



# THE SILENT THREAT OF VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (*VOCs*)

A Comprehensive Guide

# WE TRUST THAT THE WATER WE USE DAILY IS SAFE, BUT WHAT WE DON'T SEE CAN HARM US.

Dangerous chemicals known as **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)** have been found in water supplies, affecting places from Camp Lejeune to residential neighborhoods. These chemicals, often used in industries like textiles, dry cleaning, and agriculture, are linked to serious health issues, including different types of cancer. At Alexander Shunnarah Trial Attorneys, we're taking a closer look at this issue. Our guide

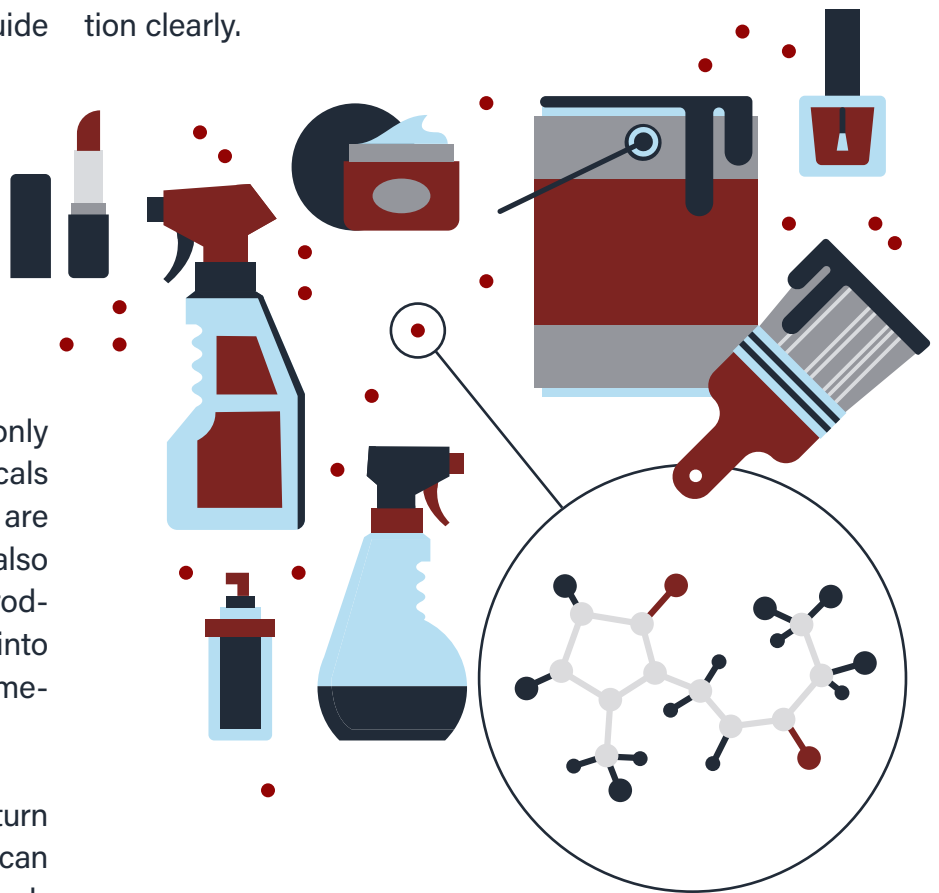
goes beyond Camp Lejeune, exploring how widespread these toxins are. We'll discuss how they are used, get into our water, and the health problems they can cause. We will also look at other harmful substances that are found with VOCs, like heavy metals and less-known cancer-causing chemicals. Our goal is to explain the wide-reaching effects and seriousness of VOC contamination clearly.

## What Are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)?

Volatile Organic Compounds, commonly known as VOCs, are a group of chemicals found all around us. These compounds are not just limited to industrial areas but also everyday items like paints, cleaning products, and cosmetics. VOCs can turn into gasses, releasing into the air and sometimes getting into our water supplies.

