EPA Superfunds: Veterans at Risk

May 16, 2009 posted by Robert O'Dowd

Veterans and dependents are at risk of exposure to contaminants from military bases listed on the EPA National Priority List (Superfund). Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) have not notified their memberships, even though the information on health effects is on an EPA website.

(WASHINGTON, DC) – The Pentagon owns 130 Superfund sites, the most of any organization. Veterans and dependents were exposed to contaminants at these sites, including carcinogens like TCE, PCE, benzene and radiation.

The Defense Authorization Bill for 2008 required the Pentagon to notify Camp Lejeune veterans, but only after the death of children from TCE contaminated wells.

Except for Camp Lejeune, there’s no legal requirement to notify veterans of the other 132 Superfund sites.

Camp Lejeune’s Water Contamination

Former Senator Elizabeth Dole was instrumental in requiring the Navy and Marine Corps to notify residents who may have been exposed to contaminated water at the Camp Lejeune.

An estimated one million people at Camp Lejeune may have been exposed to contaminated drinking water.

“Senator Elizabeth Dole, along with four of her colleagues, today introduced legislation to help protect our most susceptible populations, such as pregnant women, infants and children, against the negative health impacts of drinking water contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), a chemical commonly used in degreasing agents, paint and spot removers and adhesives,” according to a press release of August 1, 2007.

The amendment introduced by Dole and signed into law in the 2007 Defense Authorization Act required the Secretary of the Navy to notify those who may have been affected by the contaminated wells starting in 1958.

Benzene and Missing Documents

On May 13, 2009, the Camp Lejeune story took another twist when Senators Kay Hagan and Richard Burr of North Carolina requested a meeting with the Acting Secretary of the Navy the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment.
According the Senators Hagan and Burr, “new information [that] has surfaced regarding human exposure to volatile organic compounds in Camp Lejeune’s drinking water. This information calls into serious question the validity of the 1997 Public Health Assessment (PHA)…one of our constituents and his advocacy group found progress reports undertaken by a Department of the Navy (DON)-hired contractor in 1984 that showed high levels of benzene in an operating well…this finding was not previously made public not provided to ATSDR. We note that ATSDR omitted benzene from its 1997 PHA…this finding is one of the reasons ATSDR retracted the water contamination portion of its 1997 PHA….it has also come to our attention that the DON and the United States Marine Corps did not provide certain documents to ATSDR or the public until 2007.”

Other Military Sites

It’s unlikely that Congress will require DOD to take special steps to notify veterans and their dependents of the contaminants and health effects at other military sites on the EPA Superfund list.

Public service announcements of the contaminants and the health effects would be a relatively inexpensive way to communicate to veterans. However, don’t bet on DOD undertaking this type of effort.

In fact, EPA has an internet website which shows all of the contaminants and heath effects for all military bases and sites on the EPA National Priority List (Superfund).

Veteran Service Organizations

Part of the mission of Veteran Service Organization (VSOs) is to keep their membership informed of issues important to them and their families. Nothing could be more important than you and your family’s ill.

The American Legion, the VFW, the Marine Corps League and other VSOs have the resources to notify their memberships of the contaminants and health effects of military base on the EPA Superfund list. There are no indications of an organized attempt by VSOs to spread the word to their membership. The result is that veterans and their dependents are on their own.

Imagine for a moment that you are one of the thousands of veterans who served at bases now on the EPA Superfund list. Unlike someone injured on the job, there is no workman compensation for a veteran to cover his or her medical expenses or even the possibility of filing a tort lawsuit for injuries. The Supreme Court’s FERES doctrine prevents any veteran from filing a tort suit, even when an injury occurs from government negligence.

VA disability compensation is available, if you “connect the dots” of illness to military service. Even when the “dots are connected,” the veteran will be required to obtain a nexus statement from a physician linking the medical condition to military service. The veteran’s physician may be hesitant to sign a nexus statement and unsure about the correct legal terminology to use.

Independent Medical Evaluations (IMEs) are available, but can be expensive. A telephone call to a California doctor showed that the cost of a VA nexus opinion started at $3,000 and could go higher, depending upon the amount of documentation to review.

EPA’s Military Superfund Sites
EPA has identified the Contaminants of Concern at each Superfund site. According to EPA, “The chemical substances (i.e., hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants) listed below were identified as contaminants of concern (COC) for the site. COCs are the chemical substances found at the site that the EPA has determined pose an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment. These are the substances that are addressed by cleanup actions at the site.”

