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**POSITION CLASSIFICATION  
STANDARD  
FOR  
GUIDE SERIES,  
GS-0090**



**Workforce Compensation  
and Performance Service**



# Guide Series

## GS-0090

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

SERIES DEFINITION .....	3
COVERAGE .....	3
EXCLUSIONS .....	3
TITLES .....	4
CLASSIFICATION FACTORS .....	4
EVALUATION OF POSITIONS BELOW GRADE GS-04 .....	8
PARK GUIDE AND RECLAMATION GUIDE, GS-0090-04 .....	8
PARK GUIDE AND RECLAMATION GUIDE, GS-0090-05 .....	10
PARK GUIDE AND RECLAMATION GUIDE, GS-0090-06 .....	12

## SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes all classes of positions the duties of which are to provide or supervise nonprofessional interpretive and guide services to visitors to parks, dams, and other sites of public interest. The work involves giving formal talks, interpreting natural and historic features, explaining engineering structures and related water resource developments, answering questions, guiding tours, and providing miscellaneous services to visitors. Incidental duties are performed in connection with responsibility for visitor safety and protection of historic and scientific objects and natural or engineering features.

Most of the positions in this series were formerly classified in the Tour Leader Series, GS-0307-0, now abolished. This standard supersedes and replaces the standard for the Tour Leader Series, GS-0307-0 published in August 1951.

The term "park" is used in these standards to include national monuments, parkways, historical and military parks, memorials, recreational, and other areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

## COVERAGE

Although the series definition covers positions in any agency these standards were developed to cover specifically only nonsupervisory guide positions in the Department of the Interior. Supervisory guide positions are evaluated by reference to the [Supervisory Grade Evaluation Guide](#).

## EXCLUSIONS

Positions the duties of which are to supervise or perform work involved in receiving and directing persons who call or visit Government agencies, installations or offices, and giving them information concerning the organization, functions, activities, and personnel of such agencies, installations, or offices. ([Information Receptionist Series, GS-0304](#))

Positions the essential duties of which are to supervise or perform technical and specialized work involved in the investigation, collection, preparation, preservation, recording, and cataloging of museum material in connection with the operation of public museums or the management of museum collections. ([Museum Specialist and Technician Series, GS-1016](#))

Positions the essential duties of which are to advise on, administer, supervise, or perform technical or professional work in any technical, professional or scientific field even though incidental duties include guide or interpretative functions to present to the public the natural or historic features of the park or other site. (Appropriate professional or technical series, e.g., [Museum Curator Series, GS-1015](#), and [History Series, GS-0170](#))

Positions the essential duties of which are to supervise or perform work involved in protecting public property, or property in the custody of the Government even though the assignment may include incidental guide or interpretive duties. (See [Guard Series, GS-0085](#).)

## TITLES

The authorized titles for nonsupervisory positions covered by this standard are *Park Guide*, *Reclamation Guide*, and *Guide (General)*, as appropriate.

## CLASSIFICATION FACTORS

The factors of Nature and Variety of Work; Person-to-Person Work Relationships; Nature and Scope of Commitments, Recommendations, Conclusions, and Decisions; and Originality which are important in the allocation for positions in this series are treated under Job Elements. The factors of Supervision Received, Mental Demands and Qualifications Required are treated separately at the various grade levels.

### *Job Elements:*

#### Element 1 - Giving talks

Guides regularly give talks normally following a prescribed outline and requiring application of broad subject-matter knowledge of the features of interest peculiar to the work site. A guide may tell the entire story of the park or dam in a talk given at one point, e.g., in an assembly room at the visitor center where visitors are oriented before taking a self-guiding trail trip; or a guide may be stationed at one of several points of visitor interest and give talks covering only a portion of the interpretive story, e.g., in a large battlefield park, one park guide may be stationed at the historic house where the terms of surrender were drawn up, and would give talks covering the history of the house and the details of the surrender negotiations. In the same park, another park guide might be stationed at an observation point on the battlefield and would describe the battle, pointing out the exact sites where important skirmishes occurred, and explaining the significance of the battle with reference to the war.

