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# DIG NewsRelease

## Plymouth nuclear Dump Information Group

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24th July 1996

*For immediate release*

### **COUNCIL CALLS ON MoD TO RESOURCE PUBLIC NUCLEAR SAFETY PLAN**

**This week, Plymouth City Councillors voted to call on the Ministry of Defence to fund and resource the pre-distribution of cancer blocking potassium iodate tablets to protect the public from the effects of a nuclear accident in the city.**

At Mondays Environmental Services Committee meeting (22/7/96), councillors were told that no money was available from the local health authority or the city council to meet the costs of pre-distributing the life saving tablets. Local Health Authority medical expert, Dr. Sarah Harrison, told councillors that they were in favour of pre-distributing tablets to as many residents as possible, but could not meet the costs of handing out tablets or administering the scheme.

The local Health Authority has responsibility for drafting tablet distribution plans and intends to leaflet 30,000 households in the next few weeks in conjunction with the Navy's re-issue of the "What to do in a Nuclear Emergency" booklet due to be delivered to households at the same time. The leaflet will ask residents if they want to apply for their own stocks of tablets.

Councillors, who described the current safety plans as "**flawed**" (Cllr. Mike Fox, ex-Plymouth City Chief Environmental Health Officer) and "**illogical**" (Cllr. George Wheeler), criticised South and West Health Authority for failing to come up with a credible plan to protect the public when plans existed to pre-distribute tablets to Torpoint residents in Cornwall who were administered by a different local Health Authority.

Plymouth's Emergency Officer, Peter Smith, told the meeting that the Health Authorities present plan did not go far enough and in his report to the committee stated that the question of potassium iodate tablet distribution was an "**issue requiring urgent resolution**". He said the Health Authority leaflet idea was unsatisfactory as many residents may simply bin the leaflet or fail to understand its importance.

Councillors argued that as the potential polluters, the MoD and DML should bear the costs of tablet pre-distribution, though Peter Smith told DIG the Navy were "**fuming**" at this suggestion. The Navy have offered the use of 200 volunteer sailors to deliver tablets door-to-door in the event of an accident, but councillors thought the Navy's resources would already be stretched in an accident and could not understand why they could not provide assistance now to pre-distribute tablets when they would not have to face the chaos of an actual accident and run the risk of irradiating their volunteers. Dr. Harrison told DIG she understood that Navy volunteers would have to be 'flown in' because there would be insufficient man-power available.

The Committee unanimously re-affirmed the City Councils view that tablet pre-distribution was the desirable option and that the Health Authority should be advised of this and that the MoD be asked to provide the resource for implementing the pre-distribution of tablets to all premises, schools and households within 2 kilometres of the nuclear dockyard.

**ENDS**

**encs. draft copy of local Health Authority leaflet to be sent to 30,000 households**

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