“Identifying COCs is a process where the EPA identifies people and ecological resources that could be exposed to contamination found at the site, determines the amount and type of contaminants present, and identifies the possible negative human health or ecological effects that could result from contact with the contaminants” according to the EPA website.

Military sites on the EPA Superfund list are shown below. Click on the base name to follow the link to EPA website. Once on the EPA site, the Contaminants of Concern (COCs) and their health effects can be found by clicking on “View Contaminants of Concern” at the bottom of the first page. The next screen will show each COC and a link to the Agency of Toxic Substance Disease Registry (ATSDR) where the health effects can be viewed.

**US Air Force**

**Air Force Plant #4 (General Dynamics)**
Fort Worth
TX

**Air Force Plant 85**
Columbus
OH

**Air Force Plant PJKS**
Littleton
CO

**American Lake Gardens/McChord AFB**
Tacoma
WA

**Andersen Air Force Base**
Yigo
GU

**Andrews Air Force Base**
Andrews Air Force Base
MD

**Arnold Engineering Development Center (USAF)**
Tullahoma/Manchester
TN
Brandywine DRMO
Bradyine
MD

Castle Air Force Base (6 Areas)
Merced
CA

Chanute Air Force Base
Rantoul
IL

Dover Air Force Base
Dover
DE

Edwards Air Force Base
Edwards AFB
CA

Eielson Air Force Base
Fairbanks
AK

Ellsworth Air Force Base
Ellsworth AFB
SD

Elmendorf Air Force Base
Anchorage
AK

F.E. Warren Air Force Base
Cheyenne
WY

Fairchild Air Force Base (4 Waste Areas)
Spokane
WA

George Air Force Base
Victorville
CA

Griffiss Air Force Base (11 Areas)
Rome
NY
Hanscom Field/Hanscom Air Force Base
Bedford
MA

Hill Air Force Base
Hill AFB
UT

Homestead Air Force Base
Homestead Air Force Base
FL

Loring Air Force Base
Limestone
ME

Luke Air Force Base
Glendale
AZ

March Air Force Base
Riverside
CA

Mather Air Force Base (AC&W Disposal Site)
Mather
CA

McChord Air Force Base (Wash Rack/Treatment Area)
Tacoma
WA

McClellan Air Force Base (Ground Water Contamination)
McClellan AFB
CA

McGuire Air Force Base #1
Wrightstown
NJ

Mountain Home Air Force Base
Mountain Home
ID

Norton Air Force Base (Lndfl #2)
San Bernardino
CA
Pease Air Force Base
Portsmouth/Newington
NH

Plattsburgh Air Force Base
Plattsburgh
NY

Rickenbacker Air National Guard (USAF)
Lockbourne
OH

Robins Air Force Base (Landfill #4/Sludge Lagoon)
Houston County
GA

Tinker Air Force Base (Soldier Creek/Building 3001)
Oklahoma City
OK

Travis Air Force Base
Travis AFB
CA

Twin Cities Air Force Reserve Base (Small Arms Range Landfill)
Minneapolis
MN

Tyndall Air Force Base
Panama City
FL

Williams Air Force Base
Chandler
AZ

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base
Dayton
OH

Wurtsmith Air Force Base
Oscoda
MI

US Army
Aberdeen Proving Ground (Edgewood Area)
Edgewood
MD

Aberdeen Proving Ground (Michaelsville Landfill)
Aberdeen
MD

Alabama Army Ammunition Plant
Childersburg
AL

Anniston Army Depot (Southeast Industrial Area)
Anniston
AL

Cornhusker Army Ammunition Plant
Hall County
NE

Fort Devens
Fort Devens
MA

Fort Devens-Sudbury Training Annex
Sudbury
MA

Fort Dix (Landfill Site)
Pemberton Township
NJ

Fort Eustis (US Army)
Newport News
VA

Fort George G. Meade
Odenton
MD

Fort Lewis (Landfill No. 5)
Tacoma
WA

Fort Lewis Logistics Center
Tillicum
WA
Fort Ord  
Marina  
CA

Fort Richardson (USARMY)  
Anchorage  
AK

Fort Riley  
Junction City  
KS

Fort Wainwright  
Fort Wainwright  
AK

Iowa Army Ammunition Plant  
Middletown  
IA

Joliet Army Ammunition Plant (Load-Assembly-Packing Area)  
Joliet  
IL

Joliet Army Ammunition Plant (Manufacturing Area)  
Joliet  
IL

Lake City Army Ammunition Plant (Northwest Lagoon)  
Independence  
MO

Letterkenny Army Depot (PDO Area)  
Franklin County  
PA

Letterkenny Army Depot (SE Area)  
Chambersburg  
PA

Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant  
Texarkana  
TX

Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant  
Karnack  
TX
Louisiana Army Ammunition Plant
Doyline
LA

