



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Assistant Secretary for
Public Health Emergency Preparedness
Washington, D.C. 20201

November 8, 2004

Donald E. Williamson, MD
State Health Officer
Alabama Department of Public Health
201 Monroe Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017

Dear Dr. Williamson:

I am writing to seek your comments on draft Federal guidelines implementing a Congressionally mandated program to make potassium iodide (KI) available to jurisdictions within a 20-mile radius of nuclear power plants. Currently, the Federal Government, through the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, makes KI available for stockpiling and distribution to populations within 10 miles of a nuclear power plant. Through this new program, the Health and Human Services (HHS) Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) will make KI available for those individuals living within the area of a circle that is between 10 and 20 miles from a reactor.

In the event of a release of radioactive iodine from a nuclear power plant, prompt administration of KI may mitigate the adverse effects of radioactive iodine exposure to the thyroid gland. It is important to note that KI does not provide general protection against radiation. The protective effects of KI are confined to the thyroid gland. KI is not a substitute for evacuation, avoiding inhalation and ingestion, and decontamination. While studies suggest that there is a low risk of internal exposure to radioactive iodine from the plume in areas beyond the 10-mile radius, KI may be an effective countermeasure should such exposure occur.

Section 127 of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Act), which is the law that authorizes the enhanced distribution of KI, provides that before KI is distributed, state and local governments must comply with certifications and requirements that include developing a plan for the stockpiling, distribution and use of KI. It also provides that the Federal government must prepare guidelines to assist state and local jurisdictions in developing such a plan. Before we publish these guidelines, we are, as required, submitting them to you for your review. Once we receive your comments, we will work expeditiously to finalize the guidelines.

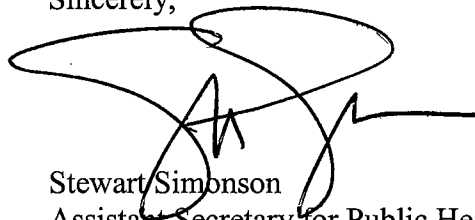
Once State and local plans have been prepared, they should be submitted through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to HHS for review and approval. Following approval, arrangements will be made for the Strategic National Stockpile to provide KI to requesting jurisdictions.

Because I am aware that not all states will implement this program through their Health Departments, I am copying your State Emergency Management Office. In the event you are not the lead, I would appreciate it if you would coordinate with them and ensure your state reviews the guidelines and submits comments by December 15, 2004. I have also forwarded a similar letter to several stakeholder organizations for their input. Please provide your comments to:

Robert G. Claypool, M.D.
Deputy Chief Medical Officer
Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 638 G
Washington, DC 20201
Phone: 202-205-2882

Should you have any questions about the draft guidelines, please feel free to have a member of your staff contact Dr. Claypool. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stewart Simonson', with a large, sweeping loop at the top and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Stewart Simonson
Assistant Secretary for Public Health
Emergency Preparedness

Enclosure

Copy: Mr. Bruce Baughman
Director, State Emergency Management Agency