



Agent Orange Review

INFORMATION FOR VETERANS

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VA Expands Dates of Agent Orange Exposure in Korea from 1968-1969 to 1968-1971

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Veterans who served along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea during the Vietnam War now have an easier path to access health care and benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expanded the dates when illnesses associated with

exposure to Agent Orange can be presumed related to their military service.

Previously, VA recognized exposure for service between April 1968 and July 1969. VA now presumes exposure for service between April 1, 1968, and August 31, 1971, if a Veteran served in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense to have operated in an area of the DMZ where Agent Orange or other herbicides were applied. The expanded dates took effect on February 24, 2011 (see www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/korea.asp).

This presumption simplifies and speeds the application process for Veterans of the Korean DMZ. VA encourages Veterans who believe they have health problems related to Agent Orange to submit their applications for VA health care and disability compensation benefits.

- To apply for health care benefits, apply online at www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez, or contact the nearest VA health care facility at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- To file a claim for disability benefits, apply online at www.ebenefits.va.gov, or contact the nearest VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000.

Veterans who served along the Korean DMZ may also be eligible for a free Agent Orange Registry health evaluation (see page 7).

The regulation expanding the dates for eligible service in Korea is available on the Office of the Federal Register website at www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=VA-2009-VBA-0021-0007. ■

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About the Agent Orange Review

VA's Office of Public Health publishes the **Agent Orange Review** to provide information on Agent Orange and related matters to Veterans, their families, and others with concerns about herbicides used in Vietnam or other locations.

This is the 49th Agent Orange Review that VA has published. This issue was completed in winter 2012 and does not include developments that occurred after that time. For past issues of the newsletter and other information, please visit our website at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

Questions, comments, and suggestions for future issues and topics are encouraged and can be sent to Editor, Agent Orange Review, Office of Public Health (10P3), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, D.C. 20420.

Blue Water Navy Veterans and Agent Orange



The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) released its report “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure” in May 2011. The report concluded that “there

was not enough information for the IOM to determine whether Blue Water Navy personnel were or were not exposed to Agent Orange.”

The IOM is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides unbiased and evidence-based recommendations to the government and other health and science policy makers. VA considers the IOM report findings in the presumptive disability decision-making process.

VA presumes that Veterans who served on the ground or on inland waterways in Vietnam (“Brown Water” Navy) were exposed to Agent Orange. VA has not granted this presumption to “Blue Water” Navy Veterans, who served on open sea ships off the shore of Vietnam. To be presumed exposed, Blue Water Veterans must show they set foot on the land of Vietnam or served on its inland waterways any time between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. VA decides claims from Blue Water Veterans on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on Blue Water Navy, including the IOM report, go to

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/bluewaternavy.asp. ■

Presumptions Available to Veterans with Agent Orange Exposure

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp

Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation and health care benefits for diseases that VA has recognized as associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. Surviving spouses, children and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and died as the result of diseases associated with Agent Orange may be eligible for survivors' benefits.

- **AL Amyloidosis**
A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.
- **Chronic B-cell Leukemias** (*added October 30, 2010*)
A type of cancer which affects white blood cells.
- **Chloracne (or similar acneform disease)**
A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acneform disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.
- **Diabetes Mellitus Type 2**
A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.
- **Hodgkin's Disease**
A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.
- **Ischemic Heart Disease** (*added October 30, 2010*)
A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart that leads to chest pain.
- **Multiple Myeloma**
A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.
- **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma**
A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
- **Parkinson's Disease** (*added October 30, 2010*)
A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement.
- **Peripheral Neuropathy, Acute and Subacute**
A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Currently it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides. VA proposed on August 10, 2012, to replace "acute

and subacute" with "early-onset" and eliminate the requirement that symptoms resolve within two years.

- **Porphyrria Cutanea Tarda**
A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.
- **Prostate Cancer**
Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.
- **Respiratory Cancers**
Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.
- **Soft Tissue Sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma)**
A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues. ■

Presumptions Available to Children of Vietnam and of Korean DMZ Veterans

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/birth_defects.asp

VA presumes that certain birth defects in children of Vietnam-era Veterans are associated with Veterans' qualifying military service:

- Spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta), a birth defect that occurs when the spine fails to close properly during pregnancy, is associated with Veterans' exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during qualifying service in Vietnam or Korea.
- At least 18 birth defects in children of women Veterans are linked to the mother's military service in Vietnam, but are not related to herbicide exposure. Some examples include cleft lip or palate, congenital heart defects, and hypospadias. ■

Presumption Available to All Vietnam Veterans

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/nonhodgkinslymphoma.asp

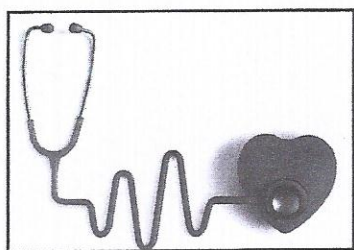
VA presumes service connection for non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma occurring in Veterans who served in Vietnam as well as Blue Water Veterans who served on its offshore waters; these Veterans do not need to prove a connection between their disease and military service to be eligible to receive VA disability compensation.

