

Fact Sheet

Defense Threat Reduction Agency



The Atomic Veterans Service Certificate (AVSC)

Historical Background

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is the Department of Defense (DoD) executive Agent for the Nuclear Test Personnel Review (NTPR) Program, which serves veterans who participated in U.S. atmospheric nuclear tests, served with the U.S. occupation forces of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, or were prisoners of war in Japan at the conclusion of World War II. The primary purpose of the NTPR Program is to provide participant data and radiation dose information for veterans. Since its inception in 1978, the NTPR Program has identified approximately 550,000 DOD personnel as participants in four missions: 1) post-World War II occupation forces of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; 2) prisoners of war in Japan at the conclusion of World War II; 3) participants of U.S. atmospheric nuclear tests (1945 - 1962), conducted primarily in Nevada and the Pacific Ocean; and 4) participants of U.S. underground nuclear testing between (1951 - 1992), conducted primarily in Nevada.

The NTPR Program involves comprehensive research of the broadest scope. Over 100 archives nationwide have been researched for relevant information. The program has located, retrieved, declassified, and preserved records pertaining to U.S. atmospheric nuclear tests. More than 50 historical volumes and 25 analytical reports have been developed to provide details of each test and operation. These records are diverse in nature and are vital in documenting participation activities and establishing radiation dose levels. The documentation includes service and medical records, film badge records, pocket dosimeter logs, test program documents and technical reports, special orders, muster rolls, unit memoranda, ship deck logs, morning reports, flight logs, personal accounts, diaries, and other relevant papers. Although the majority of the archival research effort was completed prior to 1984, the NTPR Program continues to seek and obtain new information from all available sources.

The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19)

[Section 581 of the John S. McCain NDAA for FY19](#) established the Atomic Veterans Service Certificate. Specifically, section 581 states:

- (a) SERVICE CERTIFICATE REQUIRED. – The Secretary of Defense shall design and produce a military service certificate, to be known as the "Atomic Veterans Service Certificate", to honor retired and former members of the Armed Forces who are radiation-exposed veterans (as such term is defined in section 1112(c)(3) of title 38, United States Code).
- (b) DISTRIBUTION OF CERTIFICATE. –
 - 1) ISSUANCE TO RETIRED AND FORMER MEMBERS.- At the request of a radiation-exposed veteran, The Secretary of Defense shall issue the Atomic Veterans Service Certificate to the veteran.

- 2) ISSUANCE TO NEXT OF KIN.-In the case of a radiation-exposed veteran who is deceased, the Secretary may provide for issuance of the Atomic Veterans Service Certificate to the next-of-kin of the person.

Establishing the Atomic Veteran Service Certificate

The Director, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), manages the Nuclear Test and Personnel Review (NTPR) Program, pursuant to DoD Directive 5105.62, "Defense Threat Reduction Agency," November 10, 2015. Determining eligibility for the Atomic Veterans Service Certificate (AVSC), authorized by Section 581 of the John S. McCain NDAA for FY19, is consistent with the duties associated with managing the NTPR Program. Therefore, the Acting Secretary of Defense has charged DTRA with establishing the AVSC program.

Eligibility Requirements

Pursuant to Section 581, FY19 NDAA, the AVSC is awarded to 'radiation-exposed veterans' as defined in section [1112\(c\)\(3\) of title 38, United States Code](#). For award of the AVSC the term 'radiation-exposed veteran' is further clarified in [38 Code of Federal Regulations, §3.309](#), "Diseases subject to presumptive service connection," Paragraph (d), "Diseases specific to radiation-exposed veterans," Subparagraph (3).

(1) The term "*radiation-exposed veteran*" means either a veteran who while serving on active duty, or an individual who while a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces during a period of active duty for training or inactive duty training, participated in a radiation-risk activity.

(2) The term "*radiation-risk activity*" means any of the following:

(A) Onsite participation in a test involving the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device (without regard to whether the nation conducting the test was the United States or another nation).

