

<sup>2</sup> OWCP assigned the present claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx751. Appellant has a previously accepted December 5, 2019 traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) for a lumbar sprain and internal derangement of right knee under OWCP File No. xxxxxx299. The claims have not been administratively combined by OWCP.

she first became aware of her condition on September 2, 2024 and realized its relationship to her federal employment on November 2, 2024. Appellant did not stop work.

In support of her claim, appellant submitted a statement wherein she noted that prior to the September 2, 2024 incident, she slipped and fell in the building lobby of the employing establishment, landing on her back, and thereafter, filed a workers' compensation claim for time off from work. She further related that she continued to have worsening neck, back and hip pain over the years and on September 2, 2024 she woke up with increased pain and sought medical treatment. Appellant indicated that she believed working in an office as a secretary and sitting down *versus* moving around was causing her ongoing pain.

Appellant also submitted a November 14, 2024 medical report by Dr. Steven Moalemi, a Board-certified physiatrist, who noted that she related a history that "she initially injured her low back and right knee in 2019 due to a slip and fall injury."

On November 19, 2024 appellant provided an additional statement, which indicated that she was claiming an occupational disease, and that "this is recurrent to the injury I had in 2019" when "I slipped in the lobby as the floor was wet."

By decision dated January 15, 2025, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim, finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish that her diagnosed conditions were causally related to the accepted factors of her federal employment. It noted that the medical evidence was insufficient to explain "why the claimed injuries would not be caused by your preexisting low back and right knee conditions under case file [xxxxxx]299 which has already been accepted by this office for date of injury [December 5, 2019]."

The Board, having duly considered this matter, finds that the 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>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> Appellant's claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx299 involved back and knee injuries, which are also at issue in the present claim. Therefore, for full and fair adjudication, this case shall be remanded for OWCP to administratively combine OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx751 and xxxxxx299, so it can consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in adjudicating appellant's current occupational disease claim.<sup>5</sup> Following this and other such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* 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).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; *M.L.*, Docket No. 20-1176 (issued April 29, 2021); *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> *Supra* note 3 at Chapter 2.400.8c(1); *W.D.*, Docket No. 19-0961 (issued March 31, 2021); *L.P.*, Docket Nos. 18-1558, 18-1568 (issued June 21, 2019).

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the January 15, 2025 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: March 5, 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