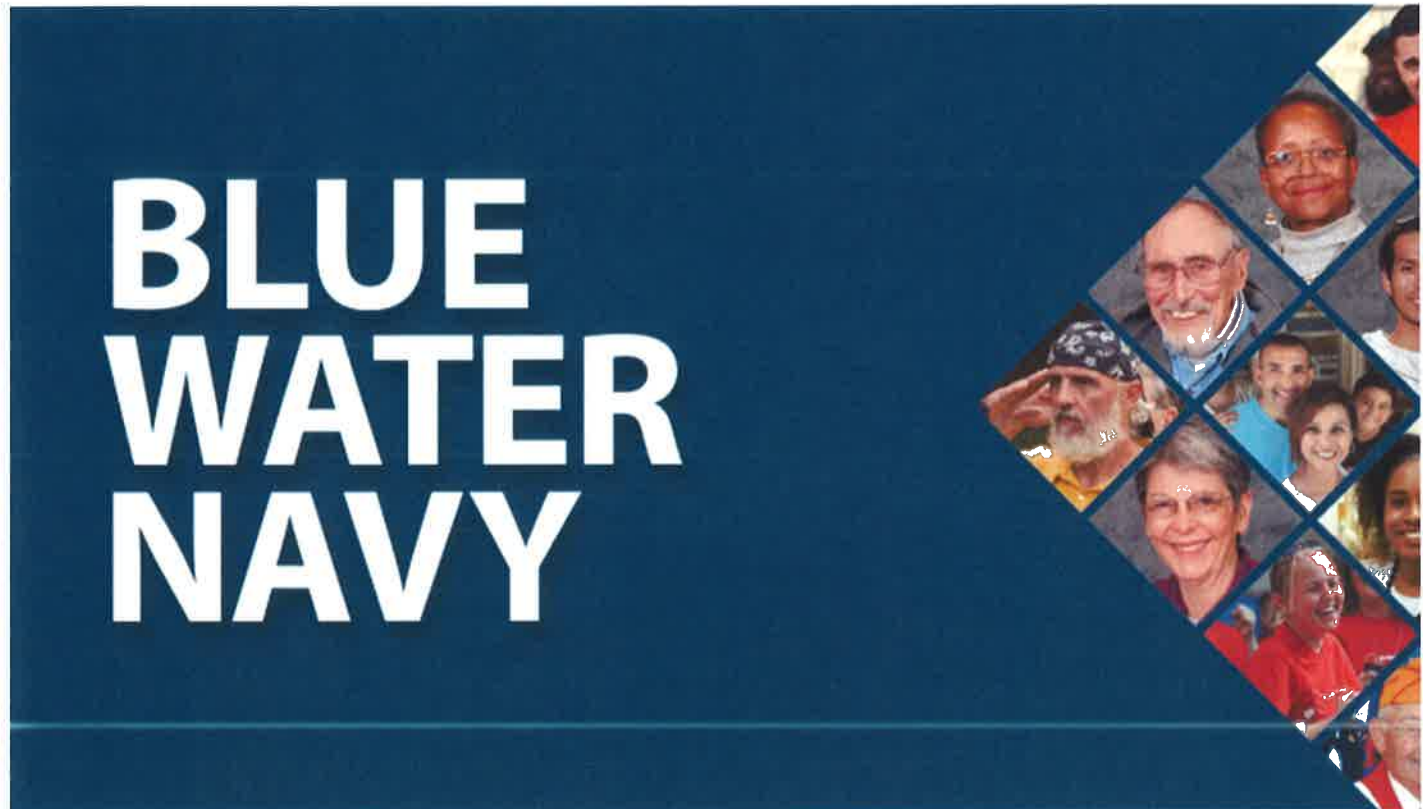


Blue Water Navy Veterans' disability claims to be decided beginning Jan.1, 2020



[Posted on Friday, December 13, 2019 9:00 am](#) [Posted in Benefits](#) by [Vantage Point Contributor](#) [31 comments](#) [28k views](#)

Did you serve in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975? If so, then you're considered a Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veteran.

On Jan. 1, 2020, the **Blue Water Navy Act of 2019** goes into effect. This Act was signed into law on Jun. 25, and extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to BWN Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of Vietnam and have since developed **one of 14 conditions** related to exposure. Some of these conditions include Type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, many forms of cancer and others. You may now be eligible for disability compensation and other benefits. In addition, if you're a Veteran who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Sept. 1, 1967, and Aug. 31, 1971, you may also qualify for compensation and benefits for yourself and your family members.

How do I know if I'm eligible?

The best way to find out if you're eligible is to work with an accredited claims representative or Veterans Affairs (VA) regional office to understand eligibility requirements before filing a claim. You don't need to prove contact with herbicides to be eligible.

