



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

April 18, 2002

Richard A. Meserve, Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Chairman Meserve:

On behalf of Governor Mark Schweiker, I write today to notify you of Pennsylvania's decision to accept the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) offer to supply potassium iodide (KI) for the general population within Emergency Planning Zones (EPZ) around the Commonwealth's five nuclear facilities. After carefully weighing the issue from both a health and emergency-planning standpoint, Governor Schweiker feels the KI will offer an extra layer of protection for our citizens living within the 10-mile radius around our nuclear power plants.

However, as a Commonwealth, we are concerned that the NRC is providing the pills only in adult dosages that are not appropriate for children. Children whose thyroid glands are still developing are at the highest risk of thyroid cancer in the event of exposure to radioactive iodine. Even though KI is considered safe and effective, there can be side effects from taking too much.

To that end, Pennsylvania urges the Food and Drug Administration and the NRC to provide states with KI in child dosages to make it easier for parents to better protect their children. While Pennsylvania accepts your offer, we prefer to receive 65 mg doses as opposed to the 130 mg doses you have offered. The Commonwealth, with the state Department of Health (DOH) being the lead agency, will be extremely pro-active in educating the public as to when and how to take KI in the event of a radiological release.

Hoping that you can accommodate our request for 65 mg doses, Pennsylvania initially requests three million, 65 mg tablets for the general population within our five EPZs. If possible, we would prefer to receive the KI in 4-tablet packages with a package insert reflecting current Food and Drug Administration dosage guidance. This would greatly assist our distribution effort. The DOH has requested having the KI shipped to more than one location at the Commonwealth's expense. The contact person for delivery of the KI is DOH Deputy Secretary Helen Burns at 717-783-8804.

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The Commonwealth is working towards finalizing the details of its plan to handle the KI once it is in our possession. Governor Schweiker has instructed the departments of Health and Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to develop a distribution plan. In addition, these agencies will be working on disseminating public information to teach residents how to store the pills, when they should be taken, and how to give them to children. We will inform the Federal Emergency Management Agency once these plans are completed.

The Schweiker Administration continues to strongly advocate evacuation as the public's best protection in the unlikely event of a radioactive release. Additionally, residents have been assured that although the state is going to make these pills available, we are not going to be any less vigilant in how we train people to respond to a nuclear emergency or defend the nuclear plants.

Should you or your staff have any questions related to this matter, please contact Helen Burns.

Sincerely,



Earl P. Freilino II, Director
Office of Homeland Security
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

cc: Governor Mark Schweiker
David E. Hess, Secretary DEP
Robert S. Zimmerman, Jr., Secretary, DOH
David L. Smith, Director, PEMA
Colonel Paul J. Evanko, Commissioner, PA State Police
Helen Burns, Deputy Secretary, DOH