



The Hidden Contaminants of Camp Lejeune Water in Plain Sight: Uncovering the Full Picture.

An opinion report by Richard Grabowski

Some people believe they won't receive healthcare or compensation if their medical conditions are not on the VA's "presumptive conditions" list for Camp Lejeune Water Contamination.

That is a HUGE mistake.



Presumptive Conditions and the Nexus.

Presumptive conditions are illnesses and diseases signed into law and used by VA to award benefits without requiring the veteran to “prove” the condition was caused while on active duty.

There may be other requirements placed on veterans for benefits, but the link between certain conditions and the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune has been written into bills, passed by Congress, and signed into law by the President.

Not having a presumptive condition does not prevent veterans from filing for benefits for any condition they have and believe was caused by the water at Camp Lejeune.

*If a veteran leaves it up to the VA to decide if there is a link between a condition other than the eight presumptive conditions and a “contaminant of concern” found in the water at Camp Lejeune, their claim **will** be rejected.*

In this case, the link between the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune and any condition you want to file a claim for must pass a standard specifying your condition was “at least as likely as not” caused by the contaminants.

To pass that standard, the veteran must provide a nexus letter signed by a medical professional in good standing who agrees that certain contaminants caused your condition(s). The medical professional must provide the accompanying documents informing his assertion that a contaminant(s) caused your condition.

Essentially, you must provide evidence linking a contaminant to your condition.

Many people interpret this to mean they must prove the link exists. That is NOT what is being asked for.



This article highlights how a nexus may be identified by the nearly one hundred contaminants in the water at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina and their adverse health effects on individuals who served or worked there.

As a United States Marine, I spent nearly three years of active duty on the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina between September 1977 and September 1981. My military experiences helped shape the remainder of my life; for the better.

However, some aspects of my time in the Marine Corps weigh heavily on me, specifically the multiple cancers, loss of organs and muscle groups, and various other ailments that I have either been afflicted with or continue to battle.



A little History

Within a year or so after completing chemotherapy for my first cancer in 2008, I unexpectedly received a health survey from the Marine Corps/Department of the Navy. The survey sought to collect medical information from those stationed on the base and requested a release of medical records so in-depth research could be performed.

I elected to participate in the survey, submitted my information, and wondered if something there caused my cancer(s) and other conditions.

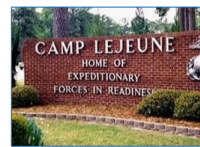
Almost a decade later, The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) published those surveys' findings and quantified the illnesses connected to those living or working on the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. My first cancer was not on the list.

Morbidity Study of Former Marines, Employees, and Dependents
Potentially Exposed to Contaminated Drinking Water at U.S.
Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

April, 2018



**ATSDR Assessment of the Evidence for the
Drinking Water Contaminants at Camp Lejeune
and Specific Cancers and Other Diseases**



January 13, 2017



These documents would ultimately inform Congress when establishing the presumptive conditions covered in future legislation.

The Marine Corps says the contamination was first discovered in 1980. However, In September 2010, a transcript from the [Committee On Science And Technology House Of Representatives](#) contains witness testimony that the Marine Corps leadership had knowledge of the contamination as early as 1974.

What isn't disputed is the duration of the contamination, which began in 1953 and ended after all contaminated wells were closed or cleared for use in 1987.

Reports also reveal the worse part of the contamination occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A 1982 report showed that in one of the drinking water treatment plants, "trichloroethylene levels were 280 times over what would currently be allowed in drinking water in this country, and it is five times the level that was found, at about that same time, in the water in Woburn, Massachusetts."

Remember Erin Brockovich? You had 5 times more contamination from this one contaminant than the residents of Woburn.

A 2005 National Academy of Sciences panel said that Camp Lejeune water contamination was the "largest drinking water contamination of any population of humans in this country" for just that one contaminant.

Giving the benefit of the doubt to the Marine Corps and accepting the contaminants were discovered in 1980, It would take another **seven years** before all the contaminated wells were closed and another **seventeen years** before [The Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012](#) required the Veterans Administration to begin accepting claims for conditions stemming from the contamination.



Although that bill provided for the “medical needs of veterans, their families, and survivors through improved healthcare, housing, education, and memorial services,” there was no financial compensation for any disability. There was no compensation for medical bills, lost wages, or pain and suffering, you simply received medical benefits.

