

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

L.P., Appellant

and

**U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, NORTH HOUSTON
POST OFFICE, Houston, TX, Employer**

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**Docket No. 26-0019
Issued: January 14, 2026**

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

Case Submitted on the Record

ORDER REMANDING CASE

Before:

ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Deputy Chief Judge
VALERIE D. EVANS-HARRELL, Alternate Judge

On October 10, 2025 appellant filed a timely appeal from September 4 and 24, 2025 merit decisions of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). The Clerk of the Appellate Boards docketed the appeal as No. 26-0019.¹

On March 6, 2025 appellant, then a 50-year-old mail handler, filed an occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) alleging that she injured her neck and right shoulder due to factors of her federal employment, including manual labor, pulling, pushing, and lifting for 26 years.² She noted that she first became aware of her condition on October 7, 2024, and realized its relationship to her federal employment on February 26, 2025. Appellant did not stop work. OWCP accepted the

¹ The Board notes that, following the September 24, 2025 decision, OWCP received additional evidence. However, the Board's *Rules of Procedure* 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.*

² OWCP assigned the present claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx604. Appellant previously filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) for a June 8, 2002 injury, which OWCP accepted for right shoulder and cervical strains under OWCP File No. xxxxxx388. She also filed a subsequent Form CA-2 alleging injuries due to pushing, pulling, and lifting for 28 years, which OWCP accepted under OWCP File No. xxxxxx923 for right shoulder and upper arm strains and impingement syndrome of the right shoulder. Appellant's claims have not been administratively combined by OWCP.

claim for right shoulder and upper arm sprain, cervical sprain, and impingement syndrome of the right shoulder.

On March 5, 2025 appellant's attending physician, Dr. Robert C. Lowry, a physiatrist, requested expansion of the acceptance of appellant's claim to include cervical disc displacement, cervical spine spondylosis, right shoulder supraspinatus tear, and right shoulder osteoarthritis.

By decision dated September 4, 2025, OWCP denied appellant's expansion claim.

Appellant requested reconsideration on September 4, 2025 and submitted additional medical evidence.

By decision dated September 24, 2025, OWCP denied modification.

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, including when similar conditions are claimed in such cases.³ This allows OWCP to consider all relevant claim files in developing a given claim.⁴ Appellant's claims under OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx923 and xxxxxx388 also involved the right shoulder and cervical spine, and should therefore be administratively combined with the present claim for a full and fair adjudication.⁵ This will allow OWCP to consider all relevant reports and accompanying evidence in developing appellant's expansion claim.⁶

The case shall, therefore, be remanded for OWCP to administratively combine OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx604, xxxxxx923, and xxxxxx388. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

³ Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8c (February 2000).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See *Order Remanding Case, J.L.*, Docket No. 24-0785 (issued November 1, 2024); *Order Remanding Case, M.T.*, Docket No. 24-0753 (issued September 23, 2024); *Order Remanding Case, K.W.*, Docket No. 22-1258 (issued March 14, 2023).

⁶ *Id.* See also *Order Remanding Case, K.G.*, Docket No. 21-0068 (issued July 29, 2022); *Order Remanding Case, D.J.*, Docket No. 20-0997 (issued November 20, 2020); *Order Remanding Case, S.D.*, Docket No. 19-0590 (issued August 28, 2020).

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the September 4 and 24, 2025 decisions of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs are set aside, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: January 14, 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