

Veteran Journey to Wellness

Veterans, Military Toxic Exposure and PACT Act









Military Toxic Exposure

- Veterans may have been exposed to a range of chemical, physical, occupational and environmental hazards during military service.
- Some occupational specialties carry particular risks, including exposure to dangerous toxins in the environment.
- These risks can expose the veteran to hazardous or toxic items or environments, like:
 - ☐ Chemical weapons agents
 - ☐ Asbestos
 - Nuclear radiation
 - ☐ Environmental hazards in the water, air, or soil
- These exposures may result in illnesses with immediate symptoms, or they could cause long-term symptoms that go unnoticed until significant health concerns arise.

Military Exposures - Public Health (va.gov)

GET EMAIL UPDATES

DIRECTORY

ENVIRONMENTAL

COORDINATORS

AIRBORNE HAZARDS & OPEN

BURN PIT REGISTRY

Exposure Ed App

CONTACT

More Health Concerns x

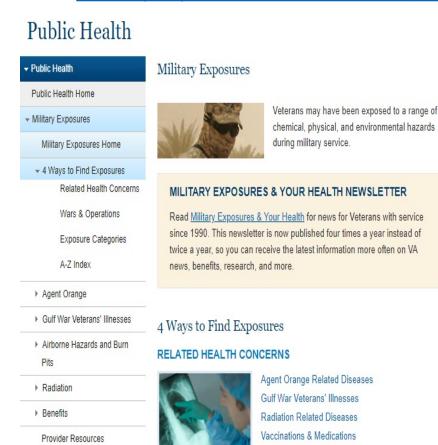
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Updates

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HEALTH



Research Studies



Six Congressionally-mandated exposure registries

- Agent Orange
- Gulf War
- Ionizing Radiation
- Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Registry
- Toxic Embedded Fragments
- Depleted Uranium

Tracking Exposures better:

 Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record/Registry (ILER) and the electronic health record



What is the PACT Act?



The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022

is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

The PACT Act:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.
- Expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances.





PACT Act Placemat

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022

Public Law 117-168



TITLE I: EXPANSION OF HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY

(Sections 101-111)

Short Title: Covenant Act of 2022

- Expands eligibility to specific categories of Toxic-Exposed Veterans
- Expands eligibility to Veterans supporting certain overseas contingency operations
- Expands eligibility period for certain eras
- Creates a one-year open enrollment period for certain Post 9/11 combat Veterans who did not enroll in VA health care previously to enroll or receive care



TITLE II: TOXIC EXPOSURE PRESUMPTION PROCESS

(Sections 201-204)

Short Title: TEAM Act of 2022

 Improves the decision-making process for presumptions of service connection based on toxic exposure



TITLE III: IMPROVING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SERVICE CONNECTION PROCESS FOR TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS

(Sections 301-303)

Short Title: Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act of 2022

- Any entry in an exposure tracking record system is a qualifying toxic exposure risk activity
- Any entry in an exposure tracking record system is a presumption of exposure for a claim for service connection



TITLE IV: PRESUMPTIONS OF SERVICE CONNECTION

(Sections 401-407)

- Expands Agent Orange exposure and adds hypertension & monoclonal gammopathy to the list of presumptions
- Establishes a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers related to burn pits and airborne hazards exposure
- · Improves compensation for Persian Gulf War Veterans with disabilities



(Sections 501-510)

TITLE V: RESEARCH MATTERS

TITLE IX: IMPROVEMENT OF WORKFORCE OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (Sections 004, 000)

(Sections 901-909)

- · Improves national rural recruitment and hiring planning for VHA
- Improves the ability of VA to hire and retain staff, including health care providers



TITLE VIII: RECORDS AND OTHER MATTERS

(Sections 801-808)

Short Title Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 (s.804)

 Creates a fund to cover health care and benefits expenses associated with exposure to environmental hazards in service



TITLE VII: RESOURCING

(Sections 701-707)

- · Appropriations to enhance claims processing capacity and automation
- Authorizes 31 major medical facility leases across 19 states



TITLE VI: IMPROVEMENT OF RESOURCES AND TRAINING REGARDING TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS

(Sections 601-604)