Obviously, very few claims were approved, and my initial claims were indeed rejected, sighting a lack of scientific evidence in the nexus letter.

Under this 2012 Camp Lejeune healthcare law, VA provided healthcare for certain conditions deemed “presumptive” to veterans and contractors who worked there for 30 days or more.

Let that linger a moment. Contamination levels were so high you were deemed contaminated in as little as thirty days.

The Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 stipulated the following eight conditions to be presumptive. That is, conditions presumed to be connected to the “contaminants of concern” and codified into law.

- Adult leukemia
- Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- Bladder cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

In addition, if you have one of the following 15 conditions, you may receive healthcare through the VA but may be subject to **paying a co-payment**. *That seems so wrong to me.*



- Bladder cancer
- Breast cancer
- Esophageal cancer
- Female infertility
- Hepatic steatosis
- Kidney cancer

- Leukemia
- Lung cancer
- Miscarriage
- Multiple myeloma
- Myelodysplastic syndromes

- Neurobehavioral effects
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Renal toxicity
- Scleroderma

Although it would take **another decade**, some relief finally arrived with the passage of the [Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2021](#), a bipartisan bill signed by President Biden on Aug. 10, 2022. This bill allows “certain individuals to sue and recover damages for harm from exposure to contaminated water.” However, the bill maintained the original eight presumptive conditions for Camp Lejeune.

That's 45 to 55 years after the Marine Corps knew the wells were polluted. Before this bill passed, there was no legal recourse to sue for damages.

Today, the Marine Corps acknowledges those who lived or worked on base for at least 30 days were definitely exposed to contamination. They have recognized that we not only drank the contaminated water but also ingested it, inhaled the steam from it (in showers or boiling water), and had dermal exposure from showering.



It has been a year since the 2021 bill was passed, and 0 (zero) claims have been resolved.

Bad Outcomes

Ashamedly, the Marine Corps relied on a North Carolina law that required a claimant to sue for damages within 10 years of an injury. This meant just about every suit was ended before it even began.

The hardest and saddest part of this is realizing anyone with a condition that manifested before about 2012, when [The Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012](#) passed, had no way of knowing their condition(s) may or may not have been tied to Camp Lejeune water contamination.

Technically, ATSDR published a Public Health assessment in 1997 and removed it in 2009.

Even if you were immediately aware of the ATSDR Public Health Assessment in 1997, you would have discovered it too late because the 10-year limit in North Carolinas' law would have been met. Meaning the clock for filing ran out on everybody who didn't already have a suit filed.

On one hand, the Marine Corps used this North Carolina law to prevent lawsuits from being initiated. On the other hand, when compelled by law to now do so, they restrict the retroactive payment of disability benefits only back to 2022, the year the bill was passed.

Today, you can sue the government for damages. However, nobody knows what that means yet. Will they reimburse for loss of income and incurred medical expenses? Will they compensate for the harm caused by their delay in notifying about the contaminants? What exactly will be compensated for? Time will tell, but this still looks to be an uphill battle.



The Marine Corps lack of transparency for at least four decades is a significant issue for those affected by the polluted water.

In some cases, the failure to provide timely information resulted in delayed treatment for conditions exacerbated over time. Had we known about the contamination in 1997 (the year ATSDR published the Public Health Assessment), 1990, or even 2000, we may have been able to treat my condition(s) sooner and prevented such a catastrophic outcome.

The delay also led to inaccurate or uncertain conclusions being drawn from doctors. Again, in my case, in a 2007 letter to another of my physicians, my oncologist wrote, "Certainly, the timing of his (type of) cancer is earlier than anticipated."

Had we known about the contamination decades earlier, we may have been able to manage or at least predict outcomes proactively. It also shows my oncologist was unnecessarily perplexed over the early onset of my cancer.

So what was in the water?



The official Marine Corps, Department of the Navy, and Congressional position, derived from the ATSDR reports, listed the “contaminants of concern” as Benzene, Trichloroethylene (TCE), Tetrachloroethylene (PCE), and Vinyl Chloride.

TCE and PCE are volatile organic compounds (fuels and solvents) used in machines' dry cleaning and cleaning metal.

