

VA Processing Disability Claims for Certain Conditions Related to Particulate Matter

NED Chris Slawinski participated in a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) virtual press conference for VA to announce that effective Aug. 2, 2021, the VA has begun processing disability claims for asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis on a presumptive “fast-track” basis, based on presumed particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas – if these conditions manifested within 10 years of a qualifying period of military service.

The VA conducted a review of scientific evidence to support the rulemaking, which recommended the creating of new presumptions of service connection for respiratory conditions based on the VA’s evaluation of a National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine report, and other evidence.

The process concluded that particulate matter pollution is associated with chronic asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis, for veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations beginning Aug 2, 1990, to the present, or Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning Sept. 19, 2001, to the present.

The VA’s review also concluded that there was sufficient evidence to presume that these veterans had been exposed to particulate matter.

The Southwest Asia theater of operations refers to Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the natural zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the airspace above these locations.

Veterans and survivors who believe they may be eligible for the newly established presumptive conditions are encouraged to apply.

They should file a **VA Form 21-526EZ**, if applying for the first time or a **VA Form 20-0995**, if they are reapplying for these conditions.

For more information on the new presumptive conditions, visit the VA website.

To apply for benefits, veterans and survivors may visit [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) or call toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.