

THE VETERANS BULLETIN

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A Service of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders

UNION COUNTY

We're Connected to You!

The Veterans Bulletin

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The Official Newsletter of the Union County Veteran Services Office

Welcome to the first edition of The Veterans Bulletin, the official newsletter of the Union County Office of Veteran Services. Our office is launching this new quarterly publication to keep our veterans and their families informed about programs, services, events and celebrations honoring Union County veterans and active military residents.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS APRIL—JUNE 2020

- **April 15 -17: Flag Guardian Pick Up Dates:** Volunteers from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion posts and other groups will be notified to pick up boxes of American flags for placement on the graves of veterans at designated cemeteries around the county for Memorial Day. The flag distribution will be held at the Motor Vehicle Office parking lot, at 79 West Grand Street, Elizabeth. All participants will be told in advance of the pick up times.
- **May 25: Memorial Day Celebration:** Our Veterans Service Office, along with local VFW and American Legion post members and volunteers will be planting flags on veterans graves at Rosedale Cemetery in Linden and Graceland Memorial Park in Kenilworth on May 25 at 10 AM. A breakfast will be held at the Kenilworth VFW post Kenilworth beginning at 8 AM. All veterans and their families are welcome to attend.
- **June 12: Women Veterans Day:** The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders will hold a presentation recognizing three county women veterans for their service. The ceremony will be on June 18 at 6:30 PM at the Union County Administration Building, 10 Elizabethtown Plaza, Elizabeth. Veterans and their families are invited to attend.



Please be advised that based on the latest COVID-19 virus guidance and restrictions that all event dates are subject to change.

If you have questions about veterans events, benefits or services, please contact the Union County Veterans Service Office at 908-527-4918.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS ACT BEGAN ON JANUARY 1, 2020

LEARN MORE AT VA.GOV
Search for "Blue Water Navy"



The Blue Water Navy Act of 2019

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 (PL 116-23) extended the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam from **January 9, 1962 to May 7, 1975**.

This historic law provides that any Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or other military service member **who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shores of Vietnam** is presumed to have been exposed to herbicides, and may be entitled to receive service connection for any of the 14 conditions the VA relates to herbicide exposure.

Previously, only veterans who served on the ground in Vietnam, or landed at a Vietnamese dock or port, or were on a ship that navigated on Vietnam's inland waters were eligible for VA compensation from herbicide-related disabilities. **As of January 1, 2020, any Blue Water Veteran who meets the new eligibility criteria may submit a VA disability claim.**

It is presumed that contact with Agent Orange, an herbicide used to clear trees and plants during the Vietnam War, likely causes several illnesses. These are referred to as **Agent Orange presumptive diseases**. If you are a Blue Water Vietnam War Veteran and had contact with Agent Orange while serving in the military, find out if you can receive disability compensation or benefits if you now have one or more of the illnesses listed below:

Cancers and other illnesses believed to have been caused by contact with Agent Orange:

Chronic B-cell leukemia: A type of cancer that affects your white blood cells (cells in the body's immune system that help to fight off illnesses and infections).

Hodgkin's disease: A type of cancer that causes the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen to get bigger and red blood cells to decrease (called anemia).

Multiple myeloma: A type of cancer affecting plasma cells (white blood cells in the bone marrow that help fight infection).

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma: A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue (a part of the immune system that helps to fight infection and illness).

Prostate cancer: Cancer of the prostate (the gland in men that helps to make semen).

Respiratory cancers (including lung cancer): Cancers of the organs affecting breathing (the lungs, larynx, trachea and bronchus).

Soft tissue sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma): Different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

AL amyloidosis: A rare illness that happens when an abnormal protein (called amyloid) builds up in the body's tissues, nerves, or organs (like the heart, kidneys, or liver) and causes damage over time.

Chloracne (or other types of acneiform disease): A skin condition that occurs soon after contact with chemicals and looks like teenage acne. Under VA rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact with herbicides.

Diabetes mellitus type 2: An illness that happens when the body is unable to properly use insulin (a hormone that turns blood glucose, or sugar, into energy), leading to high blood sugar levels.

Ischemic heart disease: A type of heart disease that happens when the heart doesn't get enough blood (and the oxygen that the blood carries). It often causes chest pain or discomfort.

Parkinson's disease: An illness of the nervous system (the network of nerves and fibers that send messages between the brain and spinal cord and other areas of the body) that affects the muscles and movement—and gets worse over time.

Peripheral neuropathy, early onset: An illness of the nervous system that causes numbness, tingling, and weakness. Under the VA rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact with herbicides.

Porphyria cutanea tarda: A rare illness that can make the liver stop working normally and can cause the skin to thin and blister when exposed to the sun. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact with herbicides.