Benzene is an industrial chemical used to make other chemicals that produce resins, plastics, synthetic fibers, and nylon. The chemical also produces pesticides, detergents, rubbers, drugs, dyes, and lubricants.

Vinyl chloride is a colorless gas that forms when TCE and PCE break down. The gas is used to produce polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which is then utilized in making a wide range of plastic products, such as pipes, coatings, and packaging materials.

In 1982, one well at Hadnot Point had contamination levels that exceeded 1400 parts per billion (ppb), with EPA's recommended acceptable level at 5 ppb.

ATSDR reported the toxins came from several sources, including leaky underground storage tanks, waste disposal sites, industrial spills, and improper disposal of waste materials.

Transcripts from the [House Committee on Science & Technology](#) reveal the Navy estimated that as much as 1,100,000 (one million one hundred thousand) gallons of fuel was floating on top of the groundwater table at Camp Lejeune.



I am befuddled that somebody did not miss one million one hundred thousand gallons of fuel.

So what about other conditions?

There are opportunities to develop claims for illnesses not on the presumptive list. However, the onus is on the veteran or civilian workers or family members and their medical and legal team to link their conditions directly to the contaminants.

When dealing with the VA, there is an important distinction between linking illnesses to contaminants and proving the contaminants caused the conditions. It is up to the claimant to supply scientific evidence their condition is *linked* to the contaminants.

The standard the Veterans Administration accepts is one where, in the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner, the condition you have is “at least as likely as not” caused by the contaminants AND supported by scientific evidence.

This is a pretty tough thing to do when you consider some of the most brilliant minds in science and medicine at ATSDR, backed by an inexhaustible sum of your taxes, have determined the only conditions presumed to be caused by the “contaminants of concern” are the eight they list as presumptive.

However, while developing my appeal for my original claim for my first cancer, I made an important discovery.

I noticed the phrase “**contaminants of concern**” repeatedly used in the available material from ATSDR and the VA. Many websites of lawyers and legal practices quote this as well.



I remember wondering if we are given a list of “contaminants of concern” and a list of conditions to go along with them, are there other contaminants not of concern?

Well, the answer to that question became a resounding Yes. As a matter of fact, the list contains almost 100 contaminants. And they all should have been Contaminants of Concern.

It would appear the ATSDR and the Marine Corps obfuscated the fact that more pollutants were involved in contaminating the water by adopting the phrase “contaminant of concern.”

Unfortunately, the real number of contaminants and the contamination levels are so great the EPA has listed Camp Lejeune as one of, if not the largest, [Superfund Sites](#) in America. And sure enough, there is a long list of contaminants found in the drinking water at Lejeune.

The Marine Corps does not inform you about the full list, the media has not reported it, and advertising law firms seem unaware there is a much longer list of contaminants with an expansive list of adverse health conditions.

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that some of the contaminants on this comprehensive list are banned by international treaties such as the [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#). This treaty aims to control and eliminate the production, use, and release of highly hazardous chemicals like the ones found in the water at Camp Lejeune.

Some examples include:



1. Aldrin: Aldrin is a pesticide included in the list of banned and restricted chemicals under the Stockholm Convention on POPs.
2. Chlordane: Chlordane is a pesticide also included in the list of banned and restricted chemicals under the Stockholm Convention on POPs.
3. Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs): PCBs are a group of synthetic organic chemicals that have been widely banned or restricted due to their persistence, toxicity, and potential for bioaccumulation. They are regulated under the Stockholm Convention on POPs.
4. Endosulfan (Endosulfan I, Endosulfan II, Endosulfan Aldehyde, Endosulfan Ketone): Endosulfan is a pesticide listed under the Stockholm Convention on POPs for global elimination.

Recognizing the breadth of nearly 100 contaminants, including the banned ones, sheds light on the magnitude of the situation and underscores the urgency for comprehensive action and justice for those affected. Even though ATSDR and the Marine Corps knew about the expanded list, they did not inform Congress about it. Nor did they research them like the four contaminants they call “contaminants of concern.”

Thus, we are led to believe there is a small list of contaminants with a small list of associated presumptive conditions. This is not the case.

And that's not all. While researching the contaminants related to my conditions, I located a document gathered in a FOIA request showing contamination by PFAS. PFAS are found in firefighting foam and are considered “forever chemicals” with serious negative health impacts.



