

Brief - Camp Lejeune

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History

[Camp Lejeune](#) is located in Onslow County, North Carolina and opened in 1942. In 1989 the site was placed on the EPA's National Priorities List due to contaminated groundwater, sediment, soil and surface water. Improper waste handling procedures and base operations resulted in the pollution. Contaminants found in the water include, - volatile organic compounds (VOCs), metals, pesticides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Health Implications

13,000 people rely on the site for drinking water. Furthermore, from 1953 until 1987, military families living on the base bathed and ingested the water and chemicals. A February 2014, [retrospective cohort study](#) done by the CDC showed that the high levels of chemicals were the cause of several deaths and illnesses. These included cancers of the kidney, liver, esophagus, cervix, multiple myeloma, Hodgkin lymphoma and ALS.

Response

In 1963 the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery issued standards for potable water; [however the water at Camp Lejeune was not tested until 1980](#). Furthermore, the military did not report the contamination to the local water authority. In a 1983 report to the EPA, the Marines stated that the contamination did not "pose an immediate threat to human health", despite multiple tastings by Grainger laboratories showing the PCE and TCE levels well above the EPA guidelines. In

1984 the Marines notified the state and shut the first of the contaminated wells. In 1985 the remaining contaminated wells were shut down.

Current Status

[The clean-up operation](#) and site monitoring is currently led by the Navy and overseen by the EPA and NCDENR. The area has been broken up into 25 operable units, and 26 clean-up plans



have been released since 1992 and as recently as April, 2014. Clean-up operations have included the installation of a water treatment plant, treatment for contaminated soil, and continued ground water monitoring. Despite the clean-up efforts, the [public is widely critical](#) of the both the military's initial lack of proper response and

handling of the site, as well as their lack of acknowledgement of the connection between the pollution and the health problems of former Marines and their families. Camp Lejeune is considered by many scientists "[to be the worst public drinking-water contamination in U.S. history](#)".