Short Title: Fairly Assessing Service-Related Toxic Exposure Residuals Presumptions Act of 2022

- Requires VA to create a list of resources and outreach program for toxic-exposed Veterans
- Incorporates a clinical toxic exposure screening for VHA enrollees
- Requires additional training for health care personnel and claims processors
- Improves compensation for Persian Gulf War Veterans with disabilities
- Includes studies on mortality of Veterans who served in certain locations during certain periods, post-9/11 Veterans' health trends, Veterans' cancer rates, and the effects of toxic exposures and mental health outcomes
- Includes studies on the effects of waste related to the Manhattan Project, Veterans in Territories of the United States, and the health effects of jet fuels
- Establishes interagency working groups on toxic exposure research



PACT Act Key Components



The Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.



VA will improve the decision-making process for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status.



exposure screening and a follow-up screening every five years. Veterans who are not enrolled, but who are eligible to enroll, will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.



VA health care staff and claims processors will receive **toxic exposure-related education and training**.



The Act **requires research studies** on the mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War; Post-9/11 Veteran health trends; and Veteran cancer rates.



The Act will help VA **build a stronger, more skilled workforce** to meet the growing demand for benefits and services.



The Act **authorizes 31 new facilities** across the country, providing greater access to VA health care.





Health Care Enrollment Eligibility

Veterans who served in the following locations and time periods can enroll in VA health care NOW:



- Republic of Vietnam (between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975)
- Thailand at any US or Royal Thai base (between January 9, 1962, and June 30, 1976)
- Laos (between December 1, 1965, and September 30, 1969)
- Certain Provinces in Cambodia (between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969)
- Guam or American Samoa or their territorial waters (between January 9, 1962, and July 31, 1980)
- Johnston Atoll, or a ship that called there (between January 1, 1972, and September 30, 1977)



Vietnam-era Veterans are now able to apply for two new Agent Orange presumptive conditions:

- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Special Enrollment Period – October 1, 2022 - October 1, 2023 for Post-9/11 combat Veterans who separated or discharged between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013.





PACT Act Special Enrollment Period

PACT ACT SPECIAL HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT PERIOD

October 1, 2022 - October 1, 2023



Did you serve in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War?





Did you serve in combat against hostile forces after November 11, 1998?

-AND-



Were you discharged or released between 09/11/2001 and 10/01/2013?







Gulf War Era and Post-9/11 Eligibility

If a Veteran served in any of these locations and time periods, they are eligible for the new Gulf War-related presumptions. This includes the airspace above any of these locations.



On or After August 2, 1990:

- Bahrain
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Oman
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Somalia
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE)



On or After September 11, 2001:

- Afghanistan
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Uzbekistan
- Yemen





Conditions Presumed to be Service-Connected

As of August 10, 2022, a long list of new conditions are presumed to be service-connected due to various in-service toxic exposures. **APPLY NOW** at **VA.gov/PACT** to expedite your claim and benefits.

- Asthma (diagnosed after service)
- Brain cancer
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Granulomatous disease
- Head cancer of any type
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)

- Kidney cancer
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Sarcoidosis







Connecting Veterans Healthcare & Benefits

- Veterans can learn more about the PACT Act at www.va.gov/PACT.
- How to apply for VA health care:
 Apply For Health Care | Veterans Affairs (va.gov)
- How to submit a VBA claim:
 File for disability compensation with VA Form 21-526EZ | Veterans Affairs
- Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry: <u>HOME Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit</u> <u>Registry (va.gov)</u>





Apply for VA Health Care in 4 Easy Ways

- 1. Online: https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction.
- 2. By calling the toll-free hotline: 877-222-8387.
- 3. By mailing VA Form 10-10EZ to:
 Health Eligibility Center
 2957 Clairmont Rd., Suite 200
 Atlanta, GA 30329
- 4. In person at the nearest VA medical center or clinic





Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans

WHO: All Veterans enrolled in VA health care

WHAT: A quick (5-10 minute) series of questions to identify and document any potential exposures to toxins during military service

WHEN: At least one every 5 years

WHERE: VA medical centers and clinics

WHY: Supports Veteran long-term health plans and informed, whole-health care

HOW: Veterans can ask about the screening at their next VA appointment







Toxic Exposure Screening Questions Preview

No guestions at this time

Inform Veteran/caregiver of local points of contact.

