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VA extends Agent Orange presumption to ‘Blue Water Navy’ Veterans

Eligible Veterans may now be entitled to disability compensation benefits

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is preparing to process Agent Orange exposure claims for [“Blue Water Navy” Veterans](#) who served offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975.

These Veterans may be eligible for presumption of herbicide exposure through [Public Law 116-23, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019](#), which was signed into law June 25, 2019, and goes into effect Jan. 1, 2020. They may also qualify for a presumption of service connection if they have a disease that is recognized as being associated with herbicide exposure.

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.

“VA is dedicated to ensuring that all Veterans receive the benefits they have earned,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We are working to ensure that we have the proper resources in place to meet the needs of our Blue Water Veteran community and minimize the impact on all Veterans filing for disability compensation.”

Blue Water Navy Veterans are encouraged to submit disability compensation claims for conditions presumed to be related to Agent Orange exposure. Veterans over age 85 or with life-threatening illnesses will have priority in claims processing.

Veterans who previously were denied for an Agent Orange related presumptive condition can file a new claim based on the change in law. Eligible survivors of deceased Blue Water Navy Veterans also may benefit from the new law and may file claims for benefits based on the Veterans’ service.

The new law affects Veterans who served on 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](#). An estimated 420,000 to 560,000 Vietnam-era Veterans may be considered Blue Water Navy Veterans.

To qualify, under the new law, these Veterans must have a disease associated with herbicide exposure, as listed in [38 Code of Federal Regulations](#) section 3.309(e).

Agent Orange presumptive conditions are:

- AL amyloidosis
- Chloracne or similar acneform disease
- Chronic B-cell leukemias
- Diabetes mellitus Type 2
- Hodgkin lymphoma, formerly known as Hodgkin’s disease
- Ischemic heart disease
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, formerly known as Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- 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).

For more information about Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam waters (Blue Water Navy Veterans), visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/navy-coast-guard-ships-vietnam/>.

Veterans seeking more information should contact their [Veterans Service Officer](#), call VA’s toll-free number at 800-827-1000 or visit the VA Blue Water Navy Agent Orange [website](#).

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