

VA Announces Changes to the Disability Rating Schedule for Traumatic Brain Injuries and Burn Scars

Increased compensation possible for some veterans

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WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced changes in the way VA will evaluate traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and burn scars for purposes of determining the appropriate level of compensation veterans receive for these injuries.

“These important regulatory changes will allow VA decision makers to better assess the consequences of these injuries and ensure veterans are properly compensated for their residual effects,” stated Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

VA has revised the Disability Rating Schedule in light of current scientific and medical knowledge in order to provide VA employees with more detailed and up-to-date criteria for evaluating and compensating veterans with these injuries.

Two groups of veterans may be affected by these changes. The first group includes veterans who will be awarded disability compensation for TBI and burn injuries in the future. The second group includes veterans already receiving compensation for these injuries whose disabilities are reevaluated under the new criteria.

The effects of blast injuries resulting from roadside explosions of improvised explosive devices have been common sources of injury in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and appear to be somewhat different from the effects of trauma seen from other sources of injury.

As of September 2008, there are more than 22,000 veterans being compensated for TBI, of whom more than 5,800 are veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Traumatic brain injuries result in immediate effects such as loss or alteration of consciousness, amnesia and sometimes neurological impairments. These abnormalities may all be transient, but more prolonged or even permanent problems with a wide range of impairment in such areas as physical, mental, and emotional/behavioral functioning may occur.

More than 90 percent of combat-related TBIs are closed head injuries, with most servicemembers sustaining a mild TBI or concussion. Difficulties after TBI may include headache, sleep difficulties, decreased memory and attention, slower thinking, irritability, and depression.

To view the entire regulation published today in the Federal Register, [click here](#) For more information about VA disability compensation, go to www.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000.