Do you believe you experienced any toxic exposure(s), such as Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit, Gulf War related exposures, Agent Orange, Radiation, contaminated water at Camp Lejeune or other such exposures, while serving in the Armed Forces? @ Yes: Your concerns about military exposures are important. It's important to us that your concerns are addressed and your needs are met. We want to be sure you get the care you deserve. * Do you believe you were exposed to any of the following while serving in the Armed Forces? Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit: * Veteran/caregiver was made aware of educational resources that includes information on the Registry Program, presumptive conditions and how to file a claim. Printed information was offered and provided if desired. Toxic Exposure Screening Information Presumptive Conditions Associated with Airborne Hazards/Open Burn Pit PACT ACT Benefits Flyer View optional scripting ✓ Gulf War related exposures: □ * Veteran/caregiver was made aware of educational resources that includes information on the Registry Program, presumptive conditions and how to file a claim. Printed information was offered and provided if Toxic Exposure Screening Information Presumptive Conditions Associated with Gulf War Exposures Other Presumptive Conditions Associated with Gulf War Exposures PACT ACT Benefits Flyer View optional scripting Agent Orange: T * Veteran/caregiver was made aware of educational resources that includes information on the Registry Program, presumptive conditions and how to file a claim. Printed information was offered and provided if desired. Toxic Exposure Screening Information Presumptive Conditions Associated with Agent Orange PACT ACT Benefits Flyer View optional scripting

Radiation: abla * Veteran/caregiver was made aware of educational resources that includes information on the Registry Program, presumptive conditions and how to file a claim. Printed information was offered and provided if Toxic Exposure Screening Information Presumptive Conditions Associated with Radiation Exposure PACT ACT Benefits Flyer View optional scripting ☑ Camp Lejeune contaminated water exposure: Veteran/caregiver was made aware of educational resources that includes information on presumptive conditions and how to file a claim. Printed information was offered and provided if desired. Toxic Exposure Screening Information Presumptive Conditions Associated with Camp Lejeune PACT ACT Benefits Flyer View optional scripting There is currently no registry program for this exposure of concern. Other exposures: Comment: * ₹ Veteran/caregiver was made aware of educational resources and printed information was offered and provided if desired. Toxic Exposure Screening Information PACT ACT Benefits Flyer View optional scripting * Ask the Veteran/caregiver if they have follow-up questions: ₩ Health/Medical Questions All patients who report a health/medical concern will receive follow-up from a clinician. For urgent or emergent concerns, follow local facility policy. ▼ Benefits/Claims Questions Inform Veteran/caregiver of local point of contact. ✓ VA Health Care Enrollment and Eligibility Questions Inform Veteran/caregiver of local point of contact. Registry Questions Inform Veteran/caregiver of local point of contact.



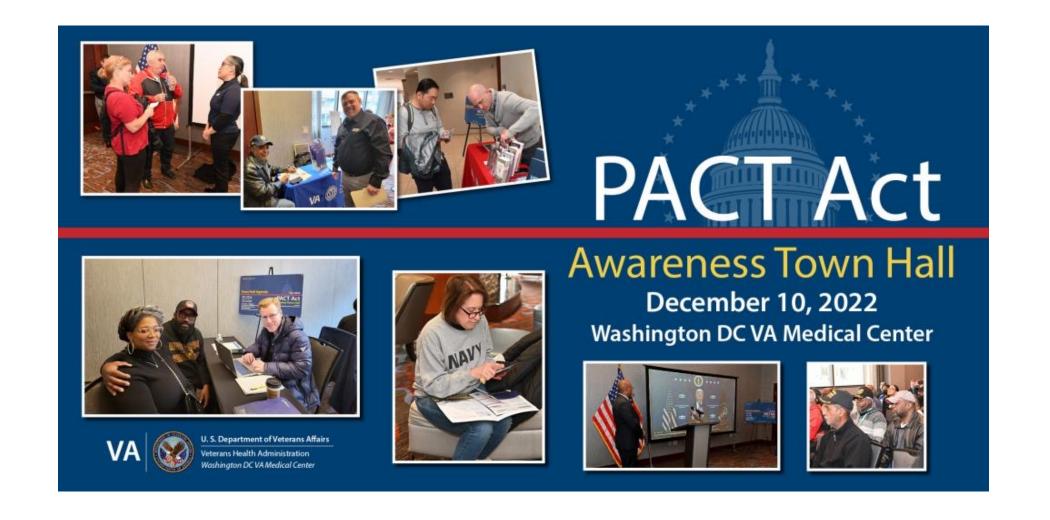
Strengthening VA's Military Environmental Research

