



New Hampshire Health Alert Network

Health.Alert@nh.gov

Status: Actual
Message Type: Alert
Severity: Moderate
Sensitive: Not Sensitive
Message Identifier: NH-HAN #20110328 Update Radiological Monitoring
Delivery Time: 12 hours
Acknowledgement: No
Originating Agency: NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

DATE: March 28, 2011

TIME: 15:00 EDT

TO: Physicians, Infection Control Practitioners, Infectious Disease Specialists, Community Health Centers, Hospital Emergency Departments, NHHA, Manchester Health Department, Nashua Health Department, Public Health Network, DHHS Outbreak Team, DPHS Investigation Team, DPHS Management Team

FROM: Jodie Dionne-Odom, MD, Deputy State Epidemiologist

SUBJECT: Monitoring for Increased Levels of Radioactive Material in the US

NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) recommends:

- Review the attached Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Health Advisory, issued March 27, 2011, on the monitoring for radioactive material in the US as a result of the Fukushima Nuclear Incident in Japan.
- Awareness that recent testing from melted snow in Concord, NH revealed detectable levels of radioiodine-131 (41 picocuries per kilogram) in the same range as what was recently found in Massachusetts (79 picocuries per kilogram). Normally there is no radioiodine-131 in the environment.
- As outlined in the CDC advisory, **these levels are well below any risk to public health.** The sample was collected as part of the US Environmental Protection Agency RadNET Program and this radioisotope's half life is expected to be relatively short in duration.
- Maintain continued understanding and situational awareness of ongoing environmental testing results in NH and the US.

For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please contact NH DHHS Infectious Disease Control and Surveillance Section at 603-271-4496 (after hours 1-800-852-3345 ext.5300).

Attachment: *Monitoring for Increased Levels of Radioactive Material in the US as a Result of the Incident with the Fukushima Nuclear Incident in Japan*

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND ALERTING VOCABULARY

Message Type

- Alert: Indicates an original alert
Update: Indicates prior alert has been updated and superseded
Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled
Error: Indicates prior alert has been retracted

Status

- Actual: Communication or alert refers to a live event
Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test: Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded

Severity

- Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe: Significant threat to life or property
Moderate: Possible threat to life or property
Minor: Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

Sensitive

- Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Identifier: A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation.

Delivery Time: Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert.

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required.

Originating Agency: A guaranteed unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

Alerting Program: The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification database.

If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would prefer to be used please contact:

Denise M. Krol, MS
NH HAN Coordinator
Denise.Krol@dhhs.state.nh.us

Business Hours 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Tel: 603-271-4596
Fax: 603-271-0545

This is an official CDC HAN Info Service Message

Distributed via Health Alert Network

March 27, 2011, 12:20 EDT (12:20 PM EDT)

CDCHAN-00320-11-03-27-ADV-N

Monitoring for Increased Levels of Radioactive Material in the US as a Result of the Incident with the Fukushima Nuclear Incident in Japan

Summary: *As a result of the incident with the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan, highly sensitive radiation monitors operated by EPA and others are detecting **very low levels** of radioactive material in the air in the United States. These levels were expected and consistent with estimated releases from the damaged nuclear reactors and are far below levels of public health concern.*

Elevated levels of radioactive material in rainwater have also been expected as a result of the nuclear incident after the events in Japan, since radiation is known to travel in the atmosphere. There have been reports received that several states including Pennsylvania and Massachusetts have detected elevated levels of radiation in rainwater following recent precipitation events.

Background

The numbers of the elevated levels of radioactive material being reported in Massachusetts are 79 picocuries (pCi) per liter (one picocurie is a trillionth of a curie). The numbers reported in Pennsylvania range from 40-100 picocuries per liter. Although these are levels above the background levels historically reported in these areas, they are still about 25 times below the level that would be of concern for use as a sole source of water over a short period of time, even for infants and pregnant or breastfeeding women, who are the most sensitive to radiation.

While short-term elevations such as these do not raise public health concerns – and the levels seen in rainwater are expected to be relatively short in duration – the U.S. EPA has taken steps to increase the level of monitoring of precipitation, drinking water, and other potential exposure routes to continue to verify that.

Given the release of radiation in Japan, it was expected that radiation monitors in this country and elsewhere will detect minute quantities of radiation. These monitors are highly sensitive and can detect amounts of radiation in trillionths of a Curie. We expect environmental monitors will continue to detect low levels of radiation in surface waters due to radioactive material in the air. When it rains or snows, the radioactive material is washed to the ground and onto surface waters.

What the US Federal Government is Doing

EPA's Radiation air monitoring network continues to conduct near-real-time air monitoring in networks across the nation. With these recent reports, the US EPA has increased monitoring across the country to ensure that the American people have the most up to date information.

What information is available to the public:

The EPA has posted information on its website at <http://www.epa.gov/japan2011/>

CDC has posted FAQs on our website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/isotopes/iodine131/surfacewater.asp>

USA.gov continues to consolidate federal guidance related to this situation at <http://www.usa.gov/Japan2011.shtml>

Recommendations

The federal government's only recommendation to state and local governments at this time is to continue to share their testing results with the appropriate federal authorities. EPA will continue to communicate nationwide sampling results as they come in.

At this time, there continues to be no indication for anyone in the United States to take potassium iodine or switch to bottled water on the basis of the events in Japan.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- Health Alert** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
- Health Advisory** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
- Health Update** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
- HAN InfoService** provides general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

##This Message was distributed to **State and Local Health Officers, Public Information Officers, Epidemiologists and HAN Coordinators as well as Clinician organizations##**

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You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification data base. If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would like us to use please contact your State-based Health Alert Network program at your State or local health department.

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