



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 01-135

December 20, 2001

NRC OFFERS TO SUPPLY POTASSIUM IODIDE TO STATES THAT REQUEST IT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has sent letters to those states that have nuclear power plants located within the state, or nearby, offering to supply potassium iodide to requesting states within about 30 days.

NRC regulations require that consideration be given to including potassium iodide as a protective measure for the general public to supplement evacuation and sheltering in the event of a severe nuclear power plant accident. Potassium iodide, if taken in time, blocks the thyroid gland's uptake of radioactive iodine and thus would help prevent thyroid cancers and other thyroid diseases that might be caused by exposure to radioactive iodine that could be dispersed in a severe nuclear accident.

The Commission has found that potassium iodide is a reasonable, prudent and inexpensive supplement to evacuation and sheltering for specific local conditions. The Commission left it to the states to make a final decision on whether to use it in their emergency preparedness program, but decided to fund the initial purchases of potassium iodide for any state that decided to stockpile it. The states of Alabama, Arizona, and Tennessee already provide potassium iodide for the general public around nuclear power plants as a part of their emergency preparedness program. In addition, emergency plans for all nuclear power plants provide for distribution of the drug to emergency workers and certain institutionalized populations, such as hospital patients within designated emergency planning zones.

The Commission has set aside \$800,000 to fund initial stockpiles of potassium iodide for one to two doses for individuals within about 10 miles around each plant. The agency is currently negotiating with pharmaceutical suppliers, who would ship the drug directly to the address indicated by each state. The NRC will provide potassium iodide to requesting states on a first-come, first-served basis.

Attachments to the NRC's letters to the states provide Food and Drug Administration guidance on use of potassium iodide and guidelines developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for implementation of a potassium iodide program.

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