

Claiming compensation for conditions relating to exposure to ionising radiation

Who can apply for compensation under the War Pension Scheme?

War Pensions are payable in respect of illness or injury due to Service in HM Armed Forces before 6 April 2005, with the benefit of reasonable doubt always given to the claimant. Decisions are medically certified and follow consideration of available service and medical evidence, where evidence supports a causal link to service, entitlement will be given.

How to apply

You can make your claim by downloading a [claim form](#).

If you think your condition was caused by exposure to ionising radiation during the UK nuclear test programme it may speed up your claim if you also complete the [additional form](#).

What information is needed?

- You need to tell us what condition is being claimed
- You need to tell us which nuclear tests you were at
- You need to tell us about medical treatment that you have had

If you are only claiming for conditions linked to exposure to ionising radiation, you don't need to complete the section relating to:-

- Reporting injuries
- Whether there were any witnesses

What happens next?

In order to consider your claim Veterans UK will collect relevant information from sources both inside and outside the Ministry of Defence.

Some of the things that we need to collect in order to consider your claim might include:-

- Confirmation of attendance at the tests
- Confirmation of the duties you were involved in when you were there

If you can provide copies of any supporting documentation such as reports from your GP/hospital this may help us deal with your claim faster.

Help and Support

Making a claim

Free independent advice is available from the [Veterans Welfare Service](#) or other charitable organisations.

The [BNTVA](#) may also be able to assist you as they have a wealth of knowledge to share and have links across the world with other Atomic organisations including America, France, Australia, Fiji, Christmas Island and New Zealand.

If you disagree with our decision

You can appeal your decision to an independent tribunal.

You can contact any of the service charities or support organisations including [BNTVA](#) who can offer personal representation at appeal hearings.



Ministry
of Defence

Information for British Nuclear Test Veterans



Information for British Nuclear Test Veterans

Over 20,000 military personnel were present at the UK nuclear weapon tests between 1952 and 1967 in Australia and the South Pacific. The tests were the largest tri-service event since the D-Day landings.

The protection, health and welfare of those involved in the operations was a vital consideration. The tests were carried out to the highest contemporary radiological standards, minimising fallout.

The UK conducted 12 major nuclear weapon tests in Australia between 1952 and 1957. The explosions occurred at the Montebello Islands, Emu Field and Maralinga.



A few hundred smaller scale tests were conducted at both Emu Field and Maralinga between 1953 and 1963.

A set of four nuclear weapon test series were also carried out by the UK in 1957 and 1958 at Malden Island and Christmas Island in the Pacific Ocean as part of the British hydrogen bomb programme. In total nine nuclear explosions were initiated as part of this series.

Health Studies

In response to health concerns of some Nuclear Test Veterans in the 1980s, the Ministry of Defence commissioned an independent study into mortality and cancer incidence among nuclear test participants. The first report was published in [1988](#) with two follow up reports in [1993](#) and [2003](#).

The studies compared the overall mortality and, cancer incidence and mortality, in over 20,000 participants with that of a similar-sized control group of ex-servicemen who were age-matched, had served around the same time and had deployed overseas but had not participated in the tests. A comparison was also made with the UK general community.

The third NRPB study published in 2003 followed the groups to the end of 1998 when cause of death was established for 23% of participants and controls. Interest in the health of nuclear test veterans has continued and in 2017/18 the Public Health England (PHE) review of study information found that about 55% of those present at the tests had now died, meaning that the statistical power of any further study to detect differences in the mortality of cancer incidence and mortality would be greatly increased. The Fourth study, commissioned in 2018, will extend the analysis by a further almost 20 years, again considering overall mortality and cancer incidence and mortality and comparing Veterans present at the tests with a control group of age and sex matched Veterans serving at the same time but who were not Nuclear Test Veterans, and also with the UK general population. It will also consider variations in risk in the groups with time.

As the fourth study is part of a series, the methodology and outcomes studied must remain the same as in the other three in the series to produce meaningful results. The report is expected in mid-2020 and the intention is to submit for publication in the mainstream scientific literature. Departmental policy on ionising radiation related compensation will be reviewed in light of the findings and, if appropriate, revised.

Compensation claims for Ionising Radiation Related Disorders – MOD’s current policy.

Veterans, including Nuclear Test Veterans, who believe they have suffered ill health due to service can apply for no-fault compensation under the War Pensions Scheme which has no time limits and a low standard of proof – more information on how to claim is on page 5.

A revised departmental policy statement on claims for ionising radiation related disorders was published in [December 2017](#). This updated the previous (first) radiation policy dated [2003](#) which was informed by contemporary understanding of the effects of ionising radiation and the NRPB reports to that date. The 2017 departmental policy reflected the several international reports and papers on the adverse health effects appearing from [2003](#). The policy document content was validated by PHE and the Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG).

Having carefully considered the overall contemporary medical and scientific published peer-reviewed literature in the context of the war pensions onus and standard of proof, the normal policy in war pensions is that there is reliable evidence to raise a reasonable doubt that there may be a causal link between ionising radiation exposure and the following cancers:-

| | | |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Bone | Breast (female) | Central Nervous System |
| Colon | Gall bladder | Liver (primary) |
| Lung | Oesophagus | Renal pelvis and ureter |
| Rectum | Salivary gland | Stomach |
| Thyroid | Urinary bladder | |

Claims will be considered on the case facts

Entitlement is accepted, as a presumption, and without consideration of case specific facts for leukaemia (other than chronic lymphatic leukaemia) having onset within 25 years of first presence at the test sites as described above. The policy is however, not an acknowledgement that those present at the tests were exposed to harm.