

*"Honor the Dead by Helping the Living"*



*Department of Pennsylvania  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
of the United States*

Veterans Service Division  
4002 Fenton Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17109-5943  
717-234-7927

*Wayne D. Perry*

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*Service Bulletin*

*January, February, March 2020*

BULLETIN 2020

## VIETNAM BLUE WATER NAVY VETERANS

### *Disability benefits available to those serving offshore.*

Agent Orange Exposure in the Republic of Vietnam Waters (Blue Water Navy). Blue Water Navy Veterans are now entitled to a presumption of service connection for conditions related to Agent Orange exposure. This extension of the presumption is a result of Public Law 116-23, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, signed into law on June 25, 2019. **The law takes effect January 1, 2020. See attached Frequently Asked Questions sheet.**

### Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act S.319

This bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures in Afghanistan or Iraq.

The VA shall, in selecting the center's site, consider entities that:

- are equipped with the specialized equipment needed to study, diagnose, and treat health conditions relating to such exposure;
- have a track record of publishing information on post-deployment health exposures among veterans who served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom;
- have access to animal models and in vitro models of dust immunology and lung injury consistent with the injuries of members of the Armed Forces who served in support of such operations; and
- have expertise in allergy, immunology, and pulmonary diseases.

The VA shall ensure that the center collaborates with the Department of Defense (DOD), institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities to:

- provide for dissemination within the VA of best practices for the treatment of such conditions and the training of health professionals,
- provide guidance for the VA and DOD health systems in determining the personnel required to provide quality health care for members of the Armed Forces and veterans with such conditions,
- establish, and oversee a program to train VA and DOD health professionals in the treatment of such conditions,
- facilitate advancements in the study of the short-term and long-term effects of such exposure,
- conduct basic science and translational research on such conditions for the purposes of understanding the etiology of such conditions and developing preventive interventions and new treatments, and
- provide medical treatment to veterans diagnosed with medical conditions specific to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.

The center shall have access to and make use of the data accumulated by the burn pits registry.

**FARM SHOW**  
**January 4-11 2020**

- Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center, 2300 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110
- Free admission/paid parking -\$15 in Farm Show operated lots
- Events: Rodeo, Rabbit Hop, Horse pulling competition, Culinary connection, Butter Sculpture, Sheep to Shawl competition and more.....
- Recruiting new VFW members

**56th MID-WINTER CONFERENCE**  
**January 31 – Feb 1 2020**

- Wyndham Gettysburg Hotel, Gettysburg PA
- Annual Collection of winter coats, thermals, sweatshirts/pant, hats and scarves, socks and gloves donation drive for Homeless Veterans

**NRA GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOOR SHOW**  
**February 1-9 2020**

- Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center, 2300 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110
- Events Rocking Country Music Concert with Lee Brice, activities for the kids, Dock Dogs- run, jump, swim competition, 3D Bowhunter Challenge and more....
- Recruiting new VFW members

**WOMEN VETERANS RETREAT**  
**March 27-29 2020**

Ramada Conference Center, 1450 Atherton St., State College PA 16801  
Additional Information and Registration Forms are available via mail or regular email and on the Department Website: <https://www.vfwpahq.org/>

**Pennsylvania Commission for Women**

The Pennsylvania Commission for Women is seeking statewide nominations for its fifth annual Female Veterans Day Ceremony as part of Women's History Month in March 2020. The event will take place at the Governor's Residence in Harrisburg and veterans selected will be honored by Governor Tom Wolf and First Lady Frances Wolf. The Commission recognizes the unique challenges faced by women in the military, as women only comprise about 20 percent of the armed services. I encourage anyone who knows a deserving woman veteran to nominate her for this honor. The Female Veterans Day nomination form should be filled out online. Nominees must be current Pennsylvania residents and have served at least four years in any branch of the U.S. military. The deadline for nominations is February 1, 2020. All final honorees will be notified via email by February 28, 2020. For additional information on the nomination process, please contact the Commission for Women at [women@pa.gov](mailto:women@pa.gov).

