



VA HEALTH CARE

Fact Sheet 16-9

May 2010

Camp Lejeune Water Contamination

The Department of the Navy has initiated a mail campaign to notify Veterans stationed at Camp LeJeune Marine Corps Base in North Carolina of the presence of toxic chemicals in the drinking water between 1957 and 1987. The letter invites service members and their families stationed there during this time period to participate in a registry of who may have consumed contaminated drinking.

Contamination

Two of the eight water treatment facilities supplying water to the Camp LeJeune base were contaminated with volatile organic compounds:

- Water from the Tarawa Terrace Treatment Plant was primarily contaminated by PCE (perchloroethylene). The source of the contamination was the waste disposal practices at an off-base dry cleaning firm. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) determined that the contamination at the Tarawa Terrace system had PCE levels that exceeded the current standards between November 1957 and February 1987.
- Water from the Hadnot Point Treatment Plant was contaminated primarily by TCE (trichloroethylene). The system was contaminated by multiple sources: leaking underground storage tanks, industrial area spills, and waste disposal sites.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR) estimated that the level of PCE in drinking water exceeded current standards from 1957 to 1987 (when the contaminated wells were shut down) and represented a potential public health hazard.

Impact

An ASTDR study begun in 2005 is evaluating whether children of mothers who were exposed while pregnant to contaminated drinking water at Camp LeJeune are at an increased risk of spina bifida, anencephaly, cleft lip or cleft palate, and childhood leukemia or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The results of this report have not yet been released.

There is limited/suggestive evidence of an association between chronic exposure to PCE or TCE and adverse health outcomes such as:

- Kidney cancer
- Esophageal cancer

- Bladder cancer
- Breast cancer, and
- Lung cancer

VA Benefits Associated With Exposure

- There are currently no health screenings or health benefits associated with this potential exposure. However, Veterans who may have been exposed are encouraged to apply for enrollment, and if enrolled, should discuss any specific concerns with their VA healthcare provider.
- VA health care providers may direct concerned Veterans to VHA Environmental Health program staff located at each medical center. These staff can offer informed discussions and answer health-related exposure questions.
- VA Environmental Healthcare providers can provide Veterans with information regarding the potential health effects of exposure to volatile organic compounds.
- Veterans are encouraged to file a claim for VA disability compensation for any injury/illness they feel is related to their military service.

Additional Information

Veterans who received the letter from the Department of the Navy may visit the following websites for the most current updates:

- <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/index.html>
- www.marines.mil/clsurvey/index.html

For more information, call the Department of Navy toll-free at (877) 261-9782. The Call Center staff can be reached Monday through Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., or by email at clwater@usmc.mil.

Former residents and employees of Camp LeJeune can now register at the official Marine Corps water study website for notification and information regarding past drinking water contamination. The address is <https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/>