

Get help from Veterans Crisis Line

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SEARCH

U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

(https://www.va.gov)

VA (<http://www.va.gov/>) » Health Care (<http://www.va.gov/health>) » Public Health (</index.asp>) » Military Exposures (</PUBLICHEALTH/exposures/index.asp>) » Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposures

Public Health

MENU

Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposures

VA added 3 presumptive conditions related to particulate matter exposure

The new presumptive conditions are **asthma**, **rhinitis**, and **sinusitis**. To be eligible for benefits, you must have gotten one of these conditions within 10 years of your separation from active service.

This will expand benefits for Veterans who served in:

- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War, from September 19, 2001, to the present, **or**
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations from August 2, 1990, to the present

If you have a pending claim for one or more of these conditions, you don't need to do anything. We'll send you a decision notice when we complete our review.

For more information about VA benefits and eligibility, or how to file a claim, Veterans and survivors can visit www.VA.gov (<http://www.VA.gov>) or call toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

See the regulation (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/08/05/2021-16693/presumptive-service-connection-for-respiratory-conditions-due-to-exposure-to-particulate-matter>).

"Airborne hazard" refers to any sort of contaminant or potentially toxic substance that we are exposed to through the air we breathe. While on active duty, military service members may have been exposed to a variety of airborne hazards including:

- The smoke and fumes from open burn pits
- Sand, dust, and particulate matter
- General air pollution common in certain countries
- Fuel, aircraft exhaust, and other mechanical fumes
- Smoke from oil well fires

VA understands that many Veterans are especially concerned about exposure to the smoke and fumes generated by open burn pits.

In Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas of the Southwest Asia theater of military operations, open-air combustion of trash and other waste in burn pits was a common practice. The Department of Defense has now closed out most burn pits and is planning to close the remainder.

Depending on a variety of factors, you may experience health effects related to this exposure. Factors that may indicate you have a greater or lesser risk of short or long-term health effects include:

- Types of waste burned
- Proximity, amount of time, and frequency of exposure
- Wind direction and other weather-related factors
- Presence of other airborne or environmental hazards in the area

Researchers, including experts at VA, are actively studying airborne hazards like burn pits and other military environmental exposures. Ongoing research will help us better understand potential long-term health effects and provide you with better care and services.

Many health conditions related to these hazards are temporary and should disappear after the exposure ends. Other longer-term health issues may be caused by a combination of hazardous exposures, injuries, or illnesses you may have experienced during your military service including blast or noise injuries.

Health Care and Benefits

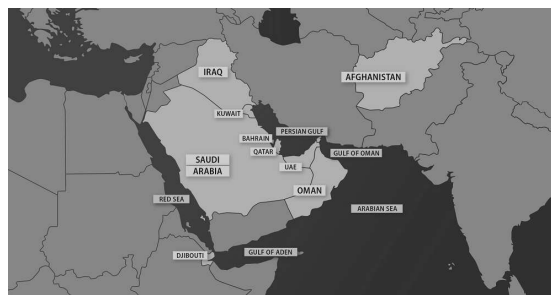
VA understands that exposure to airborne hazards like burn pits is a serious concern for many Veterans. We strongly encourage all Veterans who are concerned about any kind of hazardous exposure during their military service talk to their health care provider and apply for VA health care (<https://www.va.gov/health-care/>).

VA health care is also available for free to combat Veterans for five years after separation (<https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/active-duty/>) to help ensure continuity of care for health issues related to their military service. If you are enrolled in VA care, you can contact your facility's Environmental Health Coordinator (<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp>) for more information and resources.

Veterans can also file a claim (<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>) for compensation and benefits. If you participate in the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR), you may save and submit a copy of your registry questionnaire to support your claim. Through the claims process, VA evaluates Veterans' individual exposures, circumstances of service, and needs.

Join the Registry

We encourage all Veterans who are eligible to participate in VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR) (<https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/#page/home>). By joining the registry, you can



Click to expand the map of countries and bodies of water currently included in the VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.





provide information that can help us better understand the long-term effects of burn pit exposures. Even if you have not experienced any symptoms or illnesses you believe are related to burn pit exposure, your participation could help VA provide better care to all Veterans

- Participation in the registry is separate from and cannot negatively impact your ability to file a claim or receive health care from VA.
- You can save and submit your registry questionnaire and notes from the optional health evaluation support your claim.
- You do not have to participate in the registry to be enrolled in VA health care or file a VA claim.
- You can participate even if you do not recall any exposure to airborne hazards during your military service.

