GO-CASHLESS Beneficiary Travel Payments

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When will this change occur?
A. Nationally, the change began occurring in March 2013. Portland has delayed implementation until certain changes could be made to improve business processes and to educate Veterans on the upcoming changes. Effective **July 15th 2014,** Portland VAMC will implement the change.

Q: Why is the VA making this change?
A: The U.S. Department of Treasury has directed that federal non-tax payments, with few exceptions, will be made by EFT as a part of government-wide cost reduction.

Q: Have the eligibility rules for Beneficiary Travel changed as well?
A: No. The eligibility criteria for Beneficiary Travel benefits remain unchanged.

Q: What is the benefit of these changes to me?
A: EFT provides a faster and more reliable method of reimbursement than paper checks through the mail. EFT payment processing is more efficient and accurate. Waiting in long lines to receive payment is eliminated.

Q: How do I sign up for electronic payments?
A: Signing up for direct deposit is easy. All you need to do is complete and submit the Direct Deposit Enrollment form. Unsigned or incomplete direct deposit enrollment forms or incorrect banking information will delay payment. Also, any change to your banking institution or bank account number will require that you notify Fiscal as soon as possible to avoid payment delays.

Q: What happens to the form after I fill it out and turn it in?
A: The VA will process the information, which is used solely for the purposes of enrolling you for direct deposit payments.

Q: Is there an easier way to request beneficiary travel?
A: Veterans eligible for this benefit will be able to fill out a travel reimbursement form and place it in a drop box after checking out from their appointment. A drop box is currently located outside of the beneficiary travel window – however this will be expanded to other drop boxes located in respective clinics in the future. Veterans will no longer have to visit the VAMC travel department and wait in multiple lines.

Q: What if I don't have a bank or credit union account?
A: You need to open an account in order to receive payment by direct deposit.

Q: How does direct deposit work and is it safe?
A: The U.S. Department of the Treasury sends your money through a safe electronic transfer directly to your bank or credit union account. Your personal information is not sent over the internet.

Q: How long does it take from the time I submit my claim until the funds are in my bank account?
A: Generally it takes seven to ten business days. The claim must be verified and approved by Travel. Then it is processed by Fiscal into the federal payment system. Finally, Treasury must issue the deposit. This normally takes five-seven business days; however, some banks have different rules regarding accepting electronic deposits to verify the funds. This can slow the process and accounts for the additional three days.

Q: This is new to me. How do I know if I am eligible to receive Beneficiary Travel reimbursement?
A: Check with, or call the Beneficiary Travel office at 503-273-5069 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (9am-4pm Wednesdays).

Q: Once my direct deposit is set up, what do I need to do to get my beneficiary travel reimbursement?
A: You must fill out VA Form 10-3542 (Veteran/Beneficiary Claim For Reimbursement Of Travel Expenses). One of these completed forms must be turned in for each episode of care, not later than 30 days after the appointment. We know that medical appointments can be stressful so we recommend taking a blank form home with you. Fill it out the day of your appointment and drop it in the blue box outside of Enrollment when you arrive at the facility. Then take a new form for the

next trip. This way, after your appointment, you can leave immediately and do not have to remember to stop by Travel or wait in any lines.

Q: I receive care at a VA outpatient clinic or CBOC. How will this impact me?

A: Veterans treated at the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) will also receive payment by direct deposit. Please continue to submit your travel request using the form provided at the CBOC. Veterans will not be able to have their appointment at a CBOC, then present at the main Portland facility for cash payment.

Q: Will I be able to receive any of my reimbursement in cash?

In certain emergency situations cash will be available on a one-time basis. Veterans attempting to claim cash, on or after **July 15, 2014,** who do not meet the exemption guidelines, will be given a **one-time** cash payment in order to return home. However, you will be required to carry sufficient cash with you to return home for all future appointments. You will be asked to sign a form acknowledging receipt of the one-time payment.

Q: What are the exceptions?

A: Exceptions to Direct Deposit for some Veterans will not include a cash option; however, Treasury may still issue a paper check to certain individuals meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Individuals born prior to May 1, 1921, and who are receiving payments by check on March 1, 2013
- Individuals who have filed a waiver request with Treasury certifying that payment by EFT would impose a hardship because of:
    - The individual's inability to manage an account at a financial institution
    - Mental impairment and Treasury has not rejected the request
- Living in a remote geographic location lack the infrastructure to support electronic financial transactions and Treasury has not reject the request.

Q: What if I don't want to receive my payment by direct deposit?

A: If you decline receiving payment by direct deposit, Treasury may temporarily make payments with paper checks; however, this is a much longer time requirement and is subject to lost or misdirected mail.

Q: I do not receive mail at my residential address. I use a post office box. How does that affect my claim?

A: Mileage calculation is based upon the distance from the Veteran's actual residential address to the location of care within the VA Healthcare System. Therefore, proof of residential address must be provided so that the distance traveled can be accurately determined.

Q: What does the VA accept as proof of residential address and how often do I have to show it?

A: Proof of address is required before beneficiary travel payments will be processed. Proof of address is required every time you change your address. We accept any one of the following documents as proof of your residential address:

1) Notarized Landlord letter listing the Veteran's name, street address, city, state and zip code.
2) Current mortgage or property tax document listing the Veteran's name, street address, city, state and zip code.
3) Current utility bill (gas, electric, water, sewage, cable or phone) listing the Veteran's name, street address, city, state and zip code.
4) State driver's license or ID card with address printed on the original document (no stickers with address outside the lamination of the ID will be accepted)

Please note: Proof of address is inspected by Beneficiary Travel staff before a claim can be processed, but copies of the proof of address are not retained on file.

Q: If I have questions about this change in process, who should I contact?

A: Questions regarding the beneficiary travel payment change should be directed to the VA travel office. You may also call (503)273-5069 to speak to an Enrollment & Travel specialist.