

United States Department of Labor cares for ill and injured employees.

Division of Federal Employees' Compensation uses Adobe Experience Manager forms to provide better support for injured workers.



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*Julia Tritz, Chief of Technical Assistance,
Division of Federal Employees' Compensation,
United States Department of Labor*

SOLUTION

Adobe Experience Manager forms, part of Adobe Marketing Cloud

RESULTS



TIMELY

Improved rate of timely filing across agencies from 80.1% to 86.2% for initial claims and 57.8% to 75.9% for time loss claims



ACCESSIBILITY

Enabled anytime, anywhere claim file accessibility for federal agencies and employees



PROCESSING SPEED

Produced significant savings by eliminating the need to process and scan thousands of documents annually



SELF SERVICE

Increased integration with the department's web content management platform, enhancing forms self-service capabilities

United States Department of Labor

Established in 1913

Employees: 17,000+

Washington, D.C.

www.dol.gov

Twin Technologies

www.twintechs.com

ASRC Federal InuTeq

www.asrcfederal.com

CHALLENGES

- Reducing length and severity of injuries by providing injured workers with timely medical care
- Providing all federal agencies with access to more secure files and reliable document submission system
- Enabling agencies to conveniently access claim files without compromising the security of sensitive information

Change to digital

When United States federal employees are injured on the job, the Division of Federal Employees' Compensation (DFEC) helps ensure that they are provided with medical care and support for lost wages until they can return to work. Administered by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) as part of the United States Department of Labor (DOL), the DFEC paid out \$3 billion dollars in benefits to thousands of injured civilian employees in the United States and worldwide in 2012.

With approximately 115,000 new claims every year, ranging from slips, trips, and falls to exposure to dangerous materials, DFEC employees process hundreds of thousands of forms annually. As a program with a history spanning nearly a century, claims traditionally relied upon physical forms. Recent efforts to improve delivery of employee benefits resulted in the creation of an electronic document exchange between DFEC and agencies. However, many smaller agencies lacked resources necessary to develop the infrastructure to submit information.

For injured federal workers, filing for workers' compensation can be a complicated task with the statute requiring the submission of evidence including medical reports and testimonies, often reaching hundreds of documents per file. In support of its 115,000 annual claims, the DFEC can receive 25,000 documents per day, with peaks up to 45,000 after weekends and holidays. To improve efficiency, DFEC employs a mail center that receives, scans, and destroys all paper documents, enabling the agency to work entirely with electronic documents.

In addition to the printing, mailing, and scanning costs incurred by the DFEC and injured workers, this system lacks speed, taking up to one week for documents to enter the system. "The sooner we get notification of the injury, the sooner we can get medical care for injured workers," says Julia Tritz, Chief of Technical Assistance at DFEC. "We've seen that prompt medical care can reduce the severity of an injury and the length of recovery, which helps us get employees back to work faster."

The first step towards an efficient electronic submission system was an electronic data interchange (EDI) platform developed by the DFEC to accept electronic submissions. With this EDI, agencies were required to develop their own submission platforms. "We found that larger agencies had the infrastructure and money to develop a submission platform, but many smaller agencies did not, preventing the adoption of a standard platform," says Paul Beckham, IT Branch Chief at the Division of Federal Employees' Compensation, Department of Labor. "We began looking at a more open system, accessible to all agencies."

The screenshot shows the ECOMP Employee Dashboard for Christopher M Revenagh at the US Department of Labor. The dashboard displays a list of claims and forms, including:

- ECN 103086**: Pending Agency Reviewer Action - Invalid Supervisor. Status: Invalid. Date of event: 01/03/2012. Initiated: 01/29/2012. Actions: Edit, Review, View, Get PDF, Upload Attachments, More.
- ECN 103753**: Pending review by Supervisor. Status: Pending review. Date of event: 01/01/2012. Initiated: 04/19/2012. Actions: View, Get PDF, Upload Attachments, More.
- Case XX9996669**: Pending final review by FECA Agency Rev... Status: Pending final review. Date of event: 06/01/2011. Initiated: 02/26/2012. Actions: View, Get PDF, Upload Attachments, More.

