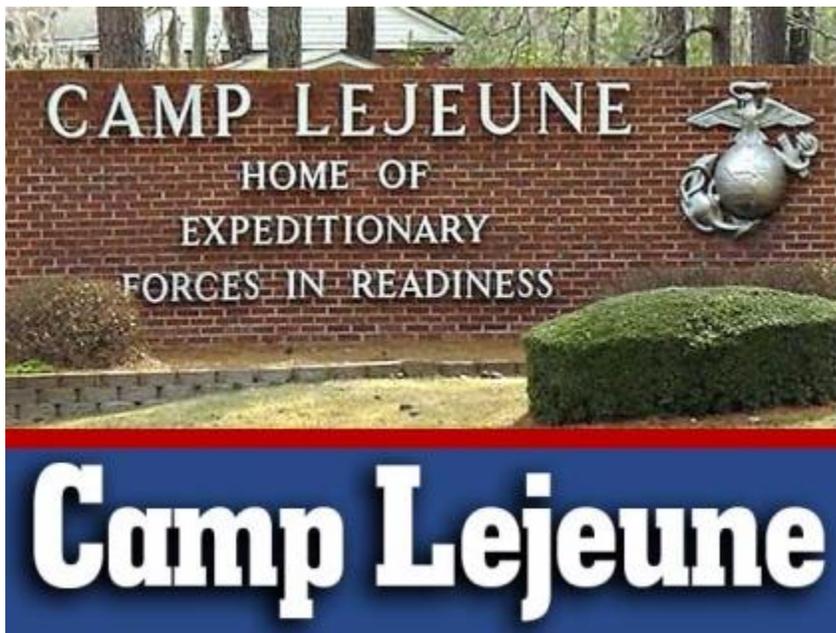


## Lejeune water contamination dated to 1950s

By THOMAS BRENNAN Daily News Staff

Published: Friday, February 21, 2014 at 12:00 PM.



For Darrell Kline, it's all just dates now.

When the 37 year old heard about the latest study conducted by BioMed Central and published in the Environmental Health Journal this week documenting contamination of Camp Lejeune water sources dating earlier in the 1950s, he wasn't shocked by the findings.

"It's all the same solvents, but it's probably earlier than we originally thought," said Kline, who was born and raised aboard Camp

Lejeune from 1981 to 1984. "I just wish the government had manned up and said they needed to fix it rather than probably just shoving it under the rug."

The study, released Wednesday, found that drinking water aboard Camp Lejeune was contaminated with chemicals from a drycleaning facility and a leaking fuel depot from the 1950s until 1985 — which is earlier than previous estimates.

A report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention dated Jan. 16 also cites similar findings.

Other sources of contamination not mentioned in the reports include leaking underground storage tanks, industrial-area spills and waste disposal sites, which are listed on the Agency of Toxic Substances and Disease Registry website: [atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune](http://atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune).

The biggest concern for Kline is the uncertainty of what, if anything, will happen to him or his family in the future and whether his undetermined stomach pain is not a much larger concern, he said.

His father, who was stationed on Camp Lejeune as a Marine, was diagnosed with testicular and prostate cancer recently.

To Kline, the government not taking care of the water contamination victims is a "slap in the face" for his dad's 24 years of military service.

The BioMed Central study conducted a mortality study of 154,932 Camp Lejeune residents and compared them to 154,969 Camp Pendleton, Calif. residents during the same time frame.

Camp Lejeune, according to the study had elevated mortality rates when compared to Pendleton. The CDC surveyed 12,598 families who had children at Camp Lejeune during the years of known contamination and found that mothers who ingested the water while pregnant were four times more susceptible to having babies born with spina bifida or other serious birth defects.

With a 16-month-old daughter who is currently healthy, Kline said he wonders how long the effects of the chemicals will stay within his family.

While he is concerned for her health, he does not blame the people who spilled or disposed of chemicals in days past.

“The government should foot the bill for everyone affected by the water,” Kline said. “I know too many people paying off medical bills for things linked to the water. Their problems are caused by the government and they need to take responsibility. They need to do more than they are doing.”

