FAQs About the Camp Lejeune Water Contamination Claims

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Perhaps you have heard about Camp Lejeune, water contamination, and legal claims. Legislation enacted last year permits veterans and others who were injured by toxic water at the military base to take action against the government to recover compensation. The number of claims and lawsuits is expected to be significant because of the time frame involved and the number of people exposed to the water.

If you were stationed, lived, or worked at Camp Lejeune and became sick after coming into contact with the water there, you need to explore your legal options. Here, the Camp Lejeune lawyers at Rosen Hagood answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

What is the basis of these claims?

Veterans, their family members, military personnel, and others who were stationed, lived, or worked at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, were exposed to contaminated water. The toxic water was caused by spills and leaks of what are known as volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. The sources of these chemicals were primarily dry cleaning solvents and degreasers. Some examples of VOCs are:

- Trichloroethylene (TCE)
- Perchloroethylene (PCE)
- Benzene
- Vinyl chloride
- Toluene
- Mercury and other heavy metals
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)
- Pesticides

What health problems have been linked to VOCs?

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VOCs are extremely hazardous to human health. They have caused the following medical issues (among others):

- Numerous cancers (esophageal, kidney, breast, bladder, lung, and others)
- Leukemia
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Multiple myeloma
- Female infertility
- Renal toxicity
- Kidney damage
- Scleroderma
- Myelodysplastic syndrome
- Neurobehavioral effects
- Hepatic steatosis

Who may have been injured by these chemicals?

Anyone who was present at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days from August 1, 1953, to December 31, 1987, – such as veterans, their family members, military personnel, and contractors – may have been harmed by contaminated water. Victims include anyone who came in contact with the toxic water by drinking it, bathing in it, cooking with it, or cleaning with it. It is likely that individuals were sickened by the water for decades and may have developed serious medical conditions.

What if I have a condition that isn't listed above?

If you were present at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days during the time periods listed above, you should file a claim, even if your condition is not on the list above. The medical conditions linked to the contaminated water continue to be monitored, so there's a good chance the list of associated diseases and ailments will continue to grow.

What compensation is available for my injuries?

Every claim is different, and so are the damages (the sum of money that compensates an injured person). Some of the most common types of damages resulting from Camp Lejeune contaminated water claims include:

- Past, present, and future medical bills
- Lost wages and benefits due to time missed from work seeking treatment or recovering from injuries
- Lost earning capacity and benefits due to the inability to continue working the same job
- Pain and suffering
- Emotional distress

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- Loss of enjoyment of life
- Wrongful death and survival actions, if the injured person died

How much compensation is available?

Because the Camp Lejeune claims and litigation are constantly developing, it's difficult to estimate the amount of compensation that may be available. As claims and lawsuits are filed, it will become clearer how much in damages the courts will award. As a general matter, however, the potential compensation varies by the individual and the nature of his or her injuries and losses. An attorney can review your case and explain what factors may affect the amount of damages available in your case.

Does filing a Camp Lejeune contaminated water claim affect benefits or health care provided by the VA?

Many veterans either seek or currently receive disability benefits or health care from the VA. It's important to know that filing a claim or lawsuit over the toxic water will neither affect a veteran's eligibility for VA benefits nor affect the amount of disability payments. However, according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, "If you already receive VA benefits or services (disability pay or health care services) for conditions related to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, the court awarded relief will be offset by the amount of any disability award, payment, or other benefit VA provided to you related to your exposure at Camp Lejeune."[1]

What if I file for VA disability after I receive an award from my claim or lawsuit brought under the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA), will the VA reduce my benefits as a result?

No. Any action you take or award you receive pursuant to a Camp Lejeune water contamination claim will not influence the VA's decision to provide you with benefits or health care based upon your exposure, nor will it affect the amount of compensation you receive from the VA.

Will my local VA help me file a Camp Lejeune water claim?

No. While local VAs are focused on helping veterans with their disability benefits, they do not help veterans file claims under the CLJA.

Is there a deadline to bring a claim?

The deadline to file a Camp Lejeune claim is August 10, 2024. However, you should take action long before that date so you and your lawyer have time to acquire the evidence you will need to present a strong case for the maximum compensation available under law.

I'm eligible to file a claim. How do I get started?

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The first step to recover compensation for your injuries is to file an administrative claim with the Judge Advocate General of the Navy's Tort Claims Unit. It is important that you have an attorney assist you with this process. Camp LeJeune water contamination claims and lawsuits are complicated and will require a significant amount of medical, scientific, and other expert witness testimony, on top of complicated civil litigation procedures and special rules that apply because of the government's involvement.

What do I do if I receive no response to my claim?

If, after six months, the Navy hasn't settled the claim, or if it denies the claim, veterans can file a lawsuit. If you were present at Camp Lejeune during the specified time periods listed above you should file your claim now so you don't miss any deadlines.

Where will the lawsuits be filed?

For now, the lawsuits are being filed only in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina (EDNC). The EDNC's website notes, "The Eastern District of North Carolina has been designated as the exclusive jurisdiction and venue for cases filed pursuant to … the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022."[2]

What does it cost to file a claim?

The government does not charge a fee to file a Camp Lejeune contaminated water claim. There is a fee associated with filing a lawsuit, however.

Have More Questions? We Have Answers.

You need and deserve a strong legal ally who will advocate for your rights and interests. That's where Rosen Hagood comes in. We know what it takes to build a compelling legal case and stand up for our clients. Were you or a loved one sickened by the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune? Call us today to get started on your claim.

[1] *Camp Lejeune Water Contamination Know Your Options*. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Retrieved June 16, 2023, from www.va.gov/files/2022-12/Camp%20Lejeune%20FAQ%20V12.6.22%201030hrs.pdf.

[2] *Information Concerning Camp Lejeune Water Litigation*. United States District Court, Eastern District of North Carolina. Retrieved June 20, 2023, from https://www.nced.uscourts.gov/attorney/clwl.aspx.

Let's discuss the details of your case to see if we can help.

YES, I'M READY TO SPEAK WITH AN ATTORNEY!

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