### Disability Payment Schedule

If you receive VA disability payments, you probably were happy to know that for 2020, you get a **1.6%** raise in your benefits. But when will you get those monthly checks? Disability payment benefits for a particular month are paid the first business day of the following month. When the first business day of the month falls on a non-business day or a holiday, VA benefits will be paid on the last business day of the preceding month.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Payment Date</u>	<u>Day of Week</u>
January	Jan. 31	Friday
February	Feb. 28	Friday
March	Apr. 1	Wednesday
April	May 1	Friday
May	June 1	Monday
June	July 1	Wednesday
July	July 31	Friday
August	Sep. 1	Tuesday
September	Oct. 1	Thursday
October	Oct. 30	Friday
November	Dec. 1	Tuesday
December	Dec. 31	Thursday

### Veterans Temporary Assistance

Purpose: Provide temporary financial assistance to Veterans and their beneficiaries who reside in Pennsylvania for the necessities of life (food, dairy, shelter, fuel and clothing).

Veterans' Eligibility Criteria:

- A person who served in the Armed Forces of the United States, who:
- Was discharged under honorable conditions after a period of active duty, other than active duty for training, as evidenced by a DD Form 214 or other official documentation, or
- Died in service or was killed in action, or
- Suffered a service-connected disability as certified by the United States Veterans' Administration.

Need for Temporary Assistance Criteria:

- Financial circumstances temporarily resulting in insufficient funds to pay for shelter and necessities of living for the Veteran and family.
- They demonstrate a clear and present direct and immediate need for temporary assistance in order to provide themselves and their families with shelter and the necessities of living.

Payments: If eligible, a Veteran or their beneficiary can qualify for an amount not to exceed \$1,600 in a twelve-month period.

Where to Apply: Contact the County Veterans' Affairs Director in the county you reside to apply for this program.

### PA Wounded Warriors Inc.

Do you need emergency financial assistance for expenses like these? Housing - security deposits, rent or mortgage payments.

Basic Utilities (ex. gas, oil, electricity, water), car payment, insurance or repair, medical expenses, education or job training expenses.

Are you a Pennsylvania resident? Are you a veteran of the United States Armed Forces holding an Honorable or General Under Honorable Conditions Discharge?

All applicants must have an advocate like a Post Service Officer or an Accredited Service Officer or Claims Consultant to validate and represent the veteran applying for funding.

Having a wounded warrior or veteran in crisis work with a veteran's advocate also has the advantage that if we are not able to help, they may be able to suggest other resources or get additional help. **Attached is a sample letter for PSO's to guide the advocate.**

### Veteran Service Award

Veteran service department is seeking nominations for individuals assisting and or advocating for veterans in our community. Submit all nominations to Christine Smith, Veteran Service Chairwoman, 4002 Fenton Ave., Harrisburg PA 17109 or email: [csmith@vfwpahq.org](mailto:csmith@vfwpahq.org)  
**Attached is the nomination criteria.**

**All questions regarding post service officer testing should be directed to Linda Jayman (Administrative Assistant/Claims Consultant) at VFW HQ @ 717-234-7927.**



## VETERANS SERVICE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Nominee is: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated by: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

On a separate sheet answered this question in less than 250 words. *How has the nominee advocated or assisted veterans in their community?*

Submit nominations to Christine Smith, Veterans Service Chairwoman, 4002 Fenton Avenue, Harrisburg PA 17109 or email : [csmith@vfwpahq.org](mailto:csmith@vfwpahq.org)

# VIETNAM BLUE WATER NAVY VETERANS

## *Disability benefits available to those serving offshore*

### **Agent Orange Exposure in the Republic of Vietnam Waters (Blue Water Navy)**

Blue Water Navy Veterans are now entitled to a presumption of service connection for conditions related to Agent Orange exposure. This extension of the presumption is a result of [Public Law 116-23](#), the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, signed into law on June 25, 2019.

The law takes effect January 1, 2020.

