



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta, GA 30341-3724

January 16, 2013

General Allison Hickey
Under Secretary for Benefits
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear General Hickey:

The purpose of this letter is to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs preliminary information regarding our assessment of volatile organic compound (VOC) exposures in drinking water distributed by the Hadnot Point and Holcomb Boulevard water treatment plants at the United States Marine Corps (USMC) Base Camp Lejeune.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has conducted a series of environmental and epidemiologic assessments of contaminated drinking water at USMC Base Camp Lejeune. The foundation of our effort is based on modeling of the contamination of the drinking water supply before 1987. The modeling was necessary because there were relatively few drinking water samples tested for VOCs during the period of contamination; none prior to 1982, when VOC contamination was first detected.

ATSDR has focused on three different drinking water distribution systems: Tarawa Terrace, Hadnot Point, and Holcomb Boulevard. We released the final Tarawa Terrace drinking water system report in June 2007. That report concluded that former Marines and their families who lived in Tarawa Terrace family housing units during the period November 1957 through February 1987 received drinking water contaminated with the dry-cleaning solvent tetrachloroethylene (PCE) at levels above the current EPA maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 5 ppb. The executive summary of the report is located on our website at:

http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/docs/TT_Executive_Summary_June142007_508.pdf

ATSDR has developed additional models for the Hadnot Point and Holcomb Boulevard water distribution systems. We have drafted our final report and completed peer review. The report is currently in clearance. We expect to release the final report of these water models sometime in spring 2013. Preliminary findings for Hadnot Point indicate that the dates of contaminated drinking water differ from the dates of contamination at Tarawa Terrace. The dates of operation and the sources of contamination to the drinking water supplied by Hadnot Point are independent of the drinking water from Tarawa Terrace.

According to our water modeling, we estimate that the first month any VOC exceeded the current EPA MCL in finished water was August 1953, and at least one VOC exceeded its current MCL in Hadnot Point drinking water from August 1953 through January 1985.

I hope this information is useful as the Department of Veterans Affairs evaluates claims from veterans who served at USMC Camp Lejeune prior to the release of our full water modeling report in the spring. ATSDR is also on schedule to release its mortality study and birth defects and childhood cancers study in spring 2013. When we finalize our water modeling and these epidemiologic studies, I will make certain that we brief the Department of Veterans Affairs staff on our findings. I would also like to recognize the efforts of your Department in supporting ATSDR's work and serving Camp Lejeune veterans and their families who were exposed to contaminated drinking water.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Portier', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Christopher J. Portier, Ph.D.
Director, National Center for
Environmental Health, and
Agency for Toxic Substances and
Disease Registry