

**United States Department of Labor
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board**

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D.J., Appellant)	
)	
and)	
)	Docket No. 25-0922
)	Issued: February 10, 2026
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, INDUSTRIAL WEST)	
SACRAMENTO POST OFFICE,)	
West Sacramento, CA, Employer)	
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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
VALERIE D. EVANS-HARRELL, Alternate Judge

JURISDICTION

On September 29, 2025 appellant filed a timely appeal from a September 4, 2025 merit decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). Pursuant to the Federal Employees' Compensation Act¹ (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 April 16, 2025 employment incident.

FACTUAL HISTORY

On April 17, 2025 appellant, then a 37-year-old city carrier, filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) alleging that on April 16, 2025 she sustained "[t]he trauma of being robbed" while

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq.*

in the performance of duty. On the reverse side of the claim form, the employing establishment checked boxes marked “Yes” indicating that she was in the performance of duty when injured and that its knowledge of the facts about this injury comported with her statement. Appellant stopped work on April 16, 2025, and returned to work on May 10, 2025.

In an April 21, 2025 work status note, Dr. Robin Price, Board-certified in family medicine, reported that appellant was evaluated and diagnosed with “anxiety counseling.” She placed appellant off work for uncontrolled symptoms April 16 through 21, 2025 and released her to full-duty work on April 22, 2025.

In an April 24, 2025 work status note, Dr. Price held appellant off work for uncontrolled symptoms from April 22 through 29, 2025 and returned her to full-duty work on April 30, 2025.

In an April 29, 2025 report, Dr. Tony Villena, Board-certified in family medicine, held appellant off work for uncontrolled symptoms from April 29 through May 9, 2025, explaining that she continued to undergo active treatment related to her traumatic event.

In a letter dated May 7, 2025, the employing establishment challenged the claim asserting that there were factual inconsistencies with regard to appellant’s claim for trauma due to being robbed on April 16, 2025. It reported that an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the claim revealed that appellant was not personally robbed as she claimed; she was not present when the incident occurred, nor was she a witness. Rather, the mail and her personal items in the back of her vehicle were stolen but this did not constitute a personal robbery. As such, the employing establishment asserted that appellant has not established fact of injury and the entire claim should be denied.

In a May 8, 2025 development letter, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of her claim. It advised her of the type of factual and medical evidence required and provided a questionnaire for her completion. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to submit the necessary evidence.

In a May 21, 2025 response to OWCP’s development letter, appellant discussed the April 16, 2025 employment incident when her postal vehicle was parked in a parking lot as she was delivering mail at the building located there. As she was closing the mailboxes, one of the residents informed her that she believed appellant had been robbed and appellant’s vehicle had been broken into. Appellant reported walking back to the postal vehicle together to discover the back door was wide open and a tray of mail and packages were missing, as were her personal belongings. At that point, the resident called the police department and appellant contacted a supervisor who came to her location to investigate. The supervisor contacted F.D., an employing establishment manager, and apprised her of the situation. F.D. then instructed appellant and the supervisor to deliver the last of the remaining packages. Appellant reported that a police report was filed. She related that after she returned home, she began to experience anxiety over her stolen personal belongings. Appellant noted that she could not sleep and her anxiety had worsened, so she contacted her physician the next day to notify him of her symptoms. Her physician recommended that she see a psychologist. Appellant further asserted that her anxiety worsened due to questions surrounding her OWCP claim and accusations from the employing establishment that the robbery did not occur despite witnesses being present.

In support of her claim, appellant submitted an April 16, 2025 police report documenting the burglary to her postal vehicle on that date, noting that the suspects took a large quantity of mail and personal items and fled in a motor vehicle. The responding officer arrived and recorded appellant's statement that the suspects stole various letters, packages, and her personal belongings. He also documented a witness statement, wherein the witness related that he saw the burglary take place from his apartment patio and identified the vehicle the suspects fled in. The officer included photographs of the postal vehicle and noted that the keyhole was punched by unknown means. A photograph of the suspects' vehicle from the witness to the event was included.

