

# Exhibit P



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
Veterans Benefits Administration  
Washington, DC 20420

March 28, 2005

Director (00/21)  
All VA Regional Offices

In Reply Refer To: 212  
Training Letter 05-01

SUBJ: Revised Mustard Agent and Lewisite Claims Processing Procedures

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

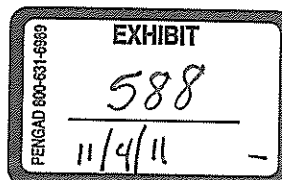
Since World War I, select servicemembers were exposed to mustard agents (sulphur mustard and nitrogen mustard) or Lewisite through activities involving secret testing, combat, and military occupational duties (such as handling or destruction of the agents). These substances are commonly known as mustard gas. Most of these servicemembers participated in World War II's mustard agents and Lewisite testing programs.

**CURRENT EFFORTS**

On December 14, 2004, VA obtained a copy of the Department of Defense's (DoD's) Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) mustard agents and Lewisite database and created a comprehensive notification action plan. Beginning in March 2005, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will attempt to individually notify all DoD-identified veterans (or, if deceased, their survivors) who were exposed to mustard agents or Lewisite during service.

The following attachments detail the revised procedures for processing claims for service connection for disabilities related to exposure to mustard and/or Lewisite.

- Attachment A: Overview
- Attachment B: Brief History of 38 CFR 3.316
- Attachment C: Centralized Claim Processing
- Attachment D: Veteran Services Representative (VSR) Procedures
- Attachment E: Rating Veteran Services Representative (RVSR) Procedures
- Attachment F: Questions and Answers (Q&As)
- Attachment G: Telephone Communications for St. Louis Help Line



## WHO TO CONTACT FOR HELP

If you have questions or need additional information, you should e-mail your inquiry to the Q&A mailbox VAVBAWAS/CO/MUSTARDGAS or MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV.

*/s/*

Renée L. Szybala, Director  
Compensation and Pension Service

Enclosures

RFP 3

2  
VVA-VA 009228

00015

VET001\_014954

VVA-VA 009228

## **ATTACHMENT A: OVERVIEW**

### **WHAT ARE MUSTARD AGENTS, MUSTARD GAS, AND LEWISITE?**

“Mustard gas” is a common term which may refer to either of two mustard agents, sulphur mustard (Yperite) or nitrogen mustard. Lewisite is another mustard agent, an organic compound which contains arsenic. Each of these chemicals is a vesicant (blister-producing), which some servicemembers may have been exposed to during World War I and World War II.

Most known post-World War II mustard agent and Lewisite exposure came as a result of military occupational duties rather than from combat or secret testing. Although these agents are commonly thought of as gases, they are thick, almost odorless liquids at room temperature. The German Army first used sulphur mustard in September 1917.

### **WHY ARE MUSTARD AGENTS AND LEWISITE A CURRENT ISSUE?**

DMDC recently released the names of servicemembers who were exposed to mustard agents and Lewisite, most during World War II. VA is now making efforts to contact these veterans or, if deceased, their survivors, and inform them of potential benefits available.

#### **World War II Servicemember Population**

During World War II, an estimated 60,000 servicemembers participated in secret mustard agent and Lewisite tests. Of this number, an estimated 4,000 servicemen participated in tests that involved the use of significant concentrations of mustard agents or Lewisite either in chambers or field exercises. An estimated 56,000 servicemen were exposed to minimal amounts of mustard agents and/or Lewisite via patch and drop tests. All participants swore to keep secret their participation.

#### **Contractors or Civilians**

DoD has identified approximately 930 non-military personnel who were exposed to mustard agents and Lewisite. These individuals fall outside the scope of VA's outreach responsibilities. VA only pays benefits to veterans and their dependents.

