

VA Disability Claim Structure - Maximized Detail

Prepared for Submission

I. Primary Service-Connected Conditions

1. Tinnitus (DC 6260)

- **Rating:** 10%
- **Evidence:** Service records linking noise exposure.

1. Pes Planus (Bilateral Flat Feet, DC 5276)

- **Rating:** 50% (bilateral factor applied).
- **Key Evidence:** Podiatry exams, gait analysis.
- **Adjustments:** Increased from 40% to 50% due to severity and bilateral impact.

1. Left Ankle Sprain with Tarsal Tunnel (DC 5271)

- **Rating:** 30% (upgraded from 20% as secondary to Pes Planus).
- **Bilateral Factor:** 50% if right ankle is later confirmed.
- **Evidence:** MRI/EMG studies (2024).

1. Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA, DC 6847)

- **Rating:** 50% (CPAP required).
- **Diagnosis:** Home Sleep Test (6/26/2019, AHI 19.2/hour).
- **Nexus:** Aggravated by obesity (medication-induced: Gabapentin/Prednisone) and Pes Planus limiting mobility.

1. Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)/Esophageal Stricture (DC 7204/7346)

- **Rating:** 50% (persistent symptoms requiring pantoprazole BID).
- **Diagnosis:** EGD confirming Schatzki ring (5/29/2024).
- **Nexus:** Secondary to OSA (intra-abdominal pressure) and NSAID use (Ibuprofen).

1. Degenerative Disc Disease

- **Cervical Spine (DC 5242):**
 - ✦ **Rating:** 20% (limitation of motion).
 - ✦ **Evidence:** MRI (6/6/2019) showing neural foraminal narrowing.
- **Lumbar Spine (DC 5242):**
 - ✦ **Rating:** 20% (intermittent incapacitating episodes).
 - ✦ **Evidence:** MRI (6/6/2019) showing epidural lipomatosis and stenosis.

1. Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome (Bilateral, DC 8524)

- **Rating:** 20% per leg (40% bilateral factor).
- **Diagnosis:** EMG/NCV confirmed (2/28/2024).

1. Migraines (DC 8100)

- **Rating:** 40% (prostrating attacks 1–2 times monthly).
- **Nexus:** Secondary to OSA, cervical spine degeneration, and tinnitus.

II. Secondary Service-Connected Conditions

1. Anxiety Disorder (DC 9400)

- **Rating:** 70% (occupational and social impairment).
- **Nexus:** Secondary to tinnitus, chronic pain, and medication side effects (Gabapentin).

1. Depression (DC 9440)

- **Rating:** 30% (merged with PTSD/Anxiety under upcoming mental health schedule for potential 70–100% combined rating).
- **Nexus:** Secondary to chronic pain, functional limitations, and job loss.

1. Peripheral Neuropathy (DC 8510)

- **Rating:** 10% per extremity (linked to tarsal tunnel/spinal degeneration).
- **Evidence:** Nerve conduction studies (2024).

1. Back Pain (Secondary to Pes Planus/2006 Injury/Spinal Alignment)

- **Rating:** 20–60% (pending ROM measurements).
- 1. Hip Strain (DC 5252)**
 - **Rating:** 10% (secondary to abnormal gait from Pes Planus).
- 1. Knee Instability (DC 5261)**
 - **Rating:** 10% bilateral (aggravated by Pes Planus/ankle injury).
- 1. Chronic Sinusitis (DC 6510-6514)**
 - **Rating:** 30% (toxic exposure to AFFF).
- 1. Asthma (DC 6602)**
 - **Rating:** 30% (linked to AFFF exposure).

III. Toxic Exposure Documentation

- **Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF):** Confirmed exposure during service (environmental hazard reports, lay statements).
 - **Linked Conditions:**
 - ✦ GERD/Esoophageal Stricture.
 - ✦ Chronic Sinusitis.
 - ✦ Asthma.

IV. Mental Health Conditions

- **PTSD (DC 9411):**
 - **Rating:** 100% (pending merger with Anxiety/Depression under revised mental health criteria).
 - **Nexus:** In-service drowning incident and chronic pain.

V. Special Monthly Compensation (SMC)

- 1. SMC(s) – Housebound Status:**
 - **Eligibility:** Combined ratings total 100% + separate 60% (e.g., 50% OSA + 30% GERD + 20% Cervical + 20% Lumbar + 30% Migraines = 95% combined).
 - **Effective Date:** Upon approval of secondary conditions (e.g., migraines/depression).
- 1. SMC(k) – Loss of Use of Extremities:**
 - **Eligibility:** Bilateral tarsal tunnel syndrome (40% rating).
 - **Effective Date:** 2/28/2024 (date of EMG/NCV confirmation).
- 1. SMC-L – Aid & Attendance:**
 - **Eligibility:** Documented functional limitations (e.g., transportation needs noted 2/23/2024).

VI. Effective Dates

Condition	Diagnosis Date	Effective Date	Key Evidence
Primary Conditions			
OSA	6/26/2019	6/26/2019	Home Sleep Test (2019)
GERD/Schatzki Ring	5/29/2024	5/29/2024	EGD (2024)
Degenerative Disc Disease	6/6/2019	6/6/2019	MRI (2019)
Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome	2/28/2024	2/28/2024	EMG/NCV (2024)

Secondary Conditions			
Migraines	6/6/2019	6/6/2019 (linked to cervical DDD)	Medical nexus opinion
Peripheral Neuropathy	2/28/2024	2/28/2024	Nerve study (2024)
Depression/Anxiety	8/5/2024	8/5/2024	Psych evaluation (2024)

VII. Aggravating Factors & Additional Considerations

- **Obesity:** Non-compensable but aggravates OSA, GERD, and spinal conditions (linked to Gabapentin/Prednisone use).
- **Chronic NSAID Use:** Supports GERD claim (Ibuprofen documented since 2/24/2021).
- **Syncope/Balance Issues:** Potentially linked to OSA/cervical stenosis (requires additional nexus).

VIII. Individual Ratings Summary (Ordered by Severity)

1. Mental Health (PTSD/Anxiety/Depression): **70–100%**
2. Sleep Apnea (CPAP): **50%**
3. GERD/Esophageal Stricture: **50%**
4. Pes Planus: **50%**
5. Migraines: **40%**
6. Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome: **40% (bilateral)**
7. Cervical/Lumbar DDD: **20% each**
8. Asthma: **30%**
9. Chronic Sinusitis: **30%**
10. Left Ankle Sprain: **30%**