

DIG

Plymouth nuclear Dump Information Group

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Nuclear Accident Tablets for Plymouth Public

DIG are to call on the City Council to distribute their stock of 40,000 radiation blocking Potassium Iodate tablets to members of the public before and in preparedness of a radiation leak from Devonport Dockyard.

The Borough Council of the nuclear shipyard port of Barrow-in-Furness, where the new Vanguard Class (Trident) submarines are being constructed, has issued residents surrounding the shipyard with Potassium Iodate tablets to combat the uptake of highly dangerous radioactive iodine in the event of a nuclear accident (see cuttings).

The drug Potassium Iodate (or non-radioactive stable iodine) is regarded as a vital first defence against exposure to **radioactive iodine**, one of the main products from an accident involving a nuclear reactor, which would be quickly absorbed and concentrated in the thyroid gland, children in particular being susceptible to increased risks of developing cancer. The thyroid gland is also important for kidney function, brain and growth development. Although not free from side-effects (inducing impotency, potential harm to unborn babies, nausea and vomiting), non-radioactive Potassium Iodate concentrates in the thyroid, blocking the uptake of radioactive iodine if taken prior to or immediately after a release of radiation, dramatically reducing the risks of thyroid cancer.

The recently revised joint Navy/City Council nuclear emergency document DevPubSafe (Devonport Public Safety Scheme) clearly states, ***"If stable iodine is taken prior to or within a few hours of internal contamination, the resultant radiation dose would be reduced substantially"*** (DevPubSafe 1992, 1.10)

The document goes on to specify, ***"The overall zone (pre-planned counter measures zone) extends 10km from the submarine and 2km is specified as the extent to which plans for the issue of Potassium Iodate should be made"*** (DevPubSafe 1992, 1.11)

This zone would encompass tens of thousands of inhabitants at Saltash, Torpoint, Wilcove, Barne Barton, St. Budeaux, King's Tamerton, Weston Mill, Camels Head, Ham, North Prospect, Keyham, Ford, Devonport, Stoke and Milehouse.

"With several nuclear submarines, radioactive wastes, spent fuel cores and decommissioned reactors in a city four times the population of Barrow, potentially we in Plymouth must be at far greater risk. It must make sense to have prior instruction and immediate access to any measures like taking Potassium Iodate which could substantially avoid suffering following a nuclear accident, particularly when massive nuclear expansion is proposed for Plymouth. If it is good enough for the people of Barrow it must be good enough for the people of Plymouth." Kevin Owen, Chairman DIG.

The present plan is for police and health workers, wearing breathing masks, to visit every household and flat to hand out 40,000 tablets and answer questions and explain the situation. This procedure has never been tested and would certainly waste vital time; or more likely be totally unworkable. Increased exposures to radioactivity could result from people opening their doors to receive the tablets and ask for information. Distributing the tablets before any accident, educating the public in advance and renewing stocks on a regular basis, would be a positive and responsible step for the City Council to take and one which DIG will be pressing for.

Ends.

encs. press cuttings for information.

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