

*An important update from...*

# **Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission**



**The Workers' Comp Clarion**

January 9, 2020



## The Chairman's Corner

By Mark Liotta, Chairman

The year 2020 holds many positive opportunities for the Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission (WCC).

Our judicial partner, the Court of Existing Claims (CEC) is undergoing a significant restructuring, decreasing in size from four judges to one in July, and shifting the presiding judge's administrative powers to a new Court Administrator In January. The CEC is also celebrating a number of retirements.

We welcome the CEC's Dustin Davison to his new role as Court Administrator, having been recently appointed by Oklahoma's Governor Kevin Stitt.

These coming changes have already allowed both agencies to begin taking advantage of economies of scale by using space and personnel more efficiently. The CEC and WCC have consolidated space in the Tulsa office and unified all reception staff in both OKC and Tulsa. The case file Records Divisions and Clerks of both agencies are now sharing common file facilities in the OKC office. These space-sharing agreements have reduced the overall footprint, rent, and utilities, while improving customer service and logistical effectiveness. The former WCC space in Tulsa has already been updated and repurposed for another agency.

Additionally, we are looking forward to the opportunity to combine our agency onto the first and second floors, and repurposing some of the existing space. The 3rd floor and possibly parts of the 2nd floor will be available to other agencies that currently may be paying commercial rent.

Our next opportunity for consolidation is to bring the CEC's decades of electronic case files onto the WCC's new case management system, as required by statute. This will be part of Phase Two of the case management system upgrade in 2020.

As we have made the commitment this year to begin going “paper optional”, the new case management system will make this advancement possible and practical, reducing paper and printing costs, and reducing the footprint of file storage systems. Our new system will also greatly simplify the logistics of physically moving files, and make documents electronically available throughout both facilities to judges, commissioners, staff and customers (including injured workers, insurers, employers, attorneys, media, legislators, etc.). A paper copy can always be produced, but when there is no need for paper, the document can remain in an electronic form throughout its life.

The combination of going “paper optional” and our new case management system will also help with our effort to bring Tulsa online as a self-sufficient one-stop operation as well. Instead of lugging files up and down the turnpike daily, we are upgrading options for transferring any needed files electronically, and making staffing adjustments to allow all phases of our work to be commenced, processed, and completed in Tulsa.

As we bring 2019 to a close, I thank our entire staff for their committed efforts to find effectiveness in our efficiencies and still have fun with it. I also thank outgoing CEC Court Administrator Judge Michael Harkey for his years of service to the state, and the positive relationship we maintained in negotiations regarding consolidation of CEC and WCC operations. Bridging the gap between two branches of state government is not an easy task, and he helped us reach our common goals.

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## **Comment Opportunity on Proposed Fee Schedule Commencing Soon**



The WCC is currently reviewing the medical fee schedule report and proposed amendments submitted by national consultant Fair Health. The WCC will release the report and proposed amended medical fee schedule on its website for a 30-day stakeholder review and comment opportunity beginning January 27<sup>th</sup>. Fair Health previously held a comment period to gather stakeholder concerns with the existing 2012 fee schedule and to hear what stakeholders hoped to see in an amended fee schedule.

Below is a list of approximate dates for the fee schedule review process. The public can stay up-to-date on the process by checking the WCC website at <https://www.ok.gov/wcc/>, where they may also see alerts and sign up for updates. Additionally, anyone can contact the WCC by phone at (405) 522-3222 or toll free at 1 (855) 291-3612 for any questions about this fees schedule update process.

Date	Projected Fee Schedule Review Dates.
12/20/2019- <b>Completed</b>	Report and Proposed Fee Schedule Due from Fair Health
1/27/2020	Special Meeting of the Workers' Compensation Commission - Approve proposed fee schedule for public comment
1/28/2020	Begin 30-day public comment period. Report and proposed fee schedule to be published on WCC website for public review and comment
2/27/2020	Special Meeting of the Workers' Compensation Commission - Receive public comment
2/27/2020	End 30-day public comment period
3/17/2020	Special Meeting of the Workers' Compensation Commission - Final adoption of Fee Schedule
3/20/2020	WCC to submit adopted Fee Schedule to Legislature for approval/disapproval by Joint Resolution



## 2019 Workers' Compensation Conference

By Collin Fowler, Director of Communication and Administration

The WCC hosted another wonderful conference this year. It was full of interesting and engaging speakers, great vendors, and fantastic

attendance. Before I close out the year, I want to thank everyone who participated in our 2019 conference. We could not put together an event like this without the interest and support of everyone involved. So, from the bottom of my heart, Thank You!

Planning is already underway for our 2020 Conference to be held October 1st and 2nd. If you have any suggestions for content or speakers you would like to hear from in 2020, please feel free to contact me. I am always ready to hear great ideas for our conference.

