



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



Sheltering-in-place and Oral KI Best Tactics for Radioactive Event

Regardless of how you feel about nuclear energy, a nuclear power plant sits in our backyard. The risks for a “radiologic accident” are small, but present nonetheless. My purpose here is not to review or reassure you about the many safety measures employed at Indian Point, or even about our ability to handle the impact here of a dirty bomb targeting NYC. I want everyone to be prepared and know how to respond to any eventuality and this brings me to the administration of Potassium Iodide and how to shelter in place.

Potassium iodide (KI) is an over-the-counter medication that blocks radioactive iodine from being absorbed by the thyroid gland. After a nuclear event, radioactive iodine is released into the air where it can be inhaled or contaminate food. If absorbed by the thyroid gland, an individual has an increased risk of thyroid cancer. In fact, the National Cancer Institute has reported a significantly increased rate of thyroid cancer, especially for children and adolescents, continuing 25 years after the Chernobyl explosion. By taking KI pills, residents can block radioactive material from entering their thyroid gland. For KI to be effective, it should be taken before or immediately after an incident, so if you are living within the ten-mile radius of Indian Point, it is best to *have it on hand before any radioactive event were to occur*.

The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Bureau of Emergency Services, will be promoting several events around the county to further educate residents and distribute KI. Please look for them.

“Sheltering in place” is the phrase coined by emergency personnel to describe the tactic of remaining inside where you are, or going inside quickly and staying there when instructed to do so. Buildings offer protection of varying degrees, depending on the construction materials and size. Dense materials such as cement, steel, brick and earth provide better protection than dry wall, thin sheet metal or wood. Large buildings also offer layers of protection because individuals can move to an inner room in the center of the building and put more distance between themselves and the radioactivity. Once inside, limit exchange of air with the outside. Close windows and turn off air conditioning. Evacuation, in contrast, could be more problematic by exposing an individual to added fallout. Instructions about which course of action to take would be distributed via NY Alert and broadcast media. More information is available on the Bureau of Emergency Services website at www.putnamcountyny.com/ pcbes under IPEC-Indian Point Energy Center and at the NYS Department of Health website at www.health.ny.gov. Simply type “KI” into the site search.

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