## WHO CAN RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT?

A veteran who applies for disability benefits based on exposure to mustard gas may receive a physical examination requested by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) as a normal part of the claims process. If the claimed disability or disease is found to be the result of mustard gas exposure during service, the veteran is entitled to free treatment for it. Otherwise, the cost to the veteran is based upon criteria established by the Veterans Health Administration. Aside from an examination requested by VBA, a VA medical facility requires co-payments from a veteran for examinations performed at his/her own request.

## ARE VOWS OF SECRECY STILL BINDING?

Veterans are released from vows of secrecy made in connection with tests conducted prior to 1968. On March 9, 1993, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, William J. Perry, issued a memorandum to the entire DoD that released anyone "who participated in testing, production, transportation or storage associated with chemical weapons research conducted prior to 1968 from non-disclosure restrictions or written or oral prohibitions (e.g. oaths of secrecy)."

Per DoD, post-1968 test participants may discuss the type of agent used, location, and circumstances of exposure, as this information is declassified.

## WHERE WERE SERVICEMEMBERS EXPOSED TO MUSTARD AGENTS AND LEWISITE?

A variety of Army and Navy personnel were exposed at the following known locations:

ARMY	NAVY
Bari, Italy*	Bari, Italy*
Bushnell, Florida	Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina	Charleston, South Carolina
Camp Sibert, Alabama	Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Illinois
Dugway Proving Ground, Utah	Hart's Island, New York
Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland	Naval Training Center, Bainbridge, Maryland
Naval Research Lab in Washington, DC	Naval Research Laboratory, Virginia
Ondal, India	Naval Research Lab in Washington, DC
Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Colorado	USS Eagle Boat No. 58
San Jose Island, Panama Canal Zone	

Note: Some American servicemembers may have participated in Allied mustard agent testing in Finschhafen, New Guinea, and Porton Down, England.

\*Additionally, select merchant seaman were also exposed or killed at Bari, Italy.

## ARE THERE OTHER SITUATIONS WHERE A SERVICEMEMBER MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPOSED? YES

- Battlefield conditions in World War I
- The Bari, Italy, incident during World War II
- Handling or transporting agents during military service

## WHAT WAS THE BARI, ITALY, INCIDENT?

The Bari incident was the result of a German air raid against the harbor of Bari, Italy, on December 2, 1943. Among the twenty ships (seven American\*) sunk or damaged was *John Harvey*, a merchant marine ship carrying sulfur mustard bombs.

Sulfur mustard bombs had been loaded on the merchant marine ship before it sailed from Baltimore to Bari. When the ship sank in the raid, some of its load was damaged, causing liquid mustard to spill out into water already heavily contaminated with an oil slick from other damaged ships. Men who abandoned ship became covered in this oily mixture.

Medical personnel who treated casualties were unaware of the sulfur mustard and were exposed to the agent. The destroyer *USS Bistera*, well outside the harbor and undamaged by the raid, pulled 30 men from the water in a rescue effort. By the next day, officers and crew of the *USS Bistera* were blinded from the effects of the sulphur mustard.

Those exposed to sulfur mustard, as a result of the ship's destruction, were the only known sulfur mustard combat casualties in World War II.

Note: During World War II, it was commonplace for merchant ships to be protected by Navy and Army Armed Guard.

\*American merchant vessels sunk: *Joseph Wheeler*, *Samuel J. Tilden*, *John Harvey*, *John L. Motley*, and *John Buscom*. American merchant vessels damaged: *Lyman Abbott*, and *Louis Hennepin*.

## ATTACHMENT B: BRIEF HISTORY OF 38 CFR 3.316

The regulation pertaining to long-term health effects of mustard gas and Lewisite is located in Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §3.316. The following narrative provides a high-level history of the presumptions of service connection for disabilities and diseases related to exposure to mustard agents and Lewisite veterans.

### BEFORE JULY 31, 1992

Before July 31, 1992, when VA's presumptive rule took effect, veterans were required to prove that their medical problems resulted from participation in mustard agent or Lewisite tests. However, few veterans could prove this relationship because of the secret nature of these tests. Therefore, the Compensation and Pension (C&P) Service reviewed its policy toward claims related to mustard agents and Lewisite exposure. (All veterans exposed to mustard agents or Lewisite prior to 1968 were relieved of their oaths of secrecy by Admiral Perry in 1993.)

