

# Did You Know?

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That each year our Legion Service Officers from all of our State Departments meet in Indianapolis, Indiana for training? For three days they are furnished with a wealth of information from The National Veterans Legal Services Program and Department of Veterans Affairs including the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and the National Cemetery Administration. This training is sponsored by the American Legion VA&R Washington office. Here are some of the highlights:

® Veterans Administration debt letters should not be ignored. If a veteran doesn't pay the debt, request a waiver or agree to a payment plan that debt will be turned over to a collection agency. The fees associated with that are 28%! And it will cause a drop in your credit score of up to 150 points.

® Regarding debts, the Veterans Administration can also take up to 15% of a veteran's Social Security check.

® Those vets who are in the National Guard and Reserves have their Veterans Administration compensation check offset by the number of paid drill days per fiscal year. DOD and VA are years behind and soon over 300,000 vets will get overpayment letters.

® The National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis receives 1.5 million requests per year for records. Requests for copies of DD 214's take an average of ten days to be mailed.

® Vets can get free copies of duty rosters and morning unit reports if it's for a Veterans Administration claim. The number to National Personnel Records Center is 314-801-0800. They prefer a three month window on your request.

® Defense Finance and Accounting Service can help vets get pay vouchers to prove TDY and hazard pay which might help with a Veterans Administration claim. Their number is 800-321-1080.

® Vets may dispute a clinical decision at a VA hospital or request a different primary care provider. They should contact the Chief of Staff or Patient Advocate's office at the hospital.

® Vets who go to private hospitals for an ER visit only have 90 days to file for reimbursement if it's for a non-service connected problem. Service-connected conditions have two years. The important thing to remember is have someone notify the Veterans Health Administration immediately when a vet is taken to a private ER. And the veteran must have used a VA hospital or clinic within the last 24 months.

® On the vast majority of claims for service-connected death benefits for widow/ers the Veterans Administration must get a medical opinion.

® Certain Army MP's who did duty near or at the base perimeters in Thailand can possibly get Agent Orange compensation.

® The reason American Legion Service Officers don't refer veterans to private lawyers is because if they lose their case the Service Officer can be sued for negligent referral.

® The DMZ in Korea is 151 miles long and 350 yards wide. Agent Orange was used there from Aug. 1969 to Aug. 1971 and certain vets can get service-connected compensation for Agent Orange conditions.

Until next month stay safe, sound and happy