Materials Technology Laboratory (USARMY)
Watertown
MA

Milan Army Ammunition Plant
Milan
TN

Natick Laboratory Army Research, Development, and Engineering Center
Natick
MA

New Brighton/Arden Hills/TCAAP (USARMY)
New Brighton
MN

Picatiny Arsenal (USARMY)
Rockaway Township
NJ

Riverbank Army Ammunition Plant
Riverbank
CA

Rocky Mountain Arsenal (USARMY)
Adams County
CO

Sacramento Army Depot
Sacramento
CA

Savanna Army Depot Activity
Savanna
IL

Schofield Barracks (USARMY)
Schofield
HI

Seneca Army Depot
Romulus
NY
Sharpe Army Depot
Lathrop
CA

Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant
Desoto
KS

Tobyhanna Army Depot
Tobyhanna
PA

Tooele Army Depot (North Area)
Tooele
UT

Tracy Defense Depot (USARMY)
Tracy
CA

Umatilla Army Depot (Lagoons)
Hermiston
OR

US Army/NASA Redstone Arsenal
Huntsville
AL

Weldon Spring Former Army Ordnance Works
St. Charles County
MO

West Virginia Ordnance (USARMY)
Point Pleasant
WV

US Coast Guard

Curtis Bay Coast Guard Yard
Baltimore
MD

US Navy
Adak Naval Air Station
Adak
AK

Alameda Naval Air Station
Alameda
CA

Alleghany Ballistics Laboratory (USNAVY)
Mineral County
WV

Bangor Naval Submarine Base
Silverdale
WA

Bangor Ordnance Disposal (USNAVY)
Bremerton
WA

Barstow Marine Corps Logistics Base
Barstow
CA

Brunswick Naval Air Station
Brunswick
ME

Camp Lejeune Military Res. (USNAVY)
Onslow County
NC

Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base
Camp Pendleton
CA

Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station
Havelock
NC

Concord Naval Weapons Station
Concord
CA

Davisville Naval Construction Battalion Center
North Kingstown
RI
El Toro Marine Corps Air Station
El Toro
CA

Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center
Indian Head
MD

Jackson Park Housing Complex (USNAVY)
Kitsap County
WA

Jacksonville Naval Air Station
Jacksonville
FL

Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico
VA

Marine Corps Logistics Base
Albany
GA

Moffett Naval Air Station
Moffett Field
CA

Naval Air Development Center (8 Waste Areas)
Warminster Township
PA

Naval Air Engineering Center
Lakehurst
NJ

Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island (Ault Field)
Whidbey Island
WA

Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island (Seaplane Base)
Whidbey Island
WA

Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek
Virginia Beach
VA
Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Eastern Pacific
Wahiawa
HI

Naval Industrial Reserve Ordnance Plant
Fridley
MN

Naval Security Group Activity
Sabana Seca
PR

Naval Surface Warfare Center – Dahlgren
Dahlgren
VA

Naval Undersea Warfare Engineering Station (4 Waste Areas)
Keyport
WA

Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant
Bedford
MA

Naval Weapons Station – Yorktown
Yorktown
VA

Naval Weapons Station Earle (Site A)
Colts Neck
NJ

Navy Ships Parts Control Center
Mechanicsburg
PA

New London Submarine Base
New London
CT

Newport Naval Education & Training Center
Newport
RI

Norfolk Naval Base (Sewells Point Naval Complex)
Norfolk
VA
Norfolk Naval Shipyard
Portsmouth
VA

NWS Yorktown – Cheatham Annex
Yorktown
VA

Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot
Parris Island
SC

Patuxent River Naval Air Station
Patuxent River
MD

Pearl Harbor Naval Complex
Pearl Harbor
HI

Pensacola Naval Air Station
Pensacola
FL

Port Hadlock Detachment (USNAVY)
Indian Island
WA

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
Kittery
ME

Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Complex
Bremerton
WA

South Weymouth Naval Air Station
Weymouth
MA

St. Juliens Creek Annex (U.S. Navy)
Chesapeake
VA

Treasure Island Naval Station-Hunters Point Annex
San Francisco
CA
USN Air Station Cecil Field
Jacksonville
FL

Washington Navy Yard
Washington
DC

Whiting Field Naval Air Station
Milton
FL

Willow Grove Naval Air and Air Reserve Station
Horsham
PA

Yuma Marine Corps Air Station
Yuma
AZ