

VA Office of Inspector General

OFFICE OF AUDITS AND EVALUATIONS



Department of Veterans Affairs

*Review of
Alleged System
Access Failures for
Veterans to the
eBenefits Program*

January 5, 2016
14-04810-05

Why We Did This Review

We conducted this review to determine the merits of a complaint received in July 2014 alleging that veterans' eBenefits accounts did not allow appropriate system access. The complainant alleged that he was able to access his account in the April/May 2014 timeframe; however, he was unable to track previously submitted claims. Additionally, the complainant stated VA was unable to assist him in resolving the issue.

What We Concluded

The reason the complainant experienced difficulty with system access could not be determined. There were no planned outages during the time the veteran experienced trouble accessing previously submitted claims. However, other reasons that could affect whether a veteran has access to his eBenefits account include a VA hardware failure, interconnection issues with VA external partners, or a failed password attempt.

Our review was initiated in September 2014 and determined that from April to September 2014, eBenefits was operational approximately 96 percent of the time. We determined system downtime resulted from both planned and unplanned outages. We were unable to determine whether planned outages coincided with the complainant's inability to access the system. However, for planned outages, eBenefits notifies veterans one hour before the outage is to occur by a banner displayed at the top of the eBenefits Web site. For unplanned outages, the eBenefits webpage typically displays the following message: "Login is intermittently unavailable due to a temporary service issue. We apologize for any inconvenience. Please try again later."

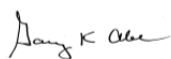
After we initiated our review, the complainant stated that he had subsequently received assistance from VA eBenefits support staff, was no longer experiencing eBenefits login issues, and was satisfied with eBenefits performance. We did not make any recommendations since the issue was not determined to be a systemic problem.

Supplemental Data

We conducted interviews with the complainant and VA eBenefits program officials. In addition, we reviewed current eBenefits program documentation, processes, controls, and outage data related to the allegation.

We complied with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluations to the extent possible. The evidence to review the allegations consisted of interviews, program documentation, processes, and controls related to the allegation.

For more information about this report, please contact the Office of Inspector General at (202)461-4720.



GARY K. ABE
Acting Assistant Inspector General
for Audits and Evaluations

REPORT DISTRIBUTION

VA

Office of the Secretary
Veterans Health Administration
Veterans Benefits Administration
National Cemetery Administration
Assistant Secretaries
Office of General Counsel

NON-VA

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
National Veterans Service Organizations
Government Accountability Office
Office of Management and Budget

This report is available on our Web site at www.va.gov/oig.

To Report Suspected Wrongdoing in VA Programs and Operations:

Telephone: 1-800-488-8244

E-Mail: vaoighotline@va.gov

(Hotline Information: www.va.gov/oig/contacts/hotline.asp)