

## **Information for Coast Guard Veterans and Retirees Filing for Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation Due to Asbestos- and Lead-Related Health Effects**

### **Exposure**

If you were assigned to Coast Guard cutters that were constructed prior to 1991, you may have been exposed to very low levels of asbestos and lead. Recorded levels of exposure were well below the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) levels that require medical surveillance examinations.

Routine exposure for asbestos and lead would include working on and berthing in a Coast Guard cutter where there may be small exposed areas of asbestos-containing thermal insulation, a number of torn asbestos-containing floor tiles, and lead dust from lead ballast ingots and lead-containing paint.

Exceptional exposures may have occurred during certain maintenance procedures (e.g. tearing up entire floor surfaces of asbestos-containing floor tiles and torching or sanding surfaces painted with lead-containing paint) without the use of personal protective equipment.

### **Asbestos- and Lead-Related Health Effects**

It is very difficult to link lead-related health effects to low level exposures on Coast Guard cutters. Routine exposures to asbestos on Coast Guard cutters could possibly be linked to the following medical conditions:

- Mesothelioma
- Asbestos-related cancers (lung, larynx, and ovary). (Note – the linkage for very low levels of exposure for these cancers is not clear.)

### **VA Disability Compensation Process**

The VA has a mechanism for veterans to apply for compensation due to a disability that is the result of an injury, disease or an event in military service. If you experience a health effect believed to be due to exposure to asbestos or lead during military service and you desire to apply for VA disability compensation, you will need to provide evidence that supports the following:

- There was an event in service that caused the injury or disease;
- You have a current physical or mental disability; and
- There is a relationship between your current disability and an event in service.

Additional assistance may be obtained through a VA employee at a VA National Facility or a Veteran Service Organization (VSO).

- A list of VA Regional Offices is available at <https://www.va.gov/directory/>.
- A list of VSOs is available at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search>.

You should also look at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/apply.asp>.

## Documentation of Exposure

Veterans and Retirees may document their exposure due to a permanent duty assignment on a Coast Guard cutter constructed prior to 1991 by providing the VA with the following information:

- Orders for a permanent duty assignment on a Coast Guard cutter.

OR

A Career Summary list of all of permanent duty assignments (if you printed this out from Direct Access prior to separation).

OR

Documentation in your Coast Guard Service Treatment Records (medical records) which states that you had a permanent duty assignment on a specific Coast Guard cutter (if this was recorded).

OR

Military Service Records from the National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri (if you have separated from the Coast Guard prior to 10/1/2006). See <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records> for additional information. *Under Information and/or Documents Requested, you should request your entire Official Military Personnel File. The DD-214 will not include information on your permanent duty assignments.*

OR

Military Service Records from the Coast Guard Military Records Section/Personnel Service Center (if you have separated from the Coast Guard on or after 10/1/2006). See [http://www.dcms.uscg.mil/PSC/BOPS/PSC-BOPS-C/PSC-BOPS-C-MR/PSC-BOPS-C-MR\\_PDR/](http://www.dcms.uscg.mil/PSC/BOPS/PSC-BOPS-C/PSC-BOPS-C-MR/PSC-BOPS-C-MR_PDR/) for additional information. *In Section II "Information and/or Documents Requested" of the SF-180 you should request your entire Official Military Personnel File. The DD-214 will not include information on your permanent duty assignments.*

- If you were on a Coast Guard cutter after 1991 (i.e. from 1991 to present), then you must also provide a copy of the list labeled "Coast Guard Cutters Constructed Prior to 1991 and in Service from 1987 to 2017" located at <http://www.dcms.uscg.mil/asbestos/>.