

² 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq.*

ISSUE

The issue is whether appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted employment factors.

FACTUAL HISTORY

On May 7, 2024 appellant, then a 46-year-old rural carrier, filed an occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) alleging that she sustained a “cumulative occupational disease” from repetitive job duties requiring prolonged gripping, pinching, grasping, twisting/rotating wrist, heavy lifting/carrying/pulling/pushing, casing, and using a scanner while in the performance of duty. She did not identify a specific body part or medical condition. Appellant noted that she first became aware of her condition on October 1, 2023, and realized its relation to her federal employment on March 12, 2024.

In a development letter dated May 14, 2024, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of her claim. It advised her of the type of factual and medical evidence required to establish her claim. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to submit the necessary evidence. No medical evidence was received.

In a follow-up letter dated June 10, 2024, OWCP advised appellant that it had conducted an interim review, and the evidence remained insufficient to establish her claim. It noted that she had 60 days from the May 14, 2004 letter to submit the requested necessary evidence. OWCP further advised that if the evidence was not received during this time, it would issue a decision based on the evidence contained in the record. No additional evidence was received.

By decision dated July 23, 2024, OWCP denied appellant’s occupational disease claim. It found that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish a medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted employment factors. OWCP concluded, therefore, that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

On July 30, 2024 appellant, through counsel, requested an oral hearing before a representative of OWCP’s Branch of Hearings and Review, which was held on November 1, 2024. The hearing representative held the record open for 30 days. No further medical evidence was received.

OWCP subsequently received a report of work status (Form CA-3), which noted that appellant stopped work on October 1, 2023, and returned to full-time regular-duty work on October 2, 2023.

By decision dated December 19, 2024, OWCP’s hearing representative affirmed the July 23, 2024 decision.

LEGAL PRECEDENT

An employee seeking benefits under FECA³ has the burden of proof to establish the essential elements of his or her claim, including that the individual is an employee of the United States within the meaning of FECA, that the claim was timely filed within the applicable time limitation of FECA,⁴ that an injury was sustained in the performance of duty as alleged, and that any disability or medical condition for which compensation is claimed is causally related to the employment injury.⁵ These are the essential elements of each and every compensation claim, regardless of whether the claim is predicated upon a traumatic injury or an occupational disease.⁶

To establish that an injury was sustained in the performance of duty in an occupational disease claim, a claimant must submit: (1) a factual statement identifying employment factors alleged to have caused or contributed to the presence or occurrence of the disease or condition; (2) medical evidence establishing the presence or existence of the disease or condition for which compensation is claimed; and (3) medical evidence establishing that the diagnosed condition is causally related to the identified employment factors.⁷

Causal relationship is a medical question that requires rationalized medical opinion evidence to resolve the issue.⁸ The opinion of the physician must be based upon a complete factual and medical background, must be one of reasonable medical certainty, and must be supported by medical rationale explaining the nature of the relationship between the diagnosed condition and the specific employment factors.⁹

ANALYSIS

The Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted employment factors.

Appellant related that she developed a medical condition from repetitive job duties including prolonged gripping, pinching, grasping, twisting/rotating wrist, heavy lifting/carrying/pulling/pushing, casing, and using a scanner while in the performance of duty. In May 14 and

³ *Id.*

⁴ See *F.G.*, Docket No. 25-0306 (issued March 19, 2025); *C.M.*, Docket No. 25-0252 (issued February 21, 2025); *S.F.*, Docket No. 23-0264 (issued July 5, 2023); *F.H.*, Docket No. 18-0869 (issued January 29, 2020); *J.P.*, Docket No. 19-0129 (issued April 26, 2019); *Joe D. Cameron*, 41 ECAB 153 (1989).

⁵ *F.G.*, *id.*; *C.M.*, *id.*; *L.C.*, Docket No. 19-1301 (issued January 29, 2020); *J.H.*, Docket No. 18-1637 (issued January 29, 2020); *James E. Chadden, Sr.*, 40 ECAB 312 (1988).

⁶ *F.G.*, *id.*; *C.M.*, *id.*; *P.A.*, Docket No. 18-0559 (issued January 29, 2020); *K.M.*, Docket No. 15-1660 (issued September 16, 2016); *Delores C. Ellyett*, 41 ECAB 992 (1990).

⁷ *R.E.*, Docket No. 25-0179 (issued January 24, 2025).

⁸ *F.G.*, *supra* note 4; *C.M.*, *supra* note 4; *I.J.*, Docket No. 19-1343 (issued February 26, 2020); *T.H.*, 59 ECAB 388 (2008); *Robert G. Morris*, 48 ECAB 238 (1996).

⁹ *D.C.*, Docket No. 19-1093 (issued June 25, 2020); see *Victor J. Woodhams*, 41 ECAB 345 (1989).

June 10, 2024 development letters, OWCP advised her of the deficiencies of her claim and the need to submit supporting medical evidence. However, appellant failed to submit any medical evidence in support of her claim.

During the November 1, 2024 hearing before an OWCP hearing representative, appellant testified that in January 2023 she developed pain in her hands, wrists, and elbows, which worsened in October 2023. She also testified that her physician had related possible diagnoses of tenosynovitis or de Quervain's syndrome. The Board finds however that appellant did not submit any medical evidence of a diagnosis and medical opinion regarding causal relationship to the accepted employment factors. As noted, appellant's burden of proof includes the submission of medical evidence establishing a diagnosed condition for which compensation is claimed and that the diagnosed condition is causally related to the accepted employment factors.¹⁰

As the evidence of record is devoid of medical evidence establishing a medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted employment factor, the Board finds that appellant did not meet her burden of proof.¹¹

Appellant may submit new evidence or argument with a written request for reconsideration to OWCP within one year of this merit decision, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 8128 and 20 C.F.R. §§ 10.605 through 10.607.

CONCLUSION

The Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted employment factors.

¹⁰ See *F.G.*, *supra* note 4; *C.M.*, *supra* note 4; *B.K.*, Docket No. 24-0728 (issued July 30, 2024); *E.L.*, Docket No. 24-0232 (issued April 9, 2024); *S.C.*, Docket No. 18-1242 (issued March 13, 2019); *R.H.*, 59 ECAB 382 (2008).

¹¹ See *J.W.*, Docket No. 24-0028 (issued December 20, 2024); *D.S.*, Docket No. 25-0034 (issued November 18, 2024); *A.C.*, Docket No. 22-1195 (issued January 18, 2023); *M.D.*, Docket No. 18-0195 (issued September 13, 2018).

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the December 19, 2024 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Issued: April 18, 2025
Washington, DC

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

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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