- A multi-agency workgroup is identifying collaborative research activities and developing a five-year strategic plan.
- The PACT Act requires studies on:
 - Mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War
 - Post 9/11 Veterans' health trends
 - Veterans' cancer rates
 - Effects of toxic exposures and mental health outcomes
 - Effects of waste related to the Manhattan Project
 - The state of access and barriers to benefits for Veterans in U.S.
 Territories
 - Effects of jet fuels
- A publicly accessible website to serve as a clearinghouse for publication of all toxic exposure research carried out or funded by the executive branch of the Federal Government





Outreach - Outreach - Outreach







VHA Facility Signage













PACT ACT PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD



VA PACT ACT

PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

MAY 12, 2023

ISSUE SIX (Corrected, see page 2)

Published Bi-weekly on Fridays



In this VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard, we are demonstrating our commitment to transparency by sharing with all stakeholders —internal to VA and externally—key performance metrics and data we are using to assess our success in implementing the PACT Act.

If you, a Veteran, family member, or survivor would like more information about the PACT Act and your VA benefits, please start here:



VA.GOV VA.gov/PACT ask.VA.gov



-800-MyVA411 24/7/365



WALK-IN VA.gov/find/ locations





Help spread the word-download PACT Act Outreach Materials!



Highlights

Researchers with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are using National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Earth observations of smoke and other air pollution to study the health impacts on Veterans who were deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, and other areas of Southwest Asia in the years after September 11, 2001.

Read more **HERE**.



Making a Difference Through the PACT Act

A Navy and Air Force Veteran was deployed several times with his rescue unit to the Southwest Asian Theater. Though he was concerned with the burn pits and ground contamination conditions he experienced there, he was denied service connection for sinusitis and sleep apnea in his original benefits claim. After learning of new presumptive conditions under the PACT Act, he persisted and was subsequently awarded a 100% permanent and total disability rating. He is grateful for this help in providing for his family and shares his knowledge of the PACT Act with fellow Veterans in his community.



PACT ACT PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

VA IS EXPANDING CARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVORS



The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefits expansion in VA history. In this section, we are measuring the overall impact of the PACT Act in terms of its expansion of health care and benefits.

Expanding Benefits -----



251,584

Total Veterans/Survivors with Completed PACT Act Related

Claims (08/10/2022-05/06/2023)



245,974

Total Veterans with Completed PACT Act Related Claims

5,616

Total Survivors with Completed PACT Act Related Claims



79.7% Approval Rate for PACT Act Related Claims

(05/06/2023)



155.5 Average Days for PACT Act Related Claim Completion (05/06/2023)



46.3% PACT Act Related Claims Completed </= 125 days (05/06/2023)

Expanding Care





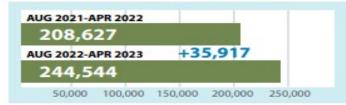
77,337

New Enrollees from the PACT Act Planning Population

(10/01/2022-04/30/2023)



Total New VHA Enrollees: (through 04/29/2023)





May 16

PACT Act Awareness Event-Tuscaloosa, AL

VIEW EVENT

May 18

We CARE Veterans Fair-Rome, GA

VIEW EVENT

May 20

Oregon Women Veterans Conference-Salem, OR

VIEW EVENT

May 25

PACT Act Brief and Claims Filing-College Park, GA

VIEW EVENT

June 03

Oregon Women Veterans Conference-Salem, OR

VIEW EVENT

June 16

PACT Act Claims Briefing-Colorado Springs, CO

VIEW EVENT

For more information on these and other events, please visit <u>VA.gov/outreach-and-events/events/</u>



PACT ACT PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

VETERANS AND SURVIVORS TRUST VA TO DELIVER AN EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Issue 6-May 12, 2023



VA is committed to providing world class and timely health care, benefits and services to Veterans and Survivors. In this section, we measure VA's success in delivering outstanding and timely support and in earning the Veteran's and Survivor's trust.



