

1ST DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICER VA & R REPORT FOR JUNE 2022



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You may be eligible for compensation if you came into contact with hazards as a veteran or volunteer who worked on or near a military installation. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has an expansive list of contaminants and locations where people may have come into contact with these hazards. These are illnesses and conditions that may be caused by contact with harmful chemicals or other hazardous materials while serving in the military, according to a news release from the VA.

The 20-year rule prohibits the VA from reducing a service-connected disability rating below the lowest rating that has been in effect for the past 20 years. However, there is an exception to the rule if the VA finds that the rating was based on fraud. Additionally, any increased ratings for a service-connected condition after 20 years can be reduced if the condition improves but not below the lowest rating. The 20-year rule protects the veterans' rating from reduction for any reason, even when their condition improves. In addition, no re-examinations are required for veterans who have continuously received benefits for 20 years or more. The 20-year rule also protects the veteran's rating from new laws or changes to current laws. You can contact an experienced legal team or accredited veterans service representative to help you understand more about the 20-year rule.

Did you know the Social Security Administration (SSA) has a special initiative to expedite disability claims belonging to veterans who are service-connected with a 100% Permanent & Total (P&T) rating? Under the special process, SSA will treat these veterans' applications as high priority and issue expedited decisions, similar to the way the agency currently handles disability claims from Wounded Warriors.

Did you know since 1990, the Department of Justice has operated a compensation program for eligible veterans who took part as service members in any above-ground atomic testing from 1945 to 1962? Under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) program, veterans in the testing can receive one-time payments of \$75,000, while miners/ore transporters can get \$100,000 apiece. Veterans are eligible for RECA benefits if they were exposed to radiation and subsequently contracted illnesses covered by the program, including lymphomas (other than Hodgkin's Disease) and several varieties of cancer. If an eligible veteran is deceased, the spouse, parents, Children and/or grandchildren may be eligible for benefits.

Did you know new legislation to protect veterans from being responsible for emergency care bills outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has passed unanimously in the Senate? U.S. Senator Mike Rounds' Veterans' Emergency Care Claims Parity Act would prevent veterans from being held liable for payment of medical bills due to errors by the VA or by non-VA health care providers in submitting emergency care claims. The measure would also legislate an increase from a 90-day deadline to a 180-day deadline from the date of treatment for non-VA health care providers to submit emergency care claims.

Did you know U.S. Representative Mike Bost (Illinois-12), the Ranking Member on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee introduced the Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act? This new Bill would ensure that no veteran loses their Second Amendment right to bear arms simply because VA appoints someone to help them manage their VA benefits.

Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced Monday that it has added nine rare respiratory cancers to the list of illnesses considered to be related to exposure to burn pits and other particles in the air encountered overseas, a designation that will expedite affected veterans' access to health care and benefits. The move

follows a White House announcement last November that it planned to establish presumption for the illnesses that have become more common among veterans in the past 32 years, with advocates and health experts zeroing in on burn pits used to dispose of trash and industrial waste in Iraq and Afghanistan as a likely culprit. The new additions are rare, affecting roughly six per every 100,000 Americans, and the expedited benefits are being offered to affected veterans who served in the Persian Gulf since Aug. 2, 1990, as well as Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti or Uzbekistan on or after Sept. 19, 2001.

Bladder cancer is the 4th most diagnosed cancer in VA. Approximately 3,200 Veterans are diagnosed with bladder cancer every year. Bladder cancer happens when the cells in the bladder start to grow out of control. Most tumors develop on the inner layer of the bladder. As the cancer grows into deeper layers, it becomes more difficult to treat. Since early diagnosis is critical to successful treatment and recovery, VA encourages Veterans to talk to their health care provider about the signs and symptoms of bladder cancer. Signs of bladder cancer can be embarrassing to discuss, but it's important to talk with your provider as soon as possible if you have any of the following symptoms: Blood in the urine; painful or urgent urination; inability to urinate, abdominal pain; lower back pain, fatigue and Appetite or weight loss. Identifying bladder cancer early is important for successful treatment and recovery. Don't wait to discuss these symptoms with your provider.



Please Remember..... That all gave some, *but many gave all!*