In caves and other parks where the size of the parties of visitors taking guided trips (as distinguished from self-guided trail trips) requires more than one guide, a group of park guides accompanies the party throughout the trip; at various stopping points, one of the park guides points out the features of interest which can be observed from that point, and gives a talk covering a portion of the cave story such as the history of exploration or the geological processes which result in the formation of the stalactites and stalagmites. Such talks include detailed and specific interpretation and explanation of the outstanding features from the standpoint of scientific or historical interest, the background of events leading up to the natural feature or phenomenon; the facts, events, personalities and circumstances, not limited to those closely related to the immediate features of interest but those identified with them in their origin, growth, or development, or influencing their present status, form, condition, or importance. In addition, the talks provide general information about other sites of public interest; facilities for public use; pertinent rules and regulations; and other matters designed to stimulate a sense of

appreciation and thus encourage protection and preservation of the scenic, scientific or historic features. In some circumstances, the talks are given in conjunction with live demonstrations of nearly forgotten arts and crafts. Frequently, the talks are given in conjunction with electric maps, photographic slides, and other audio-visual devices.

In all cases, the talks require application of skill in preparing oral presentations, a good speaking voice, a fluent command of English, and other traits common to good public speaking. The basic information to be incorporated in the talks, and the general outline to be adopted in presenting them have been provided by a professional staff man, but the guide is expected to "personalize" them. He must couch the talks in terms appropriate to the obvious interests of the group, e.g., the talks might be quite differently worded when given to a group of school children than to a group on a photographic tour. The guide must exercise judgment in selecting from among the many specific items those which best satisfy the desires of the group and hold their interest.

## Element 2 -- Answering questions

This element differs from giving talks in that while a good many questions are posed repeatedly, there is sufficient variance that the answers cannot be prepared in advance. The guide must have a great many facts in his mind, be able to sort them out promptly and give ready answers in depth to specific questions. He must recognize questions which should be referred to the supervisor or a professional employee, avoid arguments, and tactfully avoid letting one visitor absorb his entire attention during busy periods.

In evaluating this element, consideration should be given to the number and variety of questions which commonly recur, those which the guide answers and the types he refers to others. Answering questions about the events which occurred at a single feature such as a Surrender Room, usually requires memorizing fewer facts than answering questions about events in the lives of the personages who lived in a historic home and their role in the historic occasions; pointing out the authentic objects as distinguished from the reproductions; or naming the artisan who produced furniture, china, silver, etc.

In all cave situations, park guides must acquire and apply a thorough knowledge of the park and its geological formations. In some caves, historic events also occurred, or wildlife is an important feature of interpretation, e.g., the bats at Carlsbad Caverns, the blind fish at Mammoth Cave. Giving talks and answering questions about those features requires acquisition and understanding of a greater diversity of facts than is the case in those caves where such unusual features are not present.

In all cases, the guide must be able to think quickly, answer questions courteously, and exercise judgment in how much detail to supply, and the language in which to frame the answer so that it is geared to the tenor of the question.

### Element 3 -- Guiding parties

In guiding parties, guides both give talks and answer questions. This element involves the techniques of dealing with groups of people moving from place to place along a fixed route. Guides must keep the group together; maintain a pace which the group can keep up with and still conform to prescribed schedules; know the routes and any shortcuts which can be taken if necessary or desirable. This element is especially important in caves where all visitors must be guided.

This element also applies to sites where visitors are not guided on conducted trips, but follow self-guided trails or wander at will. In such situations, a guide is stationed at a point of visitor concentration, such as the stairway of a historic house. He maintains order and safeguards the objects from handling. When need arises, he takes measures to avert crowding, and to slow or speed up the pace of traffic flow. These measures might be to divert clusters of visitors into other rooms or into the garden, to give a short unscheduled talk to hold back a group, or in extreme cases, to bar admission of visitors temporarily in the interest of safety.

Considerations in evaluating this function include the size of the party; the conditions which make it difficult to keep the party together; the difficulty of the terrain or other factors, such as cramped conditions, and consequent precautions which must be taken to insure safety of the visitors; and the fragility of the features, and precautions which must be taken to prevent damage to them.

### Element 4 -- Providing services to visitors

This element includes the many factors involved in dealing with people. The guide is the first and often the only Federal Government employee at the site with whom the visitor comes in contact. He serves as the "host" to the visitors. His uniform identifies him as a Park or Reclamation authority. His presence serves as a deterrent to infraction of regulations, and he is expected to maintain order, enforce regulations, and until relieved, take charge in case of emergency. He is looked to for leadership, assistance and advice. This covers a wide range of services, including assistance with lost articles, car trouble, and first aid; and providing of information about weather conditions, highway routes, park and concessioner facilities, and prices.