On March 20, 1991, VA issued Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Circular 21-91-7, which provided guidance on handling claims for compensation from veterans who participated in these tests.

### 1992 – INITIAL REGULATION

On July 31, 1992, VA published in the *Federal Register* a final regulation (38 CFR 3.316) that became effective the date of publication. It established a presumption of service connection based upon mustard agent or Lewisite exposure, provided that the veteran was subjected to full-body exposure during field or chamber experiments to test protective clothing or equipment during World War II. These veterans must have subsequently developed a chronic form of laryngitis, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, and diseases of the eye including conjunctivitis, keratitis or corneal opacities.

On September 17, 1992, VA revised VBA Circular 21-91-7 to provide updated information on the long-term health effects of exposure to mustard agent and Lewisite, and instructions for adjudicating compensation claims under § 3.316.

### 1993 – RESULTS OF MEDICAL RESEARCH RELEASED

In June 1991, VA contracted with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a study of medical and scientific literature worldwide to determine the long-term health affects of exposure to mustard agents and Lewisite. The study, entitled "*Veterans at Risk: The Health Effects of Mustard Gas and Lewisite*," was released January 6, 1993. Within the same week, VA proposed amendments to 38 CFR 3.316.

## AUGUST 18, 1994 – AMENDED REGULATION

After reviewing IOM's findings, VA amended § 3.316 in three ways on August 18, 1994. The effective date for the amended regulation was January 6, 1993, the date of the IOM report release. First, the change removed the restriction that full-body exposure must have occurred during field or chamber tests in World War II. The presumption of service connection for specified conditions was extended to those exposed to mustard agents and Lewisite in the following duties:

- Battlefield conditions in World War I
- The Bari, Italy, incident during World War II
- Transportation of chemical warfare agents during military service

Second, the list of VA-recognized disabilities and diseases for grants of service connection under § 3.316 was expanded to include nasopharyngeal cancer, laryngeal cancer, lung cancer (except mesothelioma), and squamous cell carcinoma of the skin as a result of verified full-body exposure to mustard gas. Acute non-lymphocytic leukemia resulting from exposure to nitrogen exposure mustard was also added.

Third, the amendment permitted service connection for a chronic form of laryngitis, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease that is the result of verified full-body exposure to Lewisite.

Note: Historic regulatory amendments by effective date for 38 CFR 3.316 are located at the following websites:

July 31, 1992: <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/publicat/regs/pg21/appa/3-92-4.htm>.

January 6, 1993: <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/publicat/regs/pg21/appa/3-94-13.htm>.

## HOW CAN I ACCESS THE IOM STUDY?

A full copy of the IOM study may be obtained by clicking on the following hyperlink: <http://www.nap.edu/openbook/030904832X/html/>. A hardcopy of this report might also be available at local libraries and universities.



## ATTACHMENT C: CENTRALIZED CLAIMS PROCESSING

### CENTRALIZED SITE

All claims relating to mustard agent or Lewisite exposure are being centrally processed at the Muskogee VA Regional Office (VARO). This includes reopened claims and appeals, as well as claims from any wartime period. Any file transferred because of a mustard gas claim will be a permanent transfer. The VARO's address follows:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
VARO Muskogee (21-Mustard Gas)  
Federal Bldg  
125 S. Main St  
Muskogee, OK 74401

### PENDING CLAIMS AT VA REGIONAL OFFICES (VAROS)

**Claim Pending Prior to January 19, 2005:** All VAROs will expeditiously complete existing pending mustard agent and Lewisite claims. These should not be transferred to Muskogee.

Upon completion, the final rating must be e-mailed to the following mailbox:  
[MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV).

**Claim Pending On or After January 19, 2005:** Claims received on or after January 19, 2005, must be mailed to the Muskogee VARO for processing.