The dashboard also includes navigation links for 'File New Form', 'Access Existing Form', 'Upload Document to an Existing Case', 'Claim Status (COB)', 'Create New Form', 'Which Form To Use?', 'File CA-7 for an existing case', 'Help', 'About', 'How to File a Form', 'About Accessibility and 508 Compliance', 'Filing Forms as an Injured Worker', 'Reviewing Forms as a Supervisor', 'Uploading Documents to FECA Case Files', 'Electronic Document Submission Frequently Asked Questions', 'OSHA Record Keeper User Guide', and 'Agency Reviewer User Guide'.

Workers can log into ECOMP from any browser for convenient and secure claims submission and tracking.

“With ECOMP, examiners now receive claims and supporting documents together, which dramatically reduces the time needed to accept a claim.”

Julia Tritz, Chief of Technical Assistance, Division of Federal Employees' Compensation, United States Department of Labor

Accelerating worker care

Driven by the Deputy Director of the DFEC, Antonio Rios, the agency pushed for an open standard system that could simplify the creation, delivery, and administration of forms across agencies. Using Adobe Experience Manager forms, part of Adobe Marketing Cloud, DFEC worked with partners Twin Technologies and ASRC Federal InuTeq to develop the Employees' Compensation Operations and Management Portal (ECOMP). This accessible, web-based portal enables employees at all participating agencies to receive the fastest possible care through electronic document submission, without any additional investment from agencies.

One feature of ECOMP allows for the uploading of documents to any active claim via a web-enabled electronic document submission application. Injured workers, their attorneys, the employing agency, physicians, and other interested parties can upload documents directly to the claim as long as they have four pieces of credentialing information. Adobe PDF generator features in Adobe Experience Manager forms convert almost any type of file into PDF, while output features create thumbnails and zoom images that allow claimants to preview the files they're uploading.

Using ECOMP, employees can log into the portal from web browsers and are walked through comprehensive claim forms step by step. Unlike paper documents, the ECOMP forms created with Adobe Experience Manager forms can highlight important information and alert workers to missing data. Context sensitive help and tool tips also enable workers to gain additional information about fields. “Some documents need to be signed by supervisors,” says Beckham. “ECOMP streamlines the workflow by automatically routing documents to the appropriate parties.”

When submitting claim forms for illness, injury, or wage loss, workers can also upload and attach supporting documents to be submitted with the claim. Once an employee uses ECOMP for form filing, they are provided an individualized dashboard from which they can view the forms that they have filed in ECOMP and information about the filing status of each form. This improves communication with injured employees and helps them avoid misfiled forms, duplicated submissions, and delays caused by waiting for supporting documentation to come through the mail.

Submitting supporting evidence along with claims forms is a significant factor to improving response speed, enabling instantaneous submission of supporting documentation with the claim form. Before ECOMP, workers using the EDI could submit claims instantly, but without a document submission platform, additional medical evidence or other documentation had to be mailed separately. “Claims Examiners would see the claim form, but couldn't proceed until the additional evidence was received in the mail and scanned into the system, resulting in delays,” says Tritz. “With ECOMP, examiners now receive claims and supporting documents together, which dramatically reduces the time needed to accept a claim.”

"ECOMP helps address the security and accessibility problems that have troubled agencies for years. It gives us a cost-effective way to share sensitive information."

Julia Tritz, Chief of Technical Assistance, Division of Federal Employees' Compensation, United States Department of Labor

With the new platform built on Adobe Experience Manager forms, documents can also be submitted independently from the initial claim. Anyone with information related to an active case who has access to the claim number and other key information for the claim file, can log into ECOMP and submit files from any computer—including doctors, nurses, and lawyers. Streamlined submissions make it easier for injured workers to keep their files up to date, even years after the initial injury.

Saving time and money

As the accessible ECOMP platform gains adoption across federal agencies, the time and cost savings become increasingly apparent. Online document submission, which can be done even for claims that were not filed through ECOMP, eliminates printing and postage costs for the claimant. At the same time, fewer physical documents result in significant savings for the DFEC by reducing the volume of paper processed and scanned by the mail center.

