



Veteran's Advocate

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VA Publishes Final Regulation to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange in Korea



WASHINGTON – Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea will have an easier path to access quality health care and benefits under a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) final regulation that will expand the dates when illnesses caused by herbicide exposure can be presumed to be related to Agent Orange.

“VA’s primary mission is to be an advocate for Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki “With this new regulation VA has cleared a path for more Veterans who served in the demilitarized zone in Korea to receive access to our quality health care and disability benefits for exposure to Agent Orange.”

Under the final regulation published today in the *Federal Register*, VA will presume herbicide exposure for any Veteran who served between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense (DoD) to have operated in an area in or near the Korean DMZ in which herbicides were applied.

Previously, VA recognized that Agent Orange exposure could only be conceded to Veterans who served in certain units along the Korean DMZ between April 1968 and July 1969.

In practical terms, eligible Veterans who have specific illnesses VA presumes to be associated with

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Women Veterans Open House Offered



The St. Cloud VA Health Care System is hosting a Women Veterans Open House on Thursday, Feb. 17, from 3-6 p.m., at American Legion Post 428, 17 Second Ave. N., in Waite Park. The open house is free and all women Veterans in the St. Cloud area are invited to attend.

The open house is intended to provide an informal forum to meet and network with other women Veterans, receive information about VA benefits and health care programs, provide input about VA services, and meet VA staff.

Mickie Pittman-Leyendecker, St. Cloud VA Health Care System Women Veterans Program Manager, is hosting the event. Mickie is a Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner and can answer your questions related to women’s health and the VA’s Women Veterans Program. Representatives from the Eligibility Office, Mental Health, Health Promotions, and other VA offices will be present to assist women Veterans with accessing healthcare benefits and providing information on staying healthy.

There is no need to RSVP, and participants may come and go as they wish.

For more information about the open house contact the St. Cloud VA HCS Women Veterans Program Coordinator at 320-252-1670, ext. 7871.

Since its opening in 1924, the mission of the St. Cloud VA Health Care System remains constant: to honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

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herbicide exposure do not have to prove an association between their illness and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits and ensures that Veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

Click on these links to learn about Veterans' diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp> and birth defects in children of Vietnam-era Veterans at http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/birth_defects.asp.

VA encourages Veterans with covered service in Korea who have medical conditions that may be related to Agent Orange to submit their applications for access to VA health care and compensation as soon as possible so the agency can begin processing their claims.

Individuals can go to website <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/AO/claimherbicide.htm> to get a more complete understanding of how to file a claim for presumptive conditions related to herbicide exposure, as well as what evidence is needed by VA to make a decision about disability compensation or survivors benefits.

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA's services for Veterans exposed to the chemical is available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

The regulation is available on the Office of the Federal Register website at <http://www.ofr.gov/>.



VFW Will Defeat Bachmann Plan

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 28, 2011 — America's oldest and largest major combat veterans' organization announced it will do everything within its power to defeat a plan introduced by Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) to cut \$4.5 billion from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"No way, no how, will we let this proposal get any traction in Congress," said Richard L. Eubank, the national commander of the 2.1 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

On her website, the three-term congresswoman lists more than \$400 billion in suggestions to cut federal spending. The VA suggestion would cap increases to VA healthcare spending, and reduce disability compensation to account for Social Security Disability Insurance payments — in other words, an offset. She says her plan is intended to generate discussion.

"The only discussion the VFW wants is to tell the congresswoman that her plan is totally out of step with America's commitment to our veterans," said Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Ore.

"There are certain things you do not do when our nation is at war, and at the top of that list is not caring for our wounded and disabled servicemen and women when they return home," he said. "I want the congresswoman to join us in a tour of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and Poly Trauma Center the next time she's in her home district to witness firsthand the great work the VA does every day to heal their wounds and ease their pain. Then I want her to look those disabled veterans in the eye and tell them their service and sacrifice is too expensive for the nation to bear.

"The day this nation can't afford to take care of her veterans is the day this nation should quit creating them," said Eubank.

As you may know, the Congresswoman's web site will only accept e-mails from residents in her district. If you would like to let Congresswoman Bachmann know your concerns on these proposals, you can email her veterans representative, Chas Kroll, at her Washington D.C. office at: chase.kroll@mail.house.gov



Holiday Closures



The Veterans Service Office will be closed for the President's Day Holiday on Monday, February 21st. There will be no van service to the Minneapolis VA Hospital on that day.