Dealing with complaints requires a high order of tact and diplomacy. The guide is expected to satisfy a legitimate complaint immediately, if at all possible. Usually a courteous explanation of why a certain regulation is necessary will serve the purpose. Some types of requests, questions or complaints may require action at higher levels. The guide arranges for the visitor to see an official who may be able to satisfy his wishes, or makes a report of it for consideration by others.

Throughout his daily duties, an important part of the park guide's mission is to stimulate by his attitude toward his work, an understanding of, sense of, appreciation for, and pride of ownership in the parks on the part of the visiting public.



## Miscellaneous duties

Park guides perform protection duties in the course of providing interpretive service to visitors. They are alert to and take measures to prevent injury to persons and damage to formations, exhibits, and property.

When not performing public contact interpretive duties, park guides perform other duties as assigned in the interpretive and protective programs of the park. These assignments vary from park to park. Among the more common duties are:

- Collect admission fees, catalog library accessions and museum objects; inspect restrooms and other public areas; photograph park features for use in interpretive programs; make visitor count reports; take readings of weather observation instruments; make reports; maintain museum collections through preservation treatment; maintain signs; compose correspondence; direct traffic; and receive training and participate as necessary in fire control work.

At dams and other sites, guides perform similar incidental duties such as selling tickets, keeping visitor records, and operating vehicles, elevators, and animated displays.

### *Nature of supervision received*

The guide usually works under the direction of a professional employee, i.e., a park naturalist, park historian, or engineer. In some situations, the immediate supervisor may be a guide of higher grade. In all cases, a professional employee provides basic material to be used in interpreting the features, and suggests techniques of interpretation. During his early period of employment, the new employee accompanies an experienced guide to learn trip routes, and observe the techniques used in meeting the more common situations which arise. Thereafter, the guide usually works apart from the supervisor. Close supervision of the work is usually not practicable, although the supervisor may occasionally monitor talks, and is available for guidance in problems of public contact, to answer visitor questions which are out of the normal routine, or to deal with complaints which are referred to him. The work of giving talks and guiding tours is subject to check for conformance to schedules. Effectiveness of public contact can also be judged by the type of inquiries or complaints which are referred to the supervisor.

### *Nature of available guidelines for performance of the work*

Guides receive in-service training covering the scientific and historical data to be incorporated in interpretive talks and in answering the most frequently recurring questions; in effective methods and techniques of presenting the information; in ways of coping with recurring problems; and in techniques pertinent to the miscellaneous duties of the specific position. The length of the training period varies, depending on the complexity of the work situation, the volume of facts which must be acquired, and the nature of the foreseeable problems which are encountered.

Other guidelines available to guides include prescribed routes, maps, working models, photographs, basic policies, and established practices. Libraries and other file and reference facilities are accessible to them.

### *Qualifications required*

Qualifications required by these positions are described in "Classification Factors" above and at each grade level.

## **EVALUATION OF POSITIONS BELOW GRADE GS-04**

No description of positions below grade GS-4 has been included in this standard. However, any position which is significantly more limited in difficulty, variety or responsibility than is described in the standard at the GS-4 level should be classified in the appropriate grade below GS-4. Thus, a position which involves repetitive performance in accordance with specific directions or which is limited in the interpretive information to be provided or the kinds of questions to be answered without referral is classifiable below GS-4. Also classifiable below GS-4 are positions of trainees requiring more than a short time to learn to perform the types of work described at the GS-4 level.

## **PARK GUIDE AND RECLAMATION GUIDE, GS-0090-04**

GS-4 guides provide interpretive service, where (1) the features are largely self-explanatory and are easily observed and understood as to origin, development, form and significance, and the interpretive service required to be given by the guide is of a repetitive nature; (2) the questions encountered recur repeatedly and usually require use of a limited variety of facts, events, circumstances, personalities, and natural characteristics identified with the immediate park or dam, or are closely associated with the origin, growth, or development of the feature of interest; (3) the parties led are of such small size as to be easily accommodated within the physical limitations of the area or facility being explained (rarely over 20) on a trip of short duration; and (4) the work situation is such that accidents or other emergencies rarely occur, or help is readily available.

