



FECA: Assisting in an Emergency

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A Changing Environment

Unfortunately, large scale emergencies have become more frequent in recent decades. The rise of terrorism and workplace violence have joined natural disasters as causes of multi-injury or exposure incidents. The 24 hour news cycle and the world wide web mean that we have immediate information about newsworthy events.



Federal Employees on the Front Lines

Federal employees are often on the front lines when disaster strikes.

- Injuries can occur as part of an event (bombings, plane crashes, shootings, etc.)
- Employees can suffer injury or illness while assisting with response or aftermath (law enforcement, FEMA employees, etc.)

 **Federal Employees on the Front Lines**

- Injuries can be physical, psychological, or both
- They can be immediately apparent or they can be latent, arising and being diagnosed well after the initial incident or exposure
- There is often media coverage during and after the event which can serve as a constant reminder

 **Events Where Feds Sustained Workplace Injuries and Illness**

- Oklahoma City Bombing
- Iraq and Afghanistan
- September 11th
- Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy
- Navy Yard Shooting
- Terrorist attacks on US embassies overseas
- Assassination attempts

 **FECA Procedures**

There are a couple of areas where FECA procedures touch on emergency and high profile incidents. Part 1 of the FECA Procedure Manual deals with the creation of cases and the assignment of jurisdiction.

- Most claims are assigned to one of the 12 district offices based on the injured workers' home address.
- Overseas injuries are handled by a Special Claims unit in the Cleveland office
- DOL cases are handled differently as well

 **FECA Procedures**

In some instances, the way that claims are assigned means that claims arising from the same incident could be assigned to different district offices. Example: There is a terrorist blast in Washington, DC. Employees are injured who live in Baltimore and DC (as well as some who are in DC on official travel) – those claims are handled by different DFEC district offices.

 **FECA Procedures**

It is important that claims from the same incident are adjudicated in a consistent manner. As a result, part 2 of the FECA Procedure Manual (2-0800-12) provides that:

When possible, where two or more employees are injured in the same incident, such as an explosion or auto accident, or by the same substance, such as contaminated drinking water, the entire group of cases should be adjudicated by the same CE in order to ensure uniformity of action.

 **FECA Procedures**

Additionally, when there are a large number of claims and we want to be able to easily identify them, we will create a special indicator. Special indicators are listed as an exhibit the FECA Procedure Manual at 1-0200:

- Appear in the header in iFECS so that OWCP staff immediately identify that claim as being associate with that incident
- Allow for targeted data runs on claims arising from the same incident



FECA Procedures

Aside from the group claim procedures, claims from high profile incidents are handled in the same manner as other FECA claims. Because injured workers are sometimes traumatized, we do counsel our staff to handle these claims with sensitivity and discretion. Particularly if the injuries arise from a high profile event.



Federal Employees on the Front Lines

When an event occurs and we are aware of it from news sources, staff at the DFEC national office will reach out to the national workers' compensation program manager at the impacted agency or agencies to offer assistance and expedite the creation and adjudication of claims. Additionally, staff in the district office with jurisdiction will reach out to local contacts to offer support.



Federal Employees on the Front Lines

Communication is key in the early stages of an event to establish the scope of the impact in regards to injuries and to expedite the creation of cases and the issuing of forms CA-16. When necessary, we can involve other federal agencies who may also pay benefits (particularly for survivors in the case of death). This includes SSA and OPM.



Federal Employees on the Front Lines

Once a claim is accepted, DFEC can assign a Field Nurse to assist with obtaining treatment and supplies. In the case of catastrophic injury, they can be extremely helpful on this front. The nurse will work with the Claims Examiner, the injured worker, the employing agency, and sometimes a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to arrange for needed treatment, equipment, and vehicle or housing modifications.



Federal Employees on the Front Lines

Some examples of the kinds of incidents that could be handled as group claims and that might need special attention:

- Workplace violence
- Terrorism Attacks
- Natural Disasters
- Chemical contamination events



Contact Information

If your agency employees experience an incident that is emergent or if you have concerns about an exposure, please reach out to:

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 202-343-5960
 jones.tara@dol.gov



**On the Front Lines:
An Agency's Perspective**

- Washington Navy Yard Shooting (Building 197)
 - ◆ Immediate Aftermath
 - ◆ Days Following
 - ◆ Recovery
- Looking Back
 - ◆ Challenges
 - ◆ Overcoming Challenges
 - ◆ Lessons Learned

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**On the Front Lines:
An Agency's Perspective**

- Immediate Aftermath
 - ◆ Initial Reactions
 - ◆ Plans of Action
 - ◆ Cross-Agency Collaboration
 - ◆ Operating Procedures
- Days Following
 - ◆ Assistance and Counseling
 - ◆ Initial Claims Processing
 - ◆ Alternate Work Spaces

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**On the Front Lines:
An Agency's Perspective**

- Recovery
 - ◆ Processing claims
 - ◆ Managing complex cases
 - Psychological and physical injuries
 - Multiple physicians
 - Field Nurse
 - Long-term disability
 - ◆ Collaborating with DOL
 - ◆ Returning employees to work
 - Part 1 (alternate work space)
 - Part 2 (return to Building 197)

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On the Front Lines: An Agency's Perspective

Looking Back

- ◆ Agency Challenges
 - Work-force culture
 - Political sensitivity
 - Visibility in the media
- ◆ Overcoming Challenges
 - Providing resources, guidance and education
 - Preparing reports for Congress and the White House
 - Collaborating with higher-level officials in DOL and Department of the Navy (DON)
- ◆ Lessons Learned
 - Regular communication
 - Documenting Actions
 - Competing duties
 - Take care of yourself!

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