Documentation of Deployment Exposures and the Periodic Occupational Environmental Monitoring Summary (POEMS) Information for Preventive Medicine Personnel

FACT SHEET 64-010-6513

BACKGROUND. In the early to mid 1990's, after the initial Gulf War, the health complaints of returning Service members were evaluated against assumed types of environmental pollutants to which they may have been exposed while deployed. Gaps in environmental exposure measures and the inadequacy of comparable toxicological data made this extremely difficult. Since then, the Department of Defense (DOD) continuously improved policies and resources to collect and evaluate environmental data during deployments. Over the last 20 years, DOD has increasingly supported environmental data collection, assessment, and archiving efforts. Service members now complete pre- (DD Form 2795), post- (DD Form 2796) deployment health assessment (PDHA), and post- (DD Form 2900) deployment health reassessment (PDHRA) questionnaires. These provide an individual's subjective documentation of occupational or environmental exposures that they experienced as well as a description of their health status.

Environmental data collection and archiving has improved, and individuals are encouraged to report exposure concerns post deployment. However, the availability, adequacy, and consistency of this documentation remain a concern for a variety of logistical, policy, and scientific reasons. For example, the procedures used to collect, assess, and document exposure data varied between the Services due to differing resource constraints and missions. As a result, there have been varied approaches and types of documents used to report exposures and address individuals' concerns.

CURRENT STATUS. Recent policy changes are improving the standardization of the procedures and documentation that describe occupational and environmental (OEH) exposure hazards in deployed settings. While it is the DOD's objective to document an individual's unique exposure profile for their entire service period (e.g., linking a person's exposure data with their location and activities), this is not yet possible given current scientific, technological and logistical limitations. Until this type of documentation is available, the DOD is implementing procedures to more uniformly assess and document environmental exposures and associated health effects. This has resulted in the recent effort to develop a **Periodic Environmental and Occupational Monitoring Summary (POEMS**) for each base camp. [1]

The goal of the POEMS is to ensure that medical providers have access to the most current and applicable information when addressing post-deployment exposure related health concerns.

WHAT: A **POEMS** is an official, provider focused, DOD technical document that describes occupational and environmental health (OEH) exposures and their associated health implications for a deployment location during a specific time. The POEMS describes the types of OEH hazards identified during that time, and provides a characterization of the base camp population's exposures and potential associated health effects. It provides a description of the risk estimates for short and long term medical implications and any recommendations for any medical action, follow up or surveillance. A POEMS is based on all available site-specific OEH data, surveys, and reports and is reviewed by the COCOM FHP personnel.

The POEMS includes a summary of data and reports obtained from the DOD Military Exposure Surveillance Library (MESL) or the Defense Occupational and Environmental Health Readiness System (DOEHRS). Examples of key documents included in the evaluation are the Occupational and Environmental Health Site Assessment (OEHSA), intermittent monitoring or field sample data assessment reports, field water surveys, endemic disease information, and unique incident reports.[*]

The POEMS is NOT developed for inclusion in a medical record. It is to be used within the context of a patient-provider discussion about their health concerns. The POEMS describes the population based exposures and does not describe any specific person's unique exposure experience. However, if it appears

relevant to an individual's future complaint or health condition, the provider may use the information when documenting medical information.

The POEMS is NOT a medical disability document. Determinations regarding disability are based on an individual's specific disease or condition as diagnosed by a medical provider and the determination of an established medical review board.

WHY (REQUIREMENT): A POEMS provides a health care provider or returning deployed Service Member an official summary of what is known about OEH exposures at a particular location. The POEMS addresses the requirements of DoD Instructions (DoDIs) 6490.03, 6055.05, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum MCM 0028-07 [**] "*to ensure that appropriate environmental exposure information is available should Service Members as well or their providers have exposure-related concerns (such as those that might be documented on PDHA)*." [2-4]

WHO (AUDIENCE): POEMS are developed as a resource for Medical Providers and available for Service Members (Active duty, NG, and RC).

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES AND PROCESS: POEMS are the responsibility of the COCOM but usually produced at the Service health surveillance centers such as the Army Public Health Center, Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine or the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. They are reviewed by an Occupational and Environmental Medicine Physician and approved by the COCOM Force Health Protection (FHP) officer.

ACCESS/AVAILABILITY: Personnel with deployment-related exposure concerns and their health care providers can request a POEMS from USAPHC. Service members can submit a request at the "Request USAPHC Services" web link at https://usaphcapps.amedd.army.mil/MSRV/ServiceRequest.aspx. Select "POEMS" from the category list. Providers who are not in the DOD or VA health care systems should also use this process to request a POEMS.

DOD and VA medical staff may get direct access to all of the available POEMS at the Military Exposure Surveillance Library at https://mesl.apgea.army.mil/mesl/. POEMS are available as they are produced and currently available for many of the large troop locations in Iraq and Afghanistan. More recent time periods may not be available but are in the production process. Other hazard-specific or unique incident information may also be available to DOD and VA providers on the MESL (e.g., fact sheets describing the sulfur fire incident of 2003[7], or medical concerns regarding burn pits [8]).

References:

1 The Periodic Occupational and Environmental Monitoring Summary (POEMS)—History, Intent, and Relationship to Individual Exposures and Health Outcomes; Technical Information Paper No. 64-002-0909 (Dec 2009).
2 Department of Defense (DoD) Instructions 6490.03, Deployment Health, 2006.
3 Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction, 6055.05, Occupational and Environmental Health, 2008.
4 Chairman's Memorandum (MCM) 0028-07, *Procedures for Deployment Health Surveillance,* 2007.
5 CENTCOM Regulation 220-1: Deployment Health Deployment Health Surveillance and Force Health Protection (Feb 2012).
6 Military Deployment Periodic Occupational and Environmental Monitoring Summary; for Sea Port of Debarkation/Embarkation (SPOD/E), Shuaiba Port, Kuwait; 11 June 2009.
7 USACHPPM Factsheet 64-007-0707; Health Assessment of Al Mishraq Sulfur Fire Incident Status as of 1 July 2007.
8 USAPHC (Prov) Factsheet Medical Concerns Regarding Use of Burn Pits to Dispose of Solid Waste, April 2010.

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[*] *While these other documents may describe exposures and health risks in some fashion, they do not represent the final overall site assessment of health effects or medical implications as described by the POEMS. Inconsistencies are possible, as these other documents are limited in scope (time, location, and context). Concerns should be staffed through the COCOM FHP officer.*

[**] *The POEMS satisfies the DoDI 6490.03 requirement to prepare "periodic occupational and environmental monitoring summaries on an SF 600 for each permanent or semi-permanent basing location." This clarification is being made to a future DODI revision. In the interim, use of POEMS to replace the use of SF600s for documentation of this type of information in individual's medical records is specified for CENTCOM in a Feb 2010 CENTCOM Force Health Protection regulation.* [5]

If you have questions regarding this document please contact:
U.S. Army Public Health Command, Environmental Medicine Program,
DSN 584-2714; COMM 410-436-2714; or email usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.emp@mail.mil
or the Environmental Health Risk Assessment Program
DSN 584-2953; COMM 410-436-2953; or email to USAPHC-EHRAP@amedd.army.mil
5158 Blackhawk Road, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland 21010-5403