Typical of GS-4 positions are:

### **Park Guide, GS-0090-04**

- A. At a cave where small parties take cave trips usually not exceeding 1 ½ hours, the park guide greets the group; gives a brief talk explaining the history of exploration of the cave, the general geology of the cave, principal features to be observed, regulations to be followed to preserve the features and protect the visitors, and any measures which need to be taken ahead of time to enhance visitor comfort and enjoyment, such as opportunities and arrangements for photographing features, suggestions as to suitable clothing, etc. Serves as lead guide on the tour, scheduling speed of the party consistent with the interest of the group and to avoid encounters with other parties. Answers questions pertaining to the cave itself such as (1) the number of miles of trails; (2) the depth of the cave below the earth's surface and how far it is

above sea-level; (3) the age of the cave; (4) the difference between a stalactite and a stalagmite; (5) length of time required for formation; (6) identification of common plants and animals found on the surface, and any found in the cave. Also answers questions of a general nature such as location of nearby camping areas, distance to other parks, identification of other caves, etc. Throughout the tour, is responsible for maintaining order in the party, and coping with any emergency which may arise until relieved.

May give talks about the cave, illustrated with slides, at campfire programs and similar gatherings.

- B. At the visitor center of a battlefield site provided with an electric map, the Park Guide GS-4 relates the story of the battle in coordination with automatic lighting sequence. Answers questions regarding the battle, the restoration and early history of historic houses on the ground of the park, the associated national military cemetery, other points of local interest, and questions pertaining to accommodations, highways, etc. Occasionally guides parties over the battlefields.

When not engaged in public contact work, answers correspondence about the park, performs library research to verify obscure facts or to answer inquiries, prepares labels for exhibit cases, and performs similar duties.

### **Reclamation Guide, GS-0090-04**

- C. At a small or medium size dam area or with primary responsibility for a substantial segment of a very large dam project area, performs the customary guide duties described at the GS-5 and GS-6 levels, but under the following conditions: Principal features are easily observed and primarily self-explanatory as to identification and purpose; tours are generally of short or moderate duration; questions by the public are mostly repetitious; facts presented in talks are limited in variety of subject to very little change from time to time; and the situation is such that accidents and other emergencies rarely occur.

#### *Nature of supervision received*

A professional employee (i.e., an engineer, park historian or park naturalist) provides training in interpretive techniques and provides data to be included in talks and applied in answering questions. The immediate supervisor, who may be a professional employee or a guide of a higher grade, establishes work schedules, occasionally monitors talks, and is available to answer unusual questions.

### *Qualifications required*

The employee must acquire a considerable knowledge about the area, e.g., the history of the park or the dam and appurtenant structures, the personalities involved, the sequence of events, the significance of the event in terms of broader historical, economic, or scientific occurrences. Therefore, he must be able to assimilate specifics quickly. He must have a good command of language and the ability to communicate effectively. He must have ability and judgment to handle situations such as disorder or accidents. He must have leadership traits, poise, bearing and other traits which will enable him to obtain cooperation and compliance with regulations. He must exercise diplomacy in avoiding controversial issues; he must avoid expressing praise in such a way that would create a controversy and he must avoid expressing a bias in his point of view regarding the issue. He must demonstrate enthusiasm and sincerity, and an attitude of friendliness

## **PARK GUIDE AND RECLAMATION GUIDE, GS-0090-05**

GS-5 guides are given assignments in sites where (1) intelligent observation of the features by the visitors requires the guide to present detailed and specific interpretations and explanations of features from the standpoint of historical significance or scientific development or importance; (2) the questions encountered arise from observation of the features themselves; from the demonstrated major interests of visitors, or from the nature of the talks; (These presentations and answers to questions in (1) and (2) require explanation and description of the background of events leading up to the natural or scientific development and the introduction and discussion of an extensive body of facts, events, personalities, and circumstances, not only those closely related to the immediate features, but also those identified or associated with them in their origin, growth or development or influencing their present status, form, condition, or importance.) (3) the parties led consist of about 50 in situations where the physical limitations of the area or facility being explained make it difficult to accommodate the party on trips of two or more hours' duration; (4) the work situation may be such that there is potential danger of serious accidents, injury or other emergency situations, or (5) the parties guided are very large, the trips are of several hours' duration, and teams of guides are utilized.

