

July 25, 2003

TO: Superintendents of Public Schools and Administrators of Charter Schools
and Private Schools within the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zones of Nuclear
Power Plants

FROM : Dr. Mike Ward
State Superintendent

Dr. Leah Devlin
State Health Director

SUBJECT: Potassium Iodide (KI) Distribution to Schools

In 2002, North Carolina ordered 750,000 tablets of potassium iodide (KI) from the federal government and began distributing them to residents and workers within the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zones (EPZs) of the four nuclear power plants (NPPs) in or adjacent to North Carolina. If KI is taken prior to or soon after exposure to a release of radioactive iodine (RAI), such as might occur during an incident at an NPP, it blocks the uptake of harmful RAI by the thyroid gland, and can prevent thyroid cancers and other thyroid diseases caused by RAI. Although evacuation remains the preferred emergency response to a serious NPP event, KI is an effective supplement to evacuation or sheltering in place.

The next phase of KI distribution-- distribution to schools located within the 10-mile EPZs-- is about to begin. One tablet of KI will be made available for each student and staff person in time for the 2003/2004-fall term. The package of materials enclosed with this letter provides important information on KI: medical and historical information; the legal authority for teachers, nurses and other school personnel to distribute and administer KI; fact sheets for parents and teachers; a sample memorandum of understanding for incorporation of KI into local school health programs; a sample letter introducing this program to parents/guardians; and policy documents. The organizations that support use of KI and placing KI in schools, such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, and the American Academy of Pediatrics are also listed, along with their recommendations, for your reference.

Please review the enclosed materials carefully. After evaluating the information on the program, please contact your local health director to address any questions or concerns and to schedule distribution of KI to your schools. If you have other questions, you may contact Dr. Ben Matthews, Director of the Division of School Support at (919) 807-3501 or Dr. Greg Smith, Chair of the KI Committee, Division of Public Health at (919) 715-8179.

cc

Dr. Ben Matthews, Director, School Support Division, Department of Public Instruction
Dr. Greg Smith, Chair, Potassium Iodide Committee, Epidemiology Section
Dr. Steve Cline, Chief, Epidemiology Section, Division of Public Health
Dr. Jeffrey Engel, State Epidemiologist, Division of Public Health

Dr. Jim Kirkpatrick, Bioterrorism Coordinator, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, Division of Public Health

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Johnny James, Radiation Emergency Coordinator, Radiation Protection Section

Beverly Hall, Chief, Radiation Protection Section

Dr. Ken Taylor, Director, Division of Emergency Management

Steve Payne, Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program Manager, Division of Emergency Management

Local Health Directors of 10- mile EPZ counties

Local Emergency Management Directors of 10-mile EPZ counties

Julie George, RN, MSN, North Carolina Board of Nursing

Enclosures/ Electronic Attachments:

1. State of North Carolina Policy Regarding Potassium Iodide for the Public (Exposure to Radioiodine) (wd)
2. Map of NC Nuclear Power Plants/10-mile EPZs (ppt)
3. List/Spreadsheet of Identified Public and Non Public Schools in the 10-mile EPZ (wd and mdb)
4. Guidance for the Administration of Potassium Iodide (KI) for Emergency Workers, Institutionalized Persons and the General Public
5. NC Department of Health and Human Services Potassium Iodide Information Sheet English version (pdf) Spanish version (wd)

School Administrator Pack

6. Potassium Iodide (KI) Distribution to Schools-Background Information
7. KI in Schools-Facts for Teachers, Administrators and Staff (wd)
8. KI in Schools-Duties of Teachers 115C-304 (pdf)
9. School Health MOU Template (wd)
10. KI in Schools-NC Board of Nursing letter May 14, 2003 (pdf)
11. Sample letter- Carolina Beach School letter to parents/guardians (pdf)

Parent Pack

12. KI in Schools-Facts for Parents and Guardians (wd)
English and Spanish versions
13. KI Student Opt-In/Opt-Out Form (wd)
English and Spanish versions