United States Department of Labor
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

A.T., Appellant	)	
and	)	**Docket No. 25-0482**
	)	**Issued: June 6, 2025**
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, TIGER POST OFFICE, Columbia, MO, Employer	)	

Appearances:
Appellant, pro se
Office of Solicitor, for the Director

Case Submitted on the Record

DECISION AND ORDER

Before:
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Deputy Chief Judge
JANICE B. ASKIN, Judge

JURISDICTION

On April 15, 2025 appellant filed a timely appeal from an April 3, 2025 merit decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). Pursuant to the Federal Employees' Compensation Act[1] (FECA) and 20 C.F.R. §§ 501.2(c) and 501.3, the Board has jurisdiction over the merits of this case.

ISSUE

The issue is whether appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted August 29, 2023 employment incident.

FACTUAL HISTORY

On January 4, 2025 appellant, then a 41-year-old letter carrier, filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) alleging that on August 29, 2023 she sustained injuries which resulted in back pain and partial prolapse and urethral swelling in diverticulum when she was involved in a motor

[1] 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq*.

vehicle accident (MVA) while in the performance of duty. She stopped work on August 29, 2023 and returned to work November 18, 2023.

In a February 3, 2025 development letter, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of her claim. It advised her of the type of additional factual and medical evidence required and provided a questionnaire for her completion. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to submit the necessary evidence. No evidence was received.

In a follow-up development letter dated February 27, 2025, 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 February 3, 2025 letter to submit the requested supporting 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.

OWCP thereafter received additional evidence, including a copy of the August 29, 2023 Missouri Uniform Crash Report; an August 29, 2023 report from Dr. Jana Hill, a Board-certified family practitioner, which noted that appellant was seen for back pain; a March 28, 2024 report from Dr. Kyle Alexander Ohman, an emergency medicine physician, which provided hospital discharge instructions but did not include a firm diagnosis; and a December 3, 2024 referral from Dr. Patrick A. Nosti, a Board-certified urogynecology and reconstructive pelvic surgeon, which noted diagnoses of rectocele, incomplete uterovaginal prolapse, and midline cystocele.

By decision dated April 3, 2025, OWCP accepted that the August 29, 2023 employment incident occurred in the performance of duty, as alleged. However, it denied the claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish a medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted August 29, 2023 employment injury. Consequently, OWCP found that she had not met the requirements to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

LEGAL PRECEDENT

An employee seeking benefits under FECA[2] 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,[3] 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.[4] 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.[5]

[2] *Id.*

[3] *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).

[4] *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).

[5] *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).

To determine whether a federal employee has sustained a traumatic injury in the performance of duty, it first must be determined whether fact of injury has been established. There are two components involved in establishing fact of injury. First, the employee must submit sufficient evidence to establish that he or she actually experienced the employment incident at the time and place, and in the manner alleged. Second, the employee must submit sufficient evidence to establish that the employment incident caused an injury.[6]

The medical evidence required to establish causal relationship between a diagnosed condition and the employment incident is rationalized medical opinion evidence.[7] The opinion of the physician must be based on a complete factual and medical background of the employee, 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 incident identified by the claimant.[8] Neither the mere fact that a disease or condition manifests itself during a period of employment, nor the belief that the disease or condition was caused or aggravated by employment factors or incidents is sufficient to establish causal relationship.[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 August 29, 2023 employment incident.

In support of her claim, appellant submitted Dr. Hill's August 29, 2023 report which noted that she was seen for back pain that day. The Board has held that pain is a description of a symptom, not a clear diagnosis of a medical condition.[10] Therefore, this evidence is insufficient to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted August 29, 2023 employment incident.

Dr. Nosti, in his December 3, 2024 surgery referral, which noted diagnoses of rectocele, incomplete uterovaginal prolapse, and midline cystocele. However, the referral did not indicate a connection between appellant's diagnosed conditions and accepted employment incident. Therefore, this evidence is of no probative value.[11]

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[6] *See S.J.,* Docket No. 25-0359 (issued April 15, 2025); *T.H.*, Docket No. 19-0599 (issued January 28, 2020); *K.L.*, Docket No. 18-1029 (issued January 9, 2019); *John J. Carlone*, 41 ECAB 354 (1989).

[7] *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).

[8] *R.H.,* Docket No. 25-0188 (issued January 31, 2025); *A.S.,* Docket No. 19-1955 (issued April 9, 2020); *Leslie C. Moore,* 52 ECAB 132 (2000).

[9] *L.W.,* Docket No. 24-0947 (issued January 31, 2025); *T.H.,* Docket No. 18-1736 (issued March 13, 2019); *Dennis M. Mascarenas,* 49 ECAB 215 (1997).

[10] *See P.V.,* Docket No. 25-0311 (issued February 27, 2025); *D.R.,* Docket No. 18-1408 (issued March 1, 2019); *D.A.,* Docket No. 18-0783 (issued November 8, 2018).

[11] *See R.H.*, *supra* note 8; *C.C.*, Docket No. 24-0454 (issued June 6, 2024); *I.W.*, Docket No. 22-1065 (issued January 3, 2023).

Dr. Ohman, in his March 28, 2024 report, provided hospital discharge instructions but did not include a firm diagnosis.[12]

As the evidence of record is insufficient to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted August 29, 2023 employment incident, the Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof.

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 her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted August 29, 2023 employment incident.

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the April 3, 2025 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Issued: June 6, 2025
Washington, DC

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

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

[12] *Id*.