Claims folders must only accompany the new claim if the record is located in a VARO's file bank. The Muskogee VARO will recall all claims folders located in records repositories.

### IMPORTANT:

1. Triage teams at service centers should be on the lookout for mustard gas claims to forward to Muskogee.
2. So that Muskogee can quickly identify mustard agent correspondence in their incoming mail, all envelopes must show the mail symbol as "21-Mustard Gas."

## ATTACHMENT D: VSR PROCEDURES

This training letter amends select VSR claims processing actions identified in *Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Adjudication Manual M21-1, Part III, paragraph 5.18, Development for Exposure to Mustard Gas and Lewisite.*

### END PRODUCT (EP) CONTROL

All mustard agent and Lewisite claims must be concurrently controlled with EP 688 and a standard compensation or pension end product.

All claims must be properly developed utilizing the contention screen and drop-down menus in MAP-D. A "mustard gas" selection appears in the drop-down box on the contentions screen.

### VERIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION

Regardless of whether the veteran submits a VA-issued mustard gas notification letter, VAROs must send an e-mail to the mustard gas mailbox (MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV) requesting verification of participation.

The e-mail should include the following information:

Full Name	E-mail Address
Phone Number	Date of Birth
Social Security Number	Date of Death
Service Number	Branch of Service
Location of Test (city, state, country)	Unit
Disabilities Allegedly Related to Exposure	Date Entered on Active Duty (EOD)
Type of Test (full-body, patch, etc.)	Date Released from Active Duty (RAD)

Upon receipt of your e-mail, VACO personnel will provide a confirming or negative response.

Note: This new procedure amends M21-1, Part III, paragraph 5.18 (c).

#### Negative Response

If VACO responds that the claimant's name is not on the current mustard agent and Lewisite list, concurrently develop as follows:

- a. Develop to the designated service department as indicated in M21-1, Part III, paragraphs 5.18 (d) and (e).

- b. Develop for a copy of the veteran's military 201 file and DD 214, if not available. When received, send a copy of the records to:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Compensation and Pension Service (212)  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20420  
ATTN: Mustard Gas Manager

If there are fewer than 20 pages, they may be sent via fax to the Mustard Gas Manager at (202) 275-1756. This will also expedite the case.

When VACO receives the 201 file and DD 214, a copy will be given to DoD for further inquiry and final verification. If DoD's response remains negative, C&P Service will notify the requestor via e-mail of that fact. The RO should cancel the EP 688 and continue normal claims processing.

**Important Note:** In some mustard agent and Lewisite exposure cases, DoD placed a 3" x 5" index card in servicemembers' service or service medical records containing the following fields: experiment, date, agent, suit, concentration and time/exposure, number of exposures, and maximum reading. Please include a copy of this index card in your documentation to VACO.

### **Confirmatory Response**

When verification of exposure to mustard agent or Lewisite is received, the Pre-Determination Team will determine the need for a physical examination (see Attachment E: Rating Procedures).

## **ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF RATING DECISIONS**

VACO needs to know the outcome of all mustard agent and Lewisite claims. At the time you notify the claimant about the rating decision, please e-mail the associated mustard agent and Lewisite rating decisions (under the subject name "Mustard Agent and Lewisite Rating") to the mustard gas mailbox.

VACO uses the information provided by ROs to look for patterns in the conditions being claimed, track decision outcomes, and respond to stakeholder inquiries.

Note: Please notify VACO's Mustard Gas Manager via the mailbox of any biological and chemical exposure claims, no matter how unusual.

## **REFERENCES**

- 38 CFR §3.316
- VBA Adjudication Manual, M21-1, Part III, Chapter 5, paragraph 5.18

## ATTACHMENT E: RVSR PROCEDURES

### FULL-BODY EXPOSURE

Veterans with full-body exposure to mustard agents or Lewisite should have their disabilities reviewed under 38 CFR 3.316.

