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of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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(202) 461-7600
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VA prepares to get ahead of surge in backlogged claims

WASHINGTON — Starting in October, the Department of Veterans Affairs will hire and train new staff to ensure Veterans' claims are adjudicated quickly and help reduce an expected increase in the backlog of claims pending more than 125 days.

VA is taking the following proactive steps to help in the reduction:

- Hire and train 2,000 new employees to assist in claims processing.
- Utilize funds provided via the American Rescue Plan for overtime to ensure timely claims processing.
- Deploy requested fiscal year 2022 budget resources to support Agent Orange presumptive processing, as well as for general Compensation and Pension claims processing.

As of October 11, there were more than 204,000 backlog claims in an inventory of 603,000 total claims. VA identified more than 70,000 claims to review for additional entitlement stemming from the presumptive relationship between Agent Orange and Parkinsonism, bladder cancer and hypothyroidism. Many of these will enter the backlog in October which is projected to reach 260,000 pending claims.

“VA is committed to ensuring timely access to benefits and services for all Veterans. This includes making sure Veterans who may have experienced adverse health effects from military related exposures can get access to the benefits they need,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “As we process claims such as those for three new disabilities presumptively linked to Agent Orange exposure, including proactive application of [Nehmer provisions](#), as well as three new Gulf War particulate exposure presumptives, we anticipate the claims backlog to increase this fall. The hiring of new employees will help us resolve these claims more quickly.”

Several factors have contributed to the recent backlog. Beginning in March 2020, operational changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an untimely delay of the [Federal Records Centers'](#) retrieval of documents and suspended [Compensation and Pension examinations](#). While these actions were necessary to protect the health and safety of employees and veterans, they slowed the processing time for claims. VA workload has also increased as a result of the aforementioned recent decisions and actions, including [a court order](#) mandating the review of previously denied Veterans on the basis of qualifying service in the 12 nautical miles surrounding Vietnam.

The backlog has decreased by more than 14,000 claims since the end of August 2021. With continued improvement of VA's ability to obtain C&P examinations and Federal Records, and with all requested resources received, VBA plans to address the impending increase and then further reduce the current claims backlog to 100,000 claims by April 2024.

Learn more about claims and to view reports visit [Detailed Claims Data](#).

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