

tossed into the air and then land on his knees and palms of his hands while in the performance of duty.² He did not stop work.

By decision dated May 9, 2018, OWCP denied appellant's traumatic injury claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish that his diagnosed medical condition was causally related to the accepted March 23, 2018 employment incident.

On May 16, 2018 appellant, through counsel, requested an oral hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review. Following a preliminary review, by decision dated August 2, 2018, the hearing representative remanded the case to OWCP for further development of the medical evidence.

By decision dated April 9, 2019, OWCP again denied appellant's traumatic injury claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish that his diagnosed medical condition was causally related to the accepted March 23, 2018 employment incident. On April 15, 2019 appellant, through counsel, requested an oral hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review.

By decision dated October 21, 2019, the hearing representative affirmed OWCP's April 9, 2019 decision. She referenced OWCP File No. xxxxxx692 in the decision.

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 files.³ For example, if a new injury claim is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition of the same part of the body, doubling is required.⁴ Herein, appellant has a prior claim accepted under OWCP File No. xxxxxx692 for a low back condition, which is the same region of the body at issue in the claim presently before the Board.

Therefore, for a full and fair adjudication, the case must be remanded to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record, OWCP File No. xxxxxx836, with OWCP File No. xxxxxx692. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

² OWCP assigned the present claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx836. Appellant has a previously-accepted traumatic injury claim for a February 2, 2015 low back strain under OWCP File No. xxxxxx692. Appellant's claims have not been administratively combined.

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

⁴ *Id.*; *H.B.*, Docket No 20-1298 (issued November 22, 2021); *S.G.*, Docket No. 21-0396 (issued September 27, 2021); *R.L.*, Docket No. 20-0901 (issued July 27, 2021); *M.E.*, Docket No. 21-0094 (issued May 27, 2021); *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the October 21, 2019 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: February 25, 2022
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, 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