

VHA Support of Atomic Veterans and Other Veterans Exposed to Ionizing Radiation



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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND
ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

PRINCIPLES

Presumptive Diagnoses

- Leukemia and Lymphomas
 - Excludes CLL
 - Excludes Hodgkin's Disease
 - Includes Multiple Myeloma
- Solid Tumors
 - Thyroid
 - Breast
 - Pharynx
 - Esophagus
 - Stomach and small intestine
 - Pancreas and Gall bladder including bile duct
 - Liver cancer (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B or C)
 - Salivary glands
 - Urinary tract (excludes genitalia)
- 3/26/02: 5 additional cancers added
 - Brain, Bone, Lung, Colon, & Ovary

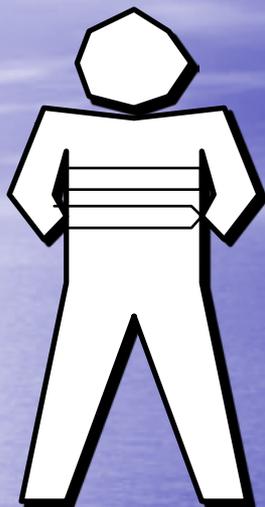
PRINCIPLES

Public Law 98-542 10/24/84

- Establish guidelines for resolving claims
- Establish Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards
- Secretary of Defense to prescribe guidelines for preparation of radiation dose estimates
- Establish process for independent dose estimate
- 38 CFR 3.311

PROCESS

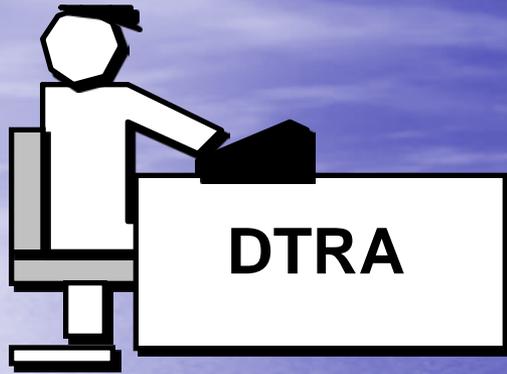
- Presumptive Diagnosis
 - Establish participation
 - Medical evidence of diagnosis
 - Handled at Jackson, MS VA Regional Office (VARO)
- Non-Presumptive
 - 38 CFR 3.311
 - All cancers included
 - Some non-cancerous conditions included
 - Any disability or disease may be considered if supported by medical or scientific evidence



**Veteran files claim with the VA
Regional Office (VARO) of the
Veterans Benefits
Administration (VBA) serving
his/her area
All Radiation related claims are
forwarded to Jackson, MS VARO**

**Jackson requests
documentation of
participation and dose
from DTRA**





DTRA researches case and responds by letter to Jackson MS VARO with a copy to the veteran when his/her mailing address is known

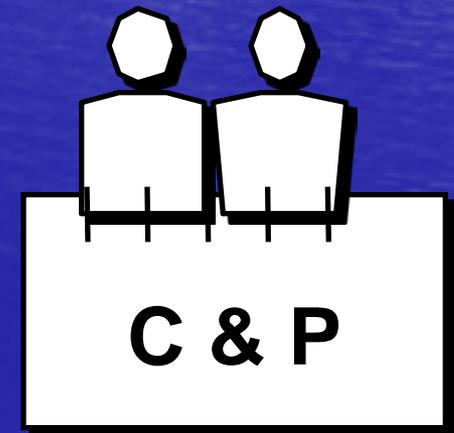


If DTRA confirms participation and provides a positive dose estimate, VARO submits case to Compensation and Pension (C&P) Service of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) in VA Central Office (VACO), Washington, DC for an advisory opinion

**VHA OPHEH returns case
with a medical opinion to the
C&P Service**



**C&P Service refers the case to the
Veterans Health Administration
(VHA) Office of Public Health and
Environmental Hazards (OPHEH)
for a medical opinion on the
likelihood that radiation was
responsible**