The law states that Veterans aboard a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia as defined in [Public Law 116-23](#), between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides such as Agent Orange and may be entitled to service connection for conditions related to that exposure.

To be entitled to disability compensation benefits, these Veterans must have one or more of the conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure that are listed in 38 Code of Federal Regulations section 3.309(e).

### **What conditions are related to Agent Orange exposure?**

Agent Orange presumptive conditions are:

- AL amyloidosis
- Chloracne, or other acneform disease consistent with chloracne
- Chronic B-cell leukemias
- Diabetes mellitus, Type 2
- Ischemic heart disease
- Hodgkin lymphoma, formerly known as Hodgkin's disease
- Non-Hodgkin lymphoma
- Multiple myeloma
- Parkinson's disease
- Peripheral neuropathy, early-onset
- Porphyria cutanea tarda
- Prostate cancer
- Respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx or trachea)
- Soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma).

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### **How do I file a claim for disability compensation?**

- Apply online using [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), **OR**
- Work with an accredited representative or agent, **OR**
- Go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you. You can find your regional office on our [Facility Locator](#) page.
- State on your application that you are filing for one of the presumed Agent Orange conditions.

- Include any evidence you have of service in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the required timeframe. Include the name(s) of the ship(s) and the date(s) you crossed within 12 nautical miles of the Republic of Vietnam, if you have that information.
- Provide medical evidence showing a diagnosis of a current Agent Orange presumptive condition or tell us where you are being treated.

For more information on how to apply and for tips on making sure your claim is ready to be processed by VA, visit our [Disability Compensation web page](#). [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Do I need to prove contact with Agent Orange?**

No. You don't need to show that you came into contact with Agent Orange. Congress has provided that conditions on the list of presumptive diseases will be deemed to have been caused by contact with Agent Orange through service in the Republic of Vietnam, including offshore waters as defined by the Blue Water Navy Act of 2019.

## **What will the effective date for Benefits be for Blue Water Navy Veteran claims?**

Presumptive Agent Orange conditions granted for Blue Water Navy Veterans may be retroactive to the date VA received your original claim. If you had a previously denied claim and you resubmit your claim, the effective date will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## **When do the Blue Water Navy presumptions go into effect?**

The Blue Water Navy Act of 2019 will take effect on January 1, 2020. Veterans can file claims at any time, and they will be decided after the law is implemented. Blue Water Navy claims and appeals currently in process have been placed on hold (stayed) until the new rules go into effect. The bipartisan Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act gives VA until Jan. 1, 2020, to begin deciding Blue Water Navy related claims. By staying claims decisions until that date, VA is complying with the law that Congress wrote and passed.

## **How will the previously denied claims be handled?**

If you had an Agent Orange claim with one or more presumptive conditions denied in the past, you are urged to **file a new claim**. Provide any new and relevant information regarding your claim such as dates you believe your ship traveled within 12 nautical miles of the Republic of Vietnam, or updated medical information. Claims that are currently in the VA review process or under appeal will be reviewed under the new policy.

## **If a Blue Water Navy Veteran has not applied for benefits in the past, but would like to apply now will the presumption of exposure be extended to them?**

Yes, VA will apply the provisions of the law to Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans who file new claims based on presumption of exposure to Agent Orange.

## **What happens if the Veteran dies before his or her claim is decided?**

If the claimant dies while his or her claim is pending, a living dependent, such as a spouse or child, may file a request to be substituted as the claimant.

## **May the surviving spouse of a Blue Water Navy Veteran who passed away from a condition related to Agent Orange exposure, and who was previously denied compensation for such condition, become entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)?**

If the Veteran served on a Navy or Coast Guard ship that that operated not more than 12 nautical miles from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia as defined in the Blue Water Navy Act of 2019 and the cause of death was from a condition related to exposure to Agent Orange, then VA may award entitlement to DIC on that basis.

