



DMA-11-004 - REVISED
January 9, 2012

FACT SHEET

Examinations Based on Exposure to Contaminated Drinking Water at Camp Lejeune

BACKGROUND

Veterans who served at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, were potentially exposed to contaminants present in the base water supply prior to 1987. The chemical compounds involved have been associated by various scientific organizations with the possible development of certain chronic diseases. However, many unanswered questions remain regarding the extent of base water contamination, the type and duration of exposure experienced by base personnel, and the likelihood that contaminant levels in the water supply were high enough to result in a particular disease.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) issued Revised Training Letter 11-03 on November 29, 2011, addressing processing disability claims based on exposure to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune. The updated Training Letter incorporates multiple recommendations provided by other interested organizations, including the Department of Defense, Department of Justice, and Office of Management and Budget. It also reflects the Environmental Protection Agency's revised assessment of trichloroethylene (TCE), now characterized as "carcinogenic to humans" by all routes of exposure.

This Revised Fact Sheet is intended to notify compensation and pension (C&P) examiners of information that may be included in examination requests for Veterans with claims based on exposure to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune.

EXAMINATION REQUESTS

1. Claims Based on Exposure

Service connection for any disability claimed to have resulted from contaminated water exposure at Camp Lejeune requires sufficient medical evidence that the disability is related to that exposure. This medical evidence will generally come from a competent

and qualified medical examiner who provides an opinion, justified with a rational scientific explanation, establishing a medical nexus between the claimed disability and the exposure. The National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council (NRC) has determined the diseases listed in Appendix B of VBA Training Letter 11-03 (Revised) are associated in a limited/suggestive manner with the chemical contaminants in the water at Camp Lejeune. However, this does not mean that service connection can automatically be established for a Camp Lejeune Veteran claiming service connection for one of these diseases. It is up to a competent medical authority, based on each Veteran's individual case, to determine whether it is at least as likely as not that the claimed disease or disability has resulted from the contaminant exposure at Camp Lejeune

2. Information Included with Examination Requests

When examinations are requested, it should be kept in mind that these claims represent a unique situation for VA medical examiners. Examiners must determine, on a case-by-case basis whether a particular claimed condition is linked to contaminated water exposure. In order to assist examiners with their assessment and determination, regional offices will provide examiners with the Appendices to VBA Training Letter 11-03 (Revised) listed below:

- **Appendix A**, *Internet websites related to the issue of contaminated water at Camp Lejeune*
- **Appendix B**, *Diseases potentially associated with exposure to contaminants present in the Camp Lejeune water supply between 1957 and 1987*
- **Appendix C**, *Websites describing potential health effects of exposure to chemical contaminants present in the water supply of Camp Lejeune between 1957 and 1987*
- **Appendix D**, *Notice to Examiners Evaluating Claims Based on Service at Camp Lejeune.*

3. Inadequate Examinations

This information in the documents provided with the examination requests is intended to provide examiners with an adequate basis for providing a reasoned opinion. This opinion is a critical element for evaluating the claim. Therefore, if the examiner fails to provide a reasoned opinion and resorts to a statement such as "an opinion cannot be made without resort to mere speculation," the examination will be returned as inadequate unless there is a scientifically based reasonable explanation for why the opinion cannot be rendered.

4. Rescissions

The Guidance in VBA Training Letter 11-03 (Revised) supersedes the Camp Lejeune section of VBA Training Letter 10-03, Environmental Hazards in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Military Installations. As such, the information contained in the documents

accompanying the examination requests replaces any prior documents or VBA Fast Letters received with examination requests for claims based on environmental exposures at Camp Lejeune.

5. Reference

VBA Training Letter 11-03 (Revised), Processing Disability Claims Based on Exposure to Contaminated Drinking Water at Camp Lejeune, November 29, 2011, found on VBA's Training Letter webpage at <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/publicat/Letters/TrngLtrs.htm>

**For additional information not covered in this Fact Sheet please contact:
DEMO at (727) 540-3800, visit the DEMO website at <http://vaww.demo.va.gov>, or
send an inquiry to the DEMO Corporate mailbox at
CorporateMailbox.DEMO@va.gov**