

VA Increases Agent Orange Illnesses Presumptions List

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is applauding Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki's decision to increase by three the number of illnesses that can now be linked to the herbicide defoliant Agent Orange, which was used extensively during the Vietnam War.

Today's addition of hairy cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease raises to 15 the total number of "presumed" service-connected illnesses the VA considers linked to Agent Orange.

"This is very significant," said VFW national commander Thomas J. Tradewell Sr., a Vietnam veteran from Sussex, Wis. "Veterans who contracted one or more of the 15 associated illnesses no longer have to prove their illness was due to their service in Vietnam during the war. The VA is saying 'We believe you,' which will enable more veterans to receive the healthcare and benefits they earned and deserve."

Shinseki's decision is supported by an independent study by the Institute of Medicine, entitled, "Veterans and Agent Orange," which was released on July 24, 2009.

Tradewell called the IOM report — the eighth in a series — extremely important because scientific research is continuing into the long-reaching impact of Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the Vietnam War.

"The report also means scientific research is continuing to validate what the veterans' community has been saying for decades — that Agent Orange is making people sick," he said.

"As a former Army chief of staff and twice-wounded Vietnam combat veteran of two tours, Secretary Shinseki knows how to take care of troops and their families. His acceptance of the IOM recommendations also proves that he will listen to the scientific community and act on their recommendations if it helps to better serve veterans and their families," said Tradewell. "The veterans community is extremely fortunate to have him in our corner."

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The new list of 15 illnesses now recognized under VA's "presumption" rule are:

- Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- AL Amyloidosis
- Chloracne
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)
- Hairy Cell Leukemia
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Parkinson's Disease
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)

To read the the VA press release with links to more information on each illness, go to <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1796>.