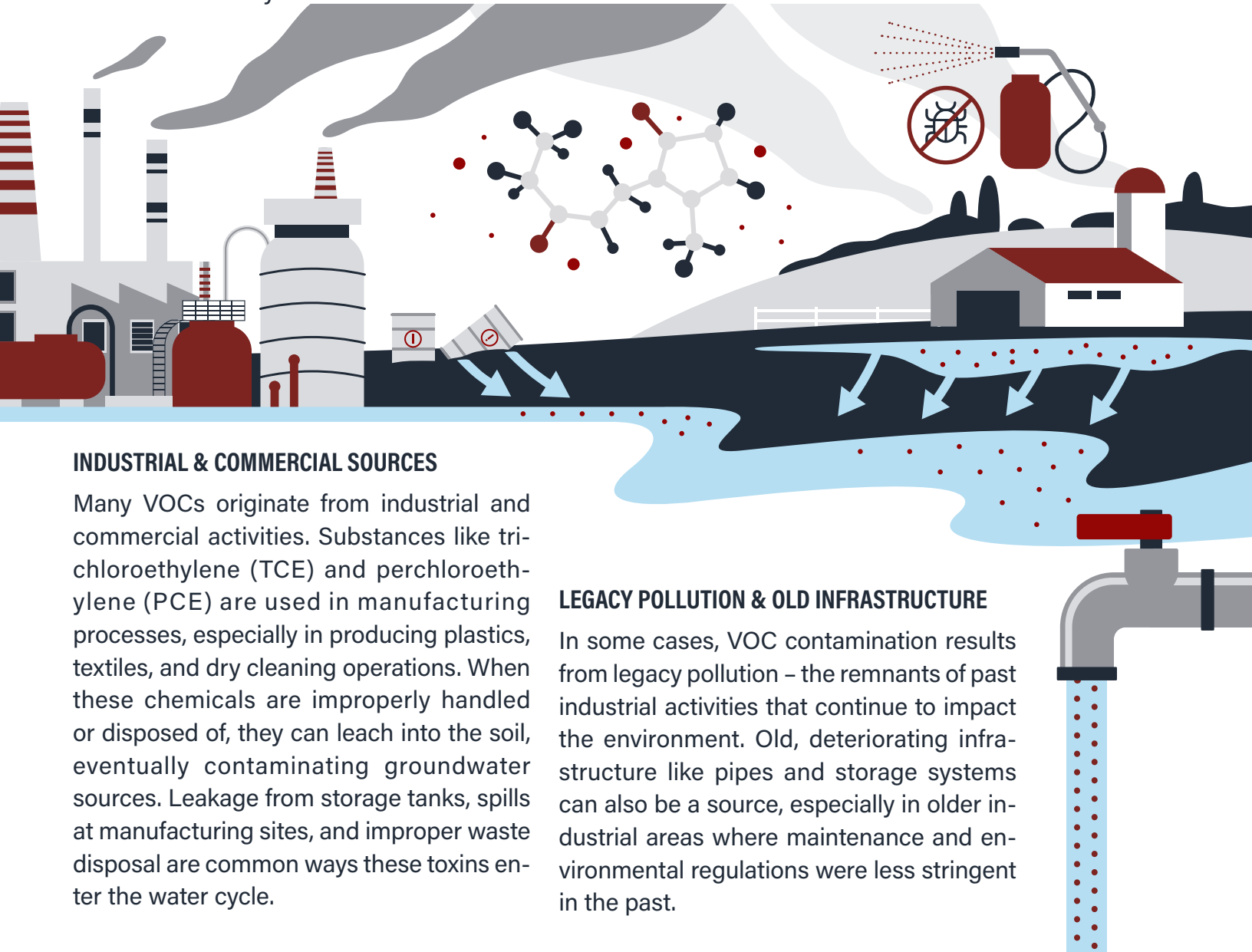
Why are VOCs a concern? When they turn into gases at room temperature, they can easily enter the environment and our bodies. Being exposed to VOCs, especially for a long time or in large amounts, can harm our health. They can cause symptoms like irritation in the eyes, nose, and throat and more serious conditions like damage to the liver and kidneys, problems with the nervous system, and even some types of cancer.

VOCs can also contaminate our water, which becomes a big public health issue. This kind of contamination happens in different ways, like leaks from underground storage tanks or improper disposal of industrial waste. Camp Lejeune's water crisis is one example, but it's not the only one.



## ■ The Pathway of VOCs into Water Supplies

Understanding how Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) infiltrate our water supplies and make their way into our homes and communities is key to grasping the full extent of their threat. Knowing their pathways into our water is not just about scientific curiosity; it's about empowering ourselves with the knowledge that can lead to better protection and informed advocacy.



### INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL SOURCES

Many VOCs originate from industrial and commercial activities. Substances like trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE) are used in manufacturing processes, especially in producing plastics, textiles, and dry cleaning operations. When these chemicals are improperly handled or disposed of, they can leach into the soil, eventually contaminating groundwater sources. Leakage from storage tanks, spills at manufacturing sites, and improper waste disposal are common ways these toxins enter the water cycle.

### AGRICULTURAL RUNOFF

Agricultural activities can also contribute to VOC contamination. Pesticides and herbicides, often containing VOCs, can seep into the groundwater or be carried into water bodies through runoff, especially after heavy rains. Runoff affects rural areas and can also reach urban water sources, expanding the contamination's reach.

### LEGACY POLLUTION & OLD INFRASTRUCTURE

In some cases, VOC contamination results from legacy pollution – the remnants of past industrial activities that continue to impact the environment. Old, deteriorating infrastructure like pipes and storage systems can also be a source, especially in older industrial areas where maintenance and environmental regulations were less stringent in the past.

### THE DANGER OF INVISIBILITY

One of the most insidious aspects of VOC contamination is its invisibility. Without specific testing, detecting these compounds in water is challenging, making it easy for them to go unnoticed until adverse health effects are observed in the community.

# UNDERSTANDING THE PATHWAYS THROUGH WHICH VOCs ENTER OUR WATER SUPPLIES IS **NOT JUST ABOUT IDENTIFYING THE SOURCES**; IT'S ABOUT RECOGNIZING THE BROADER ISSUE OF **ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND OVERSIGHT**.

## **The Broad Reach of VOC Contamination: Documented Cases and Their Impact**

### **CAMP LEJEUNE: A MILITARY TRAGEDY**

Founded in the 1940s, Camp Lejeune, a Marine Corps base in North Carolina, became a focal point of a severe health crisis. In the 1980s, investigations uncovered a disturbing reality: the base's water supply had been contaminated since the 1950s. The primary sources were leaking underground storage tanks and industrial spills. This historical overview traces the events leading up to the discovery and the initial reactions. It sets the stage for understanding how these hazardous substances infiltrated a community's water supply, leading to one of U.S. history's largest water contamination incidents.

### **BEYOND CAMP LEJEUNE: FROM INDUSTRIAL SITES TO MILITARY BASES**

While the water contamination crisis at Camp Lejeune is well-known, it represents just one instance in a broader history of VOC-related environmental hazards. Here, we explore additional documented cases that highlight the pervasive nature of VOC contamination.

At Alexander Shunnarah Trial Attorneys, we are committed to raising awareness about these environmental dangers and stand ready to advocate for those affected by VOC contaminations.

### **INDUSTRIAL SPILLS: THE LOVE CANAL DISASTER**

In the late 1970s, Love Canal, a neighborhood in Niagara Falls, New York, gained national attention when hazardous chemicals, including VOCs buried by a chemical company, began surfacing. The chemical contamination led to a public health emergency, with residents experiencing serious health issues and genetic defects.

### **RESIDENTIAL EXPOSURE: ENDICOTT, NEW YORK**

In Endicott, New York, a significant spill of TCE from a former IBM manufacturing site contaminated the groundwater. The community faced increased rates of certain types of cancer and birth defects attributed to long-term VOC exposure.

