ATSDR MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

Federal Health Agency Completes Analyses of Tarawa Terrace Drinking Water System at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

For Immediate Release: June 12, 2007

ATLANTA – The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) concludes in its analyses of the Tarawa Terrace drinking water system, at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, that former Marines and their families who lived in Tarawa Terrace family housing units during the period November 1957 through February 1987, received drinking water contaminated with tetrachloroethylene (PCE). The contaminated drinking water exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) maximum contaminant level of 5 micrograms per liter; the maximum concentration of PCE in the Tarawa Terrace drinking water was estimated to be about 200 micrograms per liter.

Former Camp Lejeune Marines and their families can find out the levels of PCE and PCE degradation by-products in the drinking water serving their homes in Tarawa Terrace by visiting the ATSDR Web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune and entering the dates they lived in Tarawa Terrace housing from 1951 to 1987.

ATSDR estimates as many as 75,000 former Tarawa Terrace residents lived in the family housing during the period November 1957 through February 1987. On average, families lived in base housing for about 2 years.

PCE is used as a dry cleaning solvent. The PCE contamination occurred because the solvent leaked into the Tarawa Terrace drinking water system from an off-base dry-cleaner. In 1987, the Tarawa Terrace water treatment plant was disconnected from the base's drinking water supply system because of contamination from the off-base dry-cleaning establishment.

PCE is a volatile organic compound (VOC). The Department of Health and Human Services has determined that PCE may reasonably be anticipated to be a carcinogen. PCE is widely used for dry cleaning of fabrics; clothes brought home from the dry cleaners release small amounts of PCE into the air.

The analyses of the Tarawa Terrace drinking water system is part of ATSDR's epidemiological study of VOCs at Camp Lejeune. The study will focus on babies born during the period 1968-1985 up to the time that they were 1 year-old.

Some scientific literature has associated VOCs with birth defects and childhood cancers. ATSDR's study may provide further evidence that exposure to VOC-contaminated drinking water may be related to specific birth defects and childhood cancers, such as spina bifida, anencephaly, cleft lip, cleft palate, leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Former Camp Lejeune Marines and their families, who resided in family housing at the

base, are encouraged to get routine physicals and monitor their health for any changes.

PCE has been found in at least 771 of the 1,430 National Priorities List sites identified by the EPA. Exposure to PCE alone typically does not mean a person will experience adverse health effects. Many factors determine whether people experience adverse health effects due to chemical exposure such as dose, the duration of exposure, exposures to other chemicals in a lifetime, and overall state of health.

Some health studies of workers in occupational settings suggest they experienced adverse effects from high exposures to PCE, but the effects of consumers' exposure to drinking water contaminated with PCE are not known.

For more information about ATSDR's Tarawa Terrace drinking-water system analyses and current epidemiologic study, call 1-800-CDC-INFO and ATSDR's Web site at http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/.

Established by Congress in 1980 under the Superfund law, ATSDR conducts public health assessments at each of the sites on the EPA National Priorities List, as well as other sites when petitioned.

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Members of the news media can request an interview with ATSDR staff by calling the ATSDR Office of Communication at 404-498-0070.

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