

PLYMOUTH

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Health bosses refuse to supply tablets

by RACHAEL GARNETT

HEALTH bosses in Plymouth have come under fire for refusing to issue radiation sickness tablets to people living near Devonport Dockyard.

Health bosses in Plymouth are still arguing over the effectiveness of the Potassium Iodate tablets - which are routinely given out to districts surrounding a nuclear site in case of accident.

Over the river Tamar in Cornwall, the Health Authority has already decided to distribute the pills to all schools in Torpoint.

Cornish health chiefs also want every household in Torpoint to receive the tablets - which counteract the problems of radioactive iodine found in nuclear 'mists' or leaks and reduce the risks of developing cancer of the thyroid.

Closer

But on the Plymouth side of the Tamar, health bosses want more tests to be done on the usefulness of the tablets, and this has angered residents who claim they are closer to the Devonport nuclear site than people living in Torpoint.

Ken Tucker of the St Budeaux Community Association said: "I detect double safety standards here.

Radiation sickness pills docks block row

"It is really unacceptable and farcical that Torpoint, which is behind the required 500 metre immediate zone, has these tablets ready to be issued while in Plymouth we have a health authority who will not commit themselves one way or another.

"It is worth noting that with the prevailing south westerly wind, Torpoint would escape most problems from any radiation exposure, but Plymouth would not escape, in partic-

ular those areas adjacent to the naval base."

Mr Tucker wants the tablets to be given, at least, to all schools within the immediate 500 metre zone around the site and preferably to households too.

Agreement

Dr Sarah Harrison of the Plymouth Health Authority said: "It is now being organised to give tablets to schools in Plymouth.

"In order to actually give

out supplies, there has to be an agreement with the education authorities and the Navy who supply the tablets and this accounts for the delay.

"But as health consultants we are more concerned with the side effects of the tablets.

"The chances of a nuclear accident happening are extremely small and cancer of the thyroid is actually very treatable so we have to balance up the risks and the benefits."