

# VETERANS CORNER

2015

Did you serve in the United States Air Force (USAF)? Did you work on C-123 aircraft? If you answered yes, then you may have been exposed to Agent Orange (AO).

Recently the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published a new regulation expanding the eligibility of benefits to Air Force veterans and Air Force Reservists that regularly and repeatedly were exposed to C-123 aircraft that were utilized in Vietnam as part of Operation Ranch Hand (ORH). The regulation was published as an interim final rule, thereby allowing affected veterans to file benefit claims immediately for the 14 medical conditions that the VA has determined to be linked to exposure to AO. The VA estimates that between 1,500 to 2,100 personnel who served as flight, medical, and ground maintenance crewmembers assigned to these aircraft were exposed. The VA will establish disability for these veterans as a presumptive to exposure to Agent Orange. The interim final rule may be found at [www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection](http://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection).

Reservists who were assigned to flight, ground, or medical duties at Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base (AFB) in Ohio ( 906<sup>th</sup> and 907<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Groups or 355<sup>th</sup> and 356<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron), Westover AFB in Massachusetts (731<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Squadron and 74<sup>th</sup> Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron) or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania International Airport (758<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron) to name a few Yes there are. Not only other locations but also specific timeframes.during the period 1969 to 1986. This list is not complete, the full list may be found at [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp). If you have developed an Agent Orange related disability, you are encouraged to apply for disability benefits. Survivors of these veterans are also encouraged to apply for benefits that they may be entitled to as well. If you have questions or need assistance, my office can help answer questions and complete the required application forms.

For active duty Air Force personnel the VA has identified several locations, Specialty Codes, and dates of service for affected crewmembers. This list is available online as well at [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/agentorange-c123.asp) or you may contact my office for more information.

When filing for benefits, the claim form must identify that the exposure to AO is a result of the C-123 assignment of duties. If you have supportive documentation of the assignment, that may also help you as a veteran or survivor. If you need assistance in obtaining this evidence we can also assist in completing the request to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) for the evidence as well; feel free to contact us for this assistance.

*Ken Cruickshank, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 205 N. L St., in Tulare, by calling 684-4960 or emailing [kcruicks@tularehhsa.org](mailto:kcruicks@tularehhsa.org).*