



her physician now believes that her injury occurred as a result of repetitive lifting and twisting with heavy trays of mail throughout her career. She stopped work on January 5, 2018. OWCP assigned the claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx827.

By decision dated August 19, 2020, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish a lumbar spine and left shoulder condition causally related to the accepted factors of her federal employment. It noted that she had a prior claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx475 where she also alleged a back condition related to a January 4, 2018 employment incident and that claim had been denied.

On June 25, 2021 appellant, through counsel, requested reconsideration of OWCP's August 19, 2020 decision.

By decision dated September 23, 2021, OWCP denied modification of its August 19, 2020 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 case files.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> In the present claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx827, appellant noted that she first became aware of her claimed lumbar spine and left shoulder conditions on January 4, 2018. Under OWCP File No. xxxxxx475, she also claimed a back injury due to an employment incident on January 4, 2018 when she lifted a heavy package from a wire container. However, OWCP has not administratively combined the present claim with OWCP File No. xxxxxx475, which pertains to the same body part and official duties.

For a full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record, OWCP File No. xxxxxx827, with OWCP File No. xxxxxx475, so it can consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in adjudicating appellant's current traumatic injury claim. Following this and such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue an appropriate decision. Accordingly,

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<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> *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 23, 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: June 8, 2022  
Washington, DC

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. D. McGinley".

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