Full-body exposure means the entire body was exposed to mustard agents or Lewisite as opposed to a patch where a drop of mustard agent or Lewisite was placed on one or more locations on the skin. Individuals were more likely to have experienced full-body exposure during the following:

- Chamber testing
- Field exercises to simulate battlefield conditions
- Transportation or handling of mustard agents such as the Bari, Italy, incident
- Actual combat during World War I

### PARTICIPATION IN TESTING AS A STRESSOR

Participation in mustard agent and Lewisite testing can be considered a stressor in determining service connection for post-traumatic stress disorder.

### RATING CODE SHEET

When completing the code sheet, clearly identify those disabilities the veteran claims, or the RVSR determines, are related to mustard agent or Lewisite exposure. Type “[MG]” by claimed symptoms or the diagnosis in RBA 2000.

## ATTACHMENT F: Q&As\*

\*These Q&As were written for those in VA facilities who might be answering phone calls from veterans or their surviving spouses asking about mustard agents and Lewisite.

### What Are Mustard Agents, Mustard Gas, and Lewisite?

“Mustard gas” is a common term that refers to either of two mustard agents: sulphur mustard or nitrogen mustard. Lewisite is another mustard agent, an organic compound containing arsenic. The German Army first used sulphur mustard in September 1917. Each of these are blister-producing (vesicant) agents, which some servicemembers may have been exposed to during secret tests, combat, or military occupational duties, especially during World War II. Although these agents are commonly thought of as gases, they are thick, almost odorless, liquids at room temperature.

### Why Are Mustard Agents and Lewisite a Current Issue?

DoD recently released the names of servicemembers who participated in chemical research involving mustard agents during World War II. VA is now making efforts to contact these servicemembers or their survivors and inform them of potential benefits available.

#### World War II Servicemember Population

By the end of World War II, nearly 60,000 servicemembers had participated in DoD-sponsored chemical research. Nearly 4,000 of these individuals participated in tests conducted with high concentrations of mustard agents or Lewisite in gas chambers or field exercises.

#### Contractors or Civilians

DoD has identified approximately 900 non-military personnel who were exposed to mustard agents. These individuals fall outside the scope of VA’s outreach responsibilities. VA only pays benefits to veterans and their dependents.

### Can I Receive Health Care?

Most veterans are required to apply for enrollment to receive VA health care benefits. If you are not already enrolled with your local VA health care facility we encourage you to do so at your earliest convenience. VA offers a comprehensive medical benefits package that would meet your treatment needs. Please be aware that VA is currently not enrolling new applicants who fall into the lowest enrollment priority (generally veterans with higher income who are otherwise not eligible for a higher enrollment

priority assignment) and that some veterans are required to make co-payments for care and/or medications provided by VA.

## Are Vows of Secrecy Still Binding?

Veterans are released from vows of secrecy made in connection with tests conducted prior to 1968. On March 9, 1993, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, William J. Perry, issued a memorandum to the entire DoD that released anyone “who participated in testing, production, transportation or storage associated with chemical weapons research conducted prior to 1968 from non-disclosure restrictions or written or oral prohibitions (e.g. oaths of secrecy).”

Per DoD, post-1968 test participants may discuss the type of agent used, location, and circumstances of exposure as this information is declassified.

## How Do I Know if I Was Exposed?

**Before April 1, 2005:** Beginning in March 2005, VA will issue letters to all DoD-identified veterans (or their surviving spouses) verifying participation in research involving mustard agents.

**After April 1, 2005:** If you have not received a letter, you may submit an inquiry to [MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV) and we will have a staff member call or e-mail you within a few days. The information we need from you is as follows:

Full Name	E-mail Address
Phone Number	Date of Birth
Social Security Number	Date of Death
Service Number	Branch of Service
Location of Test (city, state, country)	Unit
Disabilities Allegedly Related to Exposure	Date Entered on Active Duty
Type of Test (full-body, patch, etc.)	Date Released from Active Duty

## What Do You Mean by Full-Body Exposure?

Full-body exposure means the entire body was exposed to mustard agents or Lewisite, as opposed to a patch where a drop of mustard agent or Lewisite was placed on one or more locations on the skin. Individuals were more likely to have experienced full-body exposure during the following:

- Chamber testing;
- Field exercises to simulate battlefield conditions;
- Accidents, such as the “Bari incident” in Italy, occurring during the transportation of mustard agents; or
- Actual combat during World War I.

