

Under the present claim, OWCP File No. xxxxxx258, by decision dated February 4, 2020, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish the implicated employment factors. It noted that appellant had not responded to the November 14, 2019 development letter and it was unable to determine how walking as a city carrier contributed to her right knee osteoarthritis over a given period of time. OWCP concluded, therefore, that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury as defined by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act.

The Board, having duly considered the matter, finds that the case is not in posture for decision.

As appellant has pursued compensation benefits under File Nos. xxxxxx258 and xxxxxx656 for the right knee, there are medical reports and factual information that bear directly on the matter before OWCP in File No. xxxxxx656.² The record currently before the Board does not contain all of the relevant medical and factual evidence upon which the Board could adjudicate appellant's present claim.

OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication depends on cross-referencing between files and when two or more injuries occur to the same part of the body.³ 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.⁴ As the claims in the following OWCP files all involve appellant's right knee, OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx258 and xxxxxx656, the Board finds that they must be administratively combined for a full and fair adjudication of appellant's present claim. This will allow OWCP to consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in developing appellant's current occupational disease claim.

Accordingly, the Board will remand the case to OWCP to administratively combine the case records for OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx258 and xxxxxx656. Following this and other such development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* merit decision.

² *Supra* note 1.

³ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

⁴ *R.R.*, Docket No. 19-0368 (issued November 26, 2019); Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance & Management*, Chapter 2.400.8c (February 2000).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the February 4, 2020 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: December 3, 2020
Washington, DC

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

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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