Presumption Available to All Veterans

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/compensation.asp

VA presumes that Lou Gehrig's Disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS) diagnosed in a Veteran from any era is related to their military service, as long as they served on active duty for at least 90 continuous days. ■

Understanding Heart Disease and How to Reduce Your Risk



Ischemic heart disease is also known as coronary artery disease or "hardening of the arteries." Cholesterol plaque can build up in the arteries of the heart and cause "ischemia,"

which means the heart is not getting enough blood flow and oxygen. If the plaque blocks an artery, a heart attack can result.

Heart disease is the #1 killer of men and women in the U.S. Up to 90 percent of heart attacks are due to the following risk factors:

- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Abdominal obesity ("spare tire")
- Not eating enough fruits and vegetables
- Not being active/lack of exercise
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Stress

The good news is that you can do something about these risk factors and lower your risk of heart disease and heart attack:

- Get moving - walk/exercise at least 30 minutes a day
- Eat better - consume at least 5 fruits/veggies a day and 2 servings of fish a week
- Stop bad habits - get help to quit smoking or drinking too much
- Shed excess weight - lose even a few pounds and you will start to reap health benefits

VA presumes ischemic heart disease is associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides, regardless of other major risk factors that a Veteran may have. Veterans exposed to herbicides do not have to prove a connection between their heart disease and military service to be eligible for disability compensation, but the diagnosis must be ischemic heart disease.

Talk to your doctor to learn more about preventing or treating heart disease. You can also check out VA's prevention website for more tips on living healthier at www.prevention.va.gov. ■

Are You or a Fellow Veteran in Crisis? Make the Call: 1-800-273-TALK

The Veterans Crisis Line provides confidential help for Veterans and their families. VA started this nationwide suicide prevention hotline to give Veterans who need help free access to caring counselors 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than half a million calls and made more than 21,000 life-saving rescues. In 2009, VA added an anonymous online chat that has since helped thousands of Veterans and family members.

Veterans and their loved ones now have three different ways to get help:

- Phone: talk with a counselor by calling 1-800-273-TALK(8255), and press "1".
- Text: send a text message to 838255.
- Online: chat live 1-on-1 with a counselor at www.veteranscrisisline.net.

Self-Check Quiz: Answer some questions online to see if you might benefit from services at www.veteranscrisisline.net. (At any point you can connect live with a counselor.) ■

Do You Need Help to Quit Smoking or Quit Using Other Forms of Tobacco?



VA has partnered with the Department of Defense to make an online resource, *Quit Tobacco. Make Everyone Proud*, available to Veterans

enrolled in VA health care. This website provides tools—such as quit plans, savings calculators, and 24/7 live chat—to help Veterans and service members quit tobacco (www.ucanquit2.org). From the homepage, Veterans who receive their health care in VA can access information tailored just for them by clicking on the section "VA Veterans."

VA is committed to helping Veterans quit smoking and prevent smoking-related diseases. VA offers free counseling to every Veteran through their primary care provider and through smoking cessation clinics. VA also provides medicines that have been proven to help people quit. Quitting smoking is not easy, but VA can help. See your primary care provider today to get help quitting. You can do it!

For more information on quitting smoking or tobacco, see www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking or call 1-877-222-8387. ■

Check VA's "Ships List"

VA maintains a list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that operated in Vietnam during the war and could have been exposed to Agent Orange. Exposure is presumed for any Veteran with duty or visitation within the country of Vietnam or on its inland waterways. Veterans who served aboard a listed ship that operated on Vietnam's inland waterways will automatically receive the presumption of exposure. Veterans who served aboard open sea ships that did not enter inland waterways will only be presumed exposed if the ship docked to shore, sent small boats ashore, or otherwise sent crew members ashore. The Veteran must further provide a statement of personally going ashore. VA adds ships to this list after confirming service on inland waterways based on military records. As of press time, there were more than 200 ships on the list. To look up your ship, go to www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist. ■

VA Studies High Blood Pressure, Chronic Lung Disease Among Vietnam Veterans

VA researchers are studying U.S. Army Chemical Corps (ACC) Veterans who handled or sprayed herbicides in Vietnam to find out if they have higher rates of high blood pressure (hypertension) or lung disease than other Veterans. For lung disease, researchers will look at chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Researchers are asking about 4,000 Veterans who served in the ACC during the Vietnam era (1964-1975) to participate. The study will compare ACC Veterans who served in Vietnam with those who did not. ACC personnel represent the largest group of Vietnam-era Veterans who had the greatest potential exposure to herbicides.

