



Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

APR 29 1999

Chairman Jackson
Commissioner Dicus
Commissioner Diaz
Commissioner McGaffigan
Commissioner Merrifield
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Madam Chairman and Commissioners:

I read in the April 24, 1999 New York Times and in your press release that you voted to withdraw your commitment to fund the purchase of potassium iodide for States that elect to stockpile it for use by the general public in the event of a radiological release from a nuclear power plant. In addition to deciding that the NRC would not pay for State stockpiles, you announced that FEMA should pay for both regional and state stockpiles. I strongly oppose this unilateral decision that reverses your previous position and adversely affects the implementation of the policy proposed by the Federal Radiological Preparedness Coordinating Committee (FRPCC). The policy provides that if a State chooses to add potassium iodide as a supplement to its evacuation and sheltering protective actions, the State will inform FEMA and we will forward that request to the NRC to support the purchase.

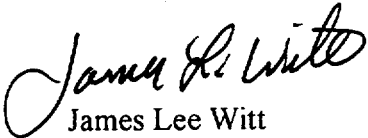
Your abrupt retreat from repeated promises to the Federal community, states and the public is apparently based on a misapprehension of FEMA's authorizing legislation and a disregard of our view—and that of other FRPCC agencies—that regional potassium iodide stockpiles will not enhance local radiological emergency preparedness. On funding, we stand fast on our position that FEMA lacks authority and appropriations for acquisition of potassium iodide and thus, cannot and will not assume the NRC financial commitment to the States.

Based on concerns expressed by States, FEMA has always opposed the notion that Federal regional stockpiles of potassium iodide would be effective in the event of a release from a nuclear power plant. The complex logistics of storage and distribution far outweigh the usefulness of such a stockpile. Regional stockpiles of potassium iodide would complicate, not strengthen radiological emergency preparedness.

NRC and FEMA must work together with the States to implement the FRPCC policy. As you may recall, this proposed policy would leave the option to the State on whether it would use potassium iodide as a supplemental protective measure for the general public. If a State opted to incorporate its use as a protective measure for the general public, and the NRC fulfills its commitment, funds will be provided for such a purchase.

In light of the significance of this issue, and the concerns being raised by the States, I would appreciate a response to this letter by May 28, 1999.

Sincerely,


James Lee Witt
Director

Attachments: NRC Potassium Iodide Funding Commitments
Federal Radiological Preparedness Coordinating Committee proposed
policy and scheme for potassium iodide request & funding

cc: William Travers, EDO
FRPCC Agencies

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