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**For article submissions, email:**  
[jallmon@inycounty.us](mailto:jallmon@inycounty.us)

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## CARC (Chemical Agent Resistant Coating)

is a paint used on military vehicles to make metal surfaces highly resistant to corrosion and penetration of chemical agents.

Inhaling CARC during the painting and drying process can be harmful. Dry CARC poses no hazards, except during welding or sanding.

Gulf War Veterans who painted combat vehicles and equipment during their military service may have been exposed to CARC paint or fumes without adequate respiratory protection.

Other Veterans who painted tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other motor pool equipment may have been exposed. Some civilian units and support units may have been exposed.

Paint fumes present the most potential risk to users especially when CARC is spray painted, rather than applied with a brush or roller.

CARC paint contains several chemical compounds that can be hazardous when inhaled or exposed to the skin:

- **Isocyanate (HDI)** – Highly irritating to skin and respiratory system. High concentrations can cause: itching and reddening of skin; burning sensation in throat and nose and watering of the eyes; and cough, shortness of breath, pain during respiration, increased sputum production, and chest tightness.
- **Solvents** – Inhaling high concentrations can cause coughing, shortness of breath, watery eyes, and respiratory problems, including asthma
- **Toluene diisocyanate (TDI)** – High levels released during the drying process can cause kidney damage.



## This Month's Featured County

Plumas County is a county in the Sierra Nevada of California, United States. As of the 2010 census, the population was 20,007. The county seat is Quincy, and the only incorporated city is Portola. The largest community in the county is East Quincy. The county was named for the Spanish Río de las Plumas, which flows through the county.



**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
www.va.gov

November 13, 2019

December 9, 2019

## VA and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation launch effort to prioritize mental health and emotional wellbeing in America's workplace

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation today, pledged to support the mental health and welfare of the country's workforce.

Included in this collaboration is the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide or PREVENTS and more than two dozen leading partners representing more than six million workers nationwide.

"We're grateful for the opportunity to work with public and private partners to make mental health a priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "We're working with a coalition of companies and organizations to develop a best-practices guide on mental health in the workplace."

The guide will help empower employers of all sizes as they work to prioritize employee welfare and address this critical issue.

"Mental health and wellbeing are top strategic imperatives for American business, as represented by the broad coalition of companies and organizations who are working with the Chamber Foundation and the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize mental health in the workplace," said U.S. Chamber of Commerce vice president and Hiring Our Heroes president, Eric Eversole. "Together, we can make a meaningful difference in our employees' lives and strengthen our communities."

Promoting emotional health in corporate America is a necessary step towards ending the stigma for Veterans and non-Veterans alike.

## VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals plans virtual hearings in 2020

*Continued evaluation of testing will broaden scope of participation*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) and Office of Information and Technology (OIT) are working towards nationwide availability of virtual hearings for Veterans next year, allowing access using their mobile phone or laptop via the VA Video Connect app.

The virtual hearings are based on the Veterans Health Administration's tele-health platform and lets Veterans participate in their appeals hearings from the comfort of their homes.

"VA strives to provide integrated solutions that leverages 21st century technology to significantly increase the number of hearings completed annually," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Giving Veterans the ability to participate in secure, confidential virtual hearings is another aspect of VA's modernization to provide Veterans with the ultimate customer experience."

The testing of virtual hearings began July 2019. The collaboration with OIT, Veteran Service Organizations and other Veteran representatives has been positive. To date, the Board has held 155 successful virtual hearings. Veterans who otherwise would have had to cancel their hearings were able to participate in virtual hearings and receive decisions.

The Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) makes final decisions for VA regarding appeals for Veterans' benefits and services. The Board's mission is to conduct hearings and issue timely decisions for Veterans and other appellants in compliance with the law.

# Ventura County Vet Success

## Ventura CVSO Team Photo



Tom joined the Navy in 1975, when he was barely 18 years old. His service was a great source of pride and community. Tom never felt more a part of anything in his life. He still smiles when he talks about manning radio communications as part of a task force while at sea. He took his duties as lookout very seriously and patrolled the flight deck, making sure all was secure. He loved being at sea for eight months at a time despite the physical toll it took on him.

