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USNavy for 6 years
Certified VSO since January 2020**

**Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday 8am-12pm & 1pm-4:30pm
Closed on Fridays**

**El Campo Library Information:
What to expect, what is coming, etc.**

**Dr. James Bailey Information:
Scheduling, When and Where appointments will be.**

Texas Veterans Commission VA Regional Office
6900 Almeda Rd.
Houston, TX 77030
To book an appointment
[TVC Houston Claims - Phone Appointments Only \(office365.com\)](https://www.office365.com)
713-794-7913 or 281-825-8599

What Should I Bring to the Office?

- **Claim for disability benefits (Compensation)**
 1. Copy of DD-214 (Member 4 Copy)
 2. Copy of Service Medical Record/Service Treatment Record (if available)
 3. Copy of any private medical records (if any outside care completed)
- **Claim for disability pension (Pension)**
 1. Copy of DD-214
 2. All necessary income and asset information (for all members of a household)
 3. If under 65, any military, VA, SSA, or private records showing disability or inability to work.
- **Claim for Special Monthly Compensation/Pension (SMC/SMP)**
 1. Healthcare provider is required to complete VA Form 21-2680 to submit with application to show a need for assistance with activities of daily living (ADL's).

HOW TO FILE A CLAIM:

To file a claim with the Department of Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA):

1. The first step to filing a claim for an individual should be completing what is known as an **"Intent to File" (VA Form 21-0966)**. This document will preserve a date of claim for up to one year (364 days) from the date of receipt by the VA. The **VA WILL NOT** recognize more than one intent to file concurrently (back to the date of filing) for the same benefit (i.e.- Compensation, Pension) **(38 C.F.R. §3.155(b)(6))**.
2. If the claimant intends to have representation by an advocacy organization (i.e. Texas Veterans Commission), the Veterans Service Organization (VSO) must be appointed by that individual by completing a **VA Form 21-22**.
3. The next step would be to complete the actual "claim" document for the claim being sought. The actual form used will vary depending upon the benefit being sought.

Keep in mind there are only 2 ways now as of January 1, 2021 to file claims to the VA: By mail, or by directly submitting online on VA.gov or ebenefits.va.gov

CLAIMS PROCESS

After you have applied or submitted your claim, there are eight distinct steps that most claims for disability compensation follow. These phases may vary in time depending on the complexity of the claim, the amount of evidence that must be gathered to support the claims, and the type of evidence. You are strongly encouraged to submit as much evidence as possible with your claim to help minimize processing time. This also helps to make your claim as much of a fully-developed claim (FDC) as possible. The eight steps of claims processing are as follows:

- 1. Claim Received**
Your claim has been received by the VA. If you applied online with E-Benefits, you should see receipt in your list of Open Claims within one hour. If you applied through the U.S. mail, please allow mailing time plus processing to record receipt of your claim.
- 2. Under Review**
Your claim has been assigned to a Veterans Service Representative and is being reviewed to determine if additional evidence is needed. If the VA does not need any additional information, your claim will move directly to the **Preparation for Decision phase**.
- 3. Gathering of Evidence**
The Veterans Service Representative will request evidence from the required sources. Requests for evidence may be made of you, a medical professional, a government agency, or another authority. It is common for claims to return to this phase, should additional evidence be required.
- 4. Review of Evidence**
VA has received all needed evidence. If, upon review, it is determined that more evidence is required, the claim will be sent back to the **Gathering of Evidence phase**.
- 5. Preparation for Decision**
The Veterans Service Representative has recommended a decision, and is preparing required documents detailing that decision. If more evidence is required, the claim will be sent back in the process for more information or evidence.
- 6. Pending Decision Approval**
The recommended decision is reviewed, and a final award approval is made. If it is determined that more evidence or information is required, the claim will be sent back in the process for more information or evidence.
- 7. Preparation for Notification**
Your entire claim decision packet is prepared for mailing.

8. **Complete**

The VA has sent a decision packet to you by U.S. mail. The packet includes details of the decision or award. Please allow standard mailing time for your packet to arrive before contacting a VA call center, **1(800) 827-1000**.

HOW LONG WILL THIS PROCESS TAKE?

The length of time it takes to complete a claim depends on several factors, such as the type of claim filed, complexity of your disability or disabilities, the number of disabilities you claim, etc.