## What Was the “Bari Incident”?

The “Bari incident” was the result of a German air raid against the harbor of Bari, Italy, on December 2, 1943. Among the twenty ships destroyed was a merchant marine ship carrying sulfur mustard bombs. Those exposed to the sulfur mustard were the only known sulfur mustard combat casualties in World War II.

## Where Were Chemical Tests Conducted?

The Army and Navy conducted laboratory and field tests at the following locations:

ARMY	NAVY
Bushnell, Florida	Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina	Charleston, South Carolina
Camp Sibert, Alabama	Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Illinois
Dugway Proving Ground, Utah	Hart’s Island, New York
Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland	Navy Training Center, Bainbridge, Maryland
Naval Research Lab in Washington, DC	Naval Research Laboratory, Virginia
Ondal, India	Naval Research Lab in Washington, DC
Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Colorado	<i>USS Eagle Boat No. 58</i>
San Jose Island, Panama Canal Zone	

Note: Some American servicemembers may have participated in Allied mustard agent testing in Finschhafen, New Guinea, and Porton Down, England.

## What Medical Research Has Been Conducted on Mustard Agents and Lewisite

In 1991, VA contracted with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a study of medical and scientific literature worldwide to determine the long-term health effects of exposure to mustard agents and Lewisite. The study, entitled “*Veterans at Risk: The Health Effects of Mustard Gas and Lewisite*,” was released January 6, 1993.

The study found a relationship between full-body exposure and subsequent development of the following disabilities and diseases:

- Chronic conjunctivitis, keratitis, corneal opacities, scar formation, or the following cancers: nasopharyngeal; laryngeal; lung (except mesothelioma); and squamous cell carcinoma of the skin (mustard agents only).
- Chronic laryngitis, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (mustard agents or Lewisite).
- Acute non-lymphocytic leukemia (nitrogen mustard only).

For information about the Institute of Medicine (IOM) study, click on the following hyperlink: <http://www.nap.edu/openbook/030904832X/html/>. A hardcopy of this report might be available at your local library or university.

Mail	E-mail	Telephone	FAX
Institute of Medicine 500 Fifth Street, NW Washington, DC 20001	iomwww@nas.edu	(202) 334-2352	(202) 334-1412

## What Happens if I File A Claim?

Your mustard agent and Lewisite claim will be processed by the Muskogee, OK, VARO.

If you, as a VARO or Hotline representative, have an inquiry regarding the status of a beneficiary's mustard agent and Lewisite claim, please e-mail the Muskogee VARO at [MUSGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSGAS@VBA.VA.GOV) in accordance with the Warm-Transfer Procedures (see page 21). A VARO representative will respond to the claimant's inquiry.

## How Can I Get More Specific Information?

You can learn more about mustard gas from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. It is a division of the Communicable Disease Center.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
Division of Toxicology  
1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop F-32  
Atlanta, GA 30333  
Phone: 1-888-42-ATSDR (1-888-422-8737)  
FAX: (770)-488-4178  
Email: [ATSDRIC@cdc.gov](mailto:ATSDRIC@cdc.gov)

## How Can I Contact DoD and VA?

If you –	Contact
Have questions about mustard agents or have concerns about releasing classified information	DoD at (800) 497-6261, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Have questions about disability compensation for diseases or injuries as a result of your military service	VA at 1-800-749-8387 (option 4), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Central time, to speak to a Department of Veterans Affairs representative or e-mail us at <a href="mailto:MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV">MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV</a> .

