



# VA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGISTRY PROGRAMS AND EVALUATIONS FOR VETERANS

## WHAT DO PROVIDERS NEED TO KNOW?

Providers at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) may get asked questions from Veterans about the VA Environmental Health Registry Programs and associated evaluations. The purpose of this fact sheet is to give providers information about:

- Six VA Environmental Health Registry Programs (this includes two VA health surveillance programs)
- Eligibility requirements for Veteran participation
- Potential benefits for both Veterans and their providers when a Veteran participates in a registry

## WHAT IS A REGISTRY EVALUATION?

VHA's Environmental Health Registry Evaluations are voluntary, focused medical evaluations for Veterans who may have been exposed to certain environmental hazards during their military service.

The registry evaluations are:

- Free to eligible Veterans (no co-pay) even if not enrolled in VHA medical care.
- NOT compensation and pension (C&P) exams—Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) handles C&P exams for benefits claims. However, data collected through participation in a VHA registry could possibly be used to support a benefits claim.

## HOW DOES A PROVIDER OR VETERAN INITIATE A VHA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION?

For most registries, local Environmental Health Clinicians/Coordinators are the first points of contact to initiate the enrollment process and guide the Veteran in completing the registry and any further evaluations. Providers can locate a local Environmental Health Clinician/Coordinator for Veterans by visiting: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp>.

**Note:** Providers can guide Veterans to the Veteran Portal (link listed below) for participation in the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

## VA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATIONS

The Environmental Health Registry Evaluations track and monitor the health of specific groups of Veterans. A Veteran might be eligible to participate in more than one registry evaluation. For example, some Veterans meet the criteria for enrollment in the Gulf War Registry and the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. All of the six registries are separate and VA providers should encourage Veterans to participate in as many registries as applicable!

## BENEFITS OF REGISTRY INVOLVEMENT FOR BOTH PROVIDERS AND VETERANS

Veteran participation in a VHA Environmental Health Registry evaluation is beneficial to both providers and Veterans. VA providers will have access to the answers on a registry form which facilitates any future care a Veteran requires. The registry exam process serves Veterans by identifying health issues and helping VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively. Registries also help to improve existing VA health care programs and advancement of care at VA!





**AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND OPEN BURN PIT REGISTRY**

VA’s newest registry is the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR). This registry is a database of information about Veterans and Service members collected online through a self-assessment questionnaire. Veterans can report exposures to airborne hazards (such as smoke from burn pits, oil-well fires, or pollution during deployment), as well as other exposures and health concerns. The Veteran must initiate the process by filling out the registry questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, a Veteran can ask for a free in-person medical evaluation at their local VA facility. If a Veteran asks their primary care provider about the exam— the provider should schedule it. Primary care providers are the typical point of contact for this evaluation, although in some VA medical facilities, this registry exam can be completed by either a primary care doctor or an Environmental Health Clinician. A template exists in VA’s CPRS for providers conducting the in-person evaluation. The template can be found in CPRS by going to the Notes tab, clicking on new note, and searching the note title drop down list by typing “burn pit” or “airborne”. If a Veteran with respiratory concerns has completed the registry and

in-person evaluation, a primary care provider can access the registry via the clinician portal (link below) and use the information to promote better follow up care and address Veteran concerns.

**Eligibility:**

Veterans who served in Operation Desert Storm, Operation Desert Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel. Veterans and Service members who have deployed to the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after August 2, 1990 as well as those who have deployed to Afghanistan or Djibouti after September 11, 2001.

**For more information:**

- Veteran Portal: <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/#page/home>
- Clinician Portal: <https://vaww.ahobpr.registries.aac.va.gov/RegistrantSearch.aspx>
- AHOBPR In-Person Evaluation: [https://www.WarRelatedIllness.va.gov/docs/brochure/Airborne\\_Hazards\\_Registry\\_Initial\\_In-Person\\_Evaluation.pdf](https://www.WarRelatedIllness.va.gov/docs/brochure/Airborne_Hazards_Registry_Initial_In-Person_Evaluation.pdf)

**GULF WAR REGISTRY**

This registry is an in-person health exam by a local VA Environmental Health Clinician. It includes an exposure and medical history, a physical exam, and possible laboratory tests if appropriate. (If a Veteran is seen at VA, and has had the appropriate tests done within the past year, a clinician may not do any labs associated with the visit— they may just review his recent tests in CPRS). The results are discussed with the Veteran and in a follow-up letter and may be useful for follow up care.

**Eligibility:**

Veterans who served in the Gulf during Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn are eligible for the Gulf War Registry exam.

