

FACT SHEET
Guide to the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AH&OBPR)
Information for Service members

About the Registry: The AH&OBPR was established by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as part of the “Dignified Burial and Other Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 2012.” The AH&OBPR is available to Veterans, Reservists, National Guard members, Coast Guard members, and Active Duty Service members who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after August 2, 1990, or in Afghanistan or Djibouti on or after September 11, 2001. The AH&OBPR will help the VA, the Department of Defense (DoD), and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) track the health of Veterans and Service members, and it may contribute to future research studies. By participating in the AH&OBPR, Veterans and Service members can receive formal acknowledgment from the VA, DoD and the USCG of their reported exposures and receive important health and wellness information.

What the AH&OBPR is: The registry is a way for eligible Veterans and Service members to self-report potential exposure to airborne hazards such as smoke and fumes from open burn pits; increased levels of particulate matter (PM) from exhaust, dust, and sand; and urban air pollution, by completing and submitting an on-line self-assessment questionnaire.

The VA/DoD/USCG will use information from the registry along with information from other sources and studies to ensure Veterans and Service members with exposures receive the following:

- Standardized exposure questionnaire
- Enhanced outreach and health communication materials
- Optional initial in-person no-cost medical evaluations

What the AH&OBPR is not: The registry is not a means to apply for other benefits, such as disability compensation payments from VA. The disability compensation process is separate from the AH&OBPR. The registry is not an official medical record. Information entered in the website will not automatically be entered into your medical record.

What we know from independent scientific studies: The VA asked the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to determine the long-term health effects of exposure to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. IOM published a report entitled, “Long-Term Health Consequences of Exposure to Burn Pits in Iraq and Afghanistan” in 2011. Looking at the available scientific literature for burn pits, incinerators, and other fires, the IOM concluded there was limited but suggestive evidence of an association between exposure to combustion products and reduced pulmonary function. They found insufficient evidence to associate any disease with these exposures. This report can be viewed and downloaded at no cost at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13209. Information specific to Veteran’s exposure is still expanding.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) partnership: The VA and DoD have developed an Airborne Hazards Joint Action Plan, and are now working on many initiatives involving long-term studies, clinical issues, and outreach and education associated with health issues related to airborne hazards. The VA will notify registry participants of significant future developments on these issues.

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The Southwest Asia theater of operation includes the following locations after August 2, 1990: Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and the Red Sea. Although not in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, Afghanistan and Djibouti are included within the scope of the registry for individuals who deployed there on or after September 11, 2001.

Active Duty (Active Duty Service members, including activated Reserve and Guard personnel): If you are experiencing any **urgent symptoms**, such as difficulty breathing or chest pains, you should go to the nearest emergency room, call 911, or contact your primary care manager for instructions. If you have any health or exposure concerns, you may contact your local military hospital or clinic to schedule an appointment for a voluntary medical evaluation. You should state that you are calling for an appointment specifically to address “health concerns related to the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry exposures.” DoD will provide you with a voluntary medical evaluation upon request. Please note a medical evaluation is NOT required to be in the registry.

Reserve Component members (Army and Air National Guard, and Reserve): Whether discharged or still serving, these individuals will be managed by the VA in the same manner as other Veterans. The VA will provide a voluntary medical evaluation upon request.

If you are a Veteran or inactive/separated National Guard or Reservist, and you **are enrolled in the VA healthcare** system, you should contact your primary care physician or Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) to schedule an appointment for a medical evaluation.

If you are a Veteran or inactive/separated National Guard or Reservist, **are not enrolled in the VA healthcare system** and would like to schedule an initial no-cost medical evaluation, please contact a VA Environmental Health Coordinator (EHC) in your area by visiting this link:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp>

Additional Resources

[TBD - insert DoD weblink to information about registry]

AH&OBPR website:

<https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry>