

# AGENT ORANGE NEWSLETTER

INFORMATION FOR VIETNAM-ERA VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

## RESEARCH TO IMPROVE VA POLICIES AND HEALTH CARE



Beginning in 1991, as required by public law, VA contracted with the Health and Medicine Division (HMD) (formally known as the Institute of Medicine) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to review scientific and medical information related to the health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. HMD released the first report of its

findings, entitled “Veterans and Agent Orange,” in 1994 and was required to release updated reports every two years through 2016.

For every biennial update, HMD was charged to determine 1) whether there was a statistical association between specific diseases and exposure to herbicides used during the conflict in Vietnam, 2) whether there was an increased risk of disease among individuals exposed to herbicides during service in Vietnam, and 3) whether there was evidence of a causal relationship between herbicide exposure and a disease.

On March 10, 2016, HMD released its tenth report in the mandated series. A technical workgroup of VA subject matter experts has been assembled to review the report and to make recommendations to the Secretary on how

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## VA PLANS TO EXPAND BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY FOR CAMP LEJEUNE VETERANS

We are including this article as some of the Agent Orange Veterans (or other Veterans reading this newsletter), may have served at Camp Lejeune. People living at this U.S. Marine Corps Base in North Carolina from the 1950s through the 1980s may have been exposed to drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, benzene, and other chemicals. This chemical exposure may have led to various health conditions.

Following discussions between health experts of the Veterans Health Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services’ Agency

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## HAVE YOU HEARD OF EXPOSURE ED?

Thanks to VA’s Exposure Ed mobile app, you can look forward to more informed conversations with your health care provider regarding any exposure-related concerns. The app offers instant information for providers on military exposures, their potential health effects, and related VA programs and benefits. It is currently available for free download from the Apple App Store. Development of an Android version of the app is underway. To learn more, visit <http://go.usa.gov/cuxvB>.



## AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE LOCATIONS

Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service may be eligible for a variety of VA benefits, including disability compensation. To learn about locations where herbicides were used, visit <http://go.usa.gov/cuxyx>.

### Vietnam and Brown Water Veterans

Veterans who set foot in Vietnam or who served on a ship while it operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides. Veterans who meet these criteria do not need to show factual evidence of exposure in order to receive disability compensation.

### Blue Water Veterans

Blue Water Veterans, or Veterans who served on open sea ships off the shore of Vietnam during the Vietnam War, are not presumed to

have been exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides. However, Veterans who set foot in Vietnam or served aboard ships on its inland waterways between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed. VA maintains an evolving list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships used for military service in Vietnam that may be associated with exposure to Agent Orange.

### Korean Demilitarized Zone

Any Veteran who 1) has been diagnosed with a disease recognized by VA as associated with Agent Orange exposure and 2) served in the military between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971, in a unit operated along the Korean Demilitarized zone, is presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides.

### Thailand Military Bases

Vietnam-era Veterans who served on the perimeters of military bases in

Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, may qualify for VA benefits.

### Herbicide Tests and Storage Outside Vietnam

Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam were tested or stored elsewhere, including some military bases in the United States. The Department of Defense gave VA a list of dates and locations of herbicide tests and storage.

### C-123 Airplanes and Agent Orange Residue

From 1972 to 1982, Air Force Reserve personnel trained and worked on C-123 aircraft that had previously been used to spray herbicides in Vietnam. Veterans whose military service involved regular contact with the contaminated C-123 aircraft may qualify for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure.

## THE FASTEST WAY TO GET A DISABILITY CLAIM DECISION



If you're a Veteran who needs to file a disability compensation claim for the first time or you need to submit a new claim for a previous service-related condition, there is now a

faster, easier way to get a claim decision. With the help of your local Veterans Service Officer, you can file an electronic claim or eClaim through eBenefits and get a faster VA decision.

