

On February 22, 2022 appellant requested reconsideration of the January 28, 2022 decision and submitted additional evidence.

By decision dated April 8, 2022, OWCP modified its prior decision finding that appellant had submitted sufficient evidence to establish diagnoses of disc displacement at L3-4 through L5-S1 and spinal stenosis at L3-4 and L5-S1. However, appellant's claim remained denied as she had not submitted sufficient rationalized medical evidence to establish that the accepted June 30, 2021 employment incident caused or aggravated her diagnosed conditions.

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.² 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.³ Herein, appellant's claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx936 also involved injuries to the low back, which are at issue in the present claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx454. For a full and fair adjudication, this case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record with OWCP File No. xxxxxx936, so it can consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in adjudicating appellant's current traumatic injury claim.⁴

Following this and other such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision.

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

³ *Id.*; *M.L.*, Docket No. 20-1176 (issued April 29, 2021); *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

⁴ *Supra* note 2 at Chapter 2.400.8c(1); *W.D.*, Docket No. 19-0961 (issued March 31, 2021); *L.P.*, Docket Nos. 18-1558, 18-1568 (issued June 21, 2019).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the January 28 and April 8, 2022 decisions of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs are set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: August 24, 2022
Washington, DC

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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

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