For more information please reach out to Janna Williams at 908-527-4918 or you can visit our website at <https://ucnj.org/uc-hero/>

Blue Water Navy Act of 2019 (continued)

If you are a Union County, Vietnam War veteran who served in Vietnam or offshore within the 12 mile nautical limit between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, and you have symptoms that are possibly related to herbicide exposure, including Agent Orange, and wish to file a VA disability claim, please contact the Union County Veteran Services Office. Our phone numbers are 908-527-4918 or 908-527-4719. We are available Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM —4:30 PM. We will keep your medical information confidential and advise you about scheduling an appointment to file a claim. Veterans with questions about benefits or filing a claim can also visit the [VA Agent Orange website](#) and [Compensation for Surviving Spouse and Dependents \(DIC\) website](#). Veterans can also call 1-800-749-8387.

If you have an illness you believe is caused by contact with Agent Orange but don't see it listed, **you can still file a claim for disability compensation.** You'll need to:

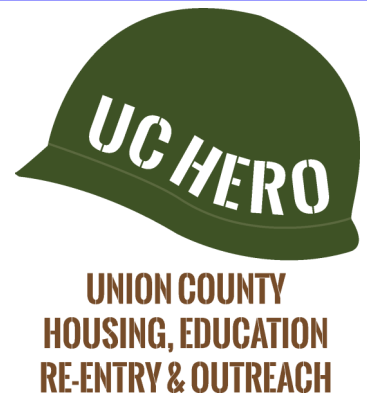
- Provide scientific or medical evidence that the condition is related to Agent Orange exposure; or
- Show that the problem started during or got worse because of your military service.

Scientific proof may include an article from a medical journal or a published research study.



Union County Heroes Veteran Resources

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders have sponsored the **UC HERO** program in honor of our veterans. The initiative offers services through various county agencies, including the Office of Veterans' Affairs, the Division on Aging, physical and mental health referrals, job opportunities through the Workforce Innovation Business Center, and partnership with local veteran groups. UC HERO seeks to increase awareness of eligibility, entitlements, benefits programs, and services provided to veterans by various Government Agencies, including County Government. Veterans and residents can find the UC HERO website at www.ucnj.org/uchero.



The Union County's Office of Veteran Services serves veterans and their families in need of benefits assistance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at a location close to their homes. The VSO maintains contact with local, state and federal agencies and organizations that serve veterans. VSOs provide the following information and assistance:

- Provides eligibility criteria for all veteran benefits and entitlements
- Assists in securing copies of lost military documents, such as the DD-214 (military separation document)
- Guides applications to the VA for service-connected compensation and pension claims
- Helps veteran's widow/widower and children apply for benefits
- Helps with appeals for denied benefit applications
- Provides death and burial benefit information
- Coordinates annual placement of flags on veteran graves in Union County during Memorial Day weekend
- Provides contact and referral information for housing, mental health, education, job training and placement, financial and medical/nursing home services
- Facilitates transportation to VA Healthcare System at Lyons and East Orange through the Union County Paratransit system

Location:

Union County Administration Building
10 Elizabethtown Plaza Elizabeth NJ 07203
Telephone: 908-527-4918/4719

Hours of Operation:

Monday—Friday 8:00 am—4:30 pm
Closed Saturday and Sunday
Website: www.ucnj.org/uchero

The Union County Office of Veteran Services



The Union County Office of Veteran Services is a vital link between men and women who served their country and the services available from federal, state, county and municipal levels of government as well as the private sector. Veteran Services provides advocacy, information and referrals for veterans and their families on a wide variety of financial, health and quality-of-life issues related to VA benefits and services.

Service is available through a toll-free hotline (866-640-7115) and at our office in the Union County Administration Complex in Elizabeth. For more information, please contact our county Veteran Service Coordinator, Janna Williams, at 908-527-4918 or go to www.ucnj.org/department-of-economic-development.

Union County Office of Veteran Services Directory

For questions or information on veterans benefits and services, please contact any of the following members of our Veteran Services staff:

- ◇ **Janna Williams** – Accredited Veteran Service Coordinator
Phone: 908-527-4918 Email: jwilliams@ucnj.org
- ◇ **Kenneth Glick** – Veteran Service Officer
Phone: 908-527-4719 Email: Kenneth.Glick@ucnj.org
- ◇ **Richard Zalinkanskas** – Assistant Veteran Service Officer
Phone: 908-527-4946 Email: rzalinkanskas@ucnj.org
- ◇ **Mary Glynos** – Veteran Service Office Intern
Phone: 908-527-4921 Email: UCVETERANS@ucnj.org



In Honor of Women’s Veterans Day in June, our office is looking for nominations for women veterans in Union County to be recognized as a “SHERO”. If you would like to nominate a veteran in your town, please submit the name of the veteran and a brief summary of her military service and accomplishments to our Veteran Service Coordinator, Janna Williams, at jwilliams@ucnj.org by June 1, 2020. Three women will be selected for an honorary presentation on June 18, 2020 at the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders meeting here in Elizabeth. All veterans and their families are invited to attend. Thank you!

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