



The Board notes that appellant had a prior work-related injury on February 25, 1987 under OWCP File No. xxxxxx098, which occurred when he fell from a chair. The prior claim was accepted by OWCP for cervical and lumbar strains and herniated nucleus pulposus (HNP) at L4-5, L5-S1, with related surgery in mid-1993.

By decision dated January 25, 2016, OWCP denied appellant's recurrence claim (Form CA-2a), finding that the medical evidence of record failed to establish a recurrence of disability commencing August 21, 2014 due to a material change/worsening of his accepted work-related condition.

The Board, having duly considered the matter, concludes that the case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be combined when correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files. In the instant case, OWCP has recommended that appellant consider filing a recurrence claim in OWCP File No. xxxxxx098. As the record before the Board does not contain the evidence from the prior claim, the Board is unable to properly adjudicate the issue of appellant's recurrence claim. The Board finds that the case is not in posture for a decision as the record before the Board is incomplete and would not permit an informed adjudication of the case by the Board. The case must be remanded to OWCP to combine the files<sup>2</sup> and for further reconstruction and proper assemblage of the case record, to be followed by any necessary further development and a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the August 25, 2016 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside, and the case is remanded for further action consistent with this order of the Board.

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<sup>2</sup> Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

Issued: April 20, 2018  
Washington, DC

Christopher J. Godfrey, Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Valerie D. Evans-Harrell, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board