

**Veterans Benefits Programs for U.S. Atmospheric Nuclear Test Participants  
and Hiroshima/Nagasaki Occupation Forces  
(Toll-Free Helpline: 1-800-462-3683)**

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 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 participation data and radiation dose information to veterans. It also informs veterans of health care availability and possible compensation benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

## **Compensation Regulations**

Various public laws as codified by Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 3 (38 CFR 3), authorize VA to provide medical care and compensation benefits to confirmed test participants who contracted certain specified diseases after their participation, as well as dependency and indemnity compensation to certain survivors. Other public laws codified by 28 CFR 79 authorize DOJ to provide compensation to confirmed participants who contracted certain specified diseases after their participation in above-ground nuclear testing. These regulations are outlined below. The Government Printing Office offers free online access to the Code of Federal Regulations at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html>

## **VA Medical Care**

All eligible veterans may participate in the Ionizing Radiation Registry (IRR) Program, which provides the following services:

1. A complete medical history, physical examination and standard diagnostic tests, as well as additional specialized tests and consultations, if needed. The IRR Program fulfills a basic clinical care purpose by offering eligible veterans a free health examination which potentially serves as an entry point for VA care.
2. Eligible veterans may also receive special treatment for radiogenic diseases currently covered by VA under federal regulations (38 CFR 3.309 and 3.311). Care for these radiogenic conditions is provided without regard to the veteran's age, service-connected status, or ability to defray the cost of medical care. Additionally, there is no co-payment required from the veteran. Even if an eligible veteran has never filed a compensation claim or if the claim has been denied, the veteran can still receive free medical care for radiogenic diseases.

For additional details on eligibility, radiation, health care and benefits to veterans who may have been exposed to radiation during military service please see the VA web-link at [http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/veterans\\_public.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/veterans_public.asp). The IRR maintains a toll

-free helpline at 1-800-749-8387.

## **Filing Claims**

Veterans may file a claim with the VA or DOJ programs listed below:

### *VA presumptive program:*

Several public laws, as codified in 38 CFR 3.309, authorize VA to grant compensation for 22 types of cancers to confirmed participants. To establish eligibility under this law, veterans must file a claim with VA. To initiate a claim, veterans must submit competent medical evidence of the claimed condition to VA. Upon receipt, VA will submit a request to the NTPR Program to confirm the veteran's participation. Filing a VA claim under this law does not require dose information from the NTPR Program, nor does it require the veteran to obtain participation information from the NTPR Program prior to initiating the claim. However, veterans who are not confirmed participants of the U.S. Atmospheric Nuclear Test Program are not entitled to VA compensation under this program.

### *VA non-presumptive program:*

Several public laws, as codified in 38 CFR 3.311, provide for VA service connection and benefits for about 25 specified disease categories, including any cancer not specifically identified in 38 CFR 3.309. These regulations specify rules for adjudicating VA claims and establish a panel of experts for addressing scientific issues regarding the relationship between diseases and radiation exposure. If a claimed disease is among those listed in 38 CFR 3.311, the veteran must cite competent scientific or medical evidence demonstrating a relationship between radiation exposure and the disease before the claim may be considered under this regulation.

To initiate a claim, veterans must submit to VA competent medical evidence that the claimed condition exists. Upon receipt and initial processing, VA will request that the NTPR Program confirm the veteran's participation and provide a radiation dose estimate. The NTPR Program will respond by providing participation and associated radiation dose information, where applicable. Per 38 CFR 3.311(a) (4), VA may concede a veteran's presence at an atmospheric test site (or Hiroshima/Nagasaki) if the NTPR Program, through military records, is unable to establish the veteran's presence at, or absence from, the site. If VA concedes a veteran's presence, it will request a radiation dose estimate from the NTPR Program.

Veterans initiating VA claims under above regulations are not required to request confirmation of participation or dose information from the NTPR Program. To initiate a claim, veterans must contact the VA.

Veterans can receive free assistance in submitting claims by contacting the VA through its toll-free help lines at 1-800-827-1000 (General Benefits Info), 1-800-749-8387 (Special Issues Hotline) and at 1-800-829-4833 for the hearing impaired. Veterans can also file claims with the VA online at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp> . Regional VA office locations and contact

information are available at <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1> .

Veterans can also receive free assistance in submitting claims by contacting one of the veteran's service organizations.

*DOJ compensation program:*

In 1990, Congress passed the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which provides for compassionate payments to individuals (or their surviving beneficiaries) who contracted certain diseases as a result of their exposure to ionizing radiation from U.S. above-ground nuclear testing. DOJ administers RECA as codified in 28 CFR 79.

There are several categories of claimants under RECA, including on-site participants, downwinders, uranium miners and millers, and ore transporters. To receive compensation, a claimant must meet certain eligibility criteria: the claimant must have developed one of the illnesses listed in 28 CFR 79 and have participated in certain nuclear tests (on-site participant), have established residence in a specified area during a specified time period (downwinder), or have been exposed to specified levels of radiation from uranium processing activities. Presence may be established through a variety of records, as listed in 28 CFR 79.13. In all cases, written medical documentation is required to prove that the claimant suffers (or suffered) from conditions listed in 28 CFR 79.

Veterans initiating a DOJ claim for on-site participation under this regulation are not required to request confirmation of participation or dose information from the NTPR Program. To initiate a claim, veterans must contact DOJ:

Radiation Exposure Compensation Program  
Department of Justice  
P.O. Box 146  
Washington, DC 20044-0146  
1-800-729-7327  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/civil/torts/const/reca/>

Upon receipt, DOJ will submit a request to the NTPR Program to confirm the claimant's participation and then determine participation status based on the input from the NTPR Program. The scope of the NTPR Program is limited to assisting DOJ with verification of participation. Uranium processing and downwinder claims do not fall within the scope of the NTPR Program.

## **Second Opinions**

Per 38 CFR 3.311(a)(3), a veteran may obtain a second opinion of his reconstructed dose from a *credible source* to compare against the NTPR dose estimate. If one estimate is at least double the other, VA is required to refer both estimates to an independent expert (selected by the Director of the National Institutes of Health), who will then prepare a separate radiation dose estimate for consideration in adjudication of the claim.

## **NTPR Inquiries**

Veterans seeking information about the NTPR Program can address their inquiries to:

Nuclear Test Personnel Review Program

DTRA / RD-NTSN

8725 John J. Kingman Road, MSC 6201

Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-6201

1-800-462-3683

[ntpr@dtra.mil](mailto:ntpr@dtra.mil)

<http://www.dtra.mil/SpecialFocus/NTPR/NTPRHome.aspx>

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