



# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## IN THIS ISSUE

---

**Tips for Veterans to Avoid Scams During Tax Season**

---

**Hearing & Vision Issues May Be Related to Traumatic Brain Injuries**

---

**Important Emergency Preparation Steps**

---

**What You Need To Know**

---

**Holiday Calendar**

---

**Important Health Contact Numbers**

---

**Just For Fun**

---



## Tips for Veterans to Avoid Scams During Tax Season

VA News – According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), taxpayers lose millions of dollars each year due to tax-related scams, fraudsters, and schemes, making it crucial for Veterans to stay vigilant and informed to avoid falling victim to these fraudulent activities.

Veterans with a service-connected disability rating may be eligible for local property tax exemptions and understanding these benefits can help Veterans differentiate between legitimate communication from the IRS and potential scams. One crucial aspect for Veterans to remember is that VA benefits are tax-free, and there is no federal income tax on VA insurance proceeds.

The IRS has also introduced Identity Protection (IP) PINs as an extra layer of security to combat tax-related identity theft. This not only helps prevent identity theft but also provides added protection for those who have been victims of tax-related fraud in the past.

For Veterans and their families seeking further guidance on protecting themselves during tax season, there are several resources available online at <https://tinyurl.com/5f4c7ju3>.

# Hearing and Vision Problems may be related to Traumatic Brain Injuries

*Health.mil* – According to experts from the Defense Health Agency, hearing and vision injuries may show up together as the result of a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Early diagnosis and treatment may lessen the impact of those injuries and if you suspect you have hearing or vision injuries as the result of a concussion, see your provider.

Visual dysfunction is common in even mild TBI patients, and several studies have found that visual dysfunctions were reported in as many as 43% of patients diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury. But not everyone who sustains a TBI will have vision dysfunction, and many visual symptoms after a TBI resolve on their own without treatment.

Those diagnosed with mild TBI may have auditory processing disorder symptoms, which include struggling to understand speech in noisy settings, recognizing spoken words, and feeling uncertain about where the words you hear are coming from. Oftentimes, TBI patients are informed they do not have hearing loss despite their perceived listening difficulties, which is why additional measures are required.



## Important Emergency Preparation Steps

- Review all available safety components.
- Create and have an evacuation plan for your residence.
- Take as much oxygen and ventilation equipment with you, should you need to evacuate.
- Contact Mid-Cities Medical for emergency assistance and setup. **You will need to provide us with your evacuation address and contact details.**
  - Texas – 1 (888) 450-6676
  - CA & AZ – 1 (833) 986-4267



If you have any oxygen or ventilation preparation questions during these ongoing events, or need emergency assistance, please contact our offices:

**VISN 17 – Texas, 1 (888) 450-6676**

**VISN 22 – Arizona, 1 (833) 986-4267**

**VISN 22 – Southern California, 1 (833) 986-4267**

**CalOx Inc. – 1 (866) 519-2414**

# What You Need To Know



**TEXAS:** The VA Medical Centers throughout Texas are continuing to perform Home Inspections and Fire Safety Checks, with all hospitals having undergone their inspections by the Joint Commission. If any safety issues are found during the hospital's inspection, the VA will be looking specifically at those items moving forward during patient home audits. The VA will also continue its ongoing monitoring and safety training for smoking patients and/or those at risk of fire events.

Severe storm season is here. Please be sure to perform a home preparation audit which includes checking for cleared exit pathway, an evacuation plan, and a meet-up place for you or those in your residence.



**CALIFORNIA:** Self-Fill Home Systems are being issued in the test program, with the Southern California region currently having patients included. This test program is a step forward in patient care, allowing patients to fill their tanks at home whenever they like while freeing them from waiting on deliveries. More information will be providing once the test phase concludes.

Fire and High Wind season is approaching. Please be sure to perform a home preparation audit which includes checking for cleared exit pathway, an evacuation plan, and a meet-up place for you or those in your residence.



**ARIZONA: Prescott, Phoenix & Show Low: The VA Prescott and VA Phoenix transition period is ending.** If you have not been transitioned, please contact our Phoenix Transition Team at 1-833-986-4267 and they can talk to you about scheduling your visit. Patients that do not respond may receive calls from the VA Medical Center or a discontinuation notice for failing to transition.

Fire and High Wind season is approaching. Please be sure to perform a home preparation audit which includes checking for cleared exit pathway, an evacuation plan, and a meet-up place for you or those in your residence.

## Holiday Calendar



### APRIL

- 15th Tax Day
- 21st San Jacinto Day
- 22nd Earth Day
- 23rd Passover (first day)
- 26th Arbor Day
- 30th Last Day of Passover

*\*Mercedes only*

1st Monday runs 04-01-24

1st Tuesday runs 04-02-24

*\*Redlands only*

3rd Wednesday runs 4-17-24

3rd Thursday runs 04-18-24

4th Thursday runs 04-25-24

4th Friday runs 04-26-24



### MAY

- 2nd National Day of Prayer
- 5th Cinco de Mayo
- 12th Mother's Day
- 15th Peace Officers Memorial Day
- 18th Armed Forces Day
- 22nd National Maritime Day
- 22nd Harvey Milk Day (CA)
- 27th Memorial Day – OFFICE CLOSED

