Radiation Found in Milk Does Not Pose a Risk to Human Health

The California Department of Public Health has found trace amounts of iodine -131 (radiation) in milk from dairy cows in San Luis Obispo County. The amount found was so low that it does not pose any risk of human health. The milk in San Luis Obispo and elsewhere in the US is absolutely safe for human consumption.

The California Department of Public Health samples milk, soil and vegetation on a quarterly basis. They have increased the frequency of testing to weekly due to the Japan incident. The U.S Environmental Protection Agency has also increased its nationwide monitoring of radiation in milk, precipitation, drinking water and other sources.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), the utility provider that operates the Diablo Canyon Power Plant, conducts regular testing in San Luis Obispo County where the nuclear power plant is located. PG&E split a recent milk sample from San Luis Obispo County and sent a portion to the California Department of Public Health for testing.

The level of radiation is very low, described as incidental. Officials say the levels are 5,000 times below levels of concern. The amounts detected are thousands of times less than what someone would receive from an X-ray or from everyday sources such as the sun, air, soil and television viewing. Air sampling has shown no activity for the past few days and the half-life of iodine -131 is short, meaning it will be gone in roughly one week. The actual impact of radiation diminishes daily.

Children are a bit more sensitive than adults, yet the amount found does not pose a health risk for children either.

Public health officials continue to recommend that potassium iodide not be taken.

With close testing by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency, there is continued monitoring. The CDPH website provides Frequently Asked Questions about Radiation and regularly updated information at: www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/RadiationFAQS2011.aspx

###