

Many veterans have been exposed to radiation during their military service. Potential sources for radiation exposure during military service include: nuclear weapons handling and detonation, weapons and other equipment made with depleted uranium, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, and x-rays. Veterans with MOS's which required frequent interaction with such sources (such as veterans serving on a nuclear submarine, or as an x-ray or dental technician) may be at risk for radiation-related diseases.

Most concern about radiation exposure is about ionizing radiation, which is high energy. Other sources such as sunlight, microwaves, radio, and sonar emit low-energy radiation, or non-ionizing.

Some veterans are eligible for a free Ionizing Radiation Registry Health Exam.

Veterans who were involved in a Radiation-Risk Activity (see below) are entitled to a presumption of service connection for certain cancers, which have been linked to exposure to ionizing radiation. These include:

- Cancers of the bile ducts, bone, brain, breast, colon, esophagus, gall bladder, liver (primary site, but not if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated), lung (including bronchiolo-alveolar cancer), pancreas, pharynx, ovary, salivary gland, small intestine, stomach, thyroid, urinary tract (kidney/renal, pelvis, urinary bladder, and urethra).
- Leukemia (except chronic lymphocytic leukemia)
- Lymphomas (except Hodgkin's disease)
- Multiple myeloma (cancer of plasma cells).

Radiation-Risk Activity:

Atomic Veterans

"Atomic Veterans" is a term referring to Veterans who:

- Participated in occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan between August 6, 1945 and July 1, 1946.
- Were prisoners of war in Japan during World War II.
- Participated in atmospheric nuclear weapons tests conducted mainly in Nevada and the Pacific Ocean from 1945 to 1962.

Atomic Veterans who have one of the above listed cancers are presumed to be service-connected.

Radiation-Risk Activity:

Underground Nuclear

Weapons Testing

Veterans who were involved in underground nuclear weapons testing at Amchitka Island, Alaska prior to January 1, 1974, are considered to have engaged in Radiation-Risk Activity. In addition, veterans who were involved in underground nuclear weapons testing for at least 250 days before February 1, 1992 at Paducah, Kent., Portsmouth, Ohio, or K25 in Oak Ridge, Tenn. are also considered to have been in Radiation-Risk Activity.

Veterans involved in such underground nuclear weapons testing who have one of the above listed cancers are presumed to be service connected.

Other Diseases (non-presumptive)

Other diseases not listed will also be considered by the VA for service-connection on a case-by-case basis. Factors considered include length of time exposed to radiation, severity of radiation, length of time between exposure and manifestation of the disease, and more.

Other possible exposures to radiation

- U.S. Coast Guard veterans who worked at a Long Range Navigation (LORAN) station from 1942-2010.
- Depleted uranium used in producing tanks, tank armor, and some bullets starting in 1990
- McMurdo Station, Antarctica nuclear power plant from 1964 to 1973—VA and DOD are still determining whether radiation exposure at McMurdo may have caused cancer in veterans.
- Nasopharyngeal (nose and throat) radium irradiation treatments from 1940 to mid-1960s—some pilots, submariners, divers, and others were given this treatment to prevent ear damage from pressure changes.
- Radiation therapy— for treatment or diagnosis of cancer or other diseases.

Veterans who have a history of radiation exposure and have suffered the onset of cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, or multiple myeloma, should consider filing a claim with

the VA with a request the VA assist them in the development of their claim. If the veteran has received compensation under The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, an offset against the VA compensation may be applicable to 100 percent of the RECA award.