

Combat-Related Special Compensation Update:

At an informal meeting of various veterans' service organization representatives and DoD officials last week procedures governing the new special compensation for certain military retirees with combat, operational or training-related disabilities were discussed. CRSC is on track for the 1 June implementation date. DoD hopes to be able to release the new rules sometime after mid-May. A clarifying point was made regarding Purple Heart recipients. The example involved a retiree who received a Purple Heart for an injury for which VA awarded a 20% disability rating and the retiree incurred a subsequent combat related disability that was also VA rated at 20%. Under these circumstances, the retiree's CRSC monthly payment would be the amount of the 20% VA disability rating only, which for 2003 is \$201. DoD's logic for this is that the combined disability rating total of 36% rounded off to 40% is less than 60%, which is the qualifying percentage requirement when no Purple Heart was awarded. However, if subsequent increases in disability are granted that are specifically derived from a Purple Heart related injury, the CRSC will be adjusted accordingly. Although the draft procedures were not released to the participants, the below outline of the process emerged during the informal talks.

Officials stressed that this is preliminary, unofficial information only, and that procedures/forms have not been officially approved:

- Application instructions should be released in the next few weeks**
- Instructions will be available via the Web and retiree/veterans newsletters.**

Once approved, applicants will be able to fill out and print an electronic application on the web at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc> for mailing to the retiree's parent service for consideration by its review board. The website is currently under construction and will be operation no later than 31 May 2003. There are no provisions for electronic filing.

- Each Military Department will establish review boards to award or deny the special compensation for retirees with at least 20 years' active federal service who have VA-related disabilities that are associated with a Purple Heart (10% or higher) or that are related to combat or military operations (60% or higher). Appeals of adverse decisions may be made to the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD).**

- Applicants can speed consideration by attaching readable copies of any available supporting documents to the application. Originals and/or certified true copies are not required nor desired.**

- **The Pentagon is asking potential applicants NOT to request supporting documents from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) or the Department of Veterans Affairs. DoD has made separate arrangements with these agencies to obtain needed documentation on an expedited basis (as quickly as one week, in some cases). Retirees can help speed decisions by attaching copies of documents they already have in their possession, but individual requests for records (which normally take months) will only add to the record centers' workload and delay the process.**

- **Regardless of when claims are submitted, approved applicants will receive compensation retroactive to June 1, 2003 provided the qualifying disability was rated by the VA on or before that date.**

- **CRSC payments will not be taxable and will not be subject to divisions enforced by the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act.**

- **VA disability rating codes will be used in the evaluation process, and VA's presumptive combat-related/service-connection rules (such as for Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam, battle-related post-traumatic stress syndrome, etc.) are expected to apply.**