

January 15, 2002

The Honorable Howard Dean, M.D.  
Governor of Vermont  
Pavilion Office Building  
109 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05609

Dear Governor Dean:

I am writing on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to inform you of the NRC's program to supply potassium iodide (KI) to requesting States. The details of the program's availability and supporting guidance have been provided by letter to Vermont's NRC State Liaison Officer, Ms. Christine Salembier, on December 20, 2001. This letter is intended to provide some background and to bring you up to date on the NRC's activities related to KI as Vermont proceeds with any KI-related decisions. Letters similar to this are being sent to the Governors of each State having nuclear power plants within or near its borders. In addition, this letter responds to your letter to me dated November 29, 2001 concerning KI.

The NRC has found that KI is a reasonable, prudent, and inexpensive supplement to evacuation and sheltering for specific local conditions. KI can effectively block the uptake of radioactive iodine in the thyroid gland, thus reducing the risk of future development of a radiation-induced thyroid cancer. KI should be administered before or immediately coincident with the exposure to radioactive iodine, although KI may still have a substantial protective effect even if taken 3 or 4 hours after exposure. KI is not an effective treatment for radionuclides other than iodine, nor does it protect the whole body or organs other than the thyroid from health effects associated with radiation exposure. Nonetheless, protection of the thyroid from radioactive iodine can be an important supplement to evacuation and sheltering in the response to incidents at nuclear power plants that involve the release of radioactive iodine.

In January 2001, the NRC issued a regulation to require that States consider including the use of KI prophylaxis as a protective measure for the general public within the 10-mile emergency planning zone (EPZ) around nuclear power plants, to supplement sheltering and evacuation in the event of a nuclear power plant accident. KI prophylaxis has previously been recommended for emergency workers and institutionalized populations (e.g., in hospitals or prisons), which would be among the last to be evacuated. Because the off-site response to reactor-related incidents is dependent on State emergency response capability, it is important for States to make an informed decision as to whether to incorporate KI in the range of protective measures for the general public.

As explained in the letter to the State Liaison Officer, the NRC, in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), has developed a means to provide KI to States. The NRC has allocated \$800,000 to

purchase an initial supply of two KI tablets per person in the 10-mile EPZ, that could be supplied directly to States, upon written request. In light of the fact that the NRC's resources for this purpose are limited, we are planning to provide KI on a first-come, first-served basis. We thus encourage States to begin their processes for considering the use of KI promptly.

We would be happy to discuss these issues with you.

Sincerely,

**/RA/**

Richard A. Meserve

cc: Ms. Christine Salembier  
NRC State Liaison Officer for Vermont

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