(B) The occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, Japan, by United States forces during the period beginning on August 6, 1945, and ending on July 1, 1946.

(C) Internment as a prisoner of war in Japan (or service on active duty in Japan immediately following such internment) during World War II which resulted in an opportunity for exposure to ionizing radiation comparable to that of the United States occupation forces in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, Japan, during the period beginning on August 6, 1945, and ending on July 1, 1946.

(D) Service in which the service member was, as part of his or her official military duties, present during a total of at least 250 days before February 1, 1992, on the grounds of a gaseous diffusion plant located in Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio, or the area identified as K25 at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, if, during such service the veteran:

(i) Was monitored for each of the 250 days of such service through the use of dosimetry badges for exposure at the plant of the external parts of veteran's body to radiation; or

(ii) Served for each of the 250 days of such service in a position that had exposures comparable to a job that is or was monitored through the use of dosimetry badges.

(E) Service before January 1, 1974, on Amchitka Island, Alaska, if, during such service, the veteran was exposed to ionizing radiation in the performance of duty related to the Long Shot, Milrow, or Cannikin underground nuclear tests.

38 CFR 3.309 also explains that “*onsite participation*” means:

- (A) During the official operational period of an atmospheric nuclear test, presence at the test site, or performance of official military duties in connection with ships, aircraft or other equipment used in direct support of the nuclear test.
- (B) During the six month period following the official operational period of an atmospheric nuclear test, presence at the test site or other test staging area to perform official military duties in connection with completion of projects related to the nuclear test including decontamination of equipment used during the nuclear test.
- (C) Service as a member of the garrison or maintenance forces on Enewetak during the periods June 21, 1951, through July 1, 1952, August 7, 1956, through August 7, 1957, or November 1, 1958, through April 30, 1959.
- (D) Assignment to official military duties at Naval Shipyards involving the decontamination of ships that participated in Operation Crossroads.

For a list of qualifying atmospheric testing operations and information, please refer to our [Operation/Project Fact Sheets](#) provided on our website.

Application Process

As stated in the FY19 NDAA, retired and former military members or their next of kin are allowed to apply for issuance of the certificate if the member in question meets the criteria as laid out above. The [DTRA Form 150, Atomic Veterans Service Certificate Application and Nuclear Test Personnel Review Information Request and Release](#), will be used to initiate a request for an Atomic Veterans Service Certificate. Due to the Privacy Act of 1974, Title 5 U.S.C. § 552a, and the privacy information required on the form to identify a veteran’s status, NTPR will only accept applications by mail to the following address:

Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Attn: RD-NTS (NTPR)
8725 John J. Kingman Road, Stop 6201
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-6201

Eligibility and issuance of the AVSC will be determined through the research practices for the following scenarios.

- (A) For AVSC requests in which the named veteran appears as a participant in NTPR’s in-house records.
 - (1) If AVSC eligibility can be confirmed with in-house source documentation, the AVSC will be issued to the veteran or surrogate.
 - (2) If sufficient records for eligibility cannot be located solely via in-house record searches, then a request for the military personnel file will be assigned to the National Personnel Records Center. Additional unit record searches will be conducted as needed to determine eligibility and issuance of the AVSC.
- (B) For AVSC requests in which the named veteran does not appear as a participant in NTPR’s in-house records, the case research and development will follow the research practices outlined in our standard operating procedures (SOP), to include the request and review of military personnel records, and research and

review of all appropriate unit and other records sources. If participation and eligibility for the AVSC cannot be confirmed upon completion of subsequent research, a standardized letter stating that available records could not confirm the veteran's eligibility will be provided and a certificate will not be issued. For more details on our research process, refer to the [AVSC Program SOP](#).

AVSC Inquiries

Individuals seeking more information about the NTPR and AVSC Programs can send inquiries to our office.

Mailing Address: Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Attn: RD-NTS (NTPR)
8725 John J. Kingman Road
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-6201

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