How this research helps Veterans: The study will help VA understand the relationship between herbicide exposure in Vietnam and a Veteran's risk of developing high blood pressure or COPD.

Background: VA researchers have been following this group of ACC Veterans since the 1990s. An earlier study found that those who sprayed Agent Orange

or other herbicides were more likely to self-report having high blood pressure. Based on this and other studies, a 2008 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report added high blood pressure to the category of "limited or suggestive evidence of an association," meaning there could be a link with Agent Orange exposure, although only some of the studies show this. Researchers also noted a possible association between Veterans who reported spraying herbicides in Vietnam and those who had respiratory problems such as COPD.

Study Methods: VA is contacting ACC Veterans to ask if their physician has diagnosed them with high blood pressure or COPD. Researchers are also reviewing medical records and will measure the blood pressure and lung function of a smaller sample of these Veterans. Researchers cannot accept volunteers, but encourage Veterans who are contacted to participate.

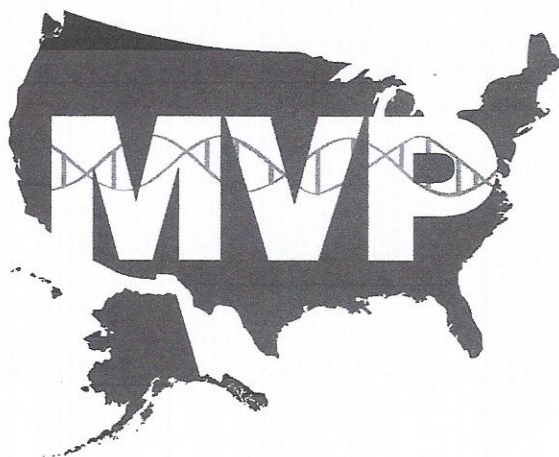
To learn more about this latest study, go to www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/studies/vietnam-army-chemical-corps.asp. ■

"Million Veteran Program" Seeks Volunteers

Why do some Veterans get diabetes, cancer, or post-traumatic stress disorder – and others do not? The answer could be in their genes.

VA launched the Million Veteran Program (MVP) to study how heredity (genetics) affects health and illness. To do this, MVP will build one of the world's largest databases with blood samples and medical histories from one million Veteran volunteers who sign up over the next 5 to 6 years. The data will be stored anonymously to ensure privacy and will be used to study chronic diseases and military-related illnesses. The results may lead to new ways of preventing and treating these conditions in Veterans.

Veterans can sign up at any of the 40 participating VA medical centers across the country. To learn more, please call 1-866-441-6075 or visit <http://www.research.va.gov/mvp>. ■



Institute of Medicine Issues Latest Report on Veterans and Agent Orange

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released its latest report, "Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2010," on September 29, 2010. This is the eighth IOM report to review the latest scientific evidence on health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the Vietnam War.

The report looked at studies of Veterans, industrial workers, and others exposed to dioxins or herbicides, as well as animal studies. Three new health outcomes were studied – hearing loss, eye problems, and osteoporosis. None were found to have enough evidence to show an association with Agent Orange.

Peripheral neuropathy, a condition where damage to nerves can cause numbness, tingling, or muscle weakness, remained in the category of "limited or suggestive evidence" for an association with Agent Orange exposure. However, the IOM noted new

evidence showing that symptoms can persist longer than 2 years and do not always go away over time.

"Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2010" and earlier IOM reports can be read or downloaded free at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/institute-of-medicine.asp. The next IOM report on Veterans and Agent Orange is expected to be released in January 2014.

VA has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as "presumptive" diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. Presumptive diseases are those that VA assumes can be related to a Veteran's military service. Veterans and their survivors may be eligible for disability compensation or survivors' benefits. For the current list, please see page 3 or visit our website at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp. ■

Agent Orange Registry Health Evaluation for Eligible Veterans - Including Korea

VA started the Agent Orange Registry program in 1978 to respond to the health concerns of Vietnam Veterans. VA offers this evaluation to eligible Veterans free of charge. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to get a registry evaluation.