How do I file a claim for compensation benefits?

You can file an initial claim (that has not been previously decided by VA), by submitting Form **21-526EZ**, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits. **CLICK HERE** to initiate your new claim.

You can also contact an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to assist you with your application. To access a list of VA-approved VSOs, **CLICK HERE**. You may also contact your **state's Veterans agency** should you need additional assistance with the application process.

What if I've previously filed a claim that was denied?

VA will be using the new law to automatically review claims that are currently with the VA review process or under appeal. However, if you had an herbicide exposure claim with one or more presumptive conditions denied in the past, you are urged to file a new claim.

When you begin the claims process, be sure to provide or identify any new and relevant information regarding your claim, such as the dates the vessel you were serving on traveled through the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam or updated medical information.

Submit a **VA Form 20-0995**, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim.

How should survivors and dependents apply for initial Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Claim for a Veteran who died of presumptive condition?

Eligible survivors and dependents must meet certain conditions to receive DIC. To learn more about this process, **CLICK HERE**. If found to be eligible, there are several ways to file a claim, including:

- By mail, using [VA Form 21P-534EZ](#).
- In person at a VA regional office.
- An accredited claims representative or VSO.

What benefits will I receive if my claim is approved?

If you are deemed eligible, you may receive a monthly disability compensation payment and free healthcare related to your disability. The amount of compensation you may receive is determined by your diagnosed condition and level of disability.

Another important component of the Blue Water Navy Act includes changes to the VA Home Loan program. VA now allows the no-down payment option on guaranteed home loans, regardless of mortgage amount for ALL Veterans. In addition, there is a reduction in the funding fee required for Reservists and National Guard borrowers and other changes.

More information and resources on the Blue Water Navy Act, eligibility, how to file a claim, and changes to the VA Home Loan Program can be found online **HERE**.

Renee Johnson is a public affairs specialist for the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Diseases related to Agent Orange

We believe that contact with Agent Orange, an herbicide used to clear trees and plants during the Vietnam War, likely causes several illnesses. We refer to these as Agent Orange presumptive diseases. Find out if you can get disability compensation or benefits if you had contact with Agent Orange while serving in the military and now have one or more of the illnesses listed below.

Cancers we believe are caused by contact with Agent Orange

- **Chronic B-cell leukemia**: A type of cancer that affects your white blood cells (cells in your body's immune system that help to fight off illnesses and infections)
- **Hodgkin's disease**: A type of cancer that causes your lymph nodes, liver, and spleen to get bigger and your red blood cells to decrease (called anemia)
- **Multiple myeloma**: A type of cancer that affects your plasma cells (white blood cells made in your bone marrow that help to fight infection)
- **Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma**: A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue (a part of your immune system that helps to fight infection and illness)
- **Prostate cancer**: Cancer of the prostate (the gland in men that helps to make semen)
- **Respiratory cancers (including lung cancer)**: Cancers of the organs involved in breathing (including the lungs, larynx, trachea, and bronchus)
- **Soft tissue sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma)**: Different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues

Other illnesses we believe are caused by contact with Agent Orange

- **AL amyloidosis**: A rare illness that happens when an abnormal protein (called amyloid) builds up in your body's tissues, nerves, or organs (like your heart, kidneys, or liver) and causes damage over time
- **Chloracne (or other types of acneiform disease like it)**: A skin condition that happens soon after contact with chemicals and looks like acne often seen in teenagers. Under our rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact with herbicides.
- **Diabetes mellitus type 2**: An illness that happens when your body is unable to properly use insulin (a hormone that turns blood glucose, or sugar, into energy), leading to high blood sugar levels
- **Ischemic heart disease**: A type of heart disease that happens when your heart doesn't get enough blood (and the oxygen the blood carries). It often causes chest pain or discomfort.
- **Parkinson's disease**: An illness of the nervous system (the network of nerves and fibers that send messages between your brain and spinal cord and other areas of your body) that affects your muscles and movement—and gets worse over time

- **Peripheral neuropathy, early onset**: An illness of the nervous system that causes numbness, tingling, and weakness. Under our rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact with herbicides.
- **Porphyria cutanea tarda**: A rare illness that can make your liver stop working the way it should and can cause your skin to thin and blister when you're out in the sun. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact with herbicides.

If you have an illness you believe is caused by contact with Agent Orange—and you don't see it listed above

You can still file a claim for disability compensation.

You'll need to:

- Provide scientific and medical evidence that the condition is related to exposure to Agent Orange, **or**
 - Show that the problem started during—or got worse because of—your military service
- Scientific proof may include an article from a medical journal or a published research study.

[Find out how to file a claim for disability compensation](#)

Last updated: September 27, 2019

More information can be found at: <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/blue-water-navy.asp>