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<b>A.N., Appellant</b>	)	
	)	
<b>and</b>	)	<b>Docket No. 21-1099</b>
	)	<b>Issued: February 6, 2023</b>
<b>U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, POST OFFICE,</b>	)	
<b>City of Industry, CA, Employer</b>	)	
	)	

*Case Submitted on the Record*

Before:  
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge  
JANICE B. ASKIN, Judge  
JAMES D. MCGINLEY, Alternate Judge

By decision dated September 30, 2020, OWCP denied appellant's claim. It found that he had not established causal relationship between the accepted July 13, 2020 employment incident and his diagnosed conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Appellant has a previously accepted May 10, 2015 traumatic injury claim for sprain of lumbar back OWCP File No. xxxxxx640. On December 8, 2016 OWCP expanded the acceptance of this claim to include acute lumbar disc herniation and permanent aggravation of the degenerative disc disease.

On December 10, 2020 appellant requested reconsideration and submitted new evidence. By decision dated March 2, 2021, OWCP denied modification of its September 30, 2020 decision.

On April 1, 2021 appellant again requested reconsideration and submitted new evidence. By decision dated June 11, 2021, OWCP denied modification of its March 2, 2021 decision.

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.<sup>2</sup> For example, if a new injury 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>3</sup> In the instant case, appellant has an accepted claim for sprain of lumbar back, acute lumbar disc herniation, and permanent aggravation of the degenerative disc disease under OWCP File No. xxxxxx640. He subsequently filed the present traumatic injury claim alleging that he reinjured his lower back under OWCP File No. xxxxxx455. The evidence pertaining to his previously accepted claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx640, however, is not part of the case record presently before the Board.

For a full and fair adjudication, the Board finds that the case must be remanded to OWCP to administratively combine the case records for OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx640 and xxxxxx455, so it can properly determine whether appellant has established that his diagnosed lower back conditions were causally related to the accepted July 13, 2020 employment incident.<sup>4</sup> Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision on the merits of appellant's claim.

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<sup>2</sup> Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000). *See also* C.M., Docket No. 20-1451 (issued July 26, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*; *see* P.B., Docket No. 19-1532 (issued April 30, 2020); L.H., Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> *See* S.N., Docket No. 20-0208 (issued June 15, 2020); J.N., *Order Remanding Case*, Docket No. 19-1847 (issued April 30, 2020).

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the June 11, 2021 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and this case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: February 6, 2023  
Washington, DC

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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