What does a registry evaluation provide?

- A free, specialized health evaluation that includes a medical and military service history, and may include a physical exam and other evaluation as needed
- Answers to questions about environmental exposures
- Information about VA health care and other benefits

Who is eligible for an Agent Orange registry evaluation?

- Vietnam Veterans
- Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) Veterans
- Veterans from certain locations in Thailand
- Veterans from other locations who were exposed during the spraying, testing, or transport of herbicides for military purposes

How do I get an appointment for a registry evaluation?

- Talk to an Environmental Health Coordinator at any VA medical facility. Call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) to find the closest facility or visit www.va.gov/directory.
- Find contact information for Environmental Health Coordinators online at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp.

NOTE: A registry evaluation is not a disability compensation exam. A Veteran can file a claim for VA benefits without having had a registry evaluation.

How many Veterans have received an Agent Orange registry evaluation?

Initial evaluations	573,088
Follow-up evaluations	65,758
Total (initial + follow-up)	638,846
(as of September 30, 2012)	

For more information about the registry evaluation, see www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/registry.asp. ■

New Hotline for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-4AID VET

VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans launched a telephone hotline to provide support for homeless and at-risk Veterans. VA counselors answer the **1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838)** hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Callers are linked directly to VA Homeless Program staff at VA medical centers across the country. Family members, workers at community agencies, and non-VA providers also may call the hotline to learn about the many programs and services available to help homeless and at-risk Veterans within the VA and their communities.

The homeless hotline is just one part of VA's "Homeless Veterans Initiatives" to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. VA wants to make sure that all Veterans have access to the resources and support they have earned. For additional information, go to www.va.gov/homeless. ■

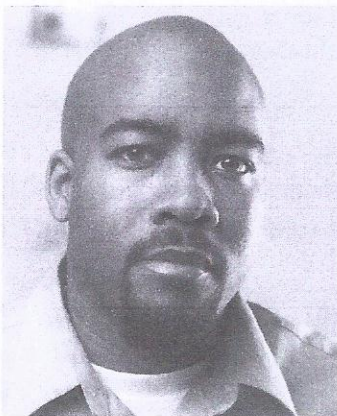
How to Apply for VA Benefits

Veterans can apply for health care benefits online (www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez), or contact their nearest VA health care facility at **1-877-222-VETS (8387)**.

Veterans with service-connected illnesses or injuries may be eligible for monthly payments called disability compensation. The disability must have occurred or worsened during active military service. In addition, the Veteran must have been separated or discharged under conditions that were other than dishonorable. Information on monthly compensation amounts is available at www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/index.htm.

Veterans can file for compensation benefits online at www.ebenefits.va.gov, or contact their nearest VA regional office at **1-800-827-1000**. ■

Connect to VA Caregiver Support: 1-855-260-3274



If you are a family member taking care of a Veteran, VA knows your focus is to take care of your loved one. It can be an incredibly demanding job, and VA wants you to know you do not have to do it alone. VA makes it easier to find support with the new VA Caregiver Support Line. Caring professionals will tell you about help that is available to you or the Veteran, and can connect you to the Caregiver Support Coordinator at your nearest VA medical center. The Coordinator will match you with services available in your area, or they will just listen, if that is the support you need right now.

Help is just a quick phone call away. Reach the VA Caregiver Support Line by calling **1-855-260-3274**. Hours: Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-11 p.m. ET, and Saturday 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. ET.

Learn more about the variety of services VA offers by visiting the new VA Caregiver Support website at www.caregiver.va.gov. ■

Where to Get Help and Information



Agent Orange
Helpline

1-800-749-8387



VA Benefits
Information

1-800-827-1000



Agent Orange
Information

[www.publichealth.va.gov/
exposures/agentorange](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange)



Nearest VA
Medical Center

1-877-222-8387
www.va.gov/directory

If you are concerned about Agent Orange exposure: Contact the nearest VA medical center to request an Agent Orange registry evaluation and get your questions answered. You can find the VA medical center nearest you by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting www.va.gov/directory.

If you are a Vietnam Veteran and need medical treatment for conditions that may be related to Agent Orange: Contact the nearest VA medical center for eligibility information. You can find the nearest VA medical center at www.va.gov/directory or call toll-free 1-877-749-8387.

If you need help resolving a problem related to your medical care: Contact the “patient advocate” or “patient representative” at that facility for assistance. Ask the VA medical center telephone operator for the patient advocate or patient representative.

