



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
2 NAVY ANNEX  
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
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PA  
17 OCT 2000

Mr. Thomas Townsend  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Townsend,

I appreciate your letter and thank you for your suggestions. I can assure you that I share your concern for the health and welfare of our Marines, Sailors and family members.

The purpose for the survey being conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry is to gather information about the effects that Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) may have had on children that were exposed to these substances at Camp Lejeune. As you know, it is important that ATSDR is able to gather a large enough sample of survey participants to reach a scientifically valid conclusion about any adverse effects resulting from VOC contamination.

The Marine Corps has always tried to inform the public about water well contamination at Camp Lejeune as verifiable information becomes available. When the source of VOC contamination was first identified in late 1984, Camp Lejeune Public Affairs released this information to the media and published an account of the contamination and clean-up efforts in the base newspaper, "The Globe." Subsequent "Globe" articles on drinking water contamination were published in 1989.

As ATSDR conducted their Public Health Assessment at Camp Lejeune in the mid 1990s, the Marine Corps first became aware of possible adverse health effects that could be linked to drinking water contamination. Consequently, when ATSDR began its first follow-on study in 1997, the Marine Corps made housing and birth records available to ATSDR, and began a cooperative effort to assist ATSDR in obtaining needed information.

This assistance has continued to the present, and has taken numerous forms. In 1999, the Camp Lejeune Public Affairs Office established an informational website, and put out a news release when the present ATSDR survey began. Then, in order to help ATSDR obtain the needed number of survey participants, the Marine Corps released an All Marine Administrative Message

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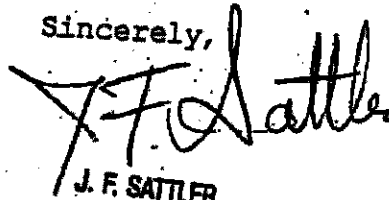
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(ALMAR) in August, 2000 to encourage participation. Base and civilian newspapers from as far away as Hawaii printed both of these releases, and the "The Retired Officer" magazine and "Marine Corps Times" also ran the story. Additionally, in January 2000 Camp Lejeune conducted an "open house" for individuals wanting to know more about the study and past contamination at Camp Lejeune. As a result of these efforts, active duty Marines and many retiree communities have been notified of the ATSDR study.

Unfortunately, as you correctly note, ATSDR has received only half the number of responses required to complete its study. In order to help eliminate this deficiency, the Marine Corps is currently evaluating a proposal to make a detailed press release about the ATSDR study to the national media. We want to release information responsibly, however. As such, the Marine Corps will confer with other affected federal agencies and decide on a course of action that will inform the greatest number of individuals, without causing undue alarm.

Once again, thank you for letting us know your concerns.

Sincerely,



J. F. SATTLER  
BRIGADIER GENERAL  
U.S. MARINE CORPS

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