

What's in your file?



Assistant to the President
for Workers' Compensation
Kevin Card

One of the fundamental principles of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act is that the process is non-adversarial. Both the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) and the Postal Service are supposed to be disinterested arbiters of the facts. In other words, both parties should develop the facts in each claim so that justice is served for the injured worker.

For many injured workers, the process has seemed nothing but adversarial. There is a perception that the Postal Service and OWCP claims examiners work against the injured worker to deny claims. That perception has been amplified by a lack of transparency in the communications between the Postal Service and OWCP, leaving injured workers wondering what's going on between the parties.

That dynamic has now changed.

On Oct. 1, OWCP rolled out enhancements for injured workers who have registered and verified an account in the ECOMP web portal. The enhancements allow the claimant access to claim file documents, allowing injured workers to view every document in their OWCP claim file in real time. The enhancements also provide a direct way to respond to OWCP letters. This is a welcome change, making the OWCP claims process more transparent and claimant-friendly.

As part of the new changes, OWCP has added an extra layer of security when logging in to ECOMP. Upon logging in with your ID and password, you will be prompted to receive (via email or text message) and enter a security code to access your ECOMP dashboard. Adding your mobile phone number to your account can expedite access to your account.

Once you have verified your identity, you then have access to individual case information with the option to respond to letters from OWCP. The "Help" section in the upper right corner of the ECOMP homepage has been redesigned to be more user friendly, with new "Injured Worker" user-guide videos to show you in detail how to use the new ECOMP features. You can search for a particular topic or browse all of the videos by clicking on the "More Topics" link on the page.

To begin exploring the new access to OWCP claim file information, select the case under the "Cases" tab on your ECOMP dashboard. Once the claim opens, you will see the new options for searching the claim. The lower section of the page features four tabs: "Forms," "Case History," "Letters" and "Case Imaging."

Clicking on "Case Imaging" opens several drop-down menus that let you explore all of the documents in your case file. On the left side of the page, you can research communications by clicking on "Incoming COR [correspondence] Calls." You will then find a list of all correspondence and calls made to the claims examiner. The "Outgoing COR" function lists the communications sent from the claims examiner. Some claimants may be surprised at what they find, which may be enlightening or disturbing.

The "Letters" tab displays four additional tabs: "Overdue Response," "Response Required," "Completed Response" and "Informational Letters."

The "Overdue Response" tab lists letters that are past due. The "Response Required" tab lists letters that you have not responded to but are not yet past due. The "Completed Response" tab lists letters that you have responded to already. You may click on any item on the list to view the letter from OWCP, your response and/or your uploaded response document.

As you complete items in either "Overdue Response" or "Response Required" tabs, they move to the "Completed Response" tab. The "Informational Letters" tab lists letters that do not need your response. Informational letters will be deleted after 30 days.

Items listed under the "Overdue Response" and "Response Required" are displayed in bold text by default. Once you click on an item, you may click the "Mark As Read" button to change the text to standard text. You can mark it as unread by clicking the "Mark as Unread" button.

When you click on any item listed under the "Overdue Response" or "Response Required" tabs, you will see three buttons: "Save PDF," "View" and "Respond to Request." The "Save PDF" button will allow you to save the letter to your computer. The "View" button opens the letter on the screen. The "Respond to Request" button takes you to the screen where you may use "Quick Answer" or "Document Upload" to respond to the letter.

Select "Quick Answer" to type your response. Select "Document Upload" to upload a document as your response. Click the "Choose a File" button, and a file browser window will open. A separate tutorial is available for uploading documents. You may save an incomplete response by clicking on the "Save & Return" button located at the bottom. Once "Quick Answer" and/or "Document Upload" is completed, you may complete the task by clicking on the "Complete Response" button.

The new ECOMP access is a valuable tool. Spending some time researching the information available will help you in managing your OWCP claim.