



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Muskogee Regional Office
PO Box 8484
Muskogee OK 74402-8484

September 28, 2011

In Reply Refer To: 351/22

Veterans Name and address

Veterans Name and SSN

Dear Mr. Veteran

You are entitled to education benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) for your Wild land Firefighter training at Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program. This letter gives information about your benefits, what you must do to receive payments, and how to contact us.

What We Did

Based on the enrollment information we received from your employer, we awarded benefits as follows:

Table with 4 columns: Dates of training for payment recieved, Monthly Rate, Beginning Date, Ending Date. Rows show payment rates of \$1138.50, 1182.50, 866.80, 551.60, 568.05 and corresponding dates from September 1, 2010 to September 1, 2012.

Your rate of payment will be lower than shown above if you work less than 120 hours in a month. Since you're enrolled in an apprenticeship or on-the-job training program, your monthly rates are lower than if you attended school full time. You can find more information about payment rates at www.GIBILL.va.gov (click on "payment rates" under the "Education Benefits" menu on the left of the screen.)

Apprenticeship and on-the-job training benefits are paid in three steps. Your monthly rate decreases to the next lower step every six months until you've reached the third step.

Your monthly rate includes an additional amount because you contributed an extra \$600 for the MGIB.

The change in your payment effective October 1, 2010 is due to a legislative change in the rates payable for Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB).



Veterans Name
and SSN

Your Benefits

At the **start of this program you're entitled** to 22 months and 27 days of benefits. You must use these benefits before July 24, 2018, the date your eligibility for benefits ends. We'll reduce the amount of your remaining benefits each time you receive a VA payment. If you work 120 hours each month, your remaining benefits will be 0 months and 0 days at the end of this period of training. If you work fewer than 120 hours each month, your remaining benefits will be greater.

NOTE: VA can't pay benefits for apprenticeship or on-the-job training to a person who is on active duty.

What You Must Do

We will send you a **VA Form 22-6553d-1** (Monthly Certification of On-the-Job and Apprenticeship Training). You must use this **form to report the number of regular hours you worked during the period shown on the form**. Be sure to give the form to an authorized official of your training establishment to sign. **After VA receives the form, you receive payment for the period reported.** VA will then send you a new form for the next reporting period.

You have **several responsibilities** while receiving benefits from VA.

- You must promptly notify VA of any change in your enrollment status or address.
Write to VA at:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 8888

Muskogee, OK 74402-8888

or call us toll-free at 1-888-GI-BILL-1 (1-888-442-4551).

- You must maintain satisfactory progress and conduct in your training program to continue to receive benefits.
- You must tell VA if you receive a wage increase or decrease not shown in your training agreement.

Veterans Name
and SSN

Direct Deposit

The Department of Treasury has mandated that all Veterans Affairs recurring benefits be paid electronically. Starting March 1, 2011 all new VA beneficiaries must receive their recurring payments either through Direct Deposit Electronic Funds Transfer or Debit Card payments. Starting March 1, 2013 all existing beneficiaries currently receiving recurring payments via paper checks must choose between Direct Deposit Electronic Funds Transfer or Debit Card payments. If you choose Direct Deposit please provide the following information:

- your financial institution's routing number
- your account number
- type of account (savings or checking)
- your full name and Social Security number

If You Have Questions or Need Assistance

If you have questions or need assistance, contact us. See the "If You Need Help" enclosure for contact information. If you disagree with us, you have the right to appeal our decision. You must write and tell us why you disagree. The enclosed VA Form 4107 explains your rights.

Sincerely yours,



Phyllis Curtis
Education Officer

Enclosure(s): VA Form 4107
If You Need Help

22/dc 



After careful and compassionate consideration, a decision has been reached on your claim. If we were not able to grant some or all of the VA benefits you asked for, this form will explain what you can do if you disagree with our decision. If you do not agree with our decision, you may:

- appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (the Board) by telling us you disagree with our decision
- give us evidence we do not already have that may lead us to change our decision

This form will tell you how to appeal to the Board and how to send us more evidence. You can do either one or both of these things.

NOTE: Please direct all new evidence to the address at the top of our letter. Do not send evidence directly to the Board until you receive written notice from the Board that they received your appeal.

WHAT IS AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS?

An appeal is your formal request that the Board review the evidence in your VA file and review the law that applies to your appeal. The Board can either agree with our decision or change it. The Board can also send your file back to us for more processing before the Board makes its decision.

HOW CAN I APPEAL THE DECISION?

