

August 29, 2008

The Honorable Jane Harman  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Harman:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I would like to thank you for your letter dated July 17, 2008, regarding the use and licensing of devices containing cesium chloride (CsCl). The security of radioactive materials remains a top priority for the NRC, and we continue to work closely with our domestic and international partners to assess, integrate, and improve security programs in order to make risk-significant radioactive materials more secure and less vulnerable to terrorists. The NRC's leadership role in applying a risk-based approach to this issue has resulted in enhanced security of radioactive materials and has reduced the potential threat from a radiological dispersal device or radiological exposure device.

The NRC has a number of initiatives currently underway to increase even further the security of CsCl and to develop an integrated strategy toward its future use. Consistent with the recommendation of the study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences entitled, "Radiation Source Use and Replacement," the NRC agrees that any effort to replace these radiation sources with alternative technologies should proceed with caution in order to minimize disruption to medical practitioners, patients, and their families. The NRC has scheduled a public workshop in Rockville, Maryland on September 29-30, 2008, to ensure that all stakeholders are afforded an early opportunity to provide input on potential regulatory changes. The Commission believes that balanced consideration of stakeholder comments is essential to inform regulatory changes and to quantify and possibly lessen the impacts of any changes. However, as stated above, one of the Commission's top priorities remains the secure use of radioactive material in order to ensure public health and safety.

I appreciate your interest in this important matter. Following the September public workshop, my staff would be happy to brief your staff on the comments we received. The Director of Congressional Affairs, Rebecca Schmidt, will be in contact with your staff. Finally, please feel free to contact me if you have further questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

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Dale E. Klein