*\*Mercedes only*

1st Monday runs 05-01-24

1st Tuesday runs 05-02-24

*\*Redlands only*

3rd Wednesday runs 05-17-24

3rd Thursday runs 05-18-24

4th Thursday runs 05-25-24

4th Friday runs 05-26-24

# Important Health Contact Numbers

**EMERGENCY** **DIAL 9-1-1**

**EMERGENCY SITUATION** **DIAL 7-1-1**

*Use if you have a TTY and cannot obtain emergency services.*

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS** **DIAL 2-1-1**

**NON-EMERGENCY OR DOWN EQUIPMENT**

Phone: **TEXAS (888) 450-6676**

Phone: **AZ & CA (833) 986-4267**

**YOU CAN QUIT SMOKING**

Phone: **(800) QUIT-NOW**

Website: **www.SmokeFree.gov**

**www.BeTobaccoFree.gov**

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE** **DIAL 9-8-8**

Phone: **(800) 273-8255**

Email: **ConfidentialChat@VeteransCrisisLine.net**

**VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Phone: **(855) 260-3274**

Website: **www.caregiver.va.gov**

**REPORT ABUSE. BREAK THE SILENCE.**

Phone: **(800) 252-5400**

*If you are being abused, suspect abuse or have witnessed someone being abused, call today.*

**SPEAK-UP CAMPAIGN**

Website: **https://tinyurl.com/5n68nt29**

*Rights patients have & what they can do if they feel they are being discriminated against & receiving substandard care.*

## Pantry Chicken Casserole

### Ingredients:

- 1 (16 oz) package penne pasta
- 4 tablespoons salted butter
- 1 green bell pepper – stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 (8 oz) package sliced fresh mushrooms
- 2 (8 oz) packages Velveeta,<sup>®</sup> cubed
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (10 oz) can ROTEL,<sup>®</sup> undrained
- 1 (4 oz) can mild chopped green chilé peppers
- 4 cups cooked chicken, cut into bite-sized pieces

**Prep Time:** 15 mins

**Cook Time:** 40 mins

**Total Time:** 55 mins

**Servings:** 10

- Step 1** – Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a large casserole dish with cooking spray.
- Step 2** – Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add penne and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender yet firm to the bite, about 11 minutes. Drain.
- Step 3** – Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and bell pepper, cooking until vegetables are tender. Add mushrooms and cook until their liquid is released. Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant.
- Step 4** – Stir in Velveeta,<sup>®</sup> diced tomatoes with juice, ROTEL<sup>®</sup> with juice, and mild chilé peppers. Cook and stir until cheese has melted. Remove from heat and stir in cooked pasta and chicken. Pour into baking dish.
- Step 5** – Bake in the preheated oven until heated through, about 20 minutes. Serve warm.

## Word Search

April  
cardboard  
clean  
depot  
extinct

green  
grow  
habitat  
oxygen  
paper

pollution  
recycle  
resources  
water  
wildlife

Q	F	O	B	K	Q	R	B	K	T	O	D	R	A	O	B	D	R	A	C	F	P	V	T	X
Z	V	D	B	D	V	I	V	D	L	N	P	F	Z	Z	R	C	N	L	K	E	T	S	U	J
B	I	W	W	S	U	W	I	L	D	L	I	F	E	F	V	R	F	X	Z	M	E	R	K	C
T	W	K	S	E	C	R	U	O	S	E	R	P	U	Y	G	E	A	D	H	B	F	T	Y	R
P	M	G	N	G	N	Z	C	G	W	K	S	J	P	R	C	Z	L	A	S	K	H	Y	H	
U	G	R	Y	V	W	F	Z	O	C	M	G	O	L	E	Y	R	R	E	M	A	H	I	E	
V	D	I	W	F	O	W	U	R	L	C	D	E	K	W	E	C	B	D	U	H	R	B	T	W
T	Q	K	J	W	C	D	G	Q	P	U	U	B	I	X	N	L	T	V	I	S	D	H	P	E
T	Y	G	P	T	Q	B	R	G	B	S	E	L	F	M	G	E	G	Q	Z	C	L	X	P	R
C	Z	C	H	B	K	C	T	U	O	X	Y	G	E	N	T	S	H	C	M	I	Z	G	O	L
N	T	O	L	S	N	O	Q	G	Q	F	C	G	Z	S	R	I	M	S	R	I	I	V	L	Q
I	R	N	Z	E	P	A	C	Z	H	Y	V	U	Y	F	M	M	F	P	M	S	O	I	L	K
T	E	C	Q	E	A	Q	U	V	K	J	U	U	J	A	O	R	A	N	S	W	T	Q	U	S
X	C	C	D	T	R	N	G	M	L	Z	P	H	C	K	R	Y	E	L	R	E	Q	I	T	B
E	S	F	L	B	L	X	N	K	V	H	A	B	I	T	A	T	W	P	X	G	A	P	I	G
S	S	W	J	I	D	D	Z	A	U	Y	Z	B	J	X	U	V	P	B	A	Q	G	B	O	U
P	Q	M	K	B	L	D	Z	F	I	Z	W	A	T	E	R	G	Y	Y	Z	P	N	C	N	R
L	U	D	Q	T	A	X	E	G	Y	O	C	B	G	Y	F	T	N	W	N	K	O	R	Q	L