

VA Posts Online List of Ships Associated with Presumptive Agent Orange Exposure

WASHINGTON (Sept. 2, 2011)- Veterans who served aboard U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.

An updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships confirmed to have operated on Vietnam's inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crewmembers sent ashore, has been posted at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/> to assist Vietnam Veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits.

"Posting of the ships list is an important recognition of the sacrifices U.S. Navy and Coast Guard Veterans made for this Nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "It provides an easier path for Veterans who served in Vietnam to get the benefits and services they are entitled to under the law."

VA presumes herbicide exposure for any Veteran with duty or visitation within the country of Vietnam or on its inland waterways during the Vietnam era. Comprehensive information about the 14 recognized illnesses under VA's "presumption" rule for Agent Orange is also located on the webpage.

In practical terms, Veterans with qualifying Vietnam service who develop a disease associated with Agent Orange exposure need not prove a medical link between their illnesses and their military service. This presumption simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

For questions about Agent Orange and the online list of ships, Veterans may call VA's Special Issues Helpline at 1-800-749-8387 and press 3.

When a claim is filed by a Veteran, surviving spouse or child, VA will determine whether the Veteran qualifies for the presumption of exposure based on official records of the ship's operations. Ships will be regularly added to the list based on information confirmed in these official records.

Even if a Veteran is not filing a claim, a Veteran may conduct his or her own research and submit scanned documentary evidence such as deck logs, ship histories, and cruise book entries via email to 211_AOSHIPS.VBACO@va.gov.

Service on board ships anchored in an open water harbor, such as Da Nang Harbor, or on ships on other open waters around Vietnam during the war, is not considered sufficient for the presumption of Agent Orange exposure. For Veterans interested in obtaining deck logs, contact the National Archives at College Park, Md., at <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/researcher-info.html>.

The Agent Orange Claims Processing System website located at <https://www.fasttrack.va.gov/AOFastTrack/> may be used to submit claims related to the three conditions added to the list of Agent Orange presumptives last year (Parkinson's disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemias, and ischemic heart disease).

This website makes it easy to electronically file a claim and allows Veterans and their physicians to upload evidence supporting the claim. It also permits online viewing of claim status.

Veterans claiming other conditions may file online at VA's My-eBenefits web site at:

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>. They can check the status of their claim with a premium account (confirming their identity), and use a growing number of online services.

Servicemembers may enroll in My-eBenefits using their Common Access Card at any time during their military service, or before they leave during their Transition Assistance Program briefings.

Veterans may also enroll through their myPay or MyHealthVet accounts, by visiting their local VA regional office or Veteran Service Organization, or by calling 1-800-827-1000.