



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

DOCKETED
USNRC

March 9, 1998

'98 MAR 10 P12:10

DOCKET NUMBER
PETITION RULE PRM 50-63A
(62 FR 66038)

OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKING AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

Thank you for your February 13, 1998, letter that urged the Commission to revise its current policy regarding the availability of potassium iodide (KI) for use by the general public in the event of an emergency at a nuclear power plant. Your letter has been included in the record of rulemaking. We have also posted it on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Web Page with other comments from the public received on the petition.

As a result of the petitioner revising his petition, the Commission published a request for public comments in the Federal Register on December 17, 1997 (62 FR 66038). The comment period was subsequently extended until February 17, 1998, by a Federal Register notice published on January 21, 1998 (63 FR 3052). Following receipt of the staff's recommendation, which we anticipate will be provided in the near future, the Commission will make its decision on the disposition of the petition. We anticipate publishing a revised policy regarding the stockpiling and availability of potassium iodide for the general public shortly after the Commission makes its decision on the petition.

For your information, I am enclosing a copy of the January 16, 1998, press release that the NRC issued on this matter. The Commission appreciates your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

Shirley Ann Jackson

Enclosure: As stated

9803120398 980309
PDR PRM
50-63A PDR



DS10

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Office of Public Affairs

Washington DC 20555

Telephone: 301/415-8200 -- E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

No. 98-12

January 16, 1998

NRC SEEKS COMMENT ON PETITION FOR RULEMAKING

CONCERNING USE OF THYROID-PROTECTING DRUG IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking public comment on a petition for rulemaking which asks that the NRC modify its regulation, 10 CFR 50.47 (b) (10), to require that nuclear power plant emergency plans consider the inclusion of the use of potassium iodide, a thyroid-protecting drug, for the general public.

The deadline for comments is February 17.

Current Federal policy, published July 24, 1985, calls for potassium iodide to be stockpiled for distribution during emergencies to emergency workers and institutionalized persons. If taken in time, the substance blocks most of the thyroid gland's uptake of radioactive iodine. It could thus help reduce the risk of thyroid cancer and other diseases that might otherwise be caused by exposure to radioactive iodine which could be dispersed in a severe nuclear accident.

The Commission last year voted to approve a proposed revision to the current Federal policy which would offer to provide funding for states which want to stockpile potassium iodide for use by the general public in the event of a nuclear power plant emergency.

The rulemaking petition now pending before the Commission calls for a change in NRC regulations to specify that states and licensees consider the use of potassium iodide, as well as evacuation and sheltering, in the preparation of nuclear power plant emergency plans.

The petition was filed by Peter G. Crane, an NRC staff attorney who took the action as a private citizen. The original January 16 deadline for comments has been extended by 30 days to allow sufficient time for public comment. Persons wishing copies of the petition may write: Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555. A copy of the petition and other related documents are also available at the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street NW (Lower Level), Washington, DC. The petition also may be accessed on the Internet at http://ruleforum.llnl.gov/cgi-bin/rulemake?source=KI_PETITION.

Comments should be mailed to: Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, Attention: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff. Comments also may be delivered to 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD, between 7:30 a. m. and 4:15 p. m. on Federal workdays. They also may be provided through the NRC's interactive rulemaking website, which may be reached via the Internet at <http://www.nrc.gov> by looking for rulemaking under the heading "Public Participation and School Programs."

###

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1502

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE
APPROPRIATIONS
SMALL BUSINESS
LABOR AND HUMAN
RESOURCES

February 13, 1998

The Honorable Shirley Ann Jackson
Chairwoman,
The Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington D.C. 20555

Dear Dr. Jackson:

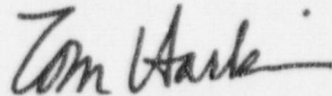
I applaud the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) proposal to modify its approach to stockpiling potassium iodide (KI) as a measure to protect the general population in case of a severe nuclear reactor accident. I am, however, concerned that this proposal does not go far enough.

I believe that the NRC's proposal to federally fund the purchase of KI for any state requesting is correct. This being said, I also believe that the NRC should do more and make stockpiling mandatory, as proposed by Commissioners Diaz and McGaffigan.

The distribution of KI to the general public in the event of a nuclear emergency is a broadly accepted protective measure. KI is an extremely effective means in the prevention of the uptake of radioactive iodine by the thyroid. For example, the World Health Organization has recommended its use for people living near a nuclear power plant if radiation levels are expected to exceed a predetermined dose. A number of foreign governments — the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Canadian provinces with nuclear power plants, and the former Soviet Union — stockpile KI for distribution to, and use by, the population in the event of a nuclear emergency. Several states include the use of KI in their emergency planning and this proposed measure would prove most effective in the protection of those citizens living and working near nuclear power plants.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of the U.S. population in case of nuclear accidents. I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin
United States Senator

980306049 JP