Quick Guide to the PACT Act of 2022

In 2022, Congress passed the PACT Act to expand health care and other benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances while serving in the military. The full name of the law is The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

The purpose of this Quick Guide is to explain what types of benefits are available under the PACT Act, who qualifies for benefits, and how to access those benefits.

How Does the PACT Act Help Veterans?

The PACT Act expands eligibility for Veterans Health Administration (VA) health care and disability benefits for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras:

- **VA Health Care**: eligibility for free VA Health Care depends on your service history and other factors
- **VA Disability Benefits**: provides tax-free monthly cash payments, if you have a service-connected condition. A service-connected condition means an illness or injury that was caused by—or got worse because of—your active military service. For more information about disability benefits: va.gov/disability/eligibility.

Service-Connected Disabilities

Under the PACT Act, if a Veteran's active military service meets certain requirements (based on location and time of service), then certain cancers and other illnesses are considered "presumptive conditions." This means that Veterans do not need to prove that their military service actually caused their medical condition to get a VA disability rating.

A VA disability rating (0-100%) determines what kinds of benefits you may receive as a Veteran:

- Veterans with a 20% rating are eligible for no-cost health care and prescriptions for service-connected disabilities
- Veterans with a 50% rating are eligible for no-cost health care and prescription medications for all conditions

Gulf War and Post-9/11 Veterans

It is presumed that you were exposed to toxic burn pits if you served:

- On or after 8/2/90, in any of these locations or in the airspace above these locations:
  - Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, United Arab Emirates
- On or after 9/11/01, in any of these locations or in the airspace above these locations:
  - Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, Yemen

The presumptive diseases associated with burn pit exposure are:

- **Cancers**: brain cancer, gastrointestinal cancer of any type, glioblastoma, head cancer of any type, kidney cancer, lymphoma of any type, melanoma, neck cancer of any type, pancreatic cancer, reproductive cancer of any type, respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- **Other Illnesses**: asthma that was diagnosed after service, chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic rhinitis, chronic sinusitis, constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis, emphysema, granulomatous disease, interstitial lung disease (ILD), pleuritis, pulmonary fibrosis, sarcoidosis

Veterans Exposed to Radiation

It is presumed that you were exposed to radiation if you served in any of these locations:

- Cleanup of Enewetak Atoll, from 1/1/77 through 12/31/80
- Cleanup of the Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons off the coast of Palomares, Spain, from 1/17/66 through 3/31/67
- Response to the fire onboard an Air Force B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons near Thule Air Force Base in Greenland from 1/21/68 to 9/25/68

Vietnam Veterans

The PACT Act added five new locations to the list of presumptive exposures to Agent Orange:

- Any U.S. or Royal Thai military base in Thailand from 1/9/62 through 6/30/76
- Laos from 12/1/65 through 9/30/69
- Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from 4/16/69 through 4/30/69
- Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off Guam or American Samoa from 1/9/62 through 7/30/80
- Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from 1/1/72 through 9/30/77

The PACT Act also added two new presumptive conditions tied to Agent Orange exposure:

- High blood pressure (also called hypertension)
- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)

You may also be eligible for disability compensation based on other Agent Orange presumptive conditions, such as these cancers: bladder cancer, chronic B-cell leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, prostate cancer, respiratory cancers (including lung cancer), and some soft tissue sarcomas.

To view the full list of service locations and presumptive conditions caused by Agent Orange exposure, visit: va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/#full-eligibility-requirements.

How to File a Claim for Benefits

Veterans can file for PACT Act benefits online:

- Disability claim: va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez
- VA health care: va.gov/health-care/apply/application

Veterans can also call the VA at 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711) or file by mail, in person, or with the help of a trained, accredited representative. To find an accredited representative: va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim.

If the VA denied your disability claim in the past, but now considers your condition presumptive, you can submit a Supplemental Claim. The VA will review your case again.

To learn about what happens after you file a claim and the current timeframe it is taking the VA to review claims, visit: va.gov/disability/after-you-file-claim.

Other PACT Act Benefits

The PACT Act also requires the VA to provide toxic exposure screenings to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.

If you are a surviving family member of a Veteran, you may be eligible for these PACT Act benefits:

- **Monthly VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC) payments.** You may qualify if you're the surviving spouse, dependent child, or parent of a Veteran who died from a service-connected disability. Learn more: va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation
- **A one-time accrued benefits payment.** You may qualify if you're the surviving spouse, dependent child, or dependent parent of a Veteran who was owed unpaid VA benefits at the time of their death. Learn more: va.gov/resources/evidence-to-support-va-pension-dic-or-accrued-benefits-claims
- **A survivor's pension.** You may qualify if you're the surviving spouse or child of a Veteran with wartime service. Learn more: va.gov/pension/survivors-pension.

For more information about resources for Veterans, visit TriageCancer.org/Military-Veterans-Cancer

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