

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240



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PERSONNEL BULLETIN No. 08-06

SUBJECT: Departmental Periodic Roll Case Management

- 1. Introduction:** The Department of the Interior is committed to reducing future Workers' Compensation costs, and toward that end, has begun an initiative to centralize the management of long-term workers' compensation cases. This allows for a concentrated effort aimed at effective case management and return to work activities on complex periodic(long-term disability) roll cases.
- 2. Authorities:**

 - a. 5 U.S.C. 8101- Compensation for Work Injuries, Subchapter 1
 - b. 5 U.S.C, Section 8149-Regulations
 - c. 20 C.F.R. Part 10 Subpart A-Claims For Compensation Under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, As Amended
 - d. Injury Compensation for Federal Employees, Publication CA-810
 - e. 5 U.S.C. 7902 and Chapter 81(NARA)
 - f. 5 U.S.C. 552a; 20 C.F.R. 10.10 and 10.11 and 29-Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act of 1974.
- 3. Definition:** The terms periodic roll case and long-term disability have been used interchangeably throughout this bulletin. A periodic roll case is defined as a case in which temporary total disability has exceeded 90 days and medical information in the file does not: 1) indicate a return to work in the immediate future (typically 90 days); or 2) identify a work capacity; or 3) indicate a permanent disability associated with the accepted work injury.
- 4. Purpose and Scope:** This bulletin establishes the Department's policy on transfer and case management for long-term workers' compensation cases. It establishes the Department's guidelines for effective case management and reemployment for injured workers and for ensuring effective collaboration between the Services for OWCP, Accountability, and Retirement Team (SOAR), formerly FLERT and participating Departmental Bureaus and Offices. The new guidance establishes practices for both the SOAR and participating bureaus when performing case transfer, case management, file maintenance, re-employment and job offers, and agency roll removal. It prescribes conferencing, reporting, and accountability practices in accordance with the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) policies, laws and regulations and Departmental guidelines.

5. **Covered Bureaus:** Case management functions are performed by members of the SOAR under the technical direction of the Department's OWCP Program Manager. Long-term cases from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Minerals Management Services, Office of Surface Mining, and United States Geological Survey are managed by the SOAR in Boise, Idaho. This responsibility may be expanded to include other Bureaus in the future upon mutual agreement.

6. **Eligible Cases For SOAR Case Management:** Cases meeting the criteria for transfer from the Bureau for case management by SOAR are all death and catastrophic injury claims, cases in which the period of temporary total disability (TTD) has exceeded one year on a continuous basis and claims for Recurrence of Injury/Disability. Claims for recurrence should be transferred to the SOAR only after OWCP accepts the claims as compensable. Catastrophic injury and death cases should not be transferred to SOAR until OWCP has adjudicated and accepted the claim and the initial periodic roll (annuity) payment has been received by the employee or beneficiary.

7. **Responsibilities and Obligations of Bureau WCC and/or HR Personnel:** Bureau WCC and/or HR Personnel will coordinate with the SOAR to identify suitable work and provide job offers to partially disabled employees. Where the attending physician or OWCP notifies the bureau or SOAR that the employee is partially disabled (that is, the employee can perform some type of work, but not return to the position held), the bureau should make every effort to provide the employee suitable employment. The Bureau will notify the SOAR and the employee of suitable employment and make a job offer in writing.

Bureau WCC and/or HR Personnel will ensure the employee has received appropriate compensation and medical care consistent with the level of disability and the medical condition associated with factors of employment.

Bureau WCC and/or HR Personnel are also responsible for informing the injured worker of the obligation to fulfill all FECA program requirements for continuing disability and the medical entitlement once medical care has been received.

8. **Case Transfer:** SOAR and the designated Bureau WCC will conduct quarterly reviews of the agency chargeback reports and the Federal Personnel Payroll System (FPPS) to ensure the timely transfer of eligible long-term cases. The Bureau WCC will review each case prior to transfer to ensure all appropriate bureau actions have been completed and certify all accompanying documents are included in the file prior to physical transfer of the case.

9. **Case Management:** The SOAR will represent the bureaus in all matters pertaining to quality case management in all active workers' compensation cases under their control. The SOAR's primary focus is to obtain information to pursue reemployment options for the affected employee.

SOAR members will serve as the bureaus' liaison to all interested parties including, but not limited to, the injured worker, medical professionals, employee representatives and attorneys, investigators, OWCP claims examiners, nurses, and vocational rehabilitation counselors.