Most importantly, the DFEC is seeing faster turn-around time with ECOMP to support more timely worker care. The DFEC defines timely filing for initial claims for an injury as 10 business days, and timely filing for wage loss claims to be 5 days. In 2009, before deploying ECOMP, the government-wide—excluding the U.S. Postal Service—rate of timely filing for initial claims was 80.1%, but by the end of 2012, the rate jumped to 86.2%. Likewise, government-wide—less the U.S. Postal Service—wage loss claims showed an improvement from a timely filing rate of 57.8% in 2009 to 75.9% in 2012.

The first agency to use ECOMP for all major workers compensation forms demonstrates the incredible gains in speed. In 2009, this agency had a timely filing rate for wage loss of 73.5%, but in the fourth quarter of 2012, the agency achieved a 99.2% timely filing rate. In the same time period, timely filing for initial injuries and illnesses also jumped from 90.1% to 100%.

"We're seeing a marked increase in timeliness for agencies using ECOMP," says Tritz. "Seeing these improvements gives us confidence that our platform is helping workers receive the timely medical care that they need."

Improving access for employees

Unlike the EDI system, which could only be accessed at secure agency computers, ECOMP is available from anywhere that a user can log into a web browser, including hospitals, hotels, or at home. "Depending on the type and extent of injury, simply getting into the office could be a big hurdle for workers, which delayed filing of any claims," says Beckham. The flexible access is particularly helpful for workers stationed overseas and employees that are incapacitated, enabling remote access and agency reviewers to complete forms on their behalf.

"With ECOMP accelerating our workflows, we can receive and process claims faster than ever."

Paul Beckham, IT Branch Chief, Division of Federal Employees' Compensation, United States Department of Labor

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

• Adobe Marketing Cloud, including Adobe Experience Manager forms.

Features used include:

- Digital forms
- Document generation, conversion, and assembly
- Forms workflow
- Document security

For more information

www.adobe.com/solutions/web-experience-management/adaptive-responsive-forms-creation.html

ECOMP also includes increased tracking capabilities to improve visibility into the claim status. Immediately after sending the claim file through ECOMP, workers receive an ECOMP control number that they can use to check the status of the claim at any time. At every step of the review process, workers also receive automatic email notifications of the status change. Once the claim reaches the DFEC, workers are emailed an official claim number that enables them to begin working with district offices or filing additional claim forms immediately.

"While tracking is important for injured workers, it also streamlines communications to reduce the load on the DFEC and individual agencies," explains Tritz. "We receive approximately 1.8 million phone calls a year, making communications a big part of our workload. We used to get many calls from injured workers checking their claim status. By providing an easier way for them to track claim status, we can free up time for our employees for higher value activities."

Balancing security and usability

One of the biggest benefits of the new ECOMP system is the use of digital rights management (DRM) to enable more secure document access without sacrificing usability. Many documents in claim files can involve sensitive information, including medical reports and psychiatric reviews. Currently, claim files can only be accessed from secure, offline computers located at DFEC district offices. If managers of an agency's workers compensation program need to check an employee's file for any reason, they must make an appointment and then physically travel to the appropriate district office.

Using the document security add-on for Adobe Experience Manager forms, the DFEC allows federal employers to view secure PDF files from their work stations. In the past, employers wanting to view documents from their injured worker files would have to schedule a time to travel to one of DFEC's 12 district offices to view these cases in a secure kiosk. Document security can restrict access to files, prohibit unauthorized access, printing, or copying, and protect files with watermarks. "ECOMP helps address the security and accessibility problems that have troubled agencies for years," says Tritz. "It gives us a cost-effective way to share sensitive information."

With the ECOMP system built with Adobe Experience Manager forms, the DFEC has streamlined claims processing with lower costs, increased convenience for workers and agencies, and ultimately can provide faster service. "With ECOMP accelerating our workflows, we can receive and process claims faster than ever," explains Beckham. "It helps us meet our commitment to workers by getting them the help that they need to get back on their feet and back to work as quickly as possible."

