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

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| **T.N., Appellant** | ) | |
| | ) | **Docket No. 26-0648** |
| **and** | ) | **Issued: October 6, 2026** |
| | ) | |
| **SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, Puyallup, WA, 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 July 8, 2026 appellant filed a timely appeal from a June 5, 2026 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 medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted February 23, 2026 employment incident.

[1] 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq*.

## ***FACTUAL HISTORY***

On March 25, 2026 appellant, then a 45-year-old claims adjudicator filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) alleging that on February 23, 2026 she sprained her right ankle when she slipped and fell on a wet restroom floor while in the performance of duty. She did not stop work.

On February 23, 2026 forms Dr. Jonathan Lin, a physician Board-certified in emergency medicine, diagnosed right ankle avulsion fracture and ankle sprain.

In a development letter dated March 27, 2026, OWCP informed appellant that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish her claim. It advised her as to the type of medical evidence needed to establish her claim and provided a questionnaire for her completion. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to provide the necessary evidence.

OWCP subsequently received a February 23, 2026 treatment note from Dr. Lin relating that appellant sustained right lateral ankle pain after slipping on a wet floor in the restroom at work and twisting her ankle. Dr. Lin noted that the lateral aspect of her right ankle was swollen. He reviewed right ankle x-rays and found prominent soft tissue swelling and possible signs of an avulsion fracture. Dr. Lin diagnosed work-related avulsion fracture of ankle and an ankle sprain.

OWCP, in a follow-up letter dated April 27, 2026, 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 March 27, 2026 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.

OWCP subsequently received duplicate copies of Dr. Lin's February 23, 2026 treatment notes and ankle x-rays.

From April 20 through May 6, 2026, Karen Witters, an occupational therapist, provided treatment.

By decision dated June 5, 2026, OWCP denied appellant's claim, finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish a medical diagnosis from a qualified physician in connection with the accepted February 23, 2026 employment incident. Consequently, it found that the requirements had not been met 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

[2] *Id*.

[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).

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. There are two components involved in establishing fact of injury. The first component is that 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. The second component is that the employee must establish whether the employment incident caused an 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.[8]

## ***ANALYSIS***

The Board finds that appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted February 23, 2026 employment incident.

In a series of February 23, 2026 notes, Dr. Lin related that appellant sustained right lateral ankle pain after slipping on a wet floor in the restroom at work and twisting her ankle. He noted that the lateral aspect of her right ankle was swollen. Dr. Lin reviewed right ankle x-rays and diagnosed work-related avulsion fracture of ankle and ankle sprain. The Board thus finds that appellant has established a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted February 23, 2026 employment incident.[9]

Consequently, the case shall be remanded for consideration of the medical evidence with regard to whether appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition

[4] *L.C.*, Docket No. 19-1301 (issued January 29, 2020); *J.H.*, Docket No. 18-1637 (issued January 29, 2020); *R.C.*, 59 ECAB 427 (2008); *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).

[6] *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] *F.S.*, Docket No. 23-0112 (issued April 26, 2023); *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).

[9] *E.S.,* Docket No. 26-0477 (issued August 24, 2026); *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).

causally related to the accepted February 23, 2026 employment incident.[10] Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision.

## ***CONCLUSION***

The Board finds that appellant has met her burden of proof to establish a medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted February 23, 2026 employment incident.

## ***ORDER***

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the June 5, 2026 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: October 6, 2026
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

[10] *V.I.*, Docket No. 23-0555 (issued January 8, 2026); *C.L.*, Docket No. 25-0468 (issued May 8, 2025); *S.R.*, Docket No. 22-0421 (issued July 15, 2022).