

## **Attachment A Radiological Event Messages for Public Health Workers**

### **Message 1**

#### ***How can I protect myself and my family?***

##### **Listen to local authorities for specific instructions.**

- Shelter in place until you receive information about the incident and safety measures.
- Local officials will provide information about evacuation procedures if it is necessary.
- Do not forget pets in your emergency plans.

##### **If you suspect you have been contaminated, there are simple decontamination steps you can take.**

- Remove clothes before entering the home (or shelter) to limit contamination.
- Taking off outer clothing will remove most of external contamination.
- Wash exposed skin with soap and lukewarm water to remove remaining contamination from skin and hair.
- Try to minimize contact with other people or things to help control the spread of contamination.

##### **If you are pregnant or a nursing mother, special precautions may be needed.**

- Protective actions that will protect pregnant women will also protect their unborn babies.
- Nursing mothers should listen to guidance from public health officials on breastfeeding.
- If possible, it may be necessary to change to baby formula.

## Message 2

### ***What are the short-term health effects of radiation?***

**The effect of radiation on the body depends on the amount of radiation.**

- Adverse effects can range from mild effects, such as skin reddening, to serious effects such as cancer and death.
- The adverse effects depend on the amount of radiation absorbed by the body (the dose), the type of radiation, the route of exposure, and the length of time a person was exposed.
- Exposure to very large doses of radiation may cause death within a few days or months.
- There are treatments available for people suffering from radiation sickness.

## Message 3

***What are the long- term health effects of radiation?***

**The adverse health effects of exposure may not be apparent for many years.**

- Exposure to lower doses of radiation may lead to an increased risk of developing cancer or other adverse health effects later in life.
- Long term monitoring programs will be put in place.

**Message 4**

***What is the difference between radiation and contamination?***

**Contamination occurs when radioactive material is where it should not be.**

- Both people and objects can be contaminated.
- If radioactive material is on or outside the body, it is external contamination.
- If radioactive material is on the inside of the body, it is internal contamination.
- People who are externally contaminated can become internally contaminated if radioactive material gets into their bodies by inhalation or ingestion.

**Both external and internal contamination can be assessed and mitigated.**

- Simple decontamination techniques can remove most if not all external contamination.
- In nearly all cases, external and internal contamination is not immediately life threatening.
- For a number of radionuclides, there are medical countermeasures available to treat internal contamination.
- If you suspect you are contaminated, try to minimize contact with other people or things to help control the spread of contamination.

**Being irradiated is similar to getting an x-ray.**

- Getting irradiated does not contaminate a person.
- If the amount of radiation is significant it could be immediately life threatening.
- There are testing methods available to evaluate the amount of radiation the person has received.

## Message 5

*What is my professional (public health) role in a radiological or nuclear emergency?*

**The public health community will play an important role in responding to a radiological terrorism event.**

- Public health officials will perform most of the same functions they would handle during any disaster response.
- In addition, public health officials will be responsible for population monitoring to identify, screen, measure, and monitor populations (people and possibly even their pets) for exposure to or contamination from radioactive materials.
- Psychosocial issues among people in the community, particularly in a radiological event, could create additional strain on public health and medical resources.

**Traditional public health practitioners will need to work closely with radiation experts in their state and local agencies as well as federal partners to address response and recovery issues.**

- Public health officials at the federal, state, and local levels will work together to protect the public's health.
- CDC is developing guidance and training for the public health workforce on radiological emergency preparedness.
- It is important to foster collaboration with state and local radiation experts in the planning process before a radiological event takes place.

