

OWCP subsequently received a September 2, 2025 request from Dr. Chris Main, an attending Board-certified orthopedic surgeon, to expand the acceptance of appellant's claim to include derangement of medial meniscus due to an old tear or injury, right knee; and complex tear of medial meniscus right knee for a current injury. Dr. Main explained that expansion of the claim

was necessary to accurately reflect the current state of appellant's right knee condition which had evolved following her original October 17, 2024 work-related injury.

On September 29, 2025 appellant filed a notice of recurrence (Form CA-2a) claiming disability causally related to the October 17, 2024 employment injury. She alleged that on August 4, 2025 she developed swelling of the right knee after she was twisting and turning to ease her route and her knee buckled. OWCP converted the notice of recurrence to a claim for traumatic injury on August 4, 2025, and assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx007.¹

On October 3, 2025 OWCP referred the medical record and a statement of accepted facts (SOAF) to Dr. Michael M. Katz, a Board-certified orthopedic surgeon serving as OWCP's district medical adviser (DMA), for an opinion on whether the accepted October 17, 2024 employment injury caused additional conditions. It requested that Dr. Katz "review and specifically comment on the opinion of Dr. Main in the report[s] dated August 18 and September 2, 2025."²

In an October 16, 2025 report, Dr. Katz reviewed the medical record and SOAF and opined that the case record did not support expansion of the acceptance of the claim to include the additional conditions of derangement of medial meniscus due to an old tear or injury, right knee; and complex tear of medial meniscus right knee for a current injury. He specifically opined that the proposed diagnoses were duplicative and overlapping with the presently accepted conditions. Dr. Katz concluded that he was unable to recommend acceptance of the proposed diagnoses.

By decision dated December 3, 2025, OWCP denied expansion of the acceptance of appellant's claim to include additional right knee conditions as causally related to, or consequential to, the accepted October 17, 2024 employment injury. It found that the conditions were duplicative and overlapped the previously accepted conditions.

On January 8, 2026 appellant *via* OWCP's Employees' Compensation Operations & Management Portal (ECOMP), requested a telephonic hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review. In support thereof, she submitted additional medical evidence.

By decision dated January 13, 2026, OWCP denied appellant's January 8, 2026 request for an oral hearing as untimely filed, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 8124(b). It further exercised its discretion and determined that the issue in this case could equally well be addressed by a request for reconsideration before OWCP, along with the submission of new evidence.

The Board has duly considered this matter and 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

¹ OWCP filed a report dated August 18, 2025 from Dr. Main in OWCP File No. xxxxxx007.

² The Board notes that Dr. Main's August 18, 2025 report was not contained in the case record when OWCP referred the medical record to Dr. Katz, the DMA.

similar conditions are claimed in such cases.³ This allows OWCP to consider all relevant claim files in developing a given claim and allows the Board access to review all of the medical evidence relevant to the claim on appeal. Appellant's claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx007 involved the right knee and should therefore be administratively combined with the present claim, OWCP File No. xxxxxx794, for a full and fair adjudication. This will allow the Board to consider all relevant reports and accompanying evidence in reviewing appellant's current expansion claim. As the Board is unable to review evidence found in OWCP File No. xxxxxx007, it is not in a position to make an informed decision regarding appellant's claim.⁴

The Board shall therefore remand the case for OWCP to administratively combine OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx794 and xxxxxx007. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the December 3, 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. The January 13, 2026 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside as moot.

Issued: June 25, 2026
Washington, DC

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

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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

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

⁴ *K.K.*, Docket No. 26-0224 (issued April 29, 2026); *E.M.*, Docket No. 26-0175 (issued April 3, 2026); *L.H.*, Docket No. 17-1960 (issued August 16, 2018).