

Health benefits for vets who may have ingested contaminated drinking water

Veterans and their family members who served on active duty or resided at the U.S. Marine Corps Base in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina between August 1, 1952 and December 31, 1987 may have ingested drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, including benzene and other chemicals that may have led to adverse health conditions. If you think your or your family may have been exposed, I encourage you to visit our office, as we can help determine your eligibility for VA healthcare benefits.

Those who are determined eligible to receive VA health care may receive reimbursement for out-of-pocket medical expenses incurred for the treatment of qualifying health conditions, including copayments.

I encourage everyone who resided at Camp Lejeune between 1952 and 1987 to get a health evaluation, especially if they suffer from any of the following conditions, including bladder cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, myelodysplastic syndromes, adult leukemia, kidney cancer, Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, renal toxicity, infertility and scleroderma. Even if you do not have one of the aforementioned health conditions, but you lived and / or served at Camp Lejeune, please go and get checked out.

Family members considering filing a claim for health benefits should gather documents showing their relationship to veterans. Documents may include a marriage license and / or a birth certificate. Family members should also collect their qualifying expense receipts for presentation to the VA for verification and approval of benefits. It is important to note that by law, the VA may only compensate for eligible out-of-pocket expenses after family members have received payment from all other health plans.

Veterans can apply for healthcare benefits online at www.CLFamilyMembers.fsc.va.gov, call 1-866-372-1144 or stop by the Solano County Veteran Services Office. In addition to those who served at Camp Lejeune, I encourage all vets to visit our office to see if they qualify for these benefit program or any other benefit services we offer, as our staff is happy to answer any questions you may have. As always, give us a call, email or drop on by, we're here to help, and thank you for your service to our country.

Ted Puntillo is Director of Veteran's Services for Solano County. Reach him at (707) 784-6590 or TEPuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran's Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.