### What is an eClaim?

Veterans now have the ability to start and submit claims online through the VA/DoD eBenefits web portal. All you need is a free Level

2 Premium eBenefits account to start your eClaim today! An eClaim removes all of the paper clutter connected with filing a traditional paper claim. You can submit your information online into VA's claims processing system. This allows VA to more quickly process your information and make a faster claim decision. For an even faster disability compensation claim decision, Veterans can also choose to file an

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## RESEARCH TO IMPROVE VA POLICIES AND HEALTH CARE

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the findings can be used to help improve VA's policies and the care of Vietnam Veterans.

### Diseases Associated with Agent Orange

VA recognizes certain cancers and other health problems as diseases that are associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. Veterans and their survivors may be eligible for benefits for the following diseases:

- AL Amyloidosis
- Chronic B-cell Leukemias
- Chloracne
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Parkinson's Disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas

For more information on these diseases please visit <http://go.usa.gov/cuxfz>. VA continues to update this list based on relevant scientific and medical information, including HMD's findings. To view HMD's reports go to <http://go.usa.gov/chaAP>.

## VA PLANS TO EXPAND BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY FOR CAMP LEJEUNE VETERANS

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for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), VA's Secretary Robert A. McDonald proposed a rule that will create a presumption of service connection for certain health conditions associated with exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune. These presumptions will make it easier for affected Veterans to receive VA disability compensation and health care.

"The water at Camp Lejeune was a hidden hazard, and it is only years later that we know how dangerous it was," said Secretary McDonald. "We thank ATSDR for the thorough review that provided much of the evidence we needed to fully

compensate Veterans who develop one of the conditions known to be related to exposure to the compounds in the drinking water."

Once finalized, the proposed rule will expand benefits eligibility for Veterans, members of the Reserves, and members of the National Guard who were assigned to Camp Lejeune from August 1, 1953, through December 31, 1987.

Veterans who served at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, are already eligible to receive VA health care for up to 15 health conditions. More information is available at <http://go.usa.gov/cuxEA>.

## THE FASTEST WAY TO GET A DISABILITY CLAIM DECISION

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electronic Fully Developed Claim (FDC) through eBenefits.

### What is an electronic FDC?

In order to file an electronic FDC you must simultaneously provide all required documentation, submit an electronic claim through eBenefits, AND certify that you have met all program requirements. Providing all your documentation up front accelerates the claim decision process.

Failure to provide required documentation in a timely manner, missing scheduled VA medical appointments, and /or submitting additional documentation after the initial submission can result in ineligibility. If you are determined

ineligible for the FDC program, your claim will be processed through the traditional route. You can learn more about the FDC program and how to file an eClaim at <http://go.usa.gov/cux7J>, or visit the VBA Media and Publications Page at <http://go.usa.gov/cuxve> to view informative videos on these topics.

Contact a Veterans Service Officer for help filing an eClaim or electronic FDC, or visit <http://go.usa.gov/cuxwH> and follow the guided step-by-step process. Agents at VA's toll-free number, 1-800-827-1000, can also answer any questions you may have. Don't get stuck waiting for a claim decision longer than you have to—take control of your claim and file an eClaim today!



## VE-HEROES: STUDYING THE HEALTH OF VIETNAM VETERANS



VA is inviting approximately 54,000 Americans to join the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study (VE-HEROeS), a national study on the health and well-being of Vietnam Veterans, Blue Water

Navy Veterans, and Veterans who served elsewhere during the Vietnam Era (1961-1975). Researchers will compare the health of these Veterans to similarly aged Americans without military experience.

Those participating in the VE-HEROeS study will be asked to fill out a questionnaire focusing on a broad range of topics, including general health, memory, health care use, military service, and the health of their children.

Researchers have scientifically selected a random sample of individuals for participation in the study and are not able to accept volunteers. If you receive an invitation, please participate! You will be making a difference in the long term health and care for you and all Veterans.

To read more about the study, please visit <http://go.usa.gov/cuxpF>.

**VE-HEROeS**  
Health Retrospective  
Observational Study

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