Visit the registry page (</exposures/burnpits/registry1.asp>) to learn more about eligibility and how to get started.

Open Burn Pits – What Was Burned

Waste products commonly disposed of in open burn pits include:

- Chemicals, paint, medical and human waste
- Metal and aluminum cans
- Munitions and unexploded ordnance
- Petroleum and lubricant products
- Plastics, rubber, wood, and food waste

Exposure to smoke created by burning these materials may cause irritation and burning of eyes or throat, coughing, breathing difficulties, skin itching or rashes. Many of these conditions are temporary and resolve on their own when the exposure ends. However, if you were closer to burn pit smoke or were exposed for longer periods of time, you may be at greater risk for longer-term health conditions.

Additional Information

Please refer to the resources below for additional information:

- Sand, Dust, and Particulate Exposure (<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/sand-dust-particulates/index.asp>) (VA Public Health Site)
- War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) Training for Health Care Providers (<https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/docs/modflyer.asp>)
- Military Exposures Newsletter (<https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.publichealth.va.gov%2Fexposures%2Fpublications%2Fmilitary-exposures%2Fmeyh-3%2Findex.asp&data=04%7C01%7C%7C489a7e3f1610449f69d008d89aeb950f%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251e>) (VA Public Health Site)

To learn more about other types of military exposures, visit the military exposures homepage (<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/index.asp>).

Download free viewer and reader software (<http://www.va.gov/viewer.htm>) to view PDF, video and other file formats.

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EXPLORE AIRBORNE HAZARDS

[General Information \(/exposures/burnpits/index.asp\)](/exposures/burnpits/index.asp)

[Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry \(/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp\)](/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp)

[Research \(/exposures/burnpits/research.asp\)](/exposures/burnpits/research.asp)

[How to Get Care \(/exposures/burnpits/get-care.asp\)](/exposures/burnpits/get-care.asp)

[Information for Health Care Providers \(/exposures/burnpits/for-providers.asp\)](/exposures/burnpits/for-providers.asp)

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) \(/exposures/burnpits/faqs.asp\)](/exposures/burnpits/faqs.asp)

RESOURCES

[10 Things to Know Factsheet \(/docs/exposures/AHBP_GeneralVeteranFactsheet_Final_508.pdf\)](/docs/exposures/AHBP_GeneralVeteranFactsheet_Final_508.pdf)

[Health Care Options Factsheet \(/docs/exposures/AHBP_HealthCareOptionsFactsheet_Final_508.pdf\)](/docs/exposures/AHBP_HealthCareOptionsFactsheet_Final_508.pdf)

[Registry Quick Reference Sheet \(/docs/exposures/AHOBPR_QuickReferenceSheet_Final_508.pdf\)](/docs/exposures/AHOBPR_QuickReferenceSheet_Final_508.pdf)

[Sand, Dust, and Particulate Matter Exposures \(/exposures/sand-dust-particulates/index.asp\)](/exposures/sand-dust-particulates/index.asp)

[Health Care Providers Factsheet \(/docs/exposures/AHBP_VAProviderFactsheet_Final_508.pdf\)](/docs/exposures/AHBP_VAProviderFactsheet_Final_508.pdf)

[Training for Health Care Providers \(https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/docs/modflyer.asp\)](https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/docs/modflyer.asp)

[10 Things to Know Factsheet \(Espanol\) \(/docs/exposures/AHBP_GeneralVeteranFactsheet_Final_Spanish_508.pdf\)](/docs/exposures/AHBP_GeneralVeteranFactsheet_Final_Spanish_508.pdf)

[Health Care Options Factsheet \(Espanol\) \(/docs/exposures/AHBP_HealthCareOptionsFactsheet_Final_Spanish_508.pdf\)](/docs/exposures/AHBP_HealthCareOptionsFactsheet_Final_Spanish_508.pdf)

CONTACT

Health Care
877-222-8387

Benefits
800-827-1000

TDD (Hearing Impaired)
800-829-4833

CONNECT

Veterans Crisis Line: (<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>)
1-800-273-8255 (tel:+18002738255) (Press 1)

Social Media



(<https://publichealth.va.gov/airborne-hazards/burn-pit-exposures/veterans-affairs>)
Complete Directory (<https://www.va.gov/opa/socialmedia.asp>)

EMAIL UPDATES

VA HOME

QUICK LIST

RESOURCES

ADMINISTRATION

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs | 810 Vermont Avenue, NW Washington DC 20420

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