

factors of his federal employment, including continuously lifting mail flats between 5 and 10 pounds at shoulder length. He noted that he first became aware of his condition on May 7, 2021 and realized its relation to his federal employment on June 18, 2021. Appellant stopped work on June 24, 2021. OWCP assigned the claim File No. xxxxxx250.³

In medical reports dated June 22 and July 15, 2021, Dr. James McGee, a chiropractic orthopedist, examined appellant's lumbar spine and diagnosed a disc herniation.

On September 9, 2021 Dr. Sanjiv Bansal, a Board-certified orthopedist, diagnosed a c-spine herniation.

By decision dated September 28, 2021, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish a back condition causally related to the accepted factors of his federal employment.

The Board, having duly considered this matter, finds 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 case 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 Appellant has a previously accepted traumatic injury claim for lumbosacral sprain and disc derangement under OWCP File No. xxxxxx029. The present claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx250, involves the same body part. However, OWCP has not administratively combined the present claim with OWCP File No. xxxxxx029.

For a full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record, OWCP File No. xxxxxx250 with OWCP File No. xxxxxx029, so it can consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in adjudicating appellant's current occupational disease claim. Following this and such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue an appropriate decision. Accordingly,

³ Under OWCP File No. xxxxxx029, appellant previously filed a traumatic injury claim on November 18, 2004, which OWCP accepted on December 3, 2004 for a lumbosacral sprain and disc derangement.

⁴ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8c (February 2000); *T.D.*, Docket No. 20-1119 (issued January 29, 2021); *R.R.*, Docket No. 19-0368 (issued November 26, 2019).

⁵ *Id.*; *M.B.*, Docket No. 20-1175 (issued December 31, 2020); *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the September 28, 2021 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: August 17, 2022
Washington, DC

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

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

James D. McGinley, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board