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<b>E.M., Appellant</b>	)	
	)	
<b>and</b>	)	<b>Docket No. 25-0572</b>
	)	<b>Issued: July 11, 2025</b>
<b>U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, FREDONIA POST</b>	)	
<b>OFFICE, Fredonia, KS, Employer</b>	)	
	)	

*Case Submitted on the Record*

Before:  
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Deputy Chief Judge  
JANICE B. ASKIN, Judge  
VALERIE D. EVANS-HARRELL, Alternate Judge

On May 5, 2025 appellant filed a timely appeal from a March 24, 2025 merit decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). Pursuant to the Federal Employees' Compensation Act<sup>1</sup> (FECA) and 20 C.F.R. §§ 501.2(c) and 501.3, the Board has jurisdiction over the merits of this case.<sup>2</sup>

The issue is whether appellant has met his burden of proof to establish a medical condition causally related to the accepted factors of his federal employment.

<sup>2</sup> The Board notes that, following the March 24, 2025 decision, appellant submitted additional evidence to OWCP. However, the Board’s *Rules of Procedures* provides: “The Board’s review of a case is limited to the evidence in the case record that was before OWCP at the time of its final decision. Evidence not before OWCP will not be considered by the Board for the first time on appeal.” 20 C.F.R. § 501.2(c)(1). Thus, the Board is precluded from reviewing this additional evidence for the first time on appeal. *Id.*

## **FACTUAL HISTORY**

On December 22, 2024 appellant, then a 75-year-old city carrier, filed an occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) alleging that he developed a medical condition due to factors of his federal employment including various repetitive motions, related to casing and delivering heavy parcels of mail over the course of 39 years. He noted that he first became aware of his condition on December 25, 2021, and realized its relation to his federal employment on December 20, 2023. Appellant stopped work on December 25, 2021 and retired from federal service on December 31, 2021.

In a September 11, 2024 electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction velocity (NCV) study of the upper extremities, Dr. M. Stephen Wilson, a Board-certified orthopedic surgeon, diagnosed moderate chronic ulnar nerve entrapment at the level of the elbows (cubital tunnel syndrome); mild-to-moderate, chronic, median nerve entrapment at the level of the wrists (carpal tunnel syndrome); and no electrodiagnostic evidence of cervical radiculopathy or brachial plexopathy.

In a December 30, 2024 development letter, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of his claim. It advised him as to the type of factual and medical evidence needed and provided a questionnaire for his completion. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to submit the necessary evidence. No additional evidence was received.

In a follow-up letter dated January 28, 2025, OWCP advised appellant that it had conducted an interim review, and the evidence remained insufficient to establish his claim. It noted that he had 60 days from the December 30, 2024 letter to submit the necessary evidence. OWCP further advised that if the necessary evidence was not received during this time, it would issue a decision based on the evidence contained in the record.

In a statement received on March 3, 2025, appellant described his repetitive employment duties and circumstances surrounding his injury.

By decision dated March 24, 2025, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish causal relationship between the diagnosed condition and the accepted factors of his federal employment.

## **LEGAL PRECEDENT**

An employee seeking benefits under FECA<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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

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<sup>3</sup> *Supra* note 1.

<sup>4</sup> *E.K.*, Docket No. 22-1130 (issued December 30, 2022); *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).

employment injury.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

To establish that an injury was sustained in the performance of duty in an occupational disease claim, an employee must submit the following: (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 employment factors identified by the employee.<sup>7</sup>

Causal relationship is a medical question that requires rationalized medical opinion evidence to resolve the issue.<sup>8</sup> A physician's opinion on whether there is causal relationship between the diagnosed condition and the implicated employment factor(s) must be based on a complete factual and medical background.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the physician's opinion must be expressed in terms of a reasonable degree of medical certainty, and must be supported by medical rationale explaining the nature of the relationship between the diagnosed condition and appellant's specific employment factor(s).<sup>10</sup>

### ANALYSIS

The Board finds that appellant has not met his burden of proof to establish a medical condition causally related to the accepted factors of his federal employment.

In support of his claim, appellant submitted an EMG/NCV study of the upper extremities dated September 11, 2024 from Dr. Wilson who provided diagnoses of bilateral cubital tunnel syndrome and carpal tunnel syndrome. He did not, however, provide an opinion on the cause of the diagnosed medical conditions. The Board has held that medical evidence that does not offer an opinion regarding the cause of an employee's condition is of no probative value on the issue of causal relationship.<sup>11</sup> As such, this evidence is insufficient to establish appellant's claim.

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<sup>5</sup> *S.H.*, Docket No. 22-0391 (issued June 29, 2022); *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).

<sup>6</sup> *E.H.*, Docket No. 22-0401 (issued June 29, 2022); *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).

<sup>7</sup> *R.G.*, Docket No. 19-0233 (issued July 16, 2019); *see also Roy L. Humphrey*, 57 ECAB 238, 241 (2005); *Ruby I. Fish*, 46 ECAB 276, 279 (1994); *Victor J. Woodhams*, 41 ECAB 345 (1989).

<sup>8</sup> *S.M.*, Docket No. 22-0075 (issued May 6, 2022); *S.S.*, Docket No. 19-0688 (issued January 24, 2020); *A.M.*, Docket No. 18-1748 (issued April 24, 2019); *Robert G. Morris*, 48 ECAB 238 (1996).

<sup>9</sup> *M.V.*, Docket No. 18-0884 (issued December 28, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> *J.D.*, Docket No. 22-0935 (issued December 16, 2022); *T.L.*, Docket No. 18-0778 (issued January 22, 2020); *Y.S.*, Docket No. 18-0366 (issued January 22, 2020); *Victor J. Woodhams*, *supra* note 7.

<sup>11</sup> *G.M.*, Docket No. 24-0388 (issued May 28, 2024); *C.R.*, Docket No. 23-0330 (issued July 28, 2023); *K.K.*, Docket No. 22-0270 (issued February 14, 2023); *S.J.*, Docket No. 19-0696 (issued August 23, 2019); *M.C.*, Docket No. 18-0951 (issued January 7, 2019); *L.B.*, Docket No. 18-0533 (issued August 27, 2018); *D.K.*, Docket No. 17-1549 (issued July 6, 2018).

As the medical evidence of record is insufficient to establish causal relationship between a medical condition and the accepted factors of federal employment, the Board finds that appellant has not met his burden of proof.<sup>12</sup>

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(a) and 20 C.F.R. §§ 10.605 through 10.607.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Board finds that appellant has not met his burden of proof to establish a medical condition causally related to the accepted factors of his federal employment.

### **ORDER**

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the March 24, 2025 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Issued: July 11, 2025  
Washington, DC

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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

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<sup>12</sup> *LD.*, Docket No. 22-0848 (issued September 2, 2022); *T.G.*, Docket No. 14-751 (issued October 20, 2014).