

PUZZLE SOLUTION – August 2007 *DHRC-I Insider*

Scenario: You are a supervisor with an employee that has just come to you to report that an old work injury has flared up. By history, you are aware that this employee strained his back moving a computer printer six months ago. You recall that the employee had previously been released back to full duty and discharged from further medical care shortly after the incident. Upon questioning the employee, you learn that he lifted a box of computer manuals two days ago. He says his back pain has been constant since then. He did not say anything to you previously because he thought the condition would improve on its own. The employee wants to go back to his doctor and asks you what paperwork he needs to complete. How would you respond?

The best answer is:

B. Advise the employee to file a form CA-1, *Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation*, because this is a new injury to the same part of the body. You further advise the employee that he may seek medical care from the same physician, but he will ultimately need to provide a new claim number once it has been established.

A traumatic injury is a wound or other condition of the body caused by external force, including stress or strain. The injury must occur at a specific time and place and it must affect a specific member or function of the body. The injury must be caused by a specific event or incident, or a series of events or incidents, within a single day or work shift. In the scenario above, the lifting of the box of computer manuals occurred at a specific time and place over the course of a single work shift, and it appears to have contributed to the recent onset of the employee's back pain.

Here's why the other answer won't work:

A. Advise the employee to file a form CA-2a, *Notice of Recurrence*, because this is a case where the same old back injury has flared up. You further advise the employee that he can go back to the same physician for additional treatment under the original injury claim number.

A recurrence, by definition, is "a spontaneous return or increase of disability due to a previous injury or occupational disease without intervening cause." In other words, an old injury that simply flares up on its own. A recurrence of disability differs from a new injury in that with a recurrence, no event other than the previous injury accounts for the disability. In the scenario above, the lifting of a box of computer manuals two days prior appears to be an intervening cause of the employee's recent onset of back pain, thus ruling out a recurrence.

Bonus Question: How would you record the employee's work absence when he goes to obtain medical care?

Answer: The employee may elect Continuation of Pay (COP – payroll codes LU & LT), or he may elect to use his own sick or annual leave.