

September 22, 2009

The Honorable Tom Coburn
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coburn:

Thank you for your September 3, 2009, e-mail, which forwarded an inquiry from Mr. Rodd Andrews, a constituent from Oklahoma City, regarding United States production of medical isotopes. While the NRC recognizes a shortage of medical isotopes in the United States, as indicated by your constituent's email, the NRC must maintain its independence and not promote production of medical isotopes or any other use of nuclear materials or nuclear power. The NRC is responsible for protecting the public health and safety and common defense and security by ensuring the safe use of radioactive materials. The NRC regulates the use of nuclear materials, such as in nuclear medicine, through licensing, inspection and enforcement of its requirements. The NRC's scope of responsibility includes the regulation of commercial nuclear power plants; research, test, and training reactors; nuclear fuel cycle facilities; medical, academic, and industrial uses of radioactive materials; and the transport, storage, and disposal of radioactive materials and wastes. The NRC has insured that regulations for the review and licensing of applications for medical isotope facilities are in place and ready for a timely review should we receive an application.

In accordance with the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, the role of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is the promotion of nuclear power and other energy-related work. The DOE is also responsible for encouraging, conducting, and supporting research and development in nuclear fields, including nuclear medicine. The DOE's mission is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States and to promote scientific and technological innovation in support of that mission. I encourage you to follow up with the DOE, which could provide additional information for you and your constituent(s) regarding any activity concerning increasing the domestic production of medical isotopes.

Sincerely,

/RA/

R. W. Borchardt
Executive Director
for Operations

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