

VA expands review of chemical exposure in drinking water at Marine Corps base Camp Lejeune

As part of VA's ongoing commitment to provide care to veterans and their families, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that it will start the process of amending its regulations to establish presumptions of service connection for certain conditions resulting from exposure to contaminated drinking water at the U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. This process is in addition to the healthcare VA already provides for 15 conditions to eligible veterans who were stationed at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between Aug. 1, 1953 and Dec. 31, 1987 as a result of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012. VA also provides reimbursement of healthcare expenses for those 15 conditions to eligible family members who resided at Camp Lejeune during that time period.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs recently met with Senators Isakson, Burr and Tillis and the Director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to discuss the creation of presumptions of service connection for diseases associated with the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune. The diseases that are currently being reviewed for potential presumptive service connection include kidney cancer, angiosarcoma of the liver and acute myelogenous leukemia, which are known to be related to long-term exposure to the chemicals that were in the water at Lejeune from the 1950s through 1987. The chemicals are Benzene, Vinyl Chloride, Trichloroethylene and Perchloroethylene, which are known as volatile organic compounds, used in industrial solvents and components of fuels. ATSDR and VA representatives will meet at ATSDR offices on Aug. 19 to begin discussions on establishing these presumptions.

VA will also work with ATSDR and potentially the National Academy of Sciences to evaluate the body of scientific knowledge and research related to exposure to these chemicals and the subsequent development of other diseases. VA will carefully consider all public comments received when determining the final scope of any presumptions.

Veterans with health problems they believe are related to exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune may file a claim for disability compensation online at ebenefits.va.gov, or call (800) 827-1000 for assistance.

For more information, Veterans and family members should contact the nearest VA healthcare facility by calling (877) 222-8387 or visit publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune. For further information on Camp Lejeune: VHA Office of Public Health has a Website on Camp Lejeune historical water contamination at: publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp.

The U.S. Marine Corps encourages all those who lived or worked at Camp Lejeune before 1987 to register for notifications regarding Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water at clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clwater.

As always please see your local County Veteran Service Officer if you have any questions. You can contact your local VSO at (218) 631-7617 or by email at david.anderson@co.wadena.mn.us and as always have a great week.