Some of the chemicals found in water samples include trichloroethylene or TCE, perchloroethylene or PCE, benzene and vinyl chloride or VC.

For children exposed in utero, possible side effects of these chemicals include eye and heart defects, low birth weight, major malformations, low birth weight and more. For people of all ages, the contaminated water may have caused non-Hodgkins lymphoma, rectal, bladder, breast or lung cancer, auto-immune diseases, renal failure, neurological effects and more, according to the report.

“Back in the day you poured stuff on the ground, it went away and you forgot about it,” Kline said. “People weren’t as environmentally conscious as they are nowadays.”

In 1982, the Corps discovered volatile organic compounds or VOC’s in two of its eight water treatment plants on base.

Tarawa Terrace for example, exceeded the maximum allowable levels of perchloroethylene or PCE for 346 months between November 1957 and February 1987. The most contaminated wells were shut down in February 1985 with the remainder of contaminated wells shut down by March 1, 1987, according to ADSTR.

Now, according to Marine Capt. Maureen Krebs, a Headquarters Marine Corps public affairs officer, the water at Camp Lejeune is an “important concern” and it is tested more often than required, meeting all government drinking water standards.

Krebs added that the Marine Corps has been actively identifying and notifying individuals who may have been exposed.

While the ATSDR study does state that, due to study limitations, it cannot provide definitive evidence for causality nor can it answer the questions of whether someone has been harmed at Camp Lejeune, Krebs said the Corps will continue to assist those who have experienced health issues they believe to be associated with the water they drank aboard the installation. Local hospitals, such as Onslow Memorial Hospital and Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, are suited to treat people with water-connected ailments or provide necessary referrals to specialists, according to public affairs representatives.

Onslow Memorial Hospital spokeswoman Amy Sousa said regardless of the cause of cancer or illness, treatment options are available.

Birth-defect treatment, she said, is based on whether a specialist is on staff for the affected system or organ.

“In general, we would encourage anyone with concerns to discuss their specific concerns with their doctor,” Sousa said. “It would be best if they discussed with their physician whether or not their symptoms could be related to water contamination.”

At both hospitals, no treatments specifically targets those who have been affected by the water contamination.

Because of the contaminated water, the federal government, in 2012, enacted the Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act. Within the act, Camp Lejeune veterans, families, rural veterans, elderly veterans are given healthcare if they were exposed to the contaminated water between 1957 and 1987. Healthcare for affected families and individuals is provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As of February 9, according to Stephen Wilkins, a spokesman for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Durham, 9,796 veterans and 954 family members have sought information on care. Of those veterans, 1,788 have reported at least 1 of the 15 covered conditions and 650 have been treated by the VA. Family members have reported 157 cases of suffering from the covered conditions.

Family members, according to Wilkins, should begin collecting documents proving eligibility and any bills, receipts and other documentation that can be used for determination and reimbursement. The VA, he said, will not charge copayments for hospital care or medical services provided to those affected by the water who have at least one of 15 of the acknowledged medical conditions.

To be eligible for care resulting from exposure to contaminated water, you must be a veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and must have served on Camp Lejeune between August 1953 and 1987. Lastly, a person must have a current disease and medical opinion that states the disease is a direct result of exposure to contaminated water. To apply, visit [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov), work with an accredited veteran service officer from a veteran service organization such as the Disabled American Veterans or Military Order of the Purple Heart or visit a local VA facility.

The Center for Disease Control did not respond to requests for information from The Daily News.

For more information about other studies being conducted, visit [atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune](http://atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune).

To learn more about the Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune’s Families Act of 2012, visit [www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book/benefits\\_contacts.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_contacts.asp).

For Camp Lejeune’s annual water quality reports, visit [Lejeune.marines.mil/OfficesStaff/EnvironmentalMgmt/AnnualReports.aspx](http://Lejeune.marines.mil/OfficesStaff/EnvironmentalMgmt/AnnualReports.aspx).

*Contact Daily News Military Reporter Thomas Brennan at 910-219-8453 or [thomas.brennan@jdnews.com](mailto:thomas.brennan@jdnews.com). Follow him on Twitter @thomasjbrennan.*

Copyright © 2014 <http://www.jdnews.com> — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.