).

### *Pay Plans:*

Employees on Floating Plant (other than Hopper Dredges). Positions evaluated by the DAMES are designated as XF (nonsupervisory), XG (leader), or XH (supervisory). NOTE: XH and XG positions evaluated by the DAMES are restricted to employees performing revetment and bank stabilization work in the Memphis and Vicksburg Districts, Mississippi Valley Division. Positions evaluated by the LD are designated XH and can be either supervisory or nonsupervisory.

Employees on Hopper Dredges. Positions evaluated by the DAMES are designated as WK (nonsupervisory). Positions evaluated by the Ladder Diagram are designated WJ and can be either supervisory or nonsupervisory.

*History:* Prior to 1953 DA blue-collar positions were assigned a Wage Board (WB) grade, with no pay plan distinction between supervisory and nonsupervisory positions. Beginning in 1953, DA WB supervisory positions were designated as WBS and placed on the Wage Board Supervisory Rate Schedule (WBSRS). The direct application of the WBSRS and the DA WB Supervisory Evaluation Standard to certain floating plant positions resulted in pay rates which were considerably below USACE wage rates as well as the going rates in the maritime industry for comparable positions. Accordingly, it was determined at that time that supervisory grades for these types of USACE floating plant positions would be established by a ranking method. This ranking procedure was employed because no evident base levels, as used in the evaluation of most supervisory jobs, existed in the floating plant jobs. The resultant LD reflects the grade levels and relative ranking of the respective marine jobs after consideration of existing grade and pay relationships and industry practice.

Benchmark job descriptions were prepared to illustrate the duties of typical LD positions throughout USACE at each grade level. In the LD, the positions were shown in ascending order of complexity beginning with the WBS-2 Boatswain (i.e., a limited Foreman position over semi-skilled marine laborers engaged in deck maintenance activities) ranging upwards to the WBS-16 Master, Hopper Dredge (i.e., the Captain responsible for the operation and management of a large ocean-going ship). When the Coordinated Federal Wage System (CFWS) was established,

grades and pay plan codes for Floating Plant (other than Hopper Dredges) were changed to coincide with the new pay system per instructions in FPM Letter 532-9, December 16, 1968. USACE was authorized to add two grades to all non-Hopper Dredge positions above WBS-3; e.g., Cook-Steward from WBS-4 to WS-6; Master, Pipeline Dredge, from WBS-15 to WS-17. Pay plan codes for WBS Hopper Dredge positions were changed to WJ; WB positions were changed to WK. Grades for Hopper Dredge positions remained the same since the basis for those pay schedules was different. OPM approved new pay plan codes for Floating Plant (other than Hopper Dredges) on 26 May 1992. WG was changed to XF; WL was changed to XG; and WS was changed to XH. The LD has remained essentially unchanged since its development in 1953, except for a few DA-approved additions and deletions of benchmark jobs over the years. HQUSACE revised the benchmark descriptions to describe them in the FWS format and to reflect operational changes such as upgrading vessels from steam to diesel-electric.

*Ladder Diagram Coverage:* The LD basically covers supervisory and/or licensed marine positions on USACE hopper dredges and other types of USACE floating plant ranging in size from tenders to large pipeline dredges. It should be noted that the term supervisory when applied to LD positions is really used in the broader marine context of a ship's officer or to an officer in charge of a watch who may direct one or more lower graded nonsupervisory employees. For example, a pilot directs deck and engine room employees while on duty but is not their supervisor. The LD positions are not supervisory in the more formal context of classification but are on the supervisory pay schedule for pay setting purposes. Not covered under the LD are nonsupervisory, non-licensed, marine and land worker type positions on Corps vessels; i.e., Deckhands, Oilers, Quartermasters, Crane Operators, Engineer Equipment Operators, etc. These positions are evaluated using the DAMES for the appropriate nonsupervisory marine occupations.

*Using the Ladder Diagram:* The LD is essentially a set of ranking standards covering supervisory and/or licensed marine employees on Corps floating plant. Use of the LD is relatively simple. The position is compared with the grading scale shown on the LD and the accompanying benchmark descriptions to determine whether the position being evaluated is essentially a match for any of the established LD positions or benchmarks. If the position can be essentially matched with an established LD position, it is classified the same as the position matched. When the work performed is the same skill level as the benchmark, the position is assigned the same grade as the benchmark. When the work performed and vessel characteristics are lower than the benchmark, a lower grade is assigned. For example, a towboat that is 75 feet long with 1300 horsepower, has a crew of 3-5 employees, and operates only one shift is clearly less than depicted in the benchmark for the Master, Towboat, XH-5784-16, which is 110 feet long with over 2000 horsepower, has a crew of 20-30 employees, and operates three shifts. The smaller towboat would be graded at the XH-14 level. When the work performed and vessel characteristics are clearly higher than the benchmark, a higher grade is assigned. For example, a tender that is 50 feet long with 800 horsepower and tows two to four barges up to a total load of 1,000 tons clearly exceeds the XH-7 benchmark where the tender is under 65 feet long with 250 horsepower and tows barges up to 500 tons. The more powerful tender would be graded at the XH-08 level. Survey boat operator positions that are not essentially a match for the two established LD benchmarks are evaluated by the DAMES.

*Using the Department of Army Manual of Evaluation Standards (DAMES), Part II - Standards for Wage Board Jobs:* Although most DAMES standards were abolished when FWS Job Grading Standards were developed, DAMES standards for floating plant are still in effect because floating plant positions remain set aside from the CFWS. Several benchmarks covering floating plant jobs were developed by the Office of the Chief of Engineers and were reviewed and approved by the Secretary of the Army. The DAMES also contains a generic standard (Auxiliary Standard for Evaluation of Nonsupervisory Wage Board Jobs) for jobs not covered by a specific series standard. The DAMES uses five factors in evaluating nonsupervisory blue collar jobs: 1) Experience and Training, 2) Responsibility, 3) Mental Application, 4) Physical Demand, and 5) Working Conditions.