

## Asbestos Exposure

Veterans from all branches of the military were once at risk of asbestos exposure. Even today, asbestos exposure remains an issue in the military, although it's much less likely for those currently in service to come into contact with the harmful mineral. If you're a veteran and have been diagnosed with an asbestos-related illness, there are steps you can take to obtain compensation and medical coverage needed to help battle the disease.

Asbestos is a term for several different groups of naturally-occurring minerals that were once mined and used in a many commonly used materials and products. Asbestos helps control high temperatures and fires, and its ease of use made it a popular choice for many manufacturers.

Over time, with prolonged exposure the fibers start to harm the body, attaching themselves to the areas around major organs. The fibers then start irritating the linings of the organs (typically the lungs, abdomen, and heart linings), which leads to scarring and cancerous tumors. These tumors can lead to asbestos-related diseases, such as mesothelioma, asbestos-related lung cancer, and asbestosis.

Prior to the mid-1970s, the military used asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) in over 300 products. The military used these ACMs during the construction of naval ships, barracks, engine rooms, boiler rooms, galleys, and more.

Veterans who worked aboard naval ships, in particular, were especially susceptible to asbestos exposure. Living and working aboard vessels that were built with asbestos was dangerous enough in itself, but many veterans worked in small, cramped areas, such as engine and boiler rooms, without enough adequate ventilation.

If you've developed an asbestos-related disease after serving in the military, there is a good chance that you may qualify for compensation and medical care. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), if you were exposed to asbestos while in service and subsequently developed an asbestos-related illness, you may be eligible for service-connected benefits. Our office can assist you in all aspects of claim development.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license and also issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Scott Holwell if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To determine if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at [www.countyofkings.com/vets](http://www.countyofkings.com/vets).

*Scott Holwell, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Deputy Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail [scott.holwell@co.kings.ca.us](mailto:scott.holwell@co.kings.ca.us).*