



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC APPROVES PROPOSAL TO CONTINUE DISTRIBUTING POTASSIUM IODIDE NEAR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS AS AN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MEASURE

The NRC has approved a staff recommendation to continue providing potassium iodide (KI) to states requesting it for residents who live within the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone of a commercial nuclear power plant. The NRC had originally authorized only a one-time distribution to states requesting the product.

KI can help reduce the risk of thyroid cancer and other diseases by blocking the thyroid gland's absorption of radioactive iodine, which could be dispersed in the unlikely event of a severe reactor accident. KI can be used as part of a state's emergency preparedness program, in addition to evacuations and/or sheltering-in-place for the population closest to the nuclear power plant and thus at greatest risk of exposure to radioactive materials released during an accident.

In 2001, the NRC sent letters to 34 eligible states and offered funding for an initial supply of KI. Over the past seven years, 22 states have requested KI supplies from the NRC. Some of these states chose to stockpile the KI, while others distributed it to the public. In its original decision, the NRC had not committed to providing more than an initial KI distribution. In 2006, however, the NRC authorized a one-time replenishment of KI for those states participating in the NRC's initiative. Under the new policy, the NRC will continue to provide KI tablets to or replenish stockpiles for states that request them. The NRC estimates the cost will be between \$4 and \$5 million every six years starting in FY 2013. A new contract is pending to spend \$2.8 million on KI to finalize the initial replenishment to states.

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