

Veterans Corner
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By: Robert G. Mitchell

Agent Orange Presumptive

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today an aggressive new initiative to solicit private sector input on a proposed “fast track” Veterans’ claims process for service-connected presumptive illnesses due to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

“This will be a new way of doing business and a major step forward in how we process the presumptive claims we expect to receive over the next two years,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki said. “With the latest, fastest, and most reliable technology, VA hopes to migrate the manual processing of these claims to an automated process that meets the needs of today’s Veterans in a timelier manner.”

Over the next two years, about 200,000 Veterans are expected to file disability compensation claims under an historic expansion of three new presumptive illnesses announced last year by Secretary Shinseki. They include Veterans who have Parkinson’s disease, ischemic heart disease and B-cell Leukemia’s.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the way and who have one of the illnesses covered by the “presumption of service connection” don’t have to prove an association between their medical problems and military service. This “presumption” makes it easier for Vietnam Veterans to access disability compensation benefits. Vietnam Veterans are encouraged to submit their claims as soon as possible to begin the important process of compensation.

Last year, VA received more than one million claims for disability compensation and pension. VA provides compensation and pension benefits to over 3.8 million veterans and beneficiaries. Presently, the basic monthly rate of compensation ranges from \$123 to \$2,673 to veterans without any dependents.

Disability compensation is a non-taxable, monthly monetary benefit paid to veterans who are disabled as a result of an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service.

For more information about disability compensation go to www.va.gov. Additional information about Agent Orange and VA’s services and programs for Veterans exposed are available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

To file an Agent Orange claim call Robert Mitchell at Saratoga County Veterans Agency at 884-4115.

Expansion in Albany for Health Care Services

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced a plan to expand health care in Albany, NY by leasing 2.4 acres to a private-sector medical facility in exchange for construction of a 30,000 square-foot building for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at its Samuel S. Stratton VA Medical Center.

“This is a win-win situation for Veterans and for the community.” Said Secretary Shinseki. “As we modernize VA moving toward a 21st century organization, we will continue to look for collaboration opportunities to play an important role in expanding services for Veterans,”

The new building, to be used by VA for administrative functions and training, will free up space for Veterans’ clinical services elsewhere on the campus. Meanwhile, the VA-affiliated Albany Medical Center will use the leased federal land to build a needed parking garage to serve the larger community with a potential for retail use in some of the space.

VA’s Samuel S. Stratton Medical Center serves Veterans in 22 counties of upstate New York, western Massachusetts and Vermont. It provides primary care, wellness and preventive outpatient care, and the full range of inpatient medical care, including specialty services.

Agent Orange Used in America

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9qRuHyn03I> Forwarded, courtesy of Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk in Canada.

Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk is a former senior environmental scientist with Hatfield Consultants, and is familiar with the history of Agent Orange.

<http://www.hatfirdgroup.com/about+us/history.aspx>

Where was Agent Orange Used?

Locations of Herbicide use, listing of the use, testing or storage of Agent Orange, Agent Blue, Agent Purple, Agent White or other herbicides which contain dioxin call Mary Ellen McCarthy at 202-225-9756

VA Issues Phone Scam Warning

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a warning to veterans not to disclose personal information over the phone to callers claiming to update, confirm, or verify VA-related information. VA reports the fraudulent callers mode of operation include asking for credit card numbers, bank routing numbers, and other personal and financial information. A recent fraudulent call reported by a veteran included the caller

claiming to be a VA employee and stating that the veteran's medical card had expired. The caller would then ask the veteran to submit a check over the phone to renew the medical card.

VA wants to be leery of any call originating from (888) 555-1234 for it is the number identified in the case above. Veterans with questions about VA services should contact VA at (877) 222-8387 or the nearest VA Medical Center.