BEFORE THE PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

STATE OF WASHINGTON

CATHY WALKER, Appellant, vs. MILITARY DEPARTMENT, Respondent.	CASE NO. R-ALLO-11-012 ORDER OF THE BOARD FOLLOWING HEARING ON EXCEPTIONS TO THE DETERMINATION OF THE DIRECTOR

Hearing on Exceptions. This appeal came before the Personnel Resources Board, DJ MARK, Chair, and LAURA ANDERSON, Member, for a hearing on Appellant's exceptions to the director's determination dated June 30, 2011. The hearing was held on November 2, 2011.

Appearances. Appellant Cathy Walker was present and was represented by Melissa Hopkins. Laura Drybread, Human Resource Manager, and Jana Dutt, Human Resource Consultant, represented Respondent Military Department (MIL).

Background. The actions that occurred that are relevant to the issues within the Board's jurisdiction are described below.

Appellant's position was allocated to the Emergency Management Program Specialist (EMPS) 2 classification. On March 1, 2010, Appellant requested a review of her position. Before MIL's Human Resource Office completed the review, Appellant accepted a position in a different agency. Subsequently, MIL completed the review of Appellant's position and determined that her position was properly allocated.

On September 21, 2010, Appellant requested a director's review of MIL's allocation determination. By letter dated June 30, 2011, the director's designee determined that Appellant's position was properly allocated.

On July 29, 2011, Appellant filed exceptions to the director's determination. Appellant's exceptions are the subject of this proceeding.

During the time period relevant to Appellant's position review, she worked in MIL's Database/WEB/GIS, Network/Desktop Operations section. In summary and in part, Appellant was responsible for installing and maintaining software products on MIL's Geographic Information System (GIS) designated computers and acting as the primary liaison to the Emergency Management Division regarding GIS software, tools, and products. She was considered the subject matter expert on the use of the software and she independently performed complex technical work to design the GIS database, to populate data in the system, and to provide training and assistance to others on the use of the software. In addition, she extracted GIS data to provide maps, information for reports, and information for mitigation plan analysis for use by others. Before loading data into the GIS, Appellant assured that the data was complete, contained the correct information, and was in the correct format. She also performed this function for archived data. In addition, she served as a project manager for the HAZUS Data Enhancement Project. Appellant's position contained components of information technology tasks and tasks related to emergency management functions.

Summary of Appellant's Arguments. Appellant argues that during the time period relevant to her position review, she installed, performed troubleshooting, and updated software on her computer and the computers of other MIL staff. Appellant contends that she designed the database and populated and edited geospatial data for GIS production data and archival data. She explains that this data was used to conduct analysis and create cartographic products for MIL staff and external customers. Appellant further explains that she developed training for the GIS software and data, and that she conducted training, served as the technical expert post-training for users of the software, and developed the instruction manual for other members of MIL's GIS section. Appellant asserts that she worked on GIS products and analysis for the State's Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan and that she was the project manager and technical lead for the HAZUS Data Enhancement

Project. Appellant further asserts that in processing her review request, MIL violated the Collective Bargaining Agreement which hampered her ability to provide information to support her reallocation. And, she argues that she performed the same duties and worked alongside other members of the GIS section who were allocated to information technology (IT) classes. She contends that she was able to obtain a position as an Information Technology Specialist 5 at another agency which further shows that the skills and abilities she developed at MIL and the duties she performed should have been allocated to an IT classification.

Summary of Respondent's Arguments. Respondent explains that the focus of Appellant's position was evolving but argues that at the time of her position review, the position's primary focus was scientific analysis relating to emergency management planning rather than IT. Respondent acknowledges Appellant performed some aspects of IT work but argues that the majority of her work involved the GIS software and included providing information used in various types of emergency management plans. MIL acknowledges that Appellant was the expert in the use of the GIS software and that she provided professional level support using GIS in the development, use, maintenance, and oversight of science and technology analysis tools relating to emergency management planning and logistics functions. MIL argues that Appellant was a GIS power-user and that she employed specialized GIS user skills, not technical IT skills, in the performance of her work. MIL contends that while Appellant used GIS software and developed tools to accomplish her work, the overall intent and focus of her position and the nature of her work was emergency management. Therefore, MIL contends that her position is best described by the EMPS 2 classification.

Primary Issue. Whether the director's determination that Appellant's position is properly allocated to the Emergency Management Program Specialist 2 classification should be affirmed.

Relevant Classifications. Emergency Management Program Specialist 2, class code 397B, and Information Technology Specialist 3, class code 479K.

Decision of the Board. It is clear from the record and the arguments of the parties that Appellant is a conscientious employee who takes pride in providing thorough and complete work products. It is also clear that Appellant was valued by MIL and others as the expert in the GIS software.

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. See Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Most positions within the civil service system occasionally perform duties that appear in more than one classification. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. See Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

Additionally, "[w]hile a comparison of one position to another similar position may be useful in gaining a better understanding of the duties performed by and the level of responsibility assigned to an incumbent, allocation of a position must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to an individual position compared to the existing classifications. The allocation or misallocation of a similar position is not a determining factor in the appropriate allocation of a position." See Byrnes v. Dept's of Personnel and Corrections, PRB No. R-ALLO-06-005 (2006), citing to Flahaut v. Dept's of Personnel and Labor and Industries, PAB No. ALLO 96-0009 (1996).

It is undisputed that Appellant performed some duties that could fit within an IT classification, such as installing, maintaining, and programming within the GIS software and developing the database. However, the majority of her work, as described in her Position Review Request form, and the focus of her position were more related to emergency management rather than IT. Appellant used GIS software and tools to create cartographic and GIS analytical products and perform geoprocessing tasks to analyze and assess the risk and vulnerability of a variety of potential hazards, and to provide information for use by others who also performed emergency management functions. We recognize that Appellant's position was evolving, but at the time of her position review request, the Information Technology class series was not the best fit for her position.

Most relevant to Appellant's position, the Emergency Management Program Specialist classifications encompass professional emergency management duties including preparation activities to manage potential or actual natural hazards and disasters. Incumbents in this series may also function as project leads. During the time period relevant to Appellant's position review, the majority of her duties and responsibilities contributed to and supported the preparation of emergency management planning functions and she was the project manager and technical lead for the HAZUS Data Enhancement Project. For example:

- Twenty-five percent of her time involved providing custom cartographic and GIS analytical products to Military Department personnel.
- Twenty percent of her time dealt with performing risk and vulnerability analysis using GIS spatial analysis tools for State Emergency Management.
- Ten percent of her time consisted of serving as project manager and/or technical lead to EMD for projects involving GIS or geospatial data management.

Her position best fit within the Emergency Management Program Specialist class series.

Within the series, the Emergency Management Program Specialist 2 level best describes Appellant's level of independence and responsibility for delivery of emergency management information using the GIS and the development and delivery of training activities for the GIS. The overall focus of Appellant's position and the majority of her duties and responsibilities, as described in her Position Review Request form, were emergency management related functions consistent with the Emergency Management Program Specialist 2 classification.

We agree with the director's designee that Appellant's assigned duties and responsibilities were more closely in line with the Emergency Management Program Specialist 2 class.

In a hearing on exceptions, the Appellant has the burden of proof. WAC 357-52-110. Appellant has failed to meet her burden of proof.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions is denied and the director's determination dated June 30, 2011, is affirmed.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 2011.

WASHINGTON PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

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DJ MARK, Chair

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LAURA ANDERSON, Member