



Toxic Wounds

Toxic wounds can occur through drinking water, general water usage, vapor seepage, soil contact, and exposure to toxic smoke from oil field fires or burn pits. Military bases have historically used and disposed of toxic substances that later posed health risks such as cancers, digestive disorders, and birth defects. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) currently lists over 130 U.S. based military installations as Superfund Priorities, which means that a rigorous assessment showed that they contain contaminants. The “Superfund” program began in 1980 and cleans contaminated land after the assessment.

Some Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have toxic embedded shrapnel in their bodies after blast injuries from IEDs, bombs, mines and shells. Some of the fragments may contain depleted uranium. These veterans may be eligible for medical surveillance at the Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center at the Baltimore VAMC.

AMVETS continues to seek system-wide changes related to military environmental hazards and toxic wounds, including:

- Seeking improvements to the pre- and post-deployment health monitoring and assessment program to address all currently recognized and emergent environmental hazard and toxic wound health issues;
- Seeking improvements to the DoD-VA health research systems so they aggressively focus on treatments, diagnostic biomarkers and mapping out bio-pathology and symptoms for the full range of environmental hazard and toxic wound health issues; and
- Seeking the implementation of a seamless DoD-VA environmental health evaluation/treatment system to ensure medical evaluation, evidence-based treatment, and ongoing medical surveillance for current and former servicemembers suffering from toxic wounds.

AMVETS urges Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to invest adequate resources to fully research, diagnose and treat conditions associated with toxic exposures and to extend presumptive service-connection to all veterans suffering from conditions associated with toxic exposures while serving in the military.

This has been a longtime critical issue for AMVETS, and we will continue to advocate for veterans suffering from the effect of any form of toxic exposure.