PACT ACT & PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

PACT Act vs. presumptive conditions

The relationship between a law, an exposure presumption, and a service-connection presumption.

The relationship
The PACT Act expanded VA healthcare and benefits related to toxic exposures. A presumption is a legal rule about an exposure or the relationship between service and a condition. The Act added and expanded presumptions, while other presumptions also exist. [1]

Term	Meaning
PACT Act	The law that expanded toxic-exposure healthcare and benefits, including additional presumptive conditions and locations. [1]
Presumption of exposure	A rule under which qualifying service facts establish a recognized exposure. [1, 2]
Presumptive service connection	A rule linking a specified condition to qualifying service or exposure when its requirements are met. [1, 2]

What a presumption changes

For a covered condition, a service-connection presumption can establish the link that would otherwise need supporting evidence. The condition and the service facts still matter. Specific rules define covered diseases, locations, periods, and other requirements. [1, 2]

An exposure and a diagnosis describe different facts

Qualifying service can establish a presumed exposure. A medical diagnosis describes the person's condition. A disease presumption connects those concepts under its stated rule. This distinction explains why an exposure history and a condition name appear separately in the official references. [1, 2]

EVIDENCE CONCEPTS

Presumptions in context

Different exposure programs have different legal requirements.

One regulatory example

38 CFR 3.320 addresses specified conditions associated with exposure to fine particulate matter. The regulation names conditions, qualifying service locations and periods, and exceptions that can rebut the presumption. This is one rule within a broader body of law. [2]

Different exposures have separate references

VA maintains separate information about burn pits, Agent Orange, radiation, contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, and other hazards. The qualifying facts and covered conditions differ among these categories. [3]

Where direct service connection fits

VA's evidence guidance describes direct service connection through a current disability, an in-service event, injury or disease, and a link between them. It also describes situations involving presumptions. A condition's absence from one presumptive list is different from a determination about every possible basis for service connection. [4]

Healthcare and compensation serve different purposes

The PACT Act expanded access to VA healthcare as well as disability benefits. Healthcare enrollment and a compensation award have distinct requirements and decisions. VA's PACT overview discusses both programs. [1]

Official references

[1] **VA PACT Act overview**

[2] **38 CFR 3.320 - fine particulate matter**

[3] **VA hazardous exposure reference**

[4] **VA disability evidence overview**

Reference titles are linked to the official publications. Source review date is shown in the footer.

This guide explains selected concepts. The linked official publications contain the condition- and service-specific rules.