Veterans with difficult-to-diagnose illnesses or other deployment health concerns: VA has the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) with three locations to help Veterans who have difficult-to-diagnose illnesses or other deployment health concerns that require special expertise. A VA primary provider can refer a Veteran to a WRIISC.

For further questions:

- Visit www.warrelatedillness.va.gov or
- Call the National Referral Program Coordinator at the WRIISC nearest you:
 - WRIISC-California:
1-888-482-4376
 - WRIISC-District of Columbia:
1-800-722-8340
 - WRIISC-New Jersey:
1-800-248-8005

Vietnam-era Veterans with children who have spina bifida: Contact VA’s national hotline at 1-888-820-1756, or the nearest VA regional office by calling 1-800-827-1000. Additional information about spina bifida is available from the Spina Bifida Association of America at 4590 MacArthur Blvd, NW., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20007, by calling 1-800-621-3141, or by email at sbaa@sbaa.org. The website is www.sbaa.org.

Vietnam-era Women Veterans with children who have birth defects: Contact VA’s national hotline at 1-888-820-1756, or the nearest VA regional office by calling 1-800-827-1000.

For disability information: Contact a VA Veteran Service Representative at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility to talk with a counselor and apply for disability compensation. VA disability counselors have information about the wide range of benefit programs that VA offers. The national number is 1-800-827-1000.

To start a disability claim online: Go to <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov>. You also can get information about disability compensation from VA’s Special Issues Helpline at 1-800-749-8387.

Support from Veterans Service Organizations: Many Veterans have been helped by Veterans Service Organizations, including Vietnam Veterans who are seeking benefits they earned through their service. VA does not endorse or recommend any specific group. State and County Veteran Service Officers are also good resources for Vietnam and other Veterans.

For additional benefits information, see VA’s “Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors” booklet. This booklet is updated every year to reflect changes in law and policies and can be downloaded free at www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp. It may be purchased from the U.S. Government Printing Office at their website (bookstore.gpo.gov) or by mail: U.S. Government Printing Office Superintendent of Documents Washington, DC 20402. ■

Check Out New Feature on VA's Military Exposures Website

Veterans and the public can quickly search for military exposure topics on VA's newly designed Military Exposures website www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures.

The user-friendly "4 Ways to Find Exposures" serves as a virtual compass to point visitors to information on a range of chemical, physical and environmental hazards during military service. Visitors can search by: related health concerns, wars and operations, exposure categories, and exposure topics "A to Z." From the same page, visitors can get to information on VA health care, disability compensation, and registry evaluations. Other new navigation tools make it even easier for Veterans and others to find their way around the website and seek out information that is important to them. ■

Service in Camp Lejeune?

Before this issue went to press, the President signed Public Law 112-154, which requires VA to provide health care to Veterans and eligible family members for one or more of 15 specified illnesses or conditions. To be eligible for care, the Veteran or family member must have served on active duty or resided in Camp Lejeune (North Carolina) for not fewer than 30 days between January 1, 1957, and December 31, 1987. For more information, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/. ■

SUBSCRIBE TO WEB UPDATES ON AGENT ORANGE:
www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.



Do you know a Vietnam Veteran who does not receive the Agent Orange Review?
Do you know a Gulf War Veteran who does not receive the Gulf War Review?
Do you know an OEF OIF Veteran who does not receive the OEF OIF Review?
Do you know an Atomic Veteran or other Veteran exposed to ionizing radiation during military service who does not receive the Ionizing Radiation Review?

Maybe it is you!

If you or a fellow Veteran want to read one of the Reviews on line, go to www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/resources.asp. All of the publications may be found there.

Address Changes

If this newsletter has your old address, please use this form to update our mailing list.

Send the completed form to:

Agent Orange Review

Department of Veterans Affairs
AITC-ATTN: Mailing list update (32B)
1615 Woodward Street
Austin, TX 78772-0001

If you receive more than one copy of the Agent Orange Review, or prefer to read it online at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange, let us know by returning the form above to the address at left. Please provide your name, address, and last four digits of your Social Security number. You may use this or other paper. Thank you.

Subscription or address change form for **Agent Orange Review Newsletter**: *Please print.*

Name First: Middle: Last: Last 4 of SSN:

Address Street (Please indicate which APO/FPO, if applicable)

City: State: Zip Code:

New Address Street

City: State: Zip Code:

☐ My address has changed, and I would like to continue to receive the newsletter.

☐ I am receiving more than one copy, and only want to get a single copy.

☐ I don't need the newsletter by mail as I can read it at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.