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June 6, 2007

Dr. Howard Frumpkin
Director
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
1825 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Dr. Frumpkin:

The Committee staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee recently met with officials of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to review ATSDR's ongoing public health assessment of possible health impacts related to historical exposures to trichloroethylene (TCE) and other volatile organic compounds from contaminated drinking water at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina (Camp Lejeune). We are writing to obtain information regarding apparent historical exposures of military personnel to TCE and volatile organic compounds in drinking water at military facilities other than Camp Lejeune with observed TCE contamination.

At Camp Lejeune, TCE and other volatile organic compounds were discovered in finished drinking water and in groundwater wells used as a source of drinking water at the site in the early-mid 1980s. In 1985, military officials immediately closed 10 specific groundwater wells used as a source of drinking water upon discovering the wells were contaminated with high levels of TCE and other volatile organic compounds. Concentrations of TCE were detected as high as 1,400 parts per billion (ppb). The Environmental Protection Agency promulgated a 5 ppb drinking water standard for TCE in 1989. ATSDR is in the process of completing an extensive multi-year public health assessment that will calculate TCE and other volatile organic compound exposures to residents at Camp Lejeune, and review possible links between birth defects and exposure to TCE and other volatile organic compounds.

As part of our review of TCE and volatile organic compound contamination at Camp Lejeune, Committee Minority staff reviewed over 7,000 records that document TCE contamination of groundwater and tap water at various military and civilian

facilities across the United States. This information was obtained from the ATSDR's publicly available HazDat database. Using the information available in HazDat, the attached list (Attachment A) identifies military bases with TCE contamination of both finished tap water and groundwater used as a source of municipal/public drinking water. In some cases, the extent of TCE contamination is similar to or far in excess of what was observed at Camp Lejeune. For instance, at the Wurtsmith Air Force Base, TCE concentrations were as high as 1,100 ppb in tap water, and source groundwater used as a source of drinking water at the site had concentrations as high as 5,173 ppb. As another example, source groundwater used as a source of drinking water at the Nebraska Ordnance Plant had TCE concentrations as high as 663,000 ppb.

In many cases, facility-specific data in the HazDat database is incomplete or missing important information with respect to the levels of TCE observed, the source of the tested water (tap water, groundwater, or municipal groundwater), or the location of the sampled water (onsite or offsite). Furthermore, where more complete data is available, the HazDat data indicates that source groundwater or tap water was at one time contaminated with TCE. However, the data does not indicate whether individuals were in fact exposed to contaminated drinking water, the degree of any exposure, or the duration of any exposure.

Based on the limitations of the HazDat data, we are concerned that we do not have a complete understanding of historical TCE and volatile organic compound contamination and exposures from drinking water at these facilities. Many of these facilities are Superfund sites, so it is likely that ATSDR has completed a health assessment at many facilities that will provide information on current exposures at these sites.

To obtain a better understanding of these matters, and specifically to obtain available information on historical exposures at these sites, we ask that you respond in writing to the attached list of questions (Attachment B). As you know, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations is planning a June 12, 2007, hearing to review Camp Lejeune drinking water contamination. I ask that you provide an interim response to these questions by June 11, 2007, and a complete response by June 25, 2007.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact us or have your staff contact Dwight Cates of the Minority Committee Staff at (202)225-3541.

Sincerely,

Joe Barton
Ranking Member

Ed Whitfield
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

Attachments

cc: The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Bart Stupak
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Attachment A

Defense Facilities with TCE Contamination in Groundwater used for Municipal/Public Drinking Water.

AIR FORCE PLANT #4 (GENERAL DYNAMICS) TX7572024605 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 11000 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE GU6571999519 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 39parts per billion (ppb)

BARSTOW MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE CA8170024261 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 25parts per billion (ppb)

CORNHUSKER ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT NE2213820234 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 32.1parts per billion (ppb)

FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE (4 WASTE AREAS) WA9571924647 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 80parts per billion (ppb)

LAKE CITY ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT MO3213890012 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 52parts per billion (ppb)

MARCH AIR FORCE BASE CA4570024527 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 66 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

MATHER AIR FORCE BASE CA8570024143 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 800 parts per billion (ppb)

MCCHORD AIR FORCE BASE WA8570024200 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 20 parts per billion (ppb)

MCCLELLAN AIR FORCE BASE CA4570024337 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 2000 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

MIDDLETOWN AIR FIELD PAD980538763 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 311 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

NAVAL AIR DEVELOPMENT CENTER PA6170024545 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 293 parts per billion (ppb)

NAVAL WEAPONS INDUSTRIAL RESERVE PLANT MA6170023570 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 33 parts per billion (ppb)

NEBRASKA ORDNANCE PLANT NE6211890011 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 663000.00000 parts per billion (ppb)

NORTON AIR FORCE BASE CA4570024345 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 17 parts per billion (ppb)

OLD ROOSEVELT FIELD NYSFN0204234 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 170 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

OTIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE/CAMP EDWARD MA2570024487 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 9.80 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

PICATINNY ARSENAL NJ3210020704 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 260 parts per billion (ppb)

PEASE AIR FORCE BASE NH7570024847 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 391 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

WHITING FIELD NAVAL AIR STATION FL2170023244 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 10.5 parts per billion (ppb)

WURTSMITH AIR FORCE BASE MI5570024278 Groundwater, Public/Municipal 5173 parts per billion (ppb)

Defense facilities with TCE contaminated Tap Water

NEW BRIGHTON/ARDEN HILLS/TCAAP (USARMY) MN7213820908 Tap Water 150 micrograms/Liter (ug/L)

WURTSMITH AIR FORCE BASE MI5570024278 Tap Water 1100 parts per billion (ppb)

Attachment B

1. For each facility on the attached list, please describe what public health activities the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has conducted, and the results of those activities. Please provide information specific to trichloroethylene (TCE) and volatile organic compound contamination, exposures, and historical exposures. Please include an explanation of when the TCE contamination was discovered, whether/when other volatile organic compounds of public health significance were discovered, whether exposures were likely to have occurred, and whether/when such exposures were stopped.
2. Please provide the same information requested in question #1 for any military facility missing from the attached list that ATSDR is aware had TCE or volatile organic compound contamination in tap water or groundwater used as a source of drinking water.
3. Please explain why the data for several military facilities in the HazDat database have incomplete or missing information, and what ATSDR is doing to obtain that missing information, and any steps ATSDR is taking to ensure more complete information in the HazDat database.