



For Immediate Release:

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HEALTH ADVISORY:

LA County residents cautioned to AVOID ingesting potassium iodide; based on current situation, there is NO increased risk of radiation exposure from nuclear power complex situation in Japan

LOS ANGELES – The damage to nuclear reactors in Japan has understandably lead to concerns about the safety of individuals throughout the world, including here in Los Angeles County. The County Health Officer, Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, is cautioning residents against ingesting potassium iodide (KI) as a precaution against possible radiation exposure. It is not an effective precautionary measure.

“There is no increased risk of harmful levels of radiation exposure in the United States based on the situation to date at the nuclear power complex in Japan. Residents who ingest potassium iodide out of concern of possible exposure from this situation are doing something which is not only ineffective, but could also cause side effects,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “If a need should arise for residents to start taking potassium iodide to guard against effects of radiation exposure, the Los Angeles County Public Health Department – along with other local, state and federal agencies – will inform the public. **We do not anticipate this need.**”

However, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health – along with other local, state and federal agencies – is actively monitoring the situation. These agencies utilize a number of redundant monitoring systems capable of detecting any significant elevation in radiation levels. The public is encouraged to check reliable sources for up-to-date information.

Potassium iodide, or KI, is a stable form of iodine. During a nuclear emergency, persons may be exposed to a radioactive form of iodine, which can be harmful to the thyroid gland. In such an event, public health officials may recommend use of KI to offer some protection. KI is not recommended for use as a precautionary medication, unless there is a specific emergency that warrants use as recommended by public health officials.

Although usually benign, it can be harmful to people with allergies to iodine or shellfish, those with certain skin disorders, or those with thyroid problems. Observed but infrequent side effects of ingesting potassium iodide include nausea, intestinal upset, rashes, inflammation of the salivary glands, and possibly severe allergic reactions. KI cannot protect the body from radioactive elements other than radioactive iodine—if radioactive iodine is not present, taking KI is not protective.



All residents are reminded to prepare a basic, emergency kit to prepare for any kind of disaster. While potassium iodide is not a recommended component of such a kit, there are at least 10 Essential Items, as recommended by the Emergency Survival Program in LA County's Office of Emergency Management, which should be included:

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| 1. Water | 2. Food |
| 3. Cash and Important Documents | 4. Clothes |
| 5. Flashlight | 6. First Aid Kit |
| 7. Prescription Medication | 8. Radio |
| 9. Toiletries | 10. Tools |

These essential items will help ensure that people have access to basic essentials when other resources may not be available during an emergency. It is also vital that families put together a Communications Plan, such as a pre-planned place to meet and a designated out-of-state contact, in case family members are separated or at work or school when a disaster strikes.

For more information on earthquake and disaster readiness, call (866) 999-5228 or the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1. Additional information can be found on the Public Health website at <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>.

For more information on potassium iodide (KI), visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/ki.asp>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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