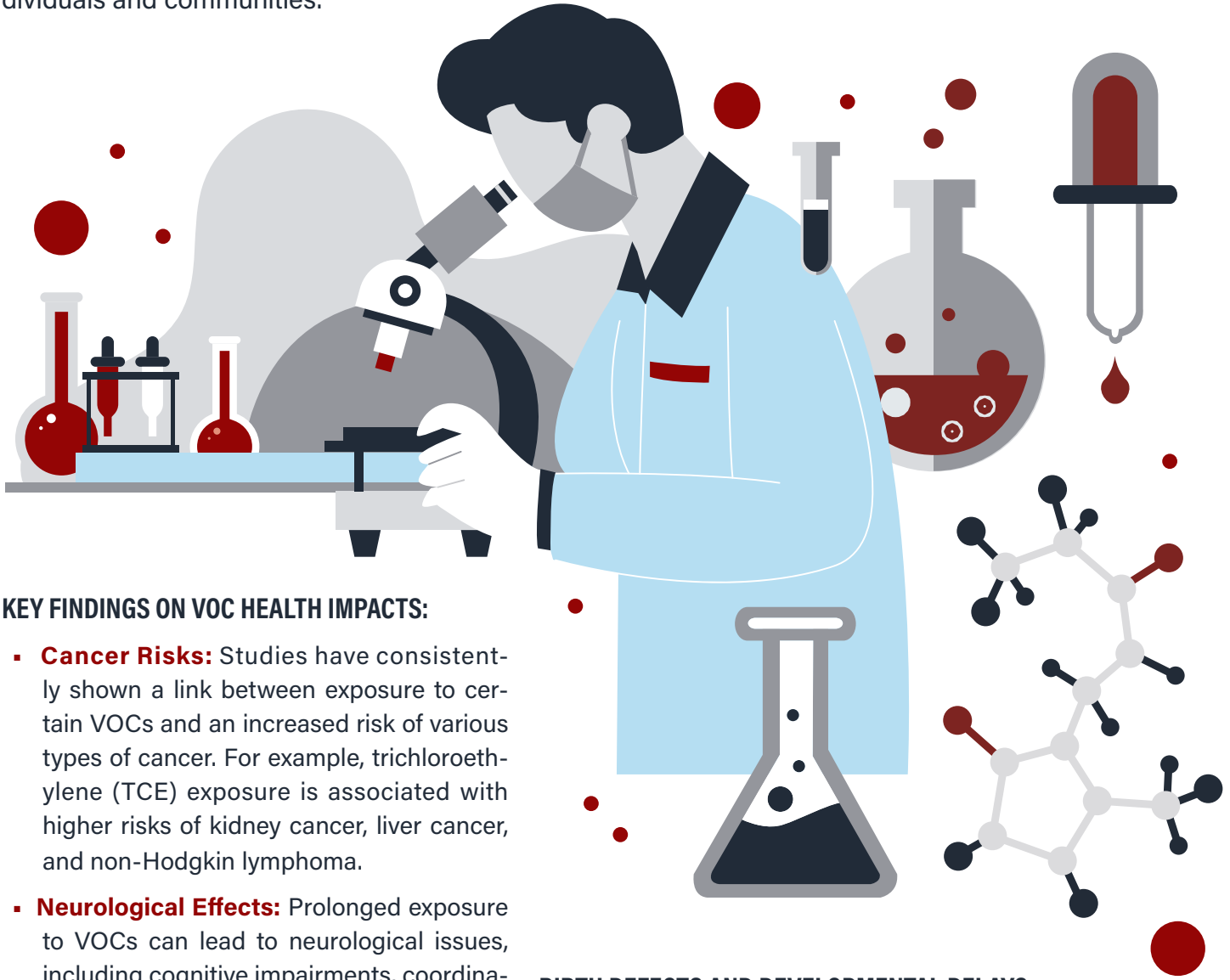
### **OTHER MILITARY BASES: FORT MCCLELLAN AND WURTSMITH AIR FORCE BASE**

Fort McClellan, Alabama, faced issues with PCBs and VOCs, leading to health concerns among military personnel.

Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Michigan dealt with PCE and TCE groundwater contamination, affecting the base and the surroundings.

## Advancing Understanding: VOC Health Impacts and Research

Significant research has been conducted in the ongoing effort to understand and mitigate the risks associated with volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The research has shown the long-term health impacts of VOC exposure, providing crucial insights for affected individuals and communities.



### KEY FINDINGS ON VOC HEALTH IMPACTS:

- **Cancer Risks:** Studies have consistently shown a link between exposure to certain VOCs and an increased risk of various types of cancer. For example, trichloroethylene (TCE) exposure is associated with higher risks of kidney cancer, liver cancer, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.
- **Neurological Effects:** Prolonged exposure to VOCs can lead to neurological issues, including cognitive impairments, coordination problems, and mood changes. These effects are particularly concerning, given the widespread use of VOCs in everyday environments.
- **Respiratory and Immune System Impact:** VOCs can aggravate respiratory conditions like asthma and may lead to chronic respiratory illnesses. Evidence suggests that VOC exposure can weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections.