## **Where can I get additional information on disability compensation for Agent Orange?**

Veterans with questions about benefits or filing a claim can visit the VA Agent Orange website [www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/navy-coast-guard-ships-vietnam/](http://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/navy-coast-guard-ships-vietnam/). They can also call the disability benefits call center at 800-827-1000.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
1000 GIBBS ROAD  
MUSKOGEE, ALABAMA 36533



**PENNSYLVANIA VFW ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICERS**

**HARRISBURG**

**(717) 234-7927**

Christine Smith – Veterans Service Chairwoman - Department Service Officer

John Chiodi - Assistant DSO

Liz Graybill - Assistant DSO

Ronald Smith - Assistant DSO

Harvey Greenawalt – Claims Consultant

Emily LeVault – Claims Consultant

Linda Jayman, Claims Consultant/ PSO testing officer

**PITTSBURGH REGIONAL OFFICE**

**(215) 381-3123**

Liz Salvadore – Veterans Service Co-Chairwoman

Clarence Madigan – Assistant DSO

Josh Croner – Assistant DSO

Kyra Price – Claims consultant

**PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL OFFICE**

**(412) 395-6259/6256**

John Foster – Assistant DSO

Katherine Woodman – Assistant DSO

Evangeline Johnson – Claims Consultant

Trudy Strain – Administrative Assistant

**WILKES-BARRE OFFICE**

**(570) 821-2535/2536**

Joanne Kane – Claims Consultant

Louis Ybarra – Assistant DSO

Lori Ybarra – Claims Consultant

**PENNSYLVANIA VFW ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICERS**

**ERIE OFFICE**

**(814) 835- 8494**

Julie Hutchinson – Claims Consultant

Charles Beattie – Assistant DSO

Rachel VanDyne – Administrative Assistant

**BUTLER OFFICE**

**(878) 271-6976**

Linda Eshenbaugh – Claims Consultant

**LOCK HAVEN OFFICE**

**(570) 748 -5929**

Dave Bower – Assistant DSO

Cynthia Bardo – Assistant DSO

Elisa Snook MacMillen – Claims Consultant

Karen Brombia - Claims Consultant

**ALTOONA OFFICE**

**VACANT**

AGENCY LETTERHEAD OR LOGO

**DATE:**

**TO:** Pennsylvania Wounded Warriors Inc.  
1117 Country Club Road  
Camp Hill, PA 17011

**Subject:** Request for Assistance for "Joe Smith"

**1. Introduction.** Introduce the Veteran. *Example:* Joe Smith is a veteran who served in the US Navy from October 1989 to October 1992. He has a (type of discharge) and a service connected disability rating of XX% (or has no disability rating). Proof of service and disability rating are enclosed. His current address is 123 Maple Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17001. (If he is moving into a new residence, insert the new address.)

**2. Situation.** Explain the problem. *Example:* Mr. Smith was laid off from his job as a truck driver in December and has been unable to find employment. However, he has an interview next week with local delivery firm that has possibilities. While he was laid off, his two children were in a hoverboard crash and this resulted in unexpected medical bills which he paid. Due to these circumstances, Mr. Smith is now one month behind on rent, one month behind on his electric bill and he needs new tires on his car – the family's only source of transportation.

**3. Request for Assistance.** We are requesting the following assistance for Mr. Smith. *Please prioritize the needs, as we may not be able to cover all of them. Tell us exactly what to do and how much. Bills must be current (not more than 30 days old).*

a. Rent payment for 1 month, total of \$600. Payable to: ABC Apartments LLC. Mail payment to: 45 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17001. Lease or letter from landlord enclosed.

b. Electric bill for \$243.97. Account number: 1547-9865. Payable to: Met Ed. Mail payment to: Box 3687, Akron, OH 44309-3687. Bill enclosed

c. Four tires for \$450. Bill/Estimate #234 enclosed. Payable to: Goodyear Store 4567. Mail payment to: 1000 Highway 181, Mechanicsburg, PA 17010. *(All car repairs require copy of veteran's driver license, current vehicle registration and proof of current auto insurance.)*

**4. Comments.** Anything else we need to know.

**Your signature block**

Include phone and email address.