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UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

May 13, 1994

CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Regulation  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Commission, I am responding to your April 20, 1994 letter which urged the Commission to revise its current policy regarding the availability of potassium iodide (KI) in the event of an emergency at a nuclear power plant. Current Federal policy, which was formulated in 1985 by an umbrella group of about 15 Federal agencies, recommends the stockpiling or distribution of KI during emergencies for emergency workers and institutionalized persons but does not recommend requiring predistribution or stockpiling for the general public. The Commission has considered this issue carefully and at great length, including all of the factors and details mentioned in your letter.

The Commission believes that the circumstances which would call for the availability of potassium iodide (KI) are very remote. We also recognize, as you observed, that the costs of stockpiling a supply of KI for all people who live within a five mile radius of a nuclear power plant are relatively low. However, the Commission does not believe that the stockpiling of KI is necessary to protect the public health and safety, and in the absence of a clear-cut regulatory justification, the Commission has been unable to agree to recommend a change to the current Federal policy.

While the current policy does not recommend requiring predistribution or stockpiling for the general public, it neither encourages nor discourages State and local authorities choosing to make KI available. Therefore State and local officials may make their own decisions based on local conditions and preferences. As you noted, some states have plans to distribute, or have distributed, KI to people living near power plants within those states.

For your information, I am enclosing a copy of the May 13, 1994 press release that the NRC issued on this matter. The Commission appreciates your interest in the use of KI.

Sincerely,

Ivan Selin

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PDR COMMS NRCC  
CORRESPONDENCE PDR

Enclosure:  
As stated

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