In a follow-up letter dated June 10, 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 May 8, 2025 letter to submit the 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.

In support of her claim appellant submitted additional medical evidence.

In a June 2, 2025 report, Dr. Villena discussed appellant's ongoing anxiety following the April 16, 2025 employment incident when her work vehicle was burglarized on her mail route. He noted that she had her property and personal identification stolen and continued to have stress because she could possibly be victimized at her residence given that her data and information were not secure. Dr. Vilena placed appellant on modified duty from May 20 through November 30, 2025 and noted that she may need work accommodations for medical treatment and evaluations.

In a June 11, 2025 form report, Dr. Chiachen Hsu, a Board-certified psychiatrist, reported that appellant presented with anxiety and stress following a work-related incident. She experienced significant anxiety and psychological distress since an April 16, 2025 work-related incident when her vehicle was broken into while at work as a mail carrier resulting in the theft of personal belongings resulting in intense anxiety and discomfort about returning to work. Dr. Hsu reported that appellant described the aftermath as stressful and overwhelming and that her employer was challenging her stress claim which was exacerbating her anxiety and stress. He noted that she was under psychiatric care since the incident and was scheduled to transition to a permanent psychiatrist on June 27, 2025.

In another form report also dated June 11, 2025, Dr. Hsu noted that appellant was evaluated on that date. In a note of even date, he diagnosed anxiety. Dr. Hsu explained that appellant sustained significant anxiety and psychological distress since an April 16, 2025 work-related incident when her vehicle was broken into while at work as a mail carrier resulting in the theft of personal belongings. This resulted in intense anxiety and discomfort about returning to work. Dr. Hsu assessed adverse effects of appellant's work environment.

In a letter dated July 9, 2025, Paul John Boyer, a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) reported that appellant was evaluated for individual psychotherapy sessions from April 23 through July 8, 2025.

By decision dated September 4, 2025, OWCP denied appellant's traumatic injury claim, finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish a medical condition in connection

with the accepted April 16, 2025 employment incident. It concluded, therefore, that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

LEGAL PRECEDENT

An employee seeking benefits under FECA² 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

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. 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 a personal injury.⁶

The medical evidence required to establish causal relationship between a claimed specific condition and an 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 specific employment incident identified by the employee.⁸

² *Supra* note 1.

³ *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).

⁴ *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).

⁵ *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).

⁶ *H.M.*, Docket No. 22-0343 (issued June 28, 2022); *T.J.*, Docket No. 19-0461 (issued August 11, 2020); *K.L.*, Docket No. 18-1029 (issued January 9, 2019); *John J. Carlone*, 41 ECAB 354 (1989).

⁷ *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).

⁸ *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*, 41 ECAB 345, 352 (1989).

ANALYSIS

The Board finds that appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted April 16, 2025 employment incident.

In support of her claim, appellant submitted reports from Dr. Hsu dated June 11, 2025 diagnosing anxiety following the April 16, 2025 employment incident when her vehicle was burglarized on her mail route. The Board thus finds that appellant has established a diagnosed medical condition.⁹ Consequently, the case shall be remanded for OWCP to develop appellant's emotional/stress-related condition claim, pursuant to its procedures, to determine whether the implicated employment factor is compensable, to be followed by a *de novo* decision.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The Board finds that appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted April 16, 2025 employment incident.

⁹ *L.H.*, Docket No. 23-0326 (issued July 3, 2023); *J.C.*, Docket No. 25-0420 (issued June 18, 2025); *M.B.*, Docket No. 25-0307 (issued March 25, 2025); *G.K.*, Docket No. 24-0012 (issued March 26, 2024).

¹⁰ See *M.M.*, Docket No. 26-0016 (issued January 21, 2026); *Lillian Cutler*, 28 ECAB 125 (1976).

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the September 4, 2025 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is reversed, and this case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this decision of the Board.

Issued: February 10, 2026
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