**For more information:**

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/benefits/registry-exam.asp>





**IONIZING RADIATION REGISTRY**

This comprehensive in-person health exam is completed by a local VA Environmental Health Clinician. It includes an exposure and medical history, a physical exam, and laboratory tests. The results are discussed with the Veteran and in a follow-up letter. If a Veteran presents at an appointment and has already had this exam, the results may be useful for follow up care or to address future concerns.

**Eligibility**

- On-site participation in a test involving the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device, whether or not the testing nation was the United States
- Participation in the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki from August 6, 1945 through July 1, 1946
- Internment as a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II
- Receipt of nasopharyngeal (NP)— nose and throat— radium irradiation treatments while in the active military, naval, or air service

- Involved in the following “radiation-risk activities”: Service at Department of Energy gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, KY, Portsmouth, OH, or the K25 area at Oak Ridge, TN, for at least 250 days before February 1, 1992 under certain conditions. Proximity to “Longshot,” “Milrow,” or “Cannikin” underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, AK, before January 1, 1974.

**Note:** Veterans with health concerns related to ionizing radiation who do not qualify for this registry (e.g. Operation Tomodachi, McMurdo Station, Enewetak Atoll clean-up, etc.) are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their primary care provider who may consult or schedule an appointment with an Environmental Health Clinician.

**For more information:**

- <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/benefits/registry-exam.asp>
- VHA Directive 1301, Ionizing Radiation Registry Program can be found by clicking on the following link: [http://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=5370](http://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=5370)

**TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENT SURVEILLANCE CENTER**

VA’s Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center (TEFSC) at the Baltimore VA Medical Center offers medical surveillance including:

- Analyses of fragments to determine their composition and analysis of surrounding tissues if the fragments were surgically removed
- Completion of an exposure questionnaire
- Urine biological monitoring (via mail) to identify elevated concentrations of 14 metals often found in fragments
- Veterans are identified and electronically enrolled following completion of screening questions from two clinical reminders. A local point of contact is then contacted by TEFSC staff and asked to inform eligible Veterans about the opportunity to enroll in clinical surveillance.

A local Environmental Health Clinician/ Coordinator can help set this up in coordination with the Baltimore VA.

**Eligibility**

Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn are eligible for the TEFSC registry. The Veteran must have, or likely have, an embedded fragment as the result of injury received while serving in an area of conflict.

**For more information:**

[https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/toxic\\_fragments/surv\\_center.asp](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/toxic_fragments/surv_center.asp)





### DEPLETED URANIUM FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

VA and the Department of Defense established the Depleted Uranium Follow-up Program at the Baltimore VA Medical Center to screen and monitor Veterans for health problems associated with exposure to depleted uranium (DU). For Veterans involved in friendly fire incidents who had inhalational exposure to DU or who have DU embedded fragments or contaminated wounds, the DU Follow-Up Program offers on-going medical surveillance through detailed clinical assessment visits performed at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. For Veterans presenting with concerns or questions about DU exposure during combat, the program offers screening to assess exposure through completion of a questionnaire and urine testing via mail. Environmental Health Clinicians/Coordinators or VA primary care providers can contact the DU Follow-Up Program to arrange for this testing. Results will be

mailed to both the Veteran and the Veteran's primary care provider, which can inform follow-up care.

#### Eligibility

VA requires active duty service in any of the following conflicts: Gulf War; Bosnia; Operation Enduring Freedom; Operation Iraqi Freedom; Operation New Dawn. The DU Follow-Up Program is especially geared to Veterans who were on, in or near vehicles hit with "friendly fire"; rescuers entering burning vehicles and those near burning vehicles; salvaging damaged vehicles; or near fires involving DU munitions. However, any Veteran concerned about possible DU exposure may submit a urine sample to the DU Follow-up program for testing via mail.

#### For more information:

[https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/depleted\\_uranium/index.asp](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/depleted_uranium/index.asp)

### AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY

This registry is an in-person health exam completed by a local VA Environmental Health Clinician. It includes an exposure history, medical history, physical exam, and any tests if needed. The results are discussed with the Veteran and in a follow-up letter.

#### Eligibility:

- Service in Vietnam 1962-1975, regardless of length of time
- Veterans who served aboard smaller river patrol and swift boats that operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam (also known as "Brown Water Veterans").
- Veterans who served in a unit in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) anytime between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971.
- U.S. Army and Air Force Veterans who provided perimeter security on Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) bases in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.

- Army Veterans who have been a member of a military police (MP) unit or assigned a military occupational specialty whose duty placed him or her at or near the base perimeter.
- Veterans who may have been exposed to herbicides during a military operation or as a result of testing, transporting, or spraying herbicides for military purposes.

#### For more information:

- <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/benefits/registry-exam.asp>
- A recent new VHA Directive 1302, Agent Orange Health Registry (AOR) Program, goes over the procedures, responsibilities, and guidance on the registry. It can be found at: [http://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=430](http://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=430)

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