



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 12, 1996

OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER

Dr. Ronald L. Kathren, Director  
United States Transuranium  
and Uranium Registries  
Washington State University  
100 Sprout Road  
Richland, Washington 99352-1643

Dear Dr. Kathren:

Thank you for your letter of July 29, 1996, regarding several recent incidents in which individuals have been accidentally exposed to one or more transuranium elements.

In response to your recommendations, the following information has been provided to me by NRC staff. The staff is satisfied that all Agreement States have available to them the information needed to report materials events, including those involving actinides. Their conclusion is based upon the fact that NRC has distributed the NRC document, "Handbook on Nuclear Material Event Reporting in the Agreement States," in March 1995 to all Agreement State radiation control program directors (enclosed). Such information reported to NRC is entered into the Nuclear Materials Events Database (NMED) which catalogues all materials events, including those involving actinides. Staff's search of this database identified only five actinide-related events since 1990, and staff has no reason to believe that States did not respond properly in each case.

As you know, the Federal support for an actinide exposure is the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site (REAC/TS), a Department of Energy (DOE) resource headquartered in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. REAC/TS is available 24 hours a day to provide medical and radiological assistance either from the REAC/TS facility or the accident site. Additionally, REAC/TS maintains a listing of other professionals (e.g., the United States Transuranium and Uranium Registries) throughout the country who are recognized as having highly specialized expertise and equipment to manage a particular area of concern. This information is shared with the States to provide readily available assistance for the type and location of a particular incident or accident. State individuals have been made aware of this resource through training that the NRC provides as part of the NRC's State outreach program as well as through DOE training and the ongoing close relationship between the States and their respective regional DOE counterparts. NRC staff reviewed the State responses to events as part of the Integrated Materials Performance Evaluation Program (IMPEP) and has found the States to be knowledgeable of the REAC/TS program. The NRC's Response Technical Manual, published in 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993, and the new Response Coordination Manual obtain wide distribution among State radiation control and emergency response programs and provide information on REAC/TS.

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Dr. R. Kathren

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Federal resources and technology are readily available to assist in actinide exposures when requested by the States. Because this information is already available and well-known to the States, staff believes that a specific Federally-sponsored training course is not warranted nor is a specific information kit needed.

I appreciate your interest in this area and am pleased to have an opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,  
**Original Signed By**  
**Greta J. Dicus**

Greta J. Dicus  
Commissioner

Enclosure: As stated

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Dr. R. Kathren

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