

November 2, 1990

Note for: *Hugh* ~~Hugh Thompson~~
From: *Peter* ~~Peter Crane~~
Subject: HANDLING OF POTASSIUM IODIDE DFO

As I mentioned to you, I had a useful meeting on October 12 with Pat Rathbun of your staff and Jack Heitemes. What was particularly reassuring about the way in which the revision of NUREG CR 1430 will, it seems, be conducted is that Jack himself, with all his conscientiousness and capability, is and will be at the tiller. I gather also that he plans to bring in some new blood to run the project, so that the agency is not in the position of always having the same person or persons asked to review and revise their own previous work. Jack says also that they realize that they do not have the capacity to do the job in-house and plan to look to an outside laboratory for assistance. What is disappointing is that money constraints prevent any such contract at this time, and that the whole process is likely to take a lot of time.

I remain concerned, however, that sixteen months after my DFO was filed, not an hour has been spent, to the best of my knowledge, on a key part of the DFO: the part that said that the NRC staff gave inaccurate information to the Commission and the public in the November 22, 1983 briefing. What makes this point especially worth noting, I think, is that the EDO's memo to the Commissioners of April 16, 1990 seems to say that those aspects of the DFO not previously dealt with were now being addressed by the staff. (In fact, it appears that what the relevant sentence intended to convey was that those aspects of the DFO were being addressed in the manner recommended by Dr. Beckford -- that is, by getting good contemporary information on the underlying health effects issues -- and by implication, ignoring the question of whether there was a misrepresentation to the Commission and the public.) But the possibility is there that someday, someone will be in a position to accuse the EDO of having misled the Commission in April 1990.

As you know, I have never wanted to see this issue referred to the Inspector General, where the focus inevitably tends to be on wrongdoing and wrongdoers. Far from being out to "get" anyone, it's a source of regret to me that one of the three people who seem to have dropped the ball in November 1983 -- as all of us occasionally drop the ball, heaven knows -- is someone whom I admire as a public servant and like as a person. (The other two have long since left NRC.) But this is a health and safety issue, and as I have said before, I don't think we can afford to let this be an issue of personalities; rather, we have an obligation to correct the record and do so in a timely way.

Moreover, KI is an issue that could come back to haunt the NRC, notwithstanding the recent Centers for Disease Control report that recommends against changing the Federal Policy Statement at this time. (It also recommends a survey of existing stocks of KI and further study of the stockpiling issue.) If the day ever comes that the question is asked, "What did the agency do to investigate the charge, made in the June 1988 DFO, that the NRC staff misled the Commission and the public on potassium iodide in 1983?", the honest answer as of today will be "nothing." And that could be a very uncomfortable day for the Commission and the staff.