Typical of positions in this class are:

### **Park Guide, GS-0090-05**

- A. At a very large cave with numerous features which require interpretation, where a team of park guides conduct large parties on cave trips requiring several hours, the Park Guide GS-5 serves on a rotating assignment in varying roles: lead, trailer, cut-in. The various roles require different techniques in management of the party. The lead turns on lights and sets the pace, faster through the less interesting sections and slower through the scenic sections of the cave. The trailer or rear guide keeps the rear section of the party compact, turns off lights, and makes sure that no one strays from the main group. The cut-in works the line of visitors to keep the party together and as necessary leads a lagging portion of the party by shortcuts to join the lead portion.

Each park guide gives one or more of several scheduled talks at stopping points along the tour route, following a prescribed outline as to material to be covered, e.g., one talk will include the history of exploration, another the general geology of the cave, another the story of plant and animal life in the cave.

While the party is enroute along the trail, the park guide in this situation answers visitor questions, and takes action as necessary to safeguard the features and prevent accidents.

- B. In an historical park, a Park Guide GS-5 is stationed on a rotating basis at any one or several points of visitor concentration, e.g., a historic house on a battlefield site. Conducts visitors through the building, telling the story of the events which took place there, how those events related to the battle, and how the battle related to the war. Another point is at an observation point where the entire battlefield can be viewed. Usually the battlefield is provided with a self-guiding trail system. The park guide gives talks and answers questions about those phases of history of the site which were covered only briefly, if at all, in the interpretive markers and trail guide leaflets. The information given covers a wide range of facts, statistics, events, circumstances, personalities, etc., identified with or closely associated with the site. May conduct groups over the battlefields and give talks geared specifically to the field of interest of organized groups, e.g., points out the site where a certain regiment engaged in combat; in an historic house, names the artisans who designed furniture, china or silver pieces, and identifies objects which are period pieces as distinguished from authentic pieces used by historic personages.

Maintains order in the parties, prevents crowding on narrow stairs or injury to historic objects, and takes appropriate action in case of emergency until relieved.

*(Note: A park guide position which involves permanent assignment to only one of these types of points ordinarily does not include the full range of duties contemplated at this grade level and therefore does not warrant evaluation at the GS-5 level.)*

### **Reclamation Guide, GS-0090-05**

- C. At a large dam, personally escorts visitors on tours of the project, and through prepared lectures and by answering inquiries explains the physical features of the project, the programs contemplated, progress made, benefits derived from the completed project such as downstream flood control, power production, etc.

The guide is responsible for the conduct of the group in his tour, including the safety of visitors. He must deal capably with emergencies that may arise, maintain tour schedules and avoid interfering with operation, maintenance and construction activities.

As incidental duties, the guide keeps records of visitors, ticket sales and money, directs traffic and parking; and operates automobiles, elevators, public address systems, and visual aid animated displays.



*Nature of supervision and guidance received*

The training is essentially as described at the next lower grade, except that because of the complexity of the story to be told, the training period is usually longer as more facts and knowledges must be acquired.

In the work situation described in Example A, the employee is attached to a party of guides led by a "Chief of Party," usually a park guide of higher grade. The "Chief of Party" assigns the park guide to his position with the party, and the specific talks he is to give at scheduled stops. The "Chief of Party" reports to the supervisor his appraisal of the park guide's performance on that trip, and makes recommendations such as further training needed, especially good features of performance warranting commendation, etc., but has no continuous supervisory responsibility over the park guide except during the trip.

In the other work situations, the employee works apart from the supervisor, much the same as described at the next lower grade.

*Qualifications required*

The basic qualifications and abilities are essentially the same as defined for the GS-4 level. In addition, the work requires an ability to acquire and apply a greater range and depth of knowledge of an extensive body of facts, events, personalities and their influence which contributed to the importance of the area to be interpreted. The work at this level also requires greater skill in dealing with a greater diversity of types of visitors and under a greater variety of circumstances. Additional requirements result from the more complex work situations, greater volume of information presented and larger size of the parties, which requires greater skill in dealing with visitors.

**PARK GUIDE AND RECLAMATION GUIDE, GS-0090-06**

GS-6 guides work at a park or dam where the work characteristics are similar to those described at the GS-5 level, but where they have responsibility for the conduct of the trip. GS-6 positions involve some elements of supervision, but involve less than the full range of supervisory responsibility. The grade controlling function is the individual-performance responsibility.