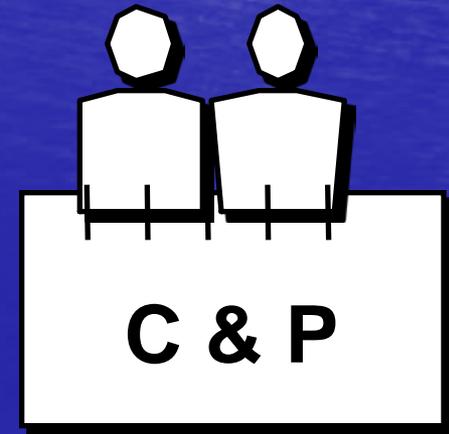




**VARO makes
compensation
decision and
informs
veteran**



**C&P Service reviews the
medical opinion and
returns case to the VARO
with an advisory opinion**



PROCESS

Medical Opinion

- VHA Central Office, Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards
 - Director Radiation and Physical Exposures
 - Health Physicist
- NIOSH Interactive Radio-Epidemiologic Program
 - 99% Confidence Interval that it is as likely as not
 - Used for cancers only
 - https://www.niosh-irep.com/irep_niosh/
- Non-cancers or those not considered radiogenic
- No dose estimate available

PROCESS

- *Skin cancers* – need specific site(s)
- *Throat cancer* – need specific organ
- *Cataracts* – only one specific type is on the radiogenic list—any other kind requires existence of medical evidence
- *Tumors* – need specific site and evidence of malignancy or radiogenicity (except for brain and central nervous system)
- *Cancers* – need target organ if not obvious from disease type and classification

PROCESS

Determining Radiation Exposure

- DD1141 forms
- Veteran's service and medical records
- Dosimetry offices
- Department of Energy
- Individual nuclear weapons facilities
- Projects - Hanford
- Air Force: Technical Applications Center

PROCESS

Determining Actual Diagnosis

- Hospital discharge summaries
- Operative reports
- Sub-specialty consultations
- Pathology reports
- Death certificate

PROCESS

Determining Service Connection

- Veteran's service and medical record
- Medical reports since leaving active duty
- Professional references
 - International Agency for Research on Cancer manuals
 - Biologic Effects of Ionizing Radiation reports
 - Oncology/ medical texts
 - Subject matter expert consultation
 - Literature review
- Other possible reasons for service connection

Types of Claims

- We received 195 total claims over the past 6 months
- 45% of these were occupational exposure claims
- 87 occupational exposure claims were written in the past 6 months
- 0 were opinioned favorably for the claimant

Radiation Case Medical Opinion Tracker

	Week Ending: 02/17/2010							
	11/30/2009	12/4/2009	12/11/2009	12/18/2009	12/31/2009	1/8/2010	1/15/2010	2/17/2010
Total Cases Awaiting VHI Medical Opinion	154	145	137	127	100	82	66	62
Medical Opinions completed by VHA		10	12	10	27	18	21	33
Background Data								
New cases assigned to VHA	N/A **	1	4	0	0	0 *	5	29
New cases transferred to VHA	N/A	1	0	0	0	20 **	37	16
Stored at VHA 13A	64	55 ***	43	33	6	8	39	29
At VBA ready for medical opinion	90	90	94	94	94	74	27	33
* Includes 4 expedited cases sent for medical opinion at request of VBA								
** expedited cases are immediately transferred to VHA for medical Opinion								
2 cases from June completed before this tracker began								
***all cases from July and October are completed								

Ionizing Radiation Registry

- October 28 1986 – Public Law 99-576
- Onsite participation in nuclear testing
- Participation in the occupation of Hiroshima/Nagasaki
- Internment as prisoner of war in Japan which resulted in an opportunity
- Other radiation risk activity

Ionizing Radiation Registry

- Enrollment in registry program
 - Health Eligibility Center
 - DTRA confirms
- Medical Examination
- Receives Letter with finding
- Follow-up examinations also available
- Receives updates through periodic mailings
- Possible Priority 6 enrollment

Ionizing Radiation Registry

Naso-pharyngeal radium

- November 11, 1998 – Public Law 105-398
- Medical examination
- Hospital care
- Medical services
- Nursing home care

IRR Statistics for past 3 years

	Initial Exams or Veterans			Follow-up Exams (2nd, 3rd, etc.)			Total IRR Exams		
Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2007	285	6	291	31	0	31	316	6	322
2008	174	3	177	23	0	23	197	3	200
2009	151	2	153	12	0	12	163	2	165

Current IR Registry Statistics

- Number of Veterans - 24,559
- Number of Exams - 25,700

Resources

- Victoria Cassano, MD, MPH
 - Victoria.Cassano@va.gov
 - 202-461-7220
- Ionizing radiation registry
 - Helen.Malaskiewicz@va.gov
 - 202-461-7226
- Our Website is being upgraded
 - <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/index.asp>