### BIRTH DEFECTS AND DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

The research linking prenatal exposure to Volatile Organic Compounds with developmental challenges in children brings to light a concern every expecting parent should be aware of. The findings reveal an increased risk of congenital heart defects and neural tube defects in children exposed to VOCs in the womb. These aren't just medical terms; they represent real struggles and hurdles that could shape a child's life.

Further studies reveal a silent but profound effect on a child's growth – delays in cognitive development, challenges with basic motor skills, and speech and language acquisition. These aren't just developmental milestones but the building blocks of a child's future, integral to their ability to learn, play, and interact with the world around them. For families, this means more than just medical care; it requires patience, understanding, and, often, a journey through educational and social challenges that they never anticipated.

### **ONGOING STUDIES AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The journey to unravel the full story of VOCs and their impact on health is far from over. The research we have today sheds light on significant concerns, yet it also opens the door to many unanswered questions. The long-term effects of low-level VOC exposure, a reality for many in residential settings, remain a landscape yet to be fully explored. These ongoing studies aren't just scientific pursuits but quests for understanding that hold the key to safeguarding our families and communities.

As we continue to peel back the layers of how VOCs affect our health, our advocacy for stronger policies and safer practices grows stronger. Each new finding is a building block to create environments where health and safety are paramount, and communities can thrive without the lurking threat of unseen toxins.

As we look forward, our commitment at Alexander Shunnarah Trial Attorneys is not just about understanding the science; it's about translating that knowledge into action that protects and empowers. We stand dedicated to advocating for public health and safety, ensuring that the lessons learned from studying VOCs lead to real change that makes a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.



## Choosing the Right Attorney for Mass Tort VOC Cases

Navigating the complexities of mass tort cases, especially those involving VOC contamination, and choosing the right legal representation is crucial. When health, well-being, and justice are at stake, deciding whom to trust with your legal battle cannot be taken lightly. At Alexander Shunnarah Trial Attorneys, we believe in empowering our clients with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their legal representation.

### UNDERSTANDING MASS TORT LITIGATION

Mass tort litigation involves numerous plaintiffs against one or several corporate defendants. These cases often center around harm caused by hazardous substances like VOCs. Understanding the intricacies of mass torts is essential, as these cases can be significantly more complex than individual lawsuits.

### EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

Look for a law firm with proven experience in mass tort cases. An attorney with a history of handling VOC-related cases will have a deeper understanding of the scientific and medical aspects crucial to these cases. Expertise in this area often translates to better navigating legal challenges and advocating for your rights.



### CLIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

Choose a law firm that values you as an individual, not just as a case number. A client-centered approach means your story is heard, your concerns are addressed, and your needs are prioritized. Your attorney should be your advocate, fighting tirelessly for the justice and compensation you deserve.

### RESOURCES AND REACH

Mass tort cases require significant resources, including access to scientific experts, medical professionals, and investigative tools. A well-resourced law firm can build a strong case backed by solid evidence. Additionally, consider a firm with a national reach, as VOC contamination issues often cross state lines.

### TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

Clear and honest communication is the foundation of a strong attorney-client relationship. Your legal team should keep you informed about your case's progress and be readily available to answer your questions.

## ■ Navigating Legal Waters: Your Ally in Mass Tort Litigation

At Alexander Shunnarah Trial Attorneys, our approach to mass tort litigation is rooted in a deep understanding of our client's legal landscape and personal journeys. Our team possesses extensive expertise in handling complex cases, especially those involving VOC exposure and environmental issues. We're not just legal experts; we are advocates who are deeply committed to the causes and well-being of our clients. Our experience in these intricate legal matters equips us to navigate the challenges and nuances of each case effectively.

**TRUE ADVOCACY** GOES BEYOND THE COURTROOM. IT'S ABOUT ENSURING YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES FEEL **SUPPORTED, HEARD, AND EMPOWERED** THROUGHOUT YOUR LEGAL JOURNEY. WHEN FACING THE REPERCUSSIONS OF VOC EXPOSURE, HAVING A TEAM THAT **STANDS FIRMLY BY YOUR SIDE** CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. WE INVITE YOU TO REACH OUT TO US TO EXPLORE YOUR LEGAL OPTIONS.

Together, we can work towards securing the justice and compensation you rightfully deserve, with the assurance that you're backed by a team that combines professional prowess with genuine care and dedication. Get the compensation you deserve. **Contact us at 1-800-229-7989 for your free consultation.**

