

From: Wiggins, Jim
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2011 11:58 AM
To: alan@anbex.com
Subject: FYI: RESPONSE TO YOUR 6/8/11 EMAIL TO CHAIRMAN JACZKO ON KI

I am responding to your email of June 8, 2011, to Chairman Jaczko in which you expressed your company's longstanding interest in thyroid prophylaxis. Additionally, you expressed concern that the NRC was not acting in the interest of public safety by ignoring the findings (i.e., increased thyroid cancer) from the Chernobyl accident in its consideration of distribution of potassium iodide (KI) to the populations within the 10 mile emergency planning zones around U.S. nuclear power plants.

The NRC's mission is to protect public health and safety and the environment. It is a responsibility that we take very seriously. The NRC has extensively reviewed the reports by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the National Academy of Sciences report, and the Chernobyl Forum Report (which is a consensus report among many international organizations including the World Health Organization) regarding the increases in thyroid cancer as a result of the Chernobyl accident. Each of these reports almost exclusively attributes the increases in thyroid cancer to the milk pathway rather than inhalation. The impacted children were at a distance from the site, however, no protective actions (such as food/milk interdiction) were recommended for those populations for a considerable period of time. As an unfortunate result, these children drank milk contaminated with I¹³¹. In the U.S., interdiction of food and evacuation out of the area, rather than the administration of a drug product, is the preferred and more effective protective action.

The NRC makes KI available to States with populations within the 10 mile emergency planning zone of nuclear power plants as an optional supplement to evacuation and sheltering. Additional information about the NRC's KI program can be found on the NRC website at www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/emerg-preparedness/about-emerg-preparedness/potassium-iodide.html.

The recommendation for evacuation of U.S. citizens within 50 miles of the Fukushima Dai'ichi reactors was made with after assessing what we knew about plant conditions based on very limited and conflicting data. In the case of a significant event at a US plant, we would expect to much more reliable data as a result of our practiced interactions with our licensees over reliable, direct communications pathways (including real-time computer links) and due to us having resident inspectors onsite. The response to the event at the Fukushima Dai'ichi plant was the responsibility of the operator, TEPCO, and the Japanese government. The U.S. government could not directly impact the actions or the outcome of the events at the reactors. Rather, the U.S. government could only make conservative recommendations to ensure the safety of its citizens within 50 miles of the damaged reactors. It was within this context that the recommendation was made to the U.S. Ambassador to Japan for U.S. citizens residing in the areas of the damaged reactors.

As you may know, the NRC has a special review ongoing to develop lessons-learned from the event in Japan that may apply to the US fleet. Emergency Preparedness is one of the areas subject to the lessons-learned review so there may be changes in that area.

Thank you for your interest in the NRC's emergency preparedness and KI distribution programs.

Jim Wiggins
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