3,317,560 Total Toxic Exposure Screenings

(09/06/2022-05/06/2023)



1,403,865 (42.32%)

Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed at least 1 Potential Exposure



272,906 (8.23%)

Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed more than 1 Potential Exposure



1,130,959 (34,09%) Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed exactly 1 Potential Exposure

77,337 New Enrollees in the PACT Act Planning Population (10/01/2022-04/30/2023



3,842,609

Current Enrollees in the PACT Act Planning Population (as of 04/30/2023)

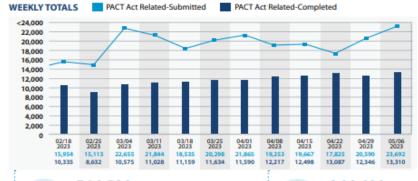
63.0% New Enrollees in Priority Groups 1, 2, or 3

(percentage based on the Planning Population

Benefits Experience

The charts below show the past 12 weeks (a rolling 12-week view).

Claims Submitted and Completed—PACT Act-Related





546,529 Cumulative Total PACT Related Claims Submitted 13,484 (08/10/2022-05/06/2023)

533,045 Total Veteran PACT Related Claims Submitted

Total Survivor PACT Related Claims Submitted 266,690 Cumulative Total PACT Related Claims Completed

(08/10/2022-05/06/2023)

155.5 Average Days for PACT Act Related Claim Completion (05/06/2023)

46.3% PACT Act Related Rating Claims Completed </=125 Days



Percentage of Claims Submitted PACT Related vs. Non-PACT Related (08/10/2022-05/06/2023)

260,951

Total Veteran PACT Related Claims Completed

5.739

Total Survivor PACT Related Claims Completed

Claims Submitted and Completed-Non-PACT Act Related

PACT Act Claims Submission Methods



27.0%

PACT Act Claims Electronically Submitted

Electronic Claims Submitted by Veterans 11.2%

Electronic Claims Submitted

by Power of Attorney

88.8%

(08/10/2022-05/06/2023)



73.0%

PACT Act Claims Submitted by Mail

(08/10/2022-05/06/2023)

86.6%

Mailed Claims Submitted with a Power of Attorney on File with VA



Resources for Community Providers

PACT Act Background Information

- PACT Act Frequently Asked Questions: This one-pager answers high-level questions about what the PACT Act means for Veterans.
- PACT Act Health Care and Benefits Map: See how Veterans can access new toxic exposure health care and benefits under the PACT Act.

PACT Act Health Care Eligibility

- Health Care Eligibility Overview: This one-pager breaks down new health care eligibility under the PACT Act and includes a key dates timeline.
- Gulf War, Post-9/11 era Veterans and Vietnam, Cold War era Veterans: These fact sheets cover how PACT Act benefits apply to specific Veteran cohorts.

PACT Act Benefits Information

- PACT Act Benefits: This flyer includes links and QR codes to help Veterans access and learn more about new PACT Act benefits.
- PACT Act Survivor Benefits: Get information on how the PACT Act applies to survivor benefits.

Understanding Toxic Exposures

- <u>War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) resources</u>: Access free provider trainings, webinars, and research to enhance knowledge of the health outcomes of military exposures.
- <u>Provider resources</u>: Find research studies and provider education—including information on the American College of Preventive Medicine <u>Military Environmental</u> <u>Exposures Certification</u>.
- <u>Public Health Military Exposures webpage</u>: Access other resources on military environmental exposures, including an easy-to-use A to Z index.
- Exposure Ed app: This free and accessible app includes information on exposure-related programs and benefits offered by VA.

Toxic Exposure Screening Information

- <u>Screening handout</u>: This document complements the toxic exposure screening with additional resources and information.
- <u>Toxic Exposure Screening Fast Facts</u>: Learn what the toxic exposure screening is—and what it isn't—in this high-level overview.
- <u>"What's the Difference?" fact sheet</u>: This one-pager breaks down the differences between certain VA exams, screenings, and programs.





Questions?