PRIMARY TYPES OF CLAIMS

The Department of Veterans Affairs has six basic types of VA disability claims:

- **Original Claim** – the first claim ever filed for disability compensation.
- **Increased Claim** – this is filed after an individual is already service-connected for a disability, and the claimant is filing to have their rating increased due to the disability having gotten worse.
- **Special Claim** – this is a claim for special needs associated to their service-connected disability, to include but not be limited to:
 1. Specially equipped vehicle due to the service-connected disability prevents you from driving, or
 2. Temporary 100% due to recovery from surgery or hospitalization of a service-connected disability, or
 3. Individual Un-employability if your service-connected disability prevents your gainful employment (providing certain criteria are met).
- **New Claim** – this is a claim for benefits by a claimant for a condition or disability which has never been filed for, and is not related to any currently rated service-connected disabilities.
- **Secondary Claim** – this is a claim for a disability which is linked to, or caused by an already service-connected disability. An example of this would be a knee injury caused by an ankle injury.
- **Supplemental Claim**– You can file a Supplemental Claim if you meet all of the requirements listed below. **All of these must be true:**
 1. VA denied your disability claim, **and**
 2. You didn't file an appeal at that time, **and**
 3. You have new and relevant evidence (new supporting documents like a doctor's report or medical test results) that we haven't seen before and that's directly related to your claim. For example, you might file a Supplemental Claim if you were treated for pain in your elbow while on active duty, but you were denied disability benefits because your VA health exam didn't find a problem. Then 2 years later, an X-ray of

your elbow showed signs of arthritis (a painful swelling and sometimes wearing down of a joint). In this case, you would need to send your new exam and X-ray results to us as new evidence related to the claim.

HOW DOES A CLAIM GET EXPEDITED, OR PRIORITIZED?

Certain criteria **must** be met for a veteran's claim to be "**flushed**" or **expedited** for claim processing. Although many calls are received by the VA requesting to expedite a claim, evidence is needed to do so for the following reasons to prioritize a claim:

- **Homeless** (*verification of homeless services, HHS, etc.*); or,
 - **Extreme Financial Hardship** (*past due notices, or notifications of eviction/foreclosure, etc.*); or,
 - **Seriously Ill/Injured** (Active duty); or
 - **Terminally Ill** (*evidence from health care provider, hospice, etc.*); or
 - **Former Prisoner of War** (FPOW); or
 - **Medal of Honor/Purple Heart** (MOH/PH); or
 - **More than 85 years of age** (*typically verified with DD-214, service records*); or
 - **Participant in Fully-Developed Claim** (FDC) program; or
 - **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or Lou Gehrig's Disease.**
- the availability of evidence needed to decide your claim.

You can track the status of your claim by either calling your Benefits Advisor or you can register for eBenefits at: www.ebenefits.va.gov, or by calling them at 1-800-827-1000.

Agent Orange

Registry

This is a free health exam for Veterans who meet any of the service requirements for presumption of contact. Even if you don't have a known illness, the exam could alert you to illnesses that may be related to contact with herbicides. By being part of this registry, you're also helping your fellow Veterans by giving the VA information so they can better understand and serve those affected by Agent Orange-related illnesses.

This exam isn't a VA disability claim exam (also known as a compensation and pension, or C&P, exam). And you don't need to have this exam to get other VA benefits. To get disability benefits, you'll need to [file a claim](#).

To schedule an exam contact:

Alecia Robinson
(713) 794-7091
Alecia.Johnson@va.gov
Fax: (713) 794-7094

Agent Orange Exposure

The VA will determine eligibility based on the facts of each Veteran's claim. But the VA will assume that certain cancers and other illnesses are caused by Agent Orange. They call these presumptive diseases. And they assume that Veterans who served in certain locations were exposed to Agent Orange. This is referred to as presumptive exposure.

Requirements for Agent Orange presumptive diseases

When sound medical and scientific evidence shows that an illness is caused by Agent Orange exposure, the VA will add it to their list of presumptive diseases. If you've been diagnosed with one of these illnesses, you don't need to prove that it started during—or got worse because of—your military service.

Cancers caused by Agent Orange:

- [Chronic B-cell leukemia](#)
- [Hodgkin's disease](#)
- [Multiple myeloma](#)
- [Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma](#)
- [Prostate cancer](#)
- [Respiratory cancers \(including lung cancer\)](#)

- [Some soft tissue sarcomas](#) They don't include osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma on our list of presumptive diseases.