However, after only two and a half years of service he lacerated his hand,

which sidelined him with injury, so he was soon after released from service under honorable conditions. Unfortunately, Tom was not prepared for the culture shock he experienced transitioning from military to civilian life, and in addition several service related medical issues, he found himself facing depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and alcoholism.

When Tom returned home, he was dismayed to learn that his service related medical issues weren't a temporary health issue, but that he would be affected for the remainder of his life. He also found it nearly impossible to function in civilian society and had problems finding work and housing. He unfortunately turned to drugs and alcohol to help him cope and "feel normal".

When Tom came to the Veteran Services Office (VSO) and met with Claims Officer Clifford Shuey, he was in bad shape. He was homeless and hungry. He had no vehicle and no job and was estranged from his family. He had bed bugs and scabies, and "just wanted to feel clean and human". He was in pain in his elbow and thumb – additional injuries related to his time in the Navy – and he hadn't followed through with his claim for any service-related injuries. He was still reeling from a recent hospitalization for his kidneys and heart due to his methamphetamine use. He wanted to stop drinking but he did not know how. Cliff spent time with Tom, listening to him and making suggestions. By just the simple act of asking for help, it was like a dam had broken and Tom suddenly felt ready to take charge of his life.

The VSO provided Tom with grocery gift cards to help get him through tight times and Hope DeBorse, VSO admin assistant, sat with Tom for hours reviewing documents and preparing his application for the Oxnard Housing Authority. He was encouraged to participate in the Ventura County Homeless Stand Down where he received medical checks and dental care, haircut, meals, showers, clean clothes and connection with service providers. Cliff and Tom would later work with some of these service providers to improve Tom's life.

Today, Tom is in receipt of disability compensation and is cared for at the VA's Oxnard CBOC and at the Greater LA VAMC. He's housed and clean from meth. Before he made the decision to change his life and get sober, he had felt "less than" and not a part of anything. Now, he is making great strides in reestablishing relationships with his family. He is making friends with his neighbors. He is motivated to work on his drinking using the harm reduction model, and is excited to get a job as a drug and alcohol counselor. This is a tremendous change for him as he never thought of himself as someone who could go to school and learn. He also never thought he could get through life without a crutch. Tom's whole attitude about life and his place in it has improved greatly, and he is excited and happy to make a difference.

# Veteran Memorial Park coming to Corcoran!!

Corcoran resident and Kings County Supervisor Richard Valle presented a check for \$1 million to Corcoran Veterans at the annual Veterans dinner on November 8, 2019, which was held in the Corcoran Technology Learning Center (TLC). Valle and the Kings County Board of Supervisors obtained the funds as part of a settlement agreement between Kings County and the High Speed Rail Authority. The funds will be used to build a Corcoran Veterans Memorial Park.

As keynote speaker for the event, Valle began his address to the audience with a story about his father, Ruben Flores who has attended the dinners with him in the past, prior to his passing away.

Valle went on to say that the new park has been a dream of many local veterans. "This community deserves its own centerpiece. A place where we can all go to remember our beloved veterans," Valle noted.

Supervisor Valle went on to recognize his colleague, Supervisor Doug Verboon, who attended the dinner representing the Kings County Board of Supervisors--Verboon was a leader in protecting the county during HSR planning and his family has a large history of service to the country dating back to WWII, Valle added.

Valle has big plans for the Veterans Memorial Park. Plans which will make the new park the "centerpiece" of Corcoran; and so special that it will be a must-see attraction for veterans across the nation which will have the ability to draw people to the City of Corcoran, "Washington has the Iwo Jima Memorial and soon Corcoran will have one equally as beautiful," Valle said. The park will beautify the area East of Corcoran which was affected by High Speed Rail construction.

(Reprinted in part from a story by Tina Botill, Managing Editor, The Corcoran Journal)

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the California Veteran Designation on your driver's license and also issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. 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 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).*



## HUD-VASH is Alive and Well

Many of us in the veteran arena have been dealing with Veteran homelessness as long as we have been doing this job, and, similarly most of us are aware of this Veterans Affairs Program yet I would like to explain it more in detail for any new CVSOs or VSRs in our Association.

