

Exposure to Contaminated Drinking Water at Camp Lejeune

In the early 1980s, at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, NC, it was discovered that two on-base water-supply systems were contaminated with the volatile organic compounds trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser, and perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning agent. Benzene, vinyl chloride, and other compounds were also found to be contaminating the water-supply systems. The water systems were contaminated from August 1953 through December 1987.

Although there is conflicting scientific evidence regarding long-term health effects of potential exposure, there is limited or suggestive evidence of an association between certain diseases, particularly kidney diseases/cancer and leukemias/lymphomas, and the chemical compounds found at Camp Lejeune during the period of contamination. VA considers disability

compensation claims based on exposure to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune on a case-by-case basis, with deference to medical opinions provided by experts in environmental medicine.



Requirements for Service Connection

- You must be a Veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable
- You must have served at Camp Lejeune during the period of contamination (August 1953 through 1987)
- You must have a current disease and a medical opinion that states the disease is at least as likely as not due to exposure to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune

Claims based on exposure to the contaminants at Camp Lejeune have been consolidated to our regional office in Louisville, KY. This was done to ensure that claims based on exposure are processed by employees who know the history of the water contamination, and who are committed to ensuring that each Veteran's claim is fully developed for information concerning length of duty at Camp Lejeune, and where the Veteran lived and worked. Normally, VA will request a VA medical examination and an opinion regarding the relationship of the disease to service at Camp Lejeune. The Veteran's claims file is made available to the subject matter expert (SME) in the Veterans Health Administration who is asked to provide the opinion. The SME reviews all available evidence concerning the claimant's service at Camp Lejeune, as well as family history and exposures prior to and post-service, and all scientific and medical literature related to the particular claimed disabilities, and renders an opinion that is consistent with the Veteran's exposure.

VBA Actions to Date

To ensure consistent and accurate decisions for Camp Lejeune Veterans, VBA has taken the following steps:

- Issued a training letter on environmental exposures on April 26, 2010;
- Consolidated processing of Camp Lejeune claims to the Louisville Regional Office and provided specific training to personnel in Louisville in December 2010. The average days to process these claims has fallen from 337 days in September 2011 to 285 days at the end of 2014;
- Provided a letter to regional offices establishing policies in January 2011;
- Reviewed prior Camp Lejeune associated claims in January 2011;
- Established a decision indicator to track these claims in February 2011;
- Issued a Camp Lejeune training letter on April 27, 2011 (revised November 29, 2011); and
- Continues to meet regularly with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Community Assistance Panel.

Camp Lejeune Claims – Update – April 2015

Statistics (as of February 28, 2015)

A total of 9,636 Veterans have received a decision on a claim related to exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, as outlined in the table below. Of the 9,636 decisions, 778 were granted and 8,909 were denied. VBA has granted 1,226 Camp Lejeune-related issues and denied 21,650 issues that were claimed to be related Camp Lejeune. However, it is important to note that 5,819 of the 9,636 Veterans are currently receiving VA benefits (63.2%) for EHCL and/or non-EHCL disabilities.

*Data Through Jan 11, 2011 through Feb 28, 2015

UNIQUE VETERANS APPLIED FOR EHCL ISSUE	NUMBER OF GRANTS	NUMBER OF DENIALS
9,636	778	8,909
Environmental Hazard Camp Lejeune (EHCL) SUMMARY		Totals
Total EHCL Veterans Served		9,636
Total Active Awards By EHCL Veteran		5,819
% of EHCL Veterans Receiving Benefits (for EHCL and/or non-EHCL disabilities)		63.2%
Total Veterans Not Receiving Benefits		3,385
% of EHCL Veterans Not Receiving Benefits		36.8%
Total Active IU Awards By EHCL Veteran		433
% of EHCL Veterans with IU		7.4%
Total Pending EHCL Claims		3,831
Total Completed EHCL Claims		12,894

A breakdown of the EHCL decisions by condition (i.e., issue) is provided in the table that follows according to disease category. Nine of the disease categories in the table were identified in the National Research Council report. An additional four diseases are included in the table as they are known potential associations with the contaminants involved. The grant rate for those thirteen disease categories is 14.1%. The majority of granted issues are related to Bladder Cancers.

Claim issues are denied when there is no credible medical opinion establishing a link between exposure to the contaminants and subsequent development of the claimed disability. This is reflected most in the 17,186 miscellaneous conditions that have been denied. In each of these, there was no or insufficient medical evidence establishing that it was at least as likely as not that the condition was associated with exposure to the contaminants in the water.

Please note that this information does not reflect the number of unique Veterans who have received decisions. Rather, it reflects the number of individual medical issues decided, as Veterans may submit claims for multiple issues. A total of 12,894 claims have been decided, and 3,831 Camp Lejeune claims are currently pending.



Camp Lejeune Claims – Update – April 2015

Analysis of Claims Folder Information by Category of Disease By Issue: *Data Through Jan 11, 2011 through Feb 28, 2015						
	<u>Condition:</u>	<u>Total claimed:</u>	<u># granted</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#denied:</u>	<u>%</u>
1	Autoimmune disorders:	231	17	7.4%	214	92.6%
2	Breast Cancer**	193	59	30.6%	134	69.4%
2a	Breast Cancer – Male	90	20	22.2%	70	77.8%
2b	Breast Cancer - Female	103	39	37.9%	64	62.1%
3	Bladder Cancer	680	128	18.8%	552	81.2%
4	<u>Liver Cancer:[1]</u>	85	13	15.3%	72	84.7%
5	Kidney Cancer:	451	71	15.7%	380	84.3%
6	Chronic Renal Disease:	339	62	18.3%	277	81.7%
7	<u>Leukemias and lymphomas:[2]</u>	590	127	21.5%	463	78.5%
8	<u>Lung Cancer[3]</u>	278	30	10.8%	248	89.2%
9	Neurobehavioral Disorders:	1011	20	2.0%	991	98.0%
10	Prostate Cancer	802	121	15.1%	681	84.9%
11	Hepatic Steatosis	182	16	8.8%	166	91.2%
12	Parkinson's Disease	185	50	27.0%	135	73.0%
13	Esophageal Cancer	172	21	12.2%	151	87.8%
	Total Primary Disease Categories	5,199	735	14.1%	4,464	85.9%
14	Miscellaneous Conditions	17,677	491	2.8%	17,186	97.2%
	Total all claimed conditions	22,876	1,226	5.4%	21,650	94.6%