



News Release

United States Marine Corps DRAFT
Division of Public Affairs

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Marine Corps Encouraging Participation in Environmental Health Survey

HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS, WASHINGTON, DC - Marine Corps officials are trying to reach about 16,500 former residents of Camp Lejeune's base housing who may have been exposed to a small amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the drinking water at the base prior to early 1985.

The effort is being made in support of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a public health service agency. ATSDR is attempting to survey residents who were possibly exposed to the drinking water at several of the housing areas.

The survey, which began in September 1999, is seeking parents of children born or conceived while living at base family housing at Camp Lejeune between 1968 and 1986.

If the ATSDR can locate a large enough population, they will conduct a health study that may enhance scientific understanding of the health risks associated with exposure to small amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the water supply. It is now known that VOCs were present in two of the base drinking water systems that provided water to base housing.

The survey focuses on two specific VOCs, tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE), often used in dry cleaning or as degreasers. Small amounts of those substances leaked into several Camp Lejeune water systems prior to early 1985.

Those water systems were shut down in 1985. All drinking water at Camp Lejeune is regularly tested and is safe to drink.

For the past year, Camp Lejeune and ATSDR officials have been trying to contact the former residents using a combination of methods such as direct mail, news releases around military bases, notices in military publications, and open houses. Despite these efforts, a sufficient number of people have not been located. We recognized up front, that there would be significant challenges in locating a large enough portion of the population.

In an effort to extend its media outreach to potential survey participants, Marine Corps officials in Washington are asking national news organizations to assist them in locating these former

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Camp Lejeune residents and their families. "The health and welfare of Marines and their families is very important to us," said Colonel Mike Lehnert, head of the Marine Corps' Facilities and Services Division. "We have Marine families with questions that cannot be answered unless the study is completed, so it is very important to us that we do everything possible to help ATSDR reach as many of the former residents as we can." Lehnert added that it is important for all individuals who are part of the survey to participate, whether or not they have experienced any health concerns."

The 35 question health survey is conducted by telephone and attempts to gather data for use in a follow-on scientific research study about the effects that these substances may have on children when exposed before birth.

All families whose children were born or conceived at Camp Lejeune between 1968 and 1986 are encouraged to participate in this survey, whether or not the child has exhibited any health concerns. To participate, call the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at (800) 639-4270. NORC is conducting the survey for the ATSDR.

For more information about the ongoing study, call the ATSDR at (888) 42-ATSDR, extension 5132. The Marine Corps has also established a toll free number to obtain general information. The toll free number is (877) 261-9782. All media queries should be directed to Capt Steve Butler, Public Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps.

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