

Measures taken to prevent future water contamination

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final part in a series about the drinking water in the Camp Lejeune/MCAS New River system, and focuses on the base's future plans and concerns.

By Cpl. Dave Mundy

As base officials embark on a cleanup of old waste sites that have threatened the water supply, the institution of programs to effectively manage hazardous wastes is slated to prevent future contamination of ground water in the Camp Lejeune/MCAS New River area.

"Most of the problems we are dealing with stem from years ago, when solvents and fuels were used all over the place and routinely dumped," said B. W. Elston, assistant chief of staff, facilities, MCB. "Over the years, it built up. But now we have a very intensive hazardous waste/hazardous material program."

Regular inspections of all sites where hazardous materials and wastes are used or stored is at the heart of the base's management program.

"We inspect units and work sites on a regular basis," Elston said. "Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic and Headquarters, Marine Corps also inspect, plus we are inspected by the state and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Very few municipalities, I'd say, are inspected as often or as thoroughly as our public

works are. Violations are reported promptly and corrected immediately."

The inspections, rules and regulations regarding the handling and storage of hazardous materials all make for a lot of paperwork.

"It is time-consuming and, technologically and logistically, very difficult," Elston admitted. "It's frustrating to everyone involved, because those units have another mission: training their Marines for combat. But it's necessary to ensure that the environment is maintained and public health is protected."

The management goes beyond mere inspections. The base recently sponsored a week-long training program for Marines involved with the handling and storage of hazardous materials and wastes, and included briefings about state and federal regulations and procedures. One session of the course was set aside for unit commanders as well.

"It's important for unit commanders to be aware of their responsibilities," Elston noted. "They can be held personally responsible for the hazardous waste disposal practices of their units."

Even as the base stands guard against future contamination, the cleanup of old hazardous waste sites will soon begin.

The base will soon have a Federal Facilities Agreement to outline the coordination between the base, state and federal agencies in the cleanup effort, which is Phase III of the Installation Restoration Program.

Camp Lejeune is awaiting the release of the EPA's National Priorities Listing, which is that agency's ranking of the nation's most threatening hazardous waste sites. A listing on the NPL will qualify the base for Federal funds in the cleanup effort.

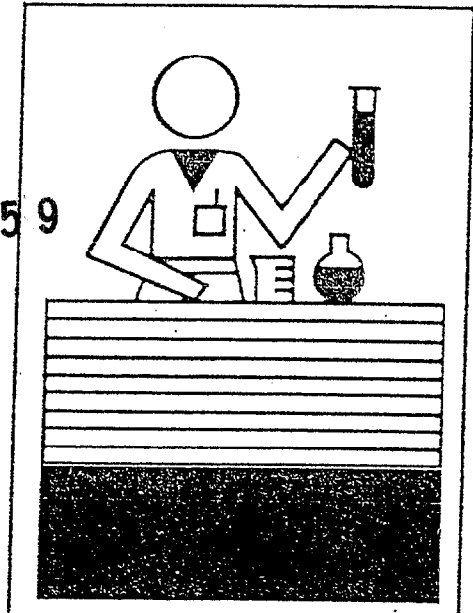
Part of the cleanup process is already underway. In the Hadnot Point Industrial Area, for example, monitoring of wells known to be contaminated is continuing, as well as testing of soil gases and air monitoring in underground workspaces.

In addition to cleaning up the sites where contaminants are known to have entered the water system, the base is also