Other Illnesses caused by Agent Orange:

- [AL amyloidosis](#)
- [Chloracne \(or other types of acneiform disease like it\)](#) Under VA rating regulations, this condition must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of herbicide exposure.
- [Diabetes mellitus type 2](#)
- [Ischemic heart disease](#)
- [Parkinson's disease](#)
- [Peripheral neuropathy, early onset](#) Under VA rating regulations, this condition must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of herbicide exposure.
- [Porphyria cutanea tarda](#): Under VA rating regulations, this condition must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of herbicide exposure.

Three Agent Orange Presumptive Added

Three conditions will be added to the list of those presumptively associated with exposure to Agent Orange. Those conditions are

- Bladder cancer,
- Hypothyroidism and
- Parkinsonism.

Vietnam War Era Veterans and their survivors, who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of these three new presumptive conditions, will have their cases automatically reviewed **without the need to refile a claim.**

If you have an illness that's not on the list of presumptive diseases, but you believe it was caused by Agent Orange exposure, you can still file a claim for VA disability benefits. But you'll need to submit more evidence.

Service requirements for presumption of exposure

VA bases eligibility for VA disability compensation benefits, in part, on whether you served in a location that exposed you to Agent Orange. Again, this is called having a presumption of exposure.

You have a presumption of exposure if you meet **at least one** of the service requirements listed below.

Between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, you must have served for any length of time in at least one of these locations:

- In the Republic of Vietnam, **or**

- Aboard a U.S. military vessel that operated in the inland waterways of Vietnam, **or**
- On a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia, **or**
- On regular perimeter duty on the fenced-in perimeters of a U.S. Army installation in Thailand or a Royal Thai Air Force base. These bases include U-Tapao, Ubon, NakhonPhanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat, or Don Muang.

Or at least one of these must be true. You:

- Served in or near the Korean DMZ for any length of time between September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, **or**
- Served on active duty in a regular Air Force unit location where a C-123 aircraft with traces of Agent Orange was assigned, and had repeated contact with this aircraft due to your flight, ground, or medical duties, **or**
- Were involved in transporting, testing, storing, or other uses of Agent Orange during your military service, **or**
- Were assigned as a Reservist to certain flight, ground, or medical crew duties at one of the below locations.

Eligible Reserve locations, time periods, and units include:

- **Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base** in Ohio, 1969 to 1986 (906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadrons)
- **Westover Air Force Base** in Massachusetts, 1972 to 1982 (731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, or 901st Organizational Maintenance Squadron)
- **Pittsburgh International Airport** in Pennsylvania, 1972 to 1982 (758th Airlift Squadron)

What evidence will I need to submit with my claim?

You'll need to submit these records:

- A medical record that shows you have an Agent Orange–related illness, **and**
- Military records to show how you were exposed to Agent Orange during your service

If your illness isn't on the list of presumptive diseases, you'll also need to provide at least one of these types of evidence:

- Evidence that shows the problem started during—or got worse because of—your military service, **or**
- Scientific or medical evidence stating that the illness you have is caused by Agent Orange. Scientific proof may include an article from a medical journal or a published research study.

[Get your VA medical records online](#)

What military records will I need to submit?

You'll need to submit your discharge or separation papers that show your time and location of service. These may include your DD214 or other separation documents.

For certain claims, you may also need more supporting documents.

For claims related to service in Thailand:

Submit documents that show you had regular perimeter security duty. These may include your:

- Daily work logs
- Performance evaluation reports
- Job records (for jobs such as a dog handler or a member of a security squadron or military police unit)

For claims related to C-123 aircraft:

Submit one or more of these forms:

- USAF Form 2096 (unit where you were assigned at the time of the training action)
- USAF Form 5 (aircraft flight duties)
- USAF Form 781 (aircraft maintenance duties)

To learn more, download our:

[Air Force specialty codes and units for affected C-123 aircraft \(PDF\)](#)

[C-123 Aircraft Agent Orange Exposure claims fact sheet \(PDF\)](#)

If you're submitting a claim related to C-123 aircraft, you can also:

- Call the C-123 hotline at [800-749-8387](tel:800-749-8387), or
- [Email the St. Paul regional benefit office](#)
-
- **You can get help in any of these ways:**
- Call [800-827-1000](tel:800-827-1000) ([TTY: 711](tel:711))
- [Go to your nearest VA regional office](#)
- Connect with [a trained professional like a VSO](#)

If you have questions about your agent orange claim:

- Call the Agent Orange help line at [800-749-8387](tel:800-749-8387)
- Send an email to GW/AOHelpline@vba.va.gov

Note: Please be ready to give us your name, email address, telephone number, and VA file number or Social Security number.

Questions about what you have heard today?

Do you have anything in particular that you would like to learn about in the next meeting?

Thank you!