Division of Federal Employees' Compensation (DFEC)

Information on FECA Coverage for Coronavirus Disease – 2019/COVID-19

A federal employee who contracts the Coronavirus Disease – 2019, known as COVID-19, while in performance of their job duties would have the full coverage of the FECA for related medical treatment and for wage loss or disability related to that condition or associated complications.

However, under 20 C.F.R. § 10.303, exposure to COVID-19 alone does not constitute a work-related injury entitling an employee to medical treatment under the FECA. The employee must actually be diagnosed with COVID-19 to potentially be afforded coverage. To establish coverage, the employee must submit a medical report from a qualified physician as defined in 5 U.S.C. § 8101(2) reflecting a positive test result for COVID-19 based on established employment-related exposure to COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website contains information about the testing and diagnosis of COVID-19.

The FECA does not authorize payment for provision of preventive measures such as quarantines. In general, preventive treatment is a responsibility of the employing agency under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. § 7901.

Employees Stationed Abroad: Certain federal employees assigned to certain positions and locations overseas, particularly in China, may experience a heightened risk of contracting COVID-19. A claim for FECA benefits may require evidence of unique or heightened risk of contracting such disease due to the employee's position or post of assignment. Such evidence will be a relevant factor in establishing the relationship between the overseas employment and a claim related to this infectious disease. Because of the exigent circumstances attendant to such employment and the inherent challenges to obtaining supporting medical evidence, OWCP will contact the employee in writing to explain what is needed and may grant additional time to obtain medical evidence. If the employee needs additional assistance, he/she may request assistance from the employing agency, particularly if there are unusual factual or medical circumstances surrounding the claim. For additional guidance, see Information for Employees on Overseas Assignments.

Employees Stationed in the United States: In this country, we would expect front line cases to involve federal medical personnel or other federal personnel whose duties may cause them to come into close contact with travelers or other members of the public infected with the disease. Federal employees claiming an injury due to contact with COVID-19 must be in the performance of duty within the meaning of the FECA to be covered. These employees have the same burden to establish the basic requirements of coverage as other claimants and must submit medical evidence in support of an identifiable injury in the course of their federal employment and any related period of disability. See 20 C.F.R. § 10.115. The employer should accompany any such claim with a statement fully explaining the exposure and its relation to employment.
This is an evolving situation. Employing agencies may contact OWCP DFEC’s Branch of Technical Assistance for guidance relating to specific claims or coverage issues.