

Are **YOU** An
Atomic Veteran?



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

I was told not to discuss my involvement in nuclear tests because this was classified information. Can I now file a claim?

Yes. In 1996, The Repeal of Nuclear Radiation and Secrecy Agreements Laws was passed. This law states that Atomic Veterans are free to describe their military involvement in nuclear testing as necessary to establish the validity of a service-connected disability.

Is there any other way for me to seek compensation?

Yes. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has a different compensation program for which you may be eligible, called the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program (RECA).

To contact DOJ, call 1-800-729-7327, or go to www.usdoj.gov/civil/torts/const/reca.

Whether or not you have a cancer, sign up with the Ionizing Radiation Registry! Why?

You receive a free radiation-related medical exam. Your data become part of a potentially useful database. To sign up, contact your nearest VA medical center or call 1-800-827-1000 and ask about the program.

Establishment of the Veterans' Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction

The Veterans' Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction (VBDR) was established by the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2003 to:

- Represent Veterans' interest, to make sure Veterans' claims are handled correctly, fairly, and as expeditiously as possible.
- Assist in communicating information on the Dose Reconstruction Program: eligibility, how to apply for a claim, and the description of the program.
- The Web site www.vbdr.org is dedicated to informing Veterans, their relatives, and other interested members of the public of the meetings and activities of VBDR. The phone number for the VBDR is 1-866-657-8237.

Are YOU An *Atomic Veteran*?

For more information contact:

VA: 1-800-827-1000

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation
www.va.gov

NTPR: 1-800-462-3683

www.dtra.mil



*Office of Public Health (10P3)
Veterans Health Administration
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420*

Are YOU An Atomic Veteran?

An *Atomic Veteran* is defined in legislation as a Veteran who, as part of his or her military service:

- Participated in an above-ground nuclear test, 1945–1962; or
- Was part of the U.S. military occupation forces in/around Hiroshima/Nagasaki before 1946; or
- Was held as a POW in or near Hiroshima or Nagasaki (certain cases).

3 Choices

If you think you are an Atomic Veteran:

- Find and contact your local VA Medical Center (VAMC) at 1-800-827-1000.
- Go to <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp> to file a claim.
- Contact your local VAMC for a Registry examination.

2 Categories

Of adverse health conditions you should know about:

Presumptive cancers

If you have developed a “presumptive cancer,” which is presumed to be due to radiation exposure during your military service, all you have to do is verify that you are an Atomic Veteran to be eligible for disability compensation. Your service connection is established without considering the dose received.

There are 21 presumptive cancers defined by law: leukemia (except chronic lymphocytic leukemia); cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract (kidneys, renal pelvis, ureter, urinary bladder and urethra), bone, brain, colon, lung, and ovary; lymphomas (except Hodgkin’s disease); multiple myeloma; primary liver cancer (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated); and bronchio-alveolar carcinoma (a rare lung cancer).

Nonpresumptive cancers or conditions

If you have developed a “nonpresumptive cancer or condition,” VA will consider additional factors to determine your entitlement to compensation based on radiation exposure. These include the amount of your radiation exposure and the elapsed time between exposure and the onset of disease. An estimate of your radiation dose will be prepared by the Nuclear Test Personnel Review (NTPR) Program. That estimate is based on scientific principles, records maintained by the Department of Defense, and information you provide to VA and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), which runs NTPR.

In some cases, a cancer on the presumptive list may require a dose estimate in order for VA to establish entitlement. Most often, this is necessary if the date of diagnosis occurred before the date that the specific disease was added to the presumptive list. Also, some nonmalignant conditions (such as nonmalignant thyroid nodular disease, posterior subcapsular cataract, and parathyroid adenoma) may be eligible for compensation.

What benefit may I be eligible for?

Atomic Veterans who have developed one of several specific cancers or nonmalignant conditions, may be eligible for compensation and/or free VA medical care. This compensation would be in the form of a partial or full service-connected disability allowance, including potential payments to your surviving spouse or children.

Who makes the determination on medical claims and adjudication of claims?

VA is solely responsible for making medical determinations. VA makes compensation decisions based on participation status information, dose estimates/reconstructions, scientific assessment of the likelihood that the exposure caused the disease, and medical evidence. When VA is deciding service connection for a nonpresumptive condition, the dose estimate provided by DTRA is the starting point for making the medical decision as to whether the exposure was sufficient for the cancer or condition to be eligible for compensation under the law.

What is a dose reconstruction, and how long does it take?

Dose reconstruction is a commonly accepted scientific method that is used to estimate how much radiation a Veteran received during military service. It takes into account many factors of the Veteran’s military service, where he or she was at the time of the nuclear detonation, how close he or she was to the resulting contamination after the detonation, and the nature of the device being tested.

The time to complete a dose reconstruction varies for each Veteran. Some dose reconstructions can take several weeks, whereas others can take over a year, depending on workload and availability of data.

For more information contact:

VA: 1-800-827-1000

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation

NTPR: 1-800-462-3683

www.dtra.mil