



# Advisory Opinions

Advisory Opinions are usually requested when:

- **The question at hand is too complex or unusual to be resolved locally**
- Involves a conflict in existing regulation or policy
- Has a potential impact to the broader VA, beyond the particular case at hand
- May affect existing policy issues relating to a larger group of Veterans
- Camp Lejeune Advisory Medical Opinions fall into this category

## Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO



**Subject:** Camp Lejeune F/U: briefing to DEPSEC and SECVA  
**Location:** Room 628 VANTs 72360

**Start:** Mon 06/04/2012 10:00 AM  
**End:** Mon 06/04/2012 10:50 AM  
**Show Time As:** Tentative

**Recurrence:** (none)

**Meeting Status:** Not yet responded

**Organizer:** Cassano, Victoria

**Required Attendees:** Cassano, Victoria; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
(SES); Cross, Gerald M. (SES EQV); Walters, Terry; Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO

**Optional Attendees:** [REDACTED]

**When:** Monday, June 04, 2012 10:00 AM-10:50 AM (GMT-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada).  
**Where:** Room 628 VANTs 72360

**Note:** The GMT offset above does not reflect daylight saving time adjustments.

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Victoria Cassano has invited you to a conference call: Camp Lejeune F/U briefing.

This conference is scheduled to begin on June 04 2012 at 10:00 AM EST+ DST (New York).

To access this conference via telephone, please call 1-800-767-1750.

When prompted for your conference code, please enter 72360 on your telephone keypad.

Please do not disclose this information to any unauthorized parties, as the privacy of your conference may be compromised.



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Talking Points  
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## Talking Points Camp Lejeune Medical Opinions

### Subject Matter Expert Panel

1. As the investigation of the water contamination at Camp Lejeune continues, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is well prepared to adjudicate claims for conditions that may be related to the drinking water at the Marine Corps Base between 1957 and 1987. VA began this process of ensuring claims were consistently and objectively adjudicated by consolidating all Camp Lejeune claims processing in the VA Regional Office (VARO), Louisville, Ky.
2. This situation is different than similar concerns over the public health effects of environmental exposures for which the VA has received claims. Most other environmental exposure concerns (Agent Orange; Hexavalent Chromium; burn pits) occurred in combat zones during the prosecution of a war, leaving very little ability for environmental monitoring or remediation. The situation at Camp Lejeune occurred over a prolonged period of time, in the mainland United States, where, since 1971, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other regulatory bodies have established safe levels of toxicants in water and air and the appropriate methods to test for these toxicants.
3. Laws enacted since 1971 provide for the evaluation of all commercial products, the documentation of their potential risks and the means to monitor both the environment and potentially exposed individuals.
4. The work of many government agencies including the Department of the Navy, The Department of Defense, the EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease registry (ATSDR), have elucidated some of the locations and levels of the various known contaminants. Despite these efforts, the exact quantification of particular contaminants will be difficult to ascertain due to the duration of the contamination and the intricacies of the water supply at Camp Lejeune.
5. Many conditions have been reportedly associated with several of the contaminants at Camp Lejeune. However, some of these associations are extremely weak and do not rise to the level of a statistically significant association.
6. Other contaminants, primarily Benzene, Vinyl Chloride, Trichloroethylene (TCE) and Tetrachloroethylene (aka Perchloroethylene, "PERC" or PCE) have mature bodies of literature linking these contaminants with particular health outcomes.

For instance Benzene was removed as an additive from gasoline because of concerns over certain leukemias developing in persons exposed to the fumes containing Benzene.

7. Even for these four contaminants, the determination of any one Veteran's risk of developing an adverse health outcome rests on their level of exposure, or the dose. The dose is dependent upon many factors:
  - a. How long the Servicemember was at Camp Lejeune during this period, including multiple tours; Temporary duty away from the base
  - b. Whether the Servicemember lived on or off the base
  - c. The Servicemember's duties during the periods s/he was stationed at the base: Examples would be:
    - i. Duties requiring vigorous physical activity outdoors would increase the amount of water consumed
    - ii. Duties involving proximity to steam or boiling water would increase the possibility of inhalational exposure
8. For all the reasons stated above, it is imperative that Veterans with claims related to drinking water at Camp Lejeune be evaluated by subject matter experts in the field of environmental medicine.
9. VA has established a team of 30 subject matter experts (SMEs) board eligible or certified in occupational and environmental medicine, internal medicine and neurology to provide advisory medical opinions for these claims. These physicians all have extensive experience in this field and are comfortable evaluating the many variables associated with this exposure incident.
10. In addition, as with other advisory medical opinions, these SMEs will be able to consult with oncologists, endocrinologist and other specialist to provide a well reasoned opinion.
11. VA believes that this is the best way to adjudicate claims in a fair and impartial manner, based upon scientific fact, but as always giving the benefit of the doubt to the Veteran.



**From:** Sampsel, James, VBAVACO  
**Sent:** Monday, October 15, 2012 10:38 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Camp Lejeume CJ

[REDACTED]  
This is the information I have.

The issue here is the conducting of C&P exams for Camp Lejeune related claims. Dr. Cassano's plan was to provide her training to certain VHA environmental medical specialist so that they could make consistent decisions on which diseases would warrant service connection. Her idea grew out of the review we did in Louisville. The plan was to have a 2-stage medical exam with the environmental medical experts conducting the first review for service connection. Then, if service connection was granted, a C&P exam would be conducted locally to determine the percentage level of disability. Dr. Cassano conducted her training for the first group of experts at Louisville during early September. She then left for DoD and said that Dr. Koopmeiners would be taking over.

The location of these experts is also an issue. The original idea was to have them travel to Louisville on a rotating basis and review files there. That changed to having an expert in each VHA VISN, but I heard that this was not practical. Therefore, the location and method of file review is still undecided. An additional problem is based on the new public law providing health care benefits to CL Veterans and their families. Some in VBA think that this will lead to a flood of disability claims that will be unmanageable for the Louisville RO and will result in each RO processing CL claims with special teams. So far there does not appear to be flood of disability claims. Eventually, a determination will be needed on whether or not all claims will continue to be processed through Louisville. This will affect the 2-stage medical evaluation process. Modifications to the CL training letter are on hold until some of these issues are resolved.

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**From:** Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO  
**Sent:** Friday, October 12, 2012 3:39 PM

[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Camp Lejeume CJ

[REDACTED]  
Please copy [REDACTED] on your response as I will be out of the office next week. Louisville tells me they are in discussions with VHA(?) about this.

Brad

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[REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, October 12, 2012 3:33 PM  
**To:** Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO  
**Subject:** RE: Camp Lejeume CJ

Good question...checking.

**From:** Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO  
**Sent:** Friday, October 12, 2012 12:23 PM  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Camp Lejeune CJ  
**Importance:** High

[REDACTED]

Was Louisville provided with specific guidance for where medical opinion requests were to be sent?

Brad

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[REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, October 12, 2012 11:15 AM  
[REDACTED], Flohr, Brad, VBAVACO  
**Subject:** FW: Camp Lejeune CJ

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 11, 2012 8:02 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Camp Lejeune CJ

[REDACTED] Dr. Cross asked me to give you a call about the plans for CJ. It appears that request for opinions are still going to the general C&P doctors at the various medical center. As you know we have trained SMEs to handle these claims. Our third training section is schedule early November in Louisville.

Thank you

