

heavy satchel on uneven terrain. Appellant further explained that he sustained a traumatic injury to his left knee on May 16, 2015 when he attempted to remove a seat from the back of his truck.³ He alleged that his left knee continued to worsen due his federal employment duties which required extensive standing and walking, lifting and carrying heavy trays and satchels of mail, and loading of his truck. Appellant was referred in December 2016 for a total left knee replacement.

By decision dated February 1, 2017, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim.

On February 28, 2017 counsel for appellant requested a hearing. On April 27, 2017 he subsequently requested a review of the written record. By decision dated June 9, 2017, OWCP's hearing representative affirmed the February 1, 2017 decision.

Appellant subsequently requested reconsideration and by decisions dated July 30, 2018 and January 30, 2019 OWCP denied modification.

The Board has duly considered the matter and concludes that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files.⁴ For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition or the same part of the body, doubling is required.⁵ In the instant case, appellant had a prior occupational injury claim for hip and knee injuries assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx212. He then filed a traumatic injury claim for the left, knee assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx749. Neither of these claims have been combined with the current claim, in which appellant alleges that his continued work as a letter carrier aggravated his prior knee conditions.

For a full and fair adjudication, the Board finds that the previously noted claims should be combined with the current claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx343, pursuant to OWCP procedures. Therefore, the case must be remanded to OWCP to administratively combine the case records for OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx212, xxxxxx749, and xxxxxx343. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision on the merits of appellant's claim.

CONCLUSION

The Board finds that this case is not in posture for decision.

³ That claim was assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx749 and was accepted by OWCP for left knee sprain and medical meniscus tear.

⁴ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

⁵ *Id.*, L.H., Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the January 30, 2019 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and this case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: April 30, 2020
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board