



## **FACTUAL HISTORY**

On August 25, 2022 appellant, then a 41-year-old nurse, filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) alleging that on July 25, 2022 she contracted COVID-19 while in the performance of duty. She stopped work on July 25, 2022 and returned to work August 4, 2022.

Appellant submitted a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result, collected on July 25, 2022, which indicated that she tested positive for COVID-19.

In a July 26, 2022 e-mail, the employing establishment acknowledged receiving appellant's positive COVID-19 test result and advised her to remain offsite until August 4, 2022.

By decision dated August 29, 2022, OWCP denied appellant's claim for COP, finding that she had not reported her injury on an OWCP-approved form within 30 days of her alleged July 25, 2022 employment injury.

## **LEGAL PRECEDENT**

Section 8118(a) of FECA authorizes COP, not to exceed 45 days, to an employee who has filed a claim for a period of wage loss due to a traumatic injury with his or her immediate superior on a form approved by the Secretary of Labor within the time specified in section 8122(a)(2) of this title.<sup>2</sup> This latter section provides that written notice of injury shall be given within 30 days.<sup>3</sup> The context of section 8122 makes clear that this means within 30 days of the injury.<sup>4</sup>

OWCP's regulations provide, in pertinent part, that to be eligible for COP, an employee must: (1) have a traumatic injury which is job related and the cause of the disability and/or the cause of lost time due to the need for medical examination and treatment; (2) file Form CA-1 within 30 days of the date of the injury; and (3) begin losing time from work due to the traumatic injury within 45 days of the injury.<sup>5</sup>

FECA Bulletin No. 21-09 at subsection II.2., however, provides that, "The FECA program considers COVID-19 to be a traumatic injury since it is contracted during a single workday or shift (*see* 20 C.F.R. § 10.5(ee)), and considers the date of last exposure prior to the medical evidence

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at § 8118(a).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at § 8122(a)(2).

<sup>4</sup> *E.M.*, Docket No. 20-0837 (issued January 27, 2021); *J.S.*, Docket No. 18-1086 (issued January 17, 2019); *Robert M. Kimzey*, 40 ECAB 762-64 (1989); *Myra Lenburg*, 36 ECAB 487, 489 (1985).

<sup>5</sup> 20 C.F.R. § 10.205(a)(1-3); *see also T.S.*, Docket No. 19-1228 (issued December 9, 2019); *J.M.*, Docket No. 09-1563 (issued February 26, 2010); *Dodge Osborne*, 44 ECAB 849 (1993); *William E. Ostertag*, 33 ECAB 1925 (1982).

establishing the COVID-19 diagnosis as the Date of Injury since the precise time of transmission may not always be known due to the nature of the virus.”<sup>6</sup>

### ANALYSIS

The Board finds that appellant has not met her burden of proof to establish entitlement to COP.

The record reflects that appellant filed written notice of her traumatic injury on a Form CA-1 on August 25, 2022, alleging that on July 25, 2022 she contracted COVID-19 while in the performance of duty. Appellant stopped work on July 25, 2022 and returned to work on August 4, 2022. As previously noted, FECA Bulletin No. 21-09 defines date of injury as the date of last exposure, which in this case was July 25, 2022.<sup>7</sup> The 30<sup>th</sup> day following July 25, 2022 was Wednesday, August 24, 2022. As appellant filed her Form CA-1 on August 25, 2022, more than 30 days after the July 25, 2022 date of injury, the Board finds that she has not met her burden of proof.

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 entitlement to COP.

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<sup>6</sup> FECA Bulletin No. 21-09.II.2 (issued April 29, 2021). On March 11, 2021 the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) was signed into law. Pub. L. No. 117-2. OWCP issued FECA Bulletin No. 21-09 to provide guidance regarding the processing of COVID-19 FECA claims as set forth in the ARPA. Previously, COVID-19 claims under FECA were processed under the guidelines provided by FECA Bulletin No. 20-05 (issued March 31, 2020) and FECA Bulletin No. 21-01 (issued October 21, 2020). FECA Bulletin No. 21-09 supersedes FECA Bulletin Nos. 20-05 and 21-01.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

**ORDER**

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the August 29, 2022 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is affirmed.

Issued: December 20, 2022  
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