

# Defense Health Agency Response

## Defense Health Agency, Indo-Pacific

Dec. 12, 2022 Town Hall

### Answered Questions

**The following questions were submitted to the moderators. Questions were consolidated when asked more than once, text was edited for ease of use.**

#### Medical / Health Related Issues:

There need to be more medical protocols for exposure to toxins. This needs to be released to all medical providers to ensure proper medical monitoring and prevention of diseases occur for everyone. An example of a protocol would be recommendations of blood and urine tests every three months for the first year; this would also include MRI scans, GI tests, CT scans, liver tests, bone marrow tests, and toxicology tests.

For asymptomatic patients no longer exposed to petroleum products, there are no evidence-based recommendations for laboratory testing, medical imaging, invasive diagnostic procedures, or treatment. Medical testing and procedures each come with their own inherent risks to include risk of radiation exposure, pain, and other procedural complications such as bleeding, pain, or medication reactions. Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) enrolled patients should discuss ongoing concerns related to petroleum exposure with a provider at the Red Hill Clinic. Patients with ongoing health concerns who are not enrolled in DEERS should consult with their primary care manager.

How is the U.S. Navy giving medical access to all those affected? There are water lines going to civilian communities like Kapilina, Honolulu airport, schools with civilian employees, Kamehameha Highway businesses like Ruby Tuesdays and Taco Bell, McDonald's, and other commercial public locations. Those affected are not just military and their dependents.

The Defense Health Agency is responsible for healthcare delivery and does not determine healthcare eligibility. For more information on expanding healthcare access to non-DEERS enrolled patients, please contact the Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs Office via phone (703) 571-3343 or via email ([osd.pentagon.pa.mbx.ce-public-inquiries@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pentagon.pa.mbx.ce-public-inquiries@mail.mil)).

When are we going to see this medical clinic open and functioning that you promised us?

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The Red Hill Clinic began scheduling appointments through the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line on December 27, 2022 and began seeing patients on January 3, 2023.

The Red Hill Clinic offers dedicated patient care and expedited referrals to specialty care as needed for all DEERS-enrolled beneficiaries, including Active Duty Service Members, TRICARE Prime, and TRICARE Select patients experiencing symptoms that may be related to the Red Hill fuel spill. To schedule an appointment, eligible patients should contact the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line (NAL), available 24/7, at 800-874-2273, select Option 1 to speak with a nurse, and request an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic. Patients concerned about exposure to Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) should schedule an appointment with their Primary Care Managers. Patients enrolled at Military Treatment Facilities on Oahu can schedule a Primary Care appointment by calling the Hawaii Central Appointment Line at 888-683-2778. The Hawaii Central Appointment line is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We understand that there are hearings related to medical issues in Washington, D.C. forthcoming. When are those dates?

We are not aware of any scheduled Congressional hearings or testimony related to Red Hill. If this changes, we will notify the public. The Defense Health Agency regularly engages with congressional members on medical responses to the Red Hill fuel spill.

Does the Navy plan on doing a town hall or setting up a Joint Task Force for those who have medical issues?

Discussions are currently in process towards establishing a family focused Red Hill open house.

A dedicated medical clinic has been established by the Defense Health Agency. Members seeking medical treatment should contact their medical provider to schedule treatment.

DOD organizations remain engaged with military families and other stakeholders via a variety of methods including public websites, public comment forms, participation in town hall events, neighborhood boards, social media updates, printed materials and other methods.

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You said at the previous meeting, “I will push it up [In reference to medical treatment for non-DOD beneficiaries].” How are civilians affected by the fuel spill going to get assistance / medical care?

The Defense Health Agency Region Indo-Pacific is responsible for healthcare delivery but cannot authorize civilian access to healthcare in Military Treatment Facilities. This policy issue is currently being discussed by senior Department of Defense officials.

Dr. Espiritu, have you studied Camp Lejeune? Do you know how many children have died after being exposed to Camp Lejeune’s water?

The Defense Health Agency Region Indo-Pacific is responsible for healthcare delivery within the Indo-Pacific region. DEERS-enrolled patients with healthcare concerns related to petroleum exposure following the Red Hill fuel spill can schedule an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic by calling the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line at 800-874-2273, selecting Option 1 to speak with a nurse, and requesting an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic. The NAL is available 24/7. Patients not enrolled in DEERS should discuss healthcare concerns with their respective Primary Care Managers.

The Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility fuel release is unlike Camp Lejeune. More information on Camp Lejeune can be found at the VA website below for further clarification:

<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/camp-lejeune-water-contamination/>

Why did Dr. Espiritu say there are no “evidence-based” injuries associated with the Red Hill fuel leaks? How does she explain the injuries so many people are reporting?

While there are very limited studies on the long-term health effects of petroleum exposure, many patients are reporting chronic symptoms following exposure to petroleum contaminated water because of the Red Hill fuel spill. We encourage DEERS-enrolled patients to schedule an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic by calling the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line at 800-874-2273, selecting Option 1 to speak with a nurse, and requesting an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic. The NAL is available 24/7. Patients not enrolled in DEERS should discuss healthcare concerns with their respective Primary Care Managers.

Are you considering the health effects from the people who were poisoned in 2014?

The Defense Health Agency Region Indo-Pacific is not aware of health concerns related to petroleum exposure prior to the Red Hill fuel spill in November 2021. There are very limited studies on the long-term health effects of petroleum exposure, and we

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encourage all DEERS-enrolled patients to schedule an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic. Our dedicated care teams exclusively care for patients with symptoms that may be related to the Red Hill fuel spill and offer expedited referrals to specialty care clinics as needed. Eligible patients can schedule an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic by calling the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line at 800-874-2273, selecting Option 1 to speak with a nurse, and requesting an appointment at the Red Hill Clinic. The NAL is available 24/7. Patients not enrolled in DEERS should schedule an appointment with their respective Primary Care Manager to discuss health concerns.

What are the side effects of ingesting water Tainted with PFAS/AFFF?

There are very limited studies on the health effects of PFAS exposure in humans. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), an independent operating agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, notes that existing research involving human PFAS exposure may result in symptoms such as increased cholesterol levels, changes in liver enzymes, decreased vaccine response in children, increased risk of high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia in pregnant women, small decreases in infant birth weights, and increased risk of kidney or testicular cancer. For more information from the ATSDR on PFAS exposure, please visit <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/index.html>

How will you provide medical updates to military families off island?

The Defense Health Agency is developing a publicly accessible website that will provide medical updates regarding the Red Hill fuel spill for family who are on- and off-island. We will notify military members and the local community once the website is live.