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Media Release

Information from the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services Concerning Japan's Nuclear Reactor Crisis

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Nevada Department of Public Safety – Division of Emergency Management (DPS-DEM) are collectively working to address the public's concerns surrounding the potential impact to the State of Nevada and the rest of the United States from the Japanese nuclear reactor crisis.

Eric Matus, Radiation Physicist for the Nevada State Health Division, has compiled an overview of information addressing the concerns and speculation that continue to linger.

There is no current health risk, and there is no expectation of any future risk to Nevada from Japanese radioactive material releases. Any material released must travel 10,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean, during which time it will be dispersed and diluted in the atmosphere to levels that might eventually be detectable but which will not present a health hazard nor require any protective actions. A worst case scenario would have the potential to raise background radiation levels in the northern hemisphere incrementally, but would not affect food or water supplies in Nevada.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are monitoring radiation levels in Japan and domestically in United States. U.S. EPA has increased the number of monitoring stations in the Pacific and along the West Coast.

The U.S. DOE is collecting independent monitoring information, and the NRC is issuing protective action guidance for U.S. Citizens at home and abroad where needed; while also advising the Japanese on their own response and recovery operations. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is coordinating analysis of public health implications and preparedness. U.S. agencies are using the best science to make informed decisions, and are in daily communication with each other.

Within the State of Nevada your Radiation Control Program, Public Health, Emergency Management and other public safety agencies are working together to keep each other informed and to address preparedness and changes as they develop. There are ambient radiation monitors in Las Vegas and Reno operated by the U.S. EPA and a network of community monitoring stations throughout southern Nevada operated by the Desert Research Institute.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q) Is there a radiation threat to the U.S. from the current Japanese nuclear crisis?

A) No. There is no prediction of hazardous levels of radiological material reaching the U.S.

Q) How do we know we are safe?

A) The U.S. Government has personnel in Japan assisting with the crisis. They are evaluating monitoring data and reviewing protective action recommendations. U.S. personnel are relaying the information back to their agencies with independent evaluation. Domestic ambient radiation monitoring stations around the U.S. and along the coast monitor for any elevated radiation. Radioactive releases from Japan will be significantly reduced and diluted in the atmosphere while crossing the Pacific Ocean. There is no recommendation for protective actions in the U.S.

Q) What about reports of radiation reaching the U.S. and maps that show radiation plumes?

A) There have been no official plume maps released, because there is no hazardous radiation plume headed for the U.S. Any maps released by the media to date have been speculative weather maps with NO radiological material analysis.

Q) Should I take any radio-protectant drugs, such as potassium iodide or prussian blue?

A) No. There is no reason to take any drugs, because there is no expectation of harmful radiation. All drugs also have a risk of side effects and should only be taken if absolutely necessary.

Q) How is the United States dealing with travelers entering the country from Japan?

A) Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Janet Napolitano, has directed her agency to increase radiation screening of international travelers, luggage and cargo. So far no radiation levels of concern have been discovered.

Q) Where can I get more information?

A) More information and current ACCURATE updates are available on the web at emergency.cdc.gov/radiation or by going to the link at the Nevada State Health Division homepage health.nv.gov in the "What's New" section.

If you do not have access to the internet, the Nevada State Health Division, Radiation Control Program is the lead State agency for this event and may be reached at 775.687.7550.

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