

Radiation Event: Frequently Asked Questions

March 16, 2011

- **Q. What's the risk for North Carolina from the current nuclear power emergency in Japan?**
A. At present, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) indicates Japan's nuclear emergency presents no danger to North Carolina or the continental United States.
- **Q. What is being done to test for radiation that might be coming or is present in the environment?**
A. Both federal and state monitoring is ongoing and will be supplemented as needed.
- **Q. Does North Carolina have a plan in place to respond to a radiological emergency?**
A. North Carolina has radiological emergency plans and dedicated response resources, both for nuclear power plants and for radiological or nuclear incidents not associated with nuclear power plants. These response plans, responders and resources are well practiced and ready should they ever be needed.
- **Q. Does North Carolina monitor areas around the state's three nuclear power plants?**
A. Yes. While nuclear power plants fall under the regulatory authority of the NRC, North Carolina has a radiological environmental monitoring program. The program includes 24/7 environmental radiological monitoring in specific locations across the state.
- **Q. Does North Carolina stockpile supplies for such an emergency?**
A. North Carolina does stockpile emergency supplies, including potassium iodide (KI). KI has been distributed to people living and working in the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zones around the state's nuclear power plants.
- **Q. Why is potassium iodide used during emergencies involving radiation exposure?**
A. Potassium iodide may be recommended to individuals who are at risk for radiation exposure or have been exposed to excessive radiation to block the body's absorption of radioactive iodine.
- **Q. Are there dangers associated with taking KI?**
A. The dangers need to be weighed against the risk of exposure to radiation. Using potassium iodide could have potential serious side effects such as abnormal heart rhythms, nausea, vomiting, electrolyte abnormalities and bleeding.
- **Q. Should I be taking potassium iodide to protect myself?**
A. No. Potassium iodide tablets are not recommended at this time and are not expected to be as associated with this event. Potassium iodide can present a danger to people with allergies to iodine, shellfish or who have thyroid problems.
- **Q. Should I purchase potassium iodide as a precaution?**
A. No. Potassium iodide is only appropriate within a very close proximity to a nuclear event. Using potassium iodide when inappropriate could have potential serious side effects such as abnormal heart rhythms, nausea, vomiting, electrolyte abnormalities and bleeding.
- **Q. Are there any protective measures I should take now?**
A. The best thing anyone can do is to stay informed. State and federal partners are monitoring the situation. If circumstances change, officials will alert the public to appropriate precautionary procedures. But, again, at this time, the NRC reports Japan's nuclear emergency presents no danger to North Carolina.