Note the difference in the use of these two e-mail addresses:  
[MUSGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSGAS@VBA.VA.GOV) ...for internal use only  
[MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV) ...for external use



## ATTACHMENT G: TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS FOR ST. LOUIS HELP LINE

The following information provides high-level guidance regarding telephone communications with veterans and their surviving spouses, especially veterans exposed to mustard agents and Lewisite. The target audience for this appendix are VA's Special Issues Help Line staff based in St. Louis, MO.

### POPULATION

Most of the veterans DoD identified were potentially exposed to sulfur mustard, nitrogen mustard, or Lewisite during secret chemical warfare tests during World War II. Other veterans were exposed through combat or military occupational duties. Either way, these chemical exposures were painful and traumatic.

Further, a majority of these veterans last served on active duty during the 1940s.

Note: During basic training, most servicemembers were, and still are, exposed to non-lethal CS (tear) gas in chemical warfare simulation exercises. These veterans, unless otherwise identified by DoD in future declassification releases, were not exposed to mustard agents or Lewisite.

### HELP LINE

Beginning in March 2005, VA's Special Issues Help Line (1-800-749- 8387) based in St. Louis, MO, commenced telephone operations for all inquiries regarding mustard agents and Lewisite. The following list identifies all available program options:

Option 1	Gulf War
Option 2	Agent Orange
Option 3	Project 112/SHAD
Option 4	Mustard Agents and Lewisite

### HANDLING PROCEDURES BASED UPON INQUIRY

The Help Line addresses all non-claim-specific mustard agents and Lewisite inquiries from veterans and their families. The following list identifies the responsible organization based on type of mustard agent or Lewisite inquiry:

- **Status of Claim or Appeal**

Effective February 2005, the Muskogee VARO centrally processes all types of mustard agent and Lewisite claims.

All Help Line inquiries requesting claim information should be warm-transferred to the Muskogee VARO at (918) 781-7699. Warm-transfers are not required for health care facilities and other organizations.

- **Name on Database**

Inform the veteran or family member that all database inquiries must be e-mailed to VACO at [MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV](mailto:MUSTARDGAS@VBA.VA.GOV) with the following information:

Full Name	E-mail Address
Phone Number	Date of Birth
Social Security Number	Date of Death
Service Number	Branch of Service
Location of Test (city, state, country)	Unit
Disabilities Allegedly Related to Exposure	Date Entered on Active Duty (EOD)
Type of Test (full-body, patch, etc.)	Date Released from Active Duty (RAD)

Upon receipt, VACO will provide a confirmatory or negative response to the Help Line staff member for release. It is envisioned that the Help Line will receive a copy of VACO's database at a later date.

- **Health Care**

Please refer the caller to the nearest VA health care facility located in the back of the "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents" pamphlet. A VA health care facility locator by zip code is available at the following website:

<http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash=1>.

- **Mustard Agents and Lewisite, and Release of Classified Test Information**

DoD established a hotline to handle all mustard agent and Lewisite inquiries, including release of classified test information. Please refer the veteran or family member to (800) 497-6261, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

## WARM-TRANSFER PROCEDURES

All claim-specific calls must be warm-transferred to the Muskogee VARO at (918) 781-7699. Help Line agents must stay on the line with the caller until someone has accepted the call in Muskogee and the transfer is confirmed.

In the event that the transfer is not confirmed due to a busy line, the agent should assist the caller using e-mail.

**Submit an E-mail Inquiry**

- Assist the caller by obtaining his/her full name, telephone number, and VA file number, if applicable
- Explain to the caller that the information will be provided to the Muskogee VARO for a call back within 24-hours.
- E-mail the information collected to the Muskogee point of contact (POC)\*

Internal and external Muskogee VARO mustard agent and Lewisite e-mail addresses follow:

- Mustard Gas Mail Box: VAVBAMUS/RO/MUSGAS
- Internal VA e-mail address: MUSGAS@VBA.VA.GOV

\*POC to be determined by the Muskogee VARO