HUD-VASH is the acronym for Housing and Urban Development- VA Supportive Housing and is a joint endeavor between those two agencies. HUD-VASH is permanent housing and one of the best options for low income veterans and their families. These vouchers are the equivalent to Section 8 vouchers for low income families yet are specifically allocated for a percentage of the veteran population. Veterans MUST be in receipt of some type of income to be eligible. These allocations are awarded usually on an annual basis (if the local HUD agency applies), and the number is allocated on previous need, as well as veteran homeless population. The vouchers are normally strictly for the County issued, however, if a nearby County has unused vouchers the vouchers may be transferred to the more needy County.

A veteran must first be eligible for VA Health benefits in order to be served by the Homeless Program, which is part of the Veterans Health Administration. During intake, income limits are looked at, however many factors come into play such as family size, loss of a job and/ or medical expenses and other factors. Disqualifications may apply to felons and sex offenders, yet intake makes that determination. The income limits are derived from the Median Family Income of the specified city (I attached an example of Fresno which has a link to all other cities). These are life-time vouchers, as long as the veteran maintains eligibility.

The HUD-VASH process does take a few weeks to a few months depending on many factors such as obtaining documents, finding a suitable apartment and working through the Housing Authority - it is advisable to connect the veteran/ family to an agency that administers the Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families (SSVF) grant to house them temporarily until the HUD-VASH process is complete. If you have questions about your specific locale, please contact your servicing VA Homeless Program Coordinator.

David Rose  
Fresno County Veteran Service Officer



# CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS

**For Immediate Release:** November 26, 2019  
**Contact:** Ted Puntillo - [tepuntillo@solanocounty.com](mailto:tepuntillo@solanocounty.com)

## SENATOR HILL RECEIVES CACVSO LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD



The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) has selected State Senator Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo) as the recipient of the Motomu Nakasako Legislator of the Year award for 2019.

In 2018 Senator Hill introduced SB 1427 which addressed veterans and military housing discrimination via the Housing and Urban Development Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) program. SB 1427 was subsequently vetoed. Undaunted, Hill introduced the bill again in 2019 (SB 222) addressing the issues outlined by the former governor. HUD-VASH is complemented by a continuum of VA programs that use modern tools and technology to identify the most vulnerable Veterans and rapidly connect them to the appropriate interventions to become and remain stably housed. SB 222 underscored that housing discrimination on account of military or veteran status is unlawful in California by explicitly stating so within the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA). In addition, SB 222 defined a Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) voucher as a source of income for purposes of FEHA. SB 222 was signed into law by Governor Newsom in October. This type of legislation helps CVSOs move homeless veterans off the streets and into stable housing for them and their families.

Scott Holwell, President of the CACVSO, said, "Senator Hill has been a steadfast supporter of veterans for years. When SB 222 goes into effect on January 1, 2020, it will enable us to continue supporting veterans and their families and improve the quality of life for our servicemembers. We deeply appreciate Senator Hill for his support and advocacy over the years."

The Association will present Senator Hill with the award on February 26, 2020, at the State Capitol during their Day at the Capitol event.

The Motomu Nakasako Award is named after "Mote" Nakasako, a Los Angeles County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) who was constantly involved in legislation to improve the lives of veterans at the local, state, and federal levels.

The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) was established in 1945. CVSOs aggressively seek out veterans and their families to provide assistance and service. To meet this objective, the CVSOs strive to increase awareness of eligibility, entitlements, benefits programs, and services provided to veterans by Federal, State, and Local government agencies and service organizations. Services include comprehensive benefits counseling, claim development, and case management. Information is provided through referral services, public speaking, and media relations. CACVSO is a professional training and legislative organization comprising all County Veterans Service Offices throughout the state, dedicated to serving California's 1.7 million veterans and their families.