How do I start my appeal? To begin your appeal, write us a letter telling us you disagree with our decision. This letter is called your "Notice of Disagreement." If we denied more than one claim for a benefit (for example, if you claimed compensation for three disabilities and we denied two of them), please tell us in your letter which claims you are appealing. *Send your Notice of Disagreement to the address at the top of our letter.*

What happens after VA receives my Notice of Disagreement? We will either grant your claim or send you a Statement of the Case. A Statement of the Case describes the facts, laws, regulations, and reasons that we used to make our decision. We will also send you a VA Form 9, "Appeal to Board of Veterans' Appeals," with the Statement of the Case. You must complete this VA Form 9 and return it to us if you want to continue your appeal.

How long do I have to start my appeal? You have one year to appeal our decision. *Your* letter saying that you disagree with our decision must be postmarked (or received by us) within one year from the date of *our* letter denying you the benefit. In most cases, you cannot appeal a decision after this one-year period has ended.

What happens if I do not start my appeal on time? If you do not start your appeal on time, our decision will become final. Once our decision is final, you cannot get the VA benefit we denied unless you either:

- show that we were clearly wrong to deny the benefit *or*
- send us new evidence that relates to the reason we denied your claim

Can I get a hearing with the Board? Yes. If you decide to appeal, the Board will give you a hearing if you want one. The VA Form 9 we will send you with the Statement of the Case has complete information about the kinds of hearings the Board offers and convenient check boxes for requesting a Board hearing. The Board does not require you to have a hearing. It is your choice.

Where can I find out more about appealing to the Board?

- You can find a "plain language" booklet called "How Do I Appeal," on the Internet at: <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/pamphlet.htm>. The booklet also may be requested by writing to: Mail Processing Section (014), Board of Veterans' Appeals, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.
- You can find the formal rules for appealing to the Board in the Board's Rules of Practice at title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20. You can find the complete Code of Federal Regulations on the Internet at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>. A printed copy of the Code of Federal Regulations may be available at your local law library.

Can I get someone to help me with my appeal to the Board? Yes. You can have a veterans' service organization representative, an attorney-at-law, or an "agent" help you with your appeal. But you are not required to have someone represent you. It is your choice.

- Representatives who work for accredited veterans' service organizations know how to prepare and present claims and will represent you. You can find a listing of these organizations on the Internet at: <http://www.va.gov/vso>.
- A private attorney or an "agent" can also represent you. If applicable, your local bar association may be able to refer you to an attorney with experience in veterans' law. VA only recognizes attorneys who are licensed to practice in the United States or in one of its territories or possessions. An agent is a person who is not a lawyer, but who VA recognizes as being knowledgeable about veterans' law. Contact us if you would like to know if there is a VA accredited agent in your area.

Do I have to pay someone to help me with my appeal to the Board? It depends on who helps you. The following explains the differences.

- Veterans' service organizations will represent you for free.
- Attorneys or agents can charge you for helping you under some circumstances. Paying their fees for helping you with your appeal to the Board is your responsibility. If you do hire an attorney or agent to represent you, one of you must send a copy of any fee agreement to the following address within 30 days from the date the agreement is executed: Office of the General Counsel (022D), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. *See* 38 C.F.R. 14.636(g). If the fee agreement provides for the direct payment of fees out of past-due benefits, a copy of the agreement must also be filed with us at the address at the top of our letter. *See* 38 C.F.R. 14.636(h)(4).

CAN I GIVE VA ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE?

Yes. You can send us more evidence to support a claim whether or not you appeal to the Board. **If you want to appeal, though, do not forget the one-year time limit!**

If you have more evidence to support a claim, it is in your best interest to give us that evidence as soon as you can. We will consider your evidence and let you know whether it changes our decision. Please keep in mind that we can only consider new evidence that: (1) we have not already seen and (2) relates to your claim. You may give us this evidence either in writing or at a personal hearing.

In writing. To support your claim, you may send documents and written statements to us at the address on the top of our letter. Tell us in a letter how these documents and statements should change our earlier decision.

At a personal hearing. You may request a local hearing with us at any time. This hearing is separate from any Board hearing you might ask for later if you appeal. We do not require you to have one. It is your choice. At this hearing, you may speak, bring witnesses to speak on your behalf, and hand us written evidence. If you want a hearing, send us a letter asking for a hearing. Use the address at the top of our letter. We will then:

- arrange a time and place for the hearing
- provide a room for the hearing
- assign someone to hear your evidence
- make a written record of the hearing

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I GIVE VA EVIDENCE?