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(405) 522-8606

## Thanks to our 2019 WCC Conference Sponsors!

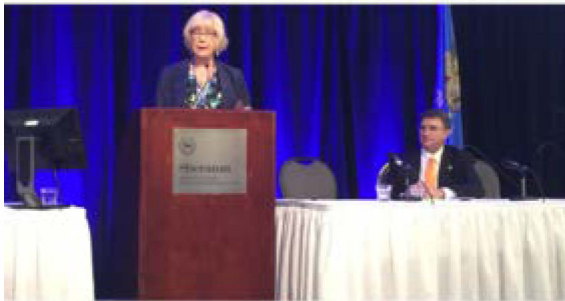
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Oklahoma Surgical Hospital







## Employee Spotlight

By Collin Fowler, Director of Communication and Administration

*This segment of our newsletter is devoted to highlighting some of the interesting people who work for the WCC. It is important to note, the Commission is more than the dour, grey walls of the Denver Davison Building, or even the laws which created the Commission. In a very real way, the employees of the WCC are at the heart of what defines us. Their hard work and commitment is what turns the lofty ideas of policy into the reality of administration. Here we examine the parts to appreciate the whole.*

In her OKC office on the 2nd floor, Teresa McNeely can be found providing all aspects of workers' compensation counseling. With each ring of the phone comes a new question, or new problem that urgently needs consideration, explanation, sometimes translation, and action. Helping to solve those problems and find the answers is what Teresa does best, and what she has been doing for over five years. Teresa works in the Counseling Division. Along with some assistance from Legal Admin Director Eric Russell, she takes on all of the calls from anyone who need to smoothly navigate the workers' compensation system. Those calls can come from unrepresented injured workers', insurance adjusters, employers, legislators, and medical providers.

When I spoke to her about what it was like when she first started with the WCC she said, "I came in and started answering the phone, and it has been ringing ever since." The mission of the Counseling Division is to provide primary public information to all stakeholders for the WCC. This can mean handling over 5,000 calls, emails, and walk-ins each year. With this volume of communication, it is easy to see the integral role Teresa and the Counseling Division play in the services provided by the WCC.

Teresa graduated from Southern Nazarene University and has been a licensed adjuster for 34 years. She has worked as a liability adjuster for Gallagher Bassett in Dallas, a liability supervisor for Hobby Lobby, and as an employee for the Oklahoma State Insurance Fund. With her extensive background and expertise, Teresa brings many skills to the table when she is helping folks who call in for help.

In her personal life, Teresa is enjoying being a newlywed. She married Winfred McNeely in May of 2018. Winfred proposed while they were on a cruise with his whole family. While at dinner, he announced he did not want to bring his girlfriend on the cruise, but he DID want to bring his fiancé, and so he popped the question!

Between them, the couple has three adult children and three grandkids. Teresa and Winfred enjoy bowling and going to concerts. They recently saw Earth Wind & Fire live in concert.

We are very fortunate to have such an experienced and dedicated person on our staff. Teresa performs a sometimes difficult yet very meaningful role for the WCC. It is critical that those who are unfamiliar with workers' compensation receive patient guidance from someone like Teresa who thoroughly understands the system.

Thank you Teresa McNeely for your hard work and service to the Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission.



Teresa and Winfred McNeely at their wedding.



## Permitting Services Update:

By James Lawson, Director of Permitting Services

Earlier this year, Oklahoma's Governor Kevin Stitt signed into law an omnibus workers' compensation bill which, in part, requires "each carrier writing compensation insurance in Oklahoma [to] pay to the Workers' Compensation Commission an annual fee of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00)." 85A O.S., § 29(A).

Pursuant to this new statute, the WCC will begin collecting the annual fee of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00). The first payment is due January 1, 2020, and payments thereafter will be due annually on January 1st. ONLINE payments can be made at [www.wcc.ok.noclick.gov](http://www.wcc.ok.noclick.gov). Click on "ONLINE WEB BILL PAY". Payments can also be mailed to the following address:



**Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission**  
**1915 N. Stiles Ave., STE 231**  
**Oklahoma City, OK, 73105**



## **Business Office Updates:**

Andrea Delling, CFO

There are occasions when the WCC must return payments for case filing fees to employers, insurance companies, attorneys, and third party administrators, which can create an unfortunate delay in everyone's process. The main reasons for the check returns are:

- Duplicate payments are submitted by the same company, or between representing parties in a workers' compensation case;
- Case filing fee payments in the amount of \$140.00 are erroneously submitted for each order issued rather than a total cost of \$140.00 per case, per 85A.O.S. § 118.A;
- Tax payment checks are mailed to the Workers' Compensation Commission, rather than mailed directly to the OK Tax Commission; and,
- Case filing fee payments lack the WCC case numbers and/or claimants' names for identification and processing of payments.

Our accounting and administrative staff work very hard, daily, to process these payments accurately according to statute and standard governmental accounting requirements. This process can be improved for everyone with complete, timely, and accurate information accompanying any payment. For any questions regarding this process, please call WCC CFO Andrea Delling at 1 (405) 522-3222.

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## Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission



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(405) 522-3222  
1915 N Stiles Ave, 231  
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