

File No. xxxxxx162, which OWCP accepted for left elbow strain.² Appellant indicated that he first became aware of his condition on June 15, 2011 and realized its relation to his federal employment on October 5, 2017. He did not stop work.

In an October 10, 2019 development letter, OWCP advised appellant of the deficiencies of his claim. It requested additional factual and medical evidence and provided a questionnaire for his completion. OWCP afforded him 30 days to respond.

By decision dated November 19, 2019, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim finding that he failed to submit medical opinion evidence establishing causal relationship between his diagnosed left elbow condition and his implicated factors of employment.

In adjudicating appellant's current left elbow claim in OWCP File No. xxxxxx823, appellant has referenced his previously accepted left elbow claim, OWCP File No. xxxxxx162, in which he had an accepted left elbow injury. OWCP has not, however, administratively combined the case records for his previously accepted left upper extremity claims, or incorporated the relevant and contemporaneous medical evidence into the current case record.³

The Board, having duly considered the matter, finds that this case is not in posture for decision. 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.⁴ As the instant claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx823 and the claims under OWCP Master File No. xxxxxx609 and OWCP Subsidiary File No. xxxxxx162 both involve injuries to appellant's left upper extremity, these claims must be administratively combined for a full and fair adjudication of his 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 current file, OWCP File No. xxxxxx823 with OWCP Master File No. xxxxxx609, which includes OWCP Subsidiary File No. xxxxxx162. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision.

² OWCP File No. xxxxxx162, accepted for left elbow sprain, along with OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx261, accepted for back and neck conditions, xxxxxx521, accepted for left knee conditions, xxxxxx177, accepted for a chest injury, xxxxxx285, accepted for an abdomen injury, xxxxxx482, accepted for right rib strain, and xxxxxx154, accepted for a mid-back condition, are subsidiary files under OWCP Master File No. xxxxxx609. OWCP Master File No. xxxxxx609 was accepted for derangement of the left acromioclavicular joint.

³ *G.D.*, Docket No. 19-1969 (issued May 4, 2020).

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

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the November 19, 2019 decision of Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and this case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: November 20, 2020
Washington, DC

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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