We will review the record of the hearing and other new evidence, together with the evidence we already have. We will then decide if we can grant your claim. If we cannot grant your claim and you appeal, we will send the new evidence and the record of any local hearing to the Board.

IF YOU NEED HELP

If you need help with your VA education benefits, you can contact us in the following ways:



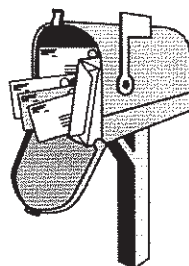
VA has a national education Home Page on the World Wide Web (internet) where you can get information about VA education benefit programs. The National Home Page address is:

<http://www.gibill.va.gov>

You can ask questions about your education claim by choosing the "Ask a Question and Find Answers" option from the home page, and following the instructions on the screen.



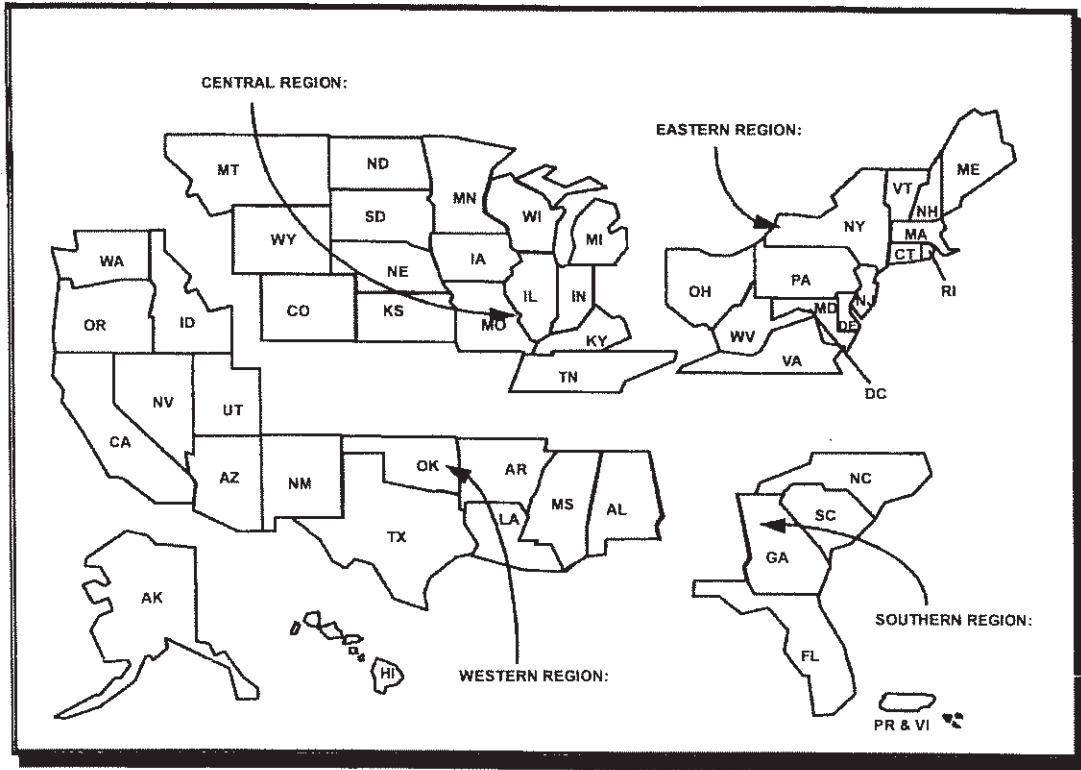
If you need help with your VA education benefits, you can call toll-free from the U.S. by dialing **1-888-GI BILL-1** (1-888-442-4551). If you're hearing impaired, call **1-800-829-4833**. For other VA benefits call 1-800-827-1000.



You can **mail** inquiries or claims for education benefits to your Regional Processing Office. See the back of this sheet for instructions.

Which VA Office Handles Your Education Claim?

There are four regional education processing offices that handle claims for the entire country, which we have divided into regions. The map below shows the states in each region. Find the state where you'll be attending school or job training. You should **mail** inquiries or claims for education benefits to the processing office for that region.



CENTRAL REGION:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 66830
St. Louis, MO 63166-6830

EASTERN REGION:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 4616
Buffalo, NY 14240-4616

WESTERN REGION:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 8888
Muskogee, OK 74402-8888

SOUTHERN REGION:

VA Regional Office
PO Box 10022
Decatur, GA 30031-7022