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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "AGENT ORANGE SETTLEMENT DEADLINE NEAR"NCBC
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Agent Orange settlement deadline near

By **BRIGITTE GREENBERG**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ MIDDLETOWN, Conn. — Four days before a deadline, Vietnam veterans who were sprayed with Agent Orange flooded an insurance company with calls Tuesday to claim their share of a \$21 million injury compensation fund.

Saturday is the last day to apply for payment from the Agent Orange Settlement Fund, administered by Aetna Insurance Co. and supported by seven chemical companies.

Ten years ago, veterans of the war and their families settled a class-action lawsuit against the makers of the toxic chemical for \$184 million. Veterans started receiving checks in 1989.

The Dec. 31 deadline to apply for the money was set by U.S. District Judge Jack Weinstein, who ruled that those covered by the 1984 settlement included people who had not yet become ill.

About 39,000 veterans and their families have received money from the fund, which is supported by Dow Chemical, Uniroyal, Monsanto, Hercules, Agricultural Nutrition, Diamond Shamrock and Thompson Chemical. Nearly 28,000 claims have been denied.

About \$21 million has not yet been claimed.

If more veterans do not come forward, the money will be distributed to those who already have put in claims.

Survivors of veterans can receive from \$340 to \$3,400 total. Disabled veterans who apply can get between \$256 to \$12,800.

During the war, U.S. military aircraft sprayed the vegetation-destroying chemical over the land to make it difficult for enemy soldiers to hide and find food.

The U.S. vets said the chemical caused cancer and other illnesses and produced birth defects in their children.

Only veterans disabled by disease who served in Vietnam from 1961 to 1971 and can show they were exposed to Agent Orange during their tour of duty are eligible.

■ Aetna will accept telephone inquiries about the fund from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. through Saturday, and applications must be postmarked no later than midnight Saturday. The phone number to reach the program is 1-800-225-4712. Applications also may be requested by fax at 203-636-0444.

Wednesday

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