United States Department of Labor
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

R.E., Appellant	)	
and	)	**Docket No. 26-0584**
	)	**Issued: September 9, 2026**
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, LEAGUE CITY POST OFFICE, League City, TX, Employer	)	

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

Case Submitted on the Record

DECISION AND ORDER

Before:
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Deputy Chief Judge
JANICE B. ASKIN, Judge
VALERIE D. EVANS-HARRELL, Alternate Judge

JURISDICTION

On June 9, 2026 appellant filed a timely appeal from a May 12, 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 diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted June 25, 2025 employment incident.

FACTUAL HISTORY

On July 2, 2025 appellant, then a 53-year-old city carrier, filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) alleging that on June 25, 2025 she experienced lightheadedness, dizziness,

[1] 5 U.S.C. § 8101 *et seq*.

disorientation, headache, and nausea when she "inhaled gas fumes" when driving a postal vehicle while in the performance of duty. She recalled driving two different postal vehicles on June 24 and 25, 2025, and noted "the smell of strong gas fumes" in both vehicles. On the reverse side of the claim form, a supervisor indicated that appellant was injured in the performance of duty and that his knowledge of the facts about the injury agreed with appellant's statements.

In a development letter dated July 14, 2025, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of her claim. It advised her of the type of factual and medical evidence needed to establish her claim and provided a questionnaire for her completion. OWCP afforded appellant 60 days to submit the necessary evidence. No additional evidence was received.

OWCP, in a follow-up letter dated August 15, 2025, 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 July 14, 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. No additional evidence was received.

By decision dated September 22, 2025, OWCP denied the claim, finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish that the June 25, 2025 employment incident occurred as alleged. It therefore concluded that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

OWCP subsequently received a June 25, 2025 hospital emergency department report wherein Dr. Amaan H. Siddiqi, Board-certified in emergency medicine, recounted that appellant complained of lightheadedness, dizziness, and headache that occurred while at work near a "reported gas leak." Dr. Siddiqi indicated that a review of neurological systems was positive for lightheadedness and headaches. On physical examination, he noted no abnormal findings. Dr. Siddiqi also provided results from a number of diagnostic and laboratory tests. He concluded that appellant's full workup was within normal limits and she was neurologically intact. Dr. Siddiqi diagnosed lightheadedness. He prescribed medication "for moderate pain or headaches for up to 10 days" as needed.

On February 17, 2026 appellant requested reconsideration.

OWCP subsequently received a June 25, 2025 after-visit summary, wherein Dr. Siddiq diagnosed appellant with lightheadedness.

In a development letter dated March 11, 2026, OWCP requested that the employing establishment provide additional information regarding the June 25, 2025 employment incident, and whether the injury occurred on June 24 and 25, 2025 or solely on June 25, 2025. It afforded the employing establishment 20 days to respond.

By decision dated May 12, 2026, OWCP modified its prior decision to accept that the June 25, 2025 employment incident occurred, as alleged.[2] However, appellant's claim remained

[2] It noted that while appellant also reported exposure to gas fumes on June 24, 2025, the decision concerned only the June 25, 2025 exposure.

denied as the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted June 25, 2025 employment incident. OWCP concluded, therefore, that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

LEGAL PRECEDENT

An employee seeking benefits under FECA[3] has the burden of proof to establish the essential elements of his or her claim including the fact that the individual is an employee of the United States within the meaning of FECA, that the claim was timely filed, 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. These are the essential elements of every compensation claim regardless of whether the claim is predicated on a traumatic injury or an occupational disease.[4]

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. 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 an injury.[5]

Causal relationship is a medical question that requires rationalized medical opinion evidence to resolve the issue. The opinion of the physician must be based on a complete factual and medical background, 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 the specific employment incident.[6] Neither the mere fact that a disease or condition manifests itself during a period of employment, nor the belief that the disease or condition was caused or aggravated by employment factors or incidents is sufficient to establish causal relationship.[7]

ANALYSIS

The Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted June 25, 2025 employment incident.

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[3] *Supra* note 1.

[4] *J.M.,* Docket No. 17-0284 (issued February 7, 2018); *R.C.,* 59 ECAB 427 (2008); *James E. Chadden, Sr.,* 40 ECAB 312 (1988).

[5] *K.B.*, Docket No. 26-0467 (issued July 22, 2026); *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).

[6] *V.C.,* Docket No. 26-0380 (issued June 29, 2026); *S.S.,* Docket No. 18-1488 (issued March 11, 2019).

[7] *V.C., id*.; *M.V.*, Docket No. 07-0437 (issued April 25, 2007).

Dr. Siddiqi, in his June 25, 2025 emergency department report, noted appellant's symptoms of lightheadedness and headache following the June 25, 2025 incident. He also related that appellant had a normal examination with no neurologic deficits. Dr. Siddiqi diagnosed lightheadedness and prescribed medication for appellant's pain/headache. The Board finds that this evidence is insufficient to establish a medical diagnosis in connection with the accepted June 25, 2025 employment incident as lightheadedness and headache are symptoms and not a diagnosis.[8]

Similarly, in his June 25, 2025 after-visit summary, Dr. Siddiqi diagnosed lightheadedness. As noted above, lightheadedness is a symptom and not a diagnosis.[9] The Board therefore finds that this report is also insufficient to meet appellant's burden of proof.

As the medical evidence of record is insufficient to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted June 25, 2025 employment incident, the Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof.[10]

Appellant may submit new evidence or argument with a written request for reconsideration to OWCP within one year of this merit decision, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 8128(a) and 20 C.F.R. §§ 10.605 through 10.607.

CONCLUSION

The Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof to establish a diagnosed medical condition in connection with the accepted June 25, 2025 employment incident.

[8] *K.V.*, Docket No. 26-0448 (issued July 29, 2026); *A.K.*, Docket No. 23-0990) issued January 10, 2024); *M.V.*, Docket No. 07-0437 (issued April 25, 2007).

[9] *Id.*

[10] *K.V.*, *supra* note 8; *B.H.,* Docket No. 26-0067 (issued March 3, 2026); *J.C.,* Docket No. 24-0315 (issued May 7, 2024).

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the May 12, 2026 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Issued: September 9, 2026
Washington, DC

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

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