

FACT SHEET
Qarmat Ali Water Treatment Plant in Basrah, Iraq

NOTICE TO VA EXAMINERS
VBA Considers this Veteran Exposed to Hexavalent Chromium

From approximately April through September of 2003, Army National Guard (NG) personnel from Indiana, West Virginia, South Carolina, and Oregon operated at the Qarmat Ali Water Treatment Plant in Basrah, Iraq. They were assigned to guard contract workers who were restoring the plant. During that time, sodium dichromate, a source of hexavalent chromium was found on the ground and measured in the air. Hexavalent chromium, or Chromium VI (six), in sodium dichromate is a lung carcinogen through inhalation. Chromium VI is also an acidic compound that can cause immediate irritation of the eyes, nose, sinuses, lungs, and skin.

DoD provided a medical evaluation for certain soldiers there at the time, which took place in October 2003. Accordingly, 137 service members were evaluated. The results at the time showed some abnormalities in individuals, such as complaints of eye, nose, throat and/or lung irritation, or abnormal pulmonary function, kidney, or liver tests. However, the Army stated that it could not specifically trace these symptoms to chromium exposure.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has begun to augment the Gulf War Registry to reflect service at Qarmat Ali. VHA is verifying the numbers of these Veterans who have either enrolled in care or received a Gulf War Registry examination. The involved Guard members who have had an initial examination will be recalled to have a complete exposure assessment as well as a more targeted physical examination and ancillary testing to detect indications of health outcomes that may be related to hexavalent Chromium. The Veteran, whose case you are reviewing, may or may not have completed this type of examination. Therefore, please be sure to review any such records if they exist in the VHA health record system for this Veteran.

This information is not meant to influence examiners rendering opinions concerning the etiology of any particular disability; but rather to ensure that such opinions are fully informed based on all known objective facts. Therefore, when rendering opinions requested by rating authorities for a disability potentially related to such exposure, please utilize this information objectively and together with the remaining evidence, including lay evidence, in the Veteran's record.

Adjudication Authority