



The September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (“VCF”) has a Law Firm Outreach Team that is dedicated to assisting law firms in filing claims and navigating the VCF’s policies and procedures. Our Law Firm Liaisons, Catherine Doctor and Peter Offen, are launching a new initiative to share periodically the common issues they receive and address on calls with law firms and when reviewing claims. The goal of this initiative is to remind, educate, and/or clarify for you some of the broadly applicable policies, procedures, and practices of the VCF.

1. When submitting a claim or responding to a missing information request, you should provide a cover letter or road map summarizing what has been submitted and how it is responsive. This type of document helps the assigned reviewer to easily identify whether the submission addresses the request and, as such, facilitates the continuing review of the claim.
2. The VCF reviews claims in “first in-first out” order based on the date the compensation portion of the claim form was submitted. This date is referred to as the “priority date” since it sets the priority by which the claim will be assigned for review. The VCF will honor this date even if the claim is missing documents or has been deactivated. The VCF uses this date at all stages of review to determine the priority of this claim relative to others. For amendments, the priority date is the date the amendment was submitted, unless an initial determination has not yet been issued on the underlying claim or there is a pending amendment with an earlier submit date. In that case, the priority date is the date the underlying claim or prior amendment was submitted.
3. The WTC Health Program provides the VCF with the name of any conditions for which the claimant has been certified. The WTC Health Program does not, however, provide the VCF with any of the claimant’s underlying medical records. If a claimant has medical records which demonstrate the severity and/or ongoing nature of a condition, please submit them if you are seeking a non-economic loss award above the baseline value. For more information please see [Policies and Procedures](#) Section 2.1.b.
4. The VCF has a process to expedite claims for claimants facing terminal illnesses or severe financial distress, so that these claims are processed out of order and more quickly in order to attempt to provide immediate relief to claimants in these situations. Please do not submit expedite requests unless truly necessary as this diverts resources from other claims. Expedite requests will not be considered unless all of the following actions have been taken:
 - All documents necessary to support the expedite request have been uploaded to the claimant portal:
 - For health-related requests, this includes medical records and/or a doctor’s note indicating terminal illness;
 - For financial hardship requests, this includes a notice of foreclosure, eviction, or utility termination, or other evidence showing imminent financial distress. Documentation of outstanding bills, without proof of income or financial means, will not support expedited relief.
 - All documents necessary to fully evaluate the claim have been submitted through the claimant portal. This includes any required authorizations (e.g., Exhibit A for NIOSH; Exhibit 1 for Social Security Administration, if claiming lost earnings), as well as documentation to support eligibility and the compensation claimed. Exhibit A must also be mailed to the VCF, as an original is still required for expedited claims.
 - You contact the Helpline to alert them of the request.

For complete information regarding expedite requests, please see [Policies and Procedures](#) Section 3.9.



5. For claimants asserting presence based on employment, always provide a phone number and mailing address for the claimant's employer. The VCF will contact the employer directly to request a Third Party Verification. If the employer responds to this request with sufficient information to place the claimant at a particular location within the VCF's [New York City Exposure Zone](#) on a particular date within the required timeframe (September 11, 2001, to May 30, 2002), no other presence documentation is needed. For complete information regarding presence, and employers the VCF works with directly, please see [Policies and Procedures](#) Section 1.6.

If you have any additional questions, concerns, or would like to schedule a call, please call or email Peter Offen or Catherine Doctor.