



VA CLAIM FILES, DECODED

What are all those cryptic entries? The file list can reveal what kind of work is happening inside a claim, but only if you know what each label usually represents.

1 How to read any entry

On file

smccalculator.pdf

Document type: Rating Calculator Worksheets

You submitted this file as additional evidence.

Received on May 5, 2026

ON FILE

The system received and attached the file. It does not mean anyone has approved what it says.

FILENAME

The best clue to the file's real purpose. Long strings are often system tracking numbers.

DOCUMENT TYPE

A broad filing bucket. Several very different documents can share one category.

RECEIVED DATE

When the system took in the file, not necessarily when it was written, signed, or reviewed.

“YOU SUBMITTED THIS FILE”

Generic portal wording. Contractor and internally generated records may display the same sentence.

WHAT SMCCALCULATOR.PDF CAN ACTUALLY SIGNAL

A decision maker likely ran the VA's Special Monthly Compensation calculator. That usually means the rating combination raised an SMC question that had to be checked. It is evidence of rating work, not proof that SMC will be awarded or which level is being considered.

2 What the common files usually mean

DBQ or C&P Exam

Medical findings about diagnosis, symptoms, testing, functional impact, and severity.

WHY IT APPEARS: The VA needed medical evidence to decide service connection or the percentage.

DBQ Medical Opinion

The clinician's answer to a cause, aggravation, onset, or other medical-connection question.

POSSIBLE CLUE: A specific medical-link question was sent for an opinion. The filename does not reveal whether the answer was favorable.

Appointment Notification Letter

The contractor's notice about an appointment, ACE review, or examiner information.

WHY IT APPEARS: Contractors attach scheduling paperwork to the exam package. It does not, by itself, mean another exam is coming.

Exam Request

The work order telling an examiner or contractor what exam, DBQ, or opinion the VA needs.

POSSIBLE CLUE: Claim development reached the medical-evidence stage. It is not the completed exam.

Clarification Response or Exam Rework

Backstage communication used to correct, clarify, or complete an exam request or prior report.

WHY IT HAPPENS: The request may be unclear, a question may be unanswered, records may conflict, or the earlier report may be incomplete. It may produce an addendum without another appointment.

TERA Memorandum

A VBA summary of whether the record supports participation in a Toxic Exposure Risk Activity.

POSSIBLE CLUE: A toxic-exposure theory is being developed for an exam or decision. It documents exposure development, not medical causation.

ILER or Individual Exposure Summary

A VA and Defense Department exposure-history record using deployment, location, occupation, and hazard data.

POSSIBLE CLUE: The VA pulled military exposure information to develop a toxic-exposure issue. It can be incomplete and is not a nexus opinion.

OMPF, Personnel Records, or DD214

Official service records showing dates, assignments, duties, specialty, locations, awards, and discharge facts.

WHY IT APPEARS: The VA is verifying service, an event, a duty, a location, or possible exposure.

Non-Government Medical Records

Treatment records from private doctors, hospitals, imaging centers, or other outside providers.

WHY IT APPEARS: They may document diagnosis, treatment, symptoms, history, and severity. They are not automatically a medical nexus.

Correspondence and Lay Statements

A broad bucket for personal statements, VA Forms 21-4138 and 21-10210, summaries, letters, and exhibits.

WHY IT APPEARS: Someone supplied facts about symptoms, timing, exposure, events, or functional impact. Open the file because the category says very little.

Automated Review Summary

A computer-generated claims-processing summary that highlights relevant evidence and DBQs for a processor.

POSSIBLE CLUE: Automation screened the claim for readiness or missing development. It is not the rating decision.

VA Memo, 21-526EZ, or 21-22

A VA Memo is an internal note; 21-526EZ is the compensation application; 21-22 appoints a VSO representative.

WHY IT APPEARS: These document internal findings, the claim itself, or representation. The broad label does not show whether any claimed condition will be granted.

“Closed evidence request: Request for Clarification”

We received this file for a closed evidence request: Exam Request - Request for Clarification

What likely happened: An examiner or contractor needed the VA to clarify part of the exam order, and a response was received, the request was canceled, or the task was otherwise closed.

What it can indicate: The examination workflow was actively being corrected or completed. It does not mean the entire claim closed, and it does not reveal whether the medical answer was favorable.

Do not overread the label

- On file does not mean reviewed or favorable.
- C&P Exam may include notices and administrative attachments.
- Closed request does not mean denied.
- File name unknown does not necessarily mean the document is missing.
- The Files tab is a portal view, not a full copy of the electronic claim folder.