Typical of positions in this class are:

**Park Guide, GS-0090-06**

- A. In a cave where a team of 3 or more park guides accompany large parties on cave trips requiring several hours, the park guide serves as "Chief of Party." He organizes parties prior to departure from the surface, insures that parties are dispatched on schedule, that each visitor is properly checked into the cave, and, throughout the tour, is responsible for maintaining order, keeping the party on schedule, taking action in case of emergency or violation of regulations, etc. He assigns roles to other park guides who accompany the party, to serve as lead, trailer cut-in, etc., specifies the particular talks each is to give at designated



stopping points along the route, and supervises their performance while they are attached to his party. Audits interpretive talks given by other guides, personally gives those talks interpreting the more complex phenomena, and answers the more difficult questions referred by the other park guides.

Alone, or with one or two park guides of lower grade, he conducts parties that require special attention such as distinguished visitors, handicapped persons in wheel chairs, and photographic enthusiasts, on partial tours of the cave.

Depending on the composition and interests of the group, applies infrequently used knowledges and techniques to meet their needs. Selects trails which will accommodate wheel-chairs. Takes scientists and other important persons over rarely-used shortcut trails to the features they most desire to see. Conducts photograph parties over routes which by-pass certain features covered on regular tours, to allow more time at especially photogenic spots; provides general information on techniques which have produced good pictures; enforces regulations (and explains the basis therefore) such as restrictions on use of flash-powder, disposal of used flashbulbs, and restrictions against resting cameras or tripods on formations; explains special arrangements for making commercial motion-pictures.

The park guide in these positions makes reports and suggestions which are relied on heavily by park management in considering management decisions such as scheduling of trail maintenance, laying out of new tour routes, limits on size of parties, increases or decreases in number of guides with a party, etc.

### **Reclamation Guide, GS-0090-06**

- B. Starting at the visitors' center of a very large multiple-purpose project which may have two or more major features, such as a very large dam, a large hydroelectric power plant, a large pumping plant, a fish hatchery or fish diversion works, a large substation activating a major transmission system, or a combination of these features, the guide, utilizing any of various public address devices, assembles the group; explains and outlines the proposed group activity, giving advance direction and/or announces precautionary measures required, and otherwise prepares visitors to enable them to acquire maximum benefit from their visit. This requires that he assess immediately and unobtrusively certain physical characteristics of the visitors in the group and to arrange for safety factors, tour time and maximum reception for the lectures and the project's visible interests.

In the course of several tours, or as required by special groups with varied interests, the guide gives lectures on the origin and inception of the project; reviews some of the considerations related to feasibility determinations in the concept stages; and explains the topographic and physical layout of the project. Describes the phases of the various multipurpose features and relates each to the other; outlines and describes the project operations in terms of effect on



the economy of the area, agricultural and industrial relationships, operation and purposes of hydroelectric power generation and distribution system, operation and purposes of a system of hydraulic gates and valves and the release of water for irrigation, types and kinds of crops, etc.

The guide may use working models, animated pictures, or other mechanical devices at the beginning or during the tour to explain any of the various project features. May conduct automobile caravans by use of pilot car from the visitor's center to any part of project; follows prescribed routes presenting lectures at designated points of interest.

- C. On a large dam project under construction in a dynamic and ever-changing work environment, the guide keeps informed of continually changing information and data, ranging from numerous statistical type data to relatively complex descriptions of various construction processes, techniques and equipment in use during various stages of construction as well as of the structures and appurtenant works. Obtains such information from supervisor or from discussion with engineers or other technical personnel and from reports and bulletins. Since potential accident hazards are relatively numerous, the guide exercises a high degree of safety consciousness and alertness to avoid accidents and prevent interference with construction activity. Assembles visitors, delivers lectures, conducts tours, and describes physical features and the interrelationship of various types of equipment operations.

### *Nature of supervision and guidance received*

The supervisor is a professional or administrative employee who is responsible for the program of guide service at the site. The supervisor establishes trip schedules, assigns work schedules to the entire guide force, spot checks the conduct of the trips, appraises the performance of the guides, and takes action to effect improvements.

### *Qualifications required*

A high degree of maturity and leadership ability is required in dealing with an extremely large group of people who are in unfamiliar surroundings where there is a serious potential for accident and injury. The greater complexity of the work situation requires a greater depth and breadth of knowledges than at the next lower level, and a keener ability to respond to diverse interests within groups.