# Varicose Veins and VA Disability Benefits

December 10, 2019



## What are Varicose Veins?

Varicose veins are swollen, twisted veins that are visible just under the skin. Any superficial vein may become varicose, but the veins most commonly affected are those in your legs. That is because standing and walking upright increases the pressure in the veins of your lower body. For most people, varicose veins are simply a cosmetic concern; however, for others, varicose veins can cause aching pain and discomfort. Painful signs and symptoms of varicose veins include the following:

- An achy or heavy feeling in your legs
- Burning, throbbing, muscle cramping and swelling in your lower legs
- Worsened pain after sitting or standing for a long time
- Itching around one or more of your veins
- Skin discoloration around a varicose vein

In extreme cases, varicose veins can lead to more serious problems, including ulcers, blood clots, and bleeding. To diagnose varicose veins, your doctor will conduct a physical exam, including looking at your legs while you're standing to check for swelling. You may also undergo an ultrasound test to see if the valves in your veins are functioning normally or if there is any evidence of a blood clot.

Several risk factors may increase your chances of developing the condition, such as your age, sex, weight, and family history. It is important to note that these are not

the only risk factors associated with varicose veins. Instead, military service may contribute to the onset of this condition. If veterans deal with varicose veins and they believe the condition is a result of their time in service, they may be eligible for VA disability benefits.

## Service Connection for Varicose Veins

In order to receive VA disability benefits for varicose veins, veterans must establish **service connection** – a process that involves three main elements:

- A current, diagnosed condition
- An in-service event, injury, or illness
- A medical nexus linking the current, diagnosed condition to the in-service event

The first element pertaining to a current diagnosis is not always applicable when applying for VA disability benefits for varicose veins. That is, veterans do not necessarily need a doctor to diagnose them with varicose veins. In 2007, the **United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims** decided in *Barr v. Nicholson* that the presence of varicose veins is not a determination “medical in nature” and is capable of lay observation. Therefore, veterans’ lay testimony describing the presence of varicose veins is sufficient to raise the issue.

In regards to an in-service event, veterans may have experienced the following, which then contributed to the development of varicose veins: standing at attention, marching, exposure to ultraviolet rays, recurring leg cramps, or not being able to move for long periods of time. Once service connection for varicose veins is established, VA will rate the condition based on its severity.

## How VA Rates Varicose Veins

VA rates varicose veins under 38 CFR § 4.104, Schedule of Ratings – Cardiovascular System, Diagnostic Code 7120. The rating criteria is as follows:

- **100%** – with the following findings attributed to the effects of varicose veins: massive board-like edema (i.e. swelling) with constant pain at rest
- **60%** – persistent edema or subcutaneous induration, stasis pigmentation or eczema, and persistent ulceration
- **40%** – persistent edema and stasis pigmentation or eczema, with or without intermittent ulceration
- **20%** – persistent edema, incompletely relieved by elevation of extremity, with or without beginning stasis pigmentation or eczema
- **10%** – intermittent edema of extremity or aching and fatigue in leg after prolonged standing or walking, with symptoms relieved by elevation of extremity or compressed hosiery
- **0%** – asymptomatic palpable or visible varicose veins

Importantly, if veterans disagree with the disability evaluation VA assigns, they have the right to appeal for an increased rating.

## Total Disability Based on Individual Unemployability (TDIU)

If a veteran’s varicose veins are so disabling that they are unable to secure and follow substantially gainful employment, they may be eligible for **total disability based on individual unemployability (TDIU)** – a benefit that compensates veterans at the 100 percent level, even if their combined disability rating does not add up to 100 percent. As mentioned above, varicose veins often cause problems with prolonged sitting, standing, and physical activity. Therefore, veterans may have trouble finding employment.



# Upcoming Events

**2020 Winter Conference**  
**Sacramento**

**Monday, February 24—Friday February 28, 2020**

**2020 Summer Conference**  
**Crescent City, CA**

**Monday, June 22, 2020—Friday, June 26, 2020**

<https://thelighthouseinn Crescent City.com/>

<https://www.fly Crescent City.com/>

# DATES OF INTEREST

## December 2019

- 10 Nobel Prize Day
- 12 National 12-Hour Fresh Breath Day
- 14 National Wreaths Across America Day
- 20 National Sangria Day
- 21 National Homeless Persons' Remembrance
- 25 Christmas
- 31 Make Up Your Mind Day

## Awareness Weeks

- 15-21 Gluten-Free Baking Week
- 16-20 Cookie Exchange Week
- 26-1/1 Kwanzaa

## Monthly Observances

- AIDS Awareness Month
- National Tie Month
- Universal Human Rights Month