10. Obtaining Information: Information can be obtained using several options:

a. Agency Query System (AQS). This system allows the SOAR to access data on employees through an Internet server, which contains data on current case status, compensation payments, and medical bill payments for all active compensation cases.

b. Interactive Voice Response (IVR). This system allows the agency representative and injured worker to access several kinds of information using their telephone keypads. The IVR provides callers with information about submitting medical bills for reimbursement and filing claims. It also allows callers to query the program's data base for the status of medical bills, the date of the last compensation payment, and other case-specific information.

c. Telephone. Most district offices have Contact Representatives who can provide information on the status of a claim, case activity and answer general questions. When more detailed information is needed, the SOAR member should contact the Claims Examiner responsible for the case.

d. Written Correspondence. The OWCP claims staff has been instructed to provide agency personnel with copies of all significant correspondence to employees, even when the employees are no longer on the agency's rolls. The use of these copies must, however, be consistent with the reason the information was collected. In practice, this means that the use must be connected in some way with the compensation claim.

e. File Inspections. The SOAR will conduct regular periodic file reviews at the OWCP district office for the purpose of identifying reemployment capabilities for injured workers. A report will be generated by the SOAR and submitted to the bureaus on all cases where a work capacity has been identified. The SOAR and designated bureau representative will conduct a conference to coordinate return to work efforts for all cases in which medical information is consistent with an injured worker's ability to perform work.

f. Privacy Act. Under the routine use provisions of the regulations governing release of information under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act of 1974, the SOAR is entitled to obtain copies of other materials in an employees' compensation file.

To safeguard the privacy of information in compensation files, much of which is inherently sensitive, the SOAR should make specific requests. Requests for material in a case should include the specific reason for requesting the information is to attempt reemployment of the worker.

SOAR members are not to provide information gathered from the employee's file to any bureau personnel in connection with EEO complaints, disciplinary actions, or other administrative actions without the employee's consent. Any questions concerning use or release of records should be directed to the OWCP district office.

11. Conferencing: In situations where the medical information in the file indicates a capacity to perform work, the SOAR will schedule a conference with the bureau's WCC, regional workers' compensation specialist, and regional human resources office to discuss the best way to initiate a job offer. The SOAR will be responsible for setting up and conducting the conference. The objective is to secure a job offer suitable to restriction requirements. The SOAR will provide all relevant documents prior to the conference to enable bureau personnel to review for possible job offer and subsequent return to work.

If the bureau is able to accommodate all restriction requirements and offer a job, the SOAR will request that a job offer be forwarded to them and the employee within 15 days from date of conference. The SOAR will furnish a job offer with medical to both the attending physician and OWCP for response and determination regarding suitability. The SOAR will maintain close contact with the bureau, employee, and attending physician throughout this process to facilitate and ensure successful return to work.

If the bureau is unable to accommodate restrictions and make a job offer, the SOAR will request this information in writing. The statement from the bureau should include the bureau's inability to offer a permanent light duty assignment and the reason why.

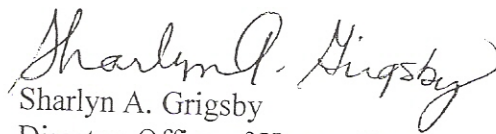
12. SOAR Reporting Requirements: The SOAR will provide quarterly status reports to the bureau's WCC, the Bureau Human Resources Director, and the Department's Workers' Compensation Program Manager.

13. File Maintenance: The SOAR is responsible for closely monitoring all long-term cases to ensure the cases are still active for compensation benefits and on-going medical treatment. In instances where information has been obtained indicating the death of a long-term roll recipient, the SOAR will submit an inquiry to the OWCP to determine whether the death was due to the accepted condition of the OWCP case or factors of employment. If OWCP determines the death is not related to factors of employment the case will be closed for future case management. If an injured worker dies while on the long-term rolls and OWCP determines the death to be related to factors of employment or the work-related injury, SOAR will continue to monitor the case to make sure appropriate compensation is being paid to the beneficiary and all medical costs have ceased. The SOAR will notify the bureau in writing to ensure accurate chargeback reporting.

All cases closed by OWCP are to be shipped the National Records Center. Cases in which compensation has ceased and that are not active for medical costs should be closed and shipped to the National Records Center. An inactive case is defined as a case in which compensation and medical payments have ceased for at least three years.

14. Effective Date: This bulletin will be effective in each Bureau upon signature by the Director, Office of Human Resources.

Questions should be directed to the respective Human Resources Office. Policy questions may be directed to Carmen Craddock via email at Carmen_Craddock@ios.doi.gov or by phone at 202-208-0144.


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