However, there is a silver lining.

Knowing the broader list of contaminations means your condition may be connected to the drinking water after all.

To see the expanded listing of almost 100 contaminants, visit the website <http://camplejeunewater.net>. Here you can see and use the list to support your claims. The site contains links to the original government websites sources.

So how do you use the list?

Assuming you were on base for at least 30 days and have experienced adverse health effects not on the presumptive list, it may be wise to do the work necessary to create the nexus between the broader list of contaminants related to your health condition(s).

To be successful, your Nexus Letter must include scientific evidence that the contaminants in the water caused your condition. To claim conditions other than the ones on the “presumptive list” caused by the “contaminants of concern” probably won't work. It didn't work for me.

Remember, ATSDR and the Marine Corps have spent millions of dollars using some of the brightest minds in science and medicine to exhaustively research the “contaminants of concern” to establish the presumptive list.

Fortunately, brilliant minds in science and medicine have also investigated many contaminants on the expanded list. Researchers and practitioners worldwide have studied contaminants for decades and placed their research where it is open-access and peer-reviewed.



This means you have a vast and invaluable library of accepted research left open for peer review on an international level.

It is now up to you to correlate that research to your condition(s).

Yes, there is work to be done on your part. Fortunately, your library of information is nearly inexhaustible.

Remember, you do not need to prove anything beyond having your competent medical practitioner agree with the finding discovered in the peer-reviewed research and be willing to state specific contaminants have been linked to your condition to a level of “at least as likely as not” or “it is more likely than not” caused by them.

In other words, the research has already been done. Many contaminants found in the Lejeune water have been associated with many conditions. The most trustworthy research findings are the ones that are open access and peer review. Peer-reviewed and public-access research has a higher level of trust within the scientific community because the researcher asks the world to weigh in on their findings.

It is up to you and your medical and legal professionals to discover those documents with the links between your conditions and **any** contaminants in the water.

With so many contaminants in the water, it is unconscionable that they are not being “officially” recognized. But don’t let that stop you from pursuing claims using the expanded list of contaminants which in turn means a vastly expanded list of illnesses.

The salient point is the expanded list of contaminants is on a government website.



Many people, including children and babies, were exposed to some of the nastiest water imaginable and continue to suffer. Many have died as a result of their exposure. One contaminated site was the playground of a daycare center for children, and some tragic outcomes occurred because of that.

In an article published in The [Washington Post](#), the author opined, “One of the saddest places in America has to be the humble stretch of ground at a Jacksonville, N.C., cemetery called ‘Baby Heaven.’”

“Baby Heaven” is filled with row after row of infant graves.



Unfortunately, many claims have been rejected based on the selective use of the “contaminants of concern” by the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, ATSDR, congress, and lawyers unwilling to connect your condition against the full list of contaminants.



Do not sit idly by and wait to see if the VA will help you, despite the 2022 legislation. The odds are they will only if you have one of the presumptive illnesses caused by the four “contaminants of concern.”

Be persistent, use the expanded list, and work with your legal and healthcare professionals to submit the best claim possible.

Remember, one of, if not the most important part of your claim, is the nexus letter that you and your doctor (competent medical professional) create linking your condition(s) to any or of the contaminants in the water.

Share

I encourage you to share this information. Tell anyone you know who spent time at Camp Lejeune; tell your family and friends.

You may even want to inform your state's Senators and Congressman.

I live in Texas and contacted John Cornyn and Ted Cruz, the State Senators. Ted Cruz never responded to multiple requests for assistance, and John Cornyn's staff said the issue was unimportant. I also contacted my Congressman, Dr. Michael Burges, a physician whose staffers simply copied the information the VA had already sent me.

Pretty Shameful.

For the record, much of what you read here was discovered while doing my research for my claim. I am not a doctor or a lawyer. I am a Leatherneck and discovered something I think is important. I am sharing some of what I have benefited from during my claim process. I can not



and do not suggest anything you do stemming from my opinion here will or will not work for your particular situation.

You must find the links between your conditions and the contaminants.

Best of luck and semper fi.

Websites:

<https://camplejeunewater.net>

<http://lejeunecontaminatedwater.com/>

