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16 Nov 00

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJ: MCB CAMP LEJEUNE PUBLIC HEALTH STUDY

ISSUE: The Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), initiated a telephone survey in September 1999 to determine if there is sufficient data available to conduct a study to determine if there is an association between childhood illness and exposure to solvent contaminated water at MCB Camp Lejeune. The survey has high visibility, the potential to raise public alarm, and has resulted in claims against the federal government. The survey group consists of 16,500 women who either conceived or gave birth at Camp Lejeune between 1968 and 1986 (including 1968 and 1986) and may have been exposed to solvent contaminated drinking water. Eighty percent (13,200) of these women must respond in order for a statistically valid study to be conducted. To date, approximately 7,500 women have responded.

BACKGROUND:

- Contamination originated from both on and off-base. Off-base contamination resulted from a dry cleaning facility (ABC Cleaners) where contaminated groundwater migrated into on-base water supply wells at Tarrawa Terrace. These wells supplied drinking water to TT residents between 1958 and 1985. This site is being remediated by EPA via the Superfund account. On-base contamination resulted from on-base operations and past disposal practices in the Hadnot Point Industrial Area.
- Contamination was first discovered in 1980; however, the long-term health effects were unknown and no drinking water standards existed for the chemicals found at that time. Continued testing revealed increasing amounts of contamination and the wells were closed in 1985.
- As required by Federal environmental law, ATSDR conducted a Public Health Assessment (PHA) in 1996. The PHA indicated a potential for health hazards related to past exposure to drinking water contamination. Subsequently, a study was completed to determine if there were adverse pregnancy outcomes related to contamination exposure. The study was inconclusive. As a result, ATSDR is seeking to conduct this new study. (Part

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of ATSDR's motivation to conduct this study is to gather scientific data that may add validity/credibility to similar studies being conducted at other locations.)

- As the search for study participants broadens, this issue has received national attention. A few concerned individuals have also engaged the Marine Corps in a correspondence/telephone dialogue to gather information that may be used in legal claims. The Marine Corps has broadened our public affairs campaign via a national press conference on November 1 and through the use of press releases, briefings, and targeted advertising to assist ATSDR in their efforts to locate survey participants.

- If personal data indicates there may be a correlation between exposure to contaminated water and childhood illness (e.g., 8-10 incidents of childhood leukemia) and a statistically valid number of people respond to the survey, a full scale epidemiological health study will be conducted in approximately 2 years. If sufficient data is not collected, the study will not be conducted; however, public and political interest will likely continue and require a follow-up report and continuing action.

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27 Nov 00

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJ: MCB CAMP LEJEUNE PUBLIC HEALTH STUDY

ISSUE: The Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), initiated a telephone survey in September 1999 to determine if there is sufficient data available to conduct a study to determine if there is an association between childhood illness and exposure to solvent contaminated water at MCB Camp Lejeune. The survey has high visibility, the potential to raise public alarm, and has resulted in claims against the federal government. The survey group consists of 16,500 women who either conceived or gave birth at Camp Lejeune between 1968 and 1986 (including 1968 and 1986) and may have been exposed to solvent contaminated drinking water. Eighty percent (13,200) of these women must respond in order for a statistically valid study to be conducted. To date, approximately 7,500 women have responded.

BACKGROUND:

- Contamination originated from two sources. One source was from an off-base dry cleaning facility (ABC Cleaners) that migrated into on-base water supply wells that supplied drinking water to Camp Lejeune residents between 1958 and 1985. ABC Cleaners is involved in negotiations with the EPA regarding remediation of the contamination. Additional contamination originated from on-base operations involving solvent use (e.g., vehicle maintenance).
- Contamination was first discovered in 1980; however, it was uncertain where the contamination originated from or if the sample results were valid. Additionally, the long-term health effects were unknown and no drinking water standards existed for the chemicals found at that time. Continued testing confirmed the contamination was present and the wells were closed in 1985.
- As required by Federal environmental law, ATSDR conducted a Public Health Assessment (PHA) in 1994. The PHA indicated a potential for health hazards related to past exposure to drinking water contamination. Subsequently, a study was completed to determine if there were adverse pregnancy outcomes related to contamination exposure. The study was inconclusive.

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As a result, ATSDR is seeking to conduct this new survey. (Part of ATSDR's purpose to conduct this survey is to gather scientific data that may add validity/credibility to similar studies being conducted at other locations.)

- The Marine Corps and ATSDR have enlisted the support of the national news media to locate additional survey participants. On 1 Nov 2000, ATSDR and the Marine Corps issued a joint news briefing at the Pentagon. In late Oct 2000, Brigadier General (Select) Lehnert was interviewed by a Wisconsin affiliate of Fox News and CNN national news. Shortly after the press briefing, several television networks (local and national) and many publications (newspapers and professional publications) published stories which generated approximately 14,000 phone calls to the survey toll free line. The 14,000 calls represent 4,500 people (due to multiple calls). To date, ATSDR has returned calls to approximately 2,000 individuals; approximately 1,000 of those individuals were part of the survey. Of the remaining 2,500 individuals who called in, ATSDR has tried unsuccessfully to reach about 1,000. The remaining 1,500 haven't been contacted yet.

- A few concerned individuals have also engaged the Marine Corps in a correspondence/telephone dialogue to gather information that may be used in legal claims. At the same time, the Marine Corps will be broadening its public affairs campaign through the use of press releases, briefings, and targeted advertising to assist ATSDR in their efforts to locate survey participants.

- If personal data indicates there may be an association between exposure to contaminated water and childhood illness (e.g., 8-10 incidents of childhood leukemia) and a statistically valid number of people respond to the survey, a full scale epidemiological health study will be conducted in approximately 1 year. If sufficient data is not collected, the study will not be conducted; however, public and political interest will likely continue and require a follow-up report and continuing action.

- Action required: None, for information only.

Prepared by: Ms. Kelly Dreyer, GS-13
I&L (LFL), 695-8302

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