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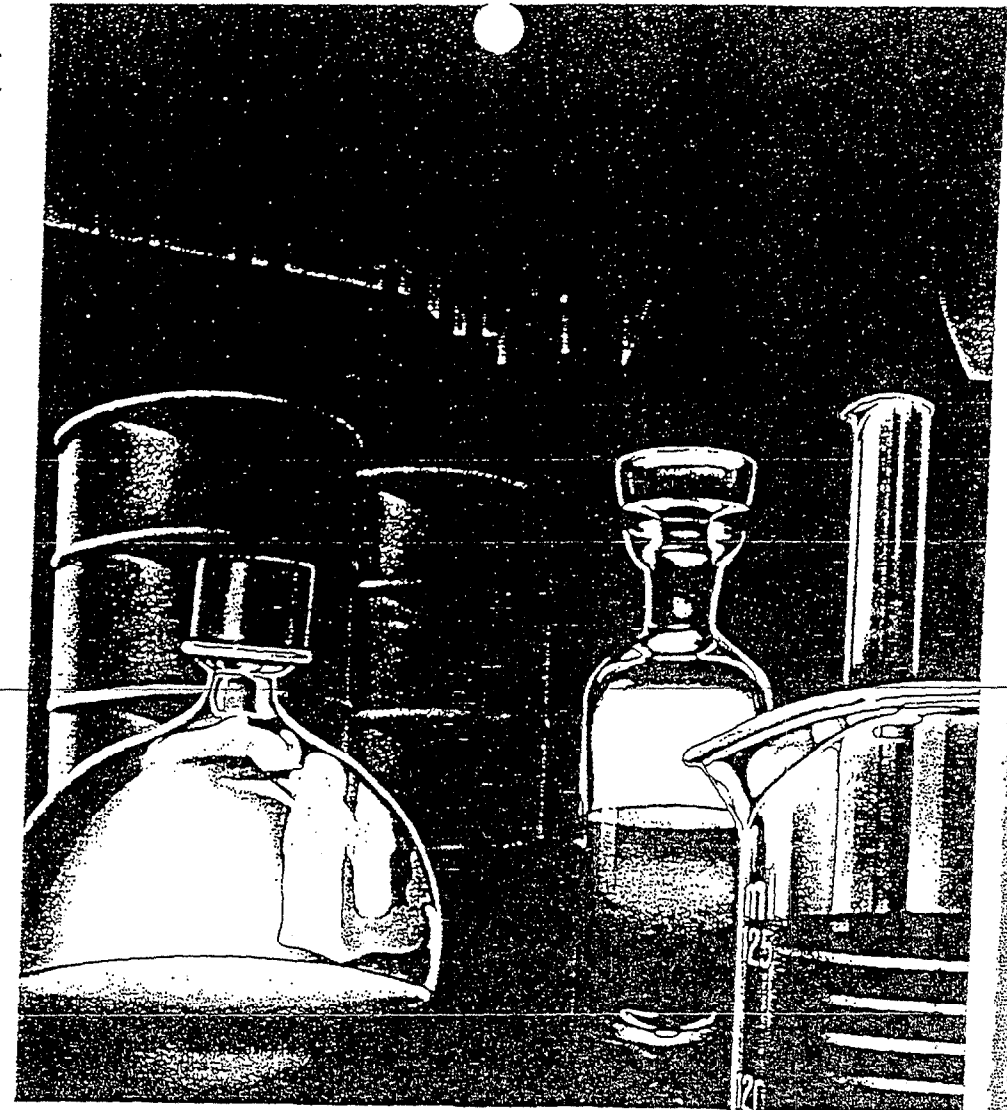
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In addition to cleaning up the sites where contaminants are known to have entered the water system, the base is also



trying to get a step ahead.

“The U. S. Geological Survey is doing a study right now, mapping how contamination might move through the groundwater in our soil,” Elston said. “If we know the nature, type and consistency of the soil and how the groundwater moves within it, we can predict where contaminants might move and then take preventive action.”

But, whatever the cleanup method used, the process will be lengthy and costly.

“Initially, we hope to have funding from DERA,” Elston said. “Thereafter, we’ll be using our own funds. I don’t know how long it will take, but it will be very, very expensive.”

While the cleanup process will

eliminate mistakes of the past, it remains the concern of Marines aboard Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River to avoid future mishaps.

“The best way to avoid future contamination is to have good house-keeping in maintenance areas,” said Elizabeth Betz, base chemist. “If someone is sloppy, it will get into the system.”

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