

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 12, 2020

Department of Health Provides Alternative Distribution Methods of Free Potassium Iodide Tablets during COVID-19 Mitigation

Harrisburg, PA – Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine announced that in lieu of in-person free potassium iodide, or KI, tablet distribution the department has provided in previous years, the tablets are available to all Pennsylvanians who live or work within 10 miles of the state's five nuclear power plants by calling the Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH or at [county and municipal health departments or state health centers](#).

“Emergency preparedness is an important aspect of public health and having potassium iodide tablets for residents who live or work within 10 miles of a nuclear facility is an essential preparedness action in the case of a radiological emergency,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “However, with continuing to efforts to limit indoor gatherings, we want Pennsylvanians to know about alternative ways to obtain these tablets.”

KI helps protect the thyroid gland against harmful radioactive iodine and can be taken by anyone, if they are not allergic to it. It is safe for pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding, people on thyroid medication, children and infants. Individuals who are unsure if they should take potassium iodide should ask a health care provider first.

“It’s important to remember potassium iodide should only be taken when instructed to by state health officials or the governor, and it is not a substitute for evacuation in the case of a radiological emergency at one of Pennsylvania’s nuclear facilities,” Dr. Levine said.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Tom Wolf’s and Sec. Levine’s [Targeted Mitigation Order](#) limiting indoor gatherings to 25 people, the decision was made to cancel the KI distribution events for 2020. KI tablets are still recommended for people living and working within 10 miles of the Three Mile Island Generating Station, which closed in September 2019.

Individuals requesting KI tablets may do so for other family members or those who are unable to get the tablets on their own. School districts and employers within a 10-mile radius can also arrange to obtain their supply of KI tablets from the department.

Information sheets explaining how many KI tablets should be taken, when to take the tablets, and how to store them are provided with the packages. Health nurses can answer questions about the process over the phone as well.

The state’s five nuclear facilities are closely regulated, secure and well-maintained. The facilities are: Beaver Valley Power Station; Limerick Generating Station; Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station; Susquehanna Steam Electric Station; and recently closed Three Mile Island Generating Station.

Additional information on potassium iodide (KI) tablets and nuclear power plant safety can be found on the Department of Health’s website at health.pa.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

MEDIA CONTACT: Nate Wardle, 717-787-1783 or RA-DHPressOffice@pa.gov