

All Belgians to get iodine pills in case of nuclear accident: report

April 28 2016

Belgium is to provide iodine pills to its entire population of around 11 million people to protect against radioactivity in case of a nuclear accident, the health minister was quoted as saying Thursday.

The move comes as Belgium faces growing pressure from neighbouring Germany to shutter two ageing [nuclear power plants](#) near their border due to concerns over their [safety](#).

Iodine pills, which help reduce radiation build-up in the human thyroid gland, had previously only been given to people living within 20 kilometres (14 miles) of the Tihange and Doel nuclear plants.

Health Minister Maggie De Block was quoted by La Libre Belgique newspaper as telling parliament that the range had now been expanded to 100 kilometres, effectively covering the whole country.

The health ministry did not immediately respond to AFP when asked to comment.

The head of Belgium's French-speaking Green party, Jean-Marc Nollet, backed the measures but added that "just because everyone will get these pills doesn't mean there is no longer any nuclear risk," La Libre reported.

Belgium's creaking nuclear plants have been causing safety concerns for some time after a series of problems ranging from leaks to cracks and an unsolved sabotage incident.

Last week Germany asked that the 40-year-old Tihange 2 and Doel 3 reactors be turned off "until the resolution of outstanding security issues".

The reactor pressure vessels at both sites have shown signs of metal degradation, raising fears about their safety. They were temporarily closed but resumed service last December.

Belgium's official nuclear safety agency (AFCN) rejected the German request, saying the two plants "respond to the strictest possible safety requirements."

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Citation: All Belgians to get iodine pills in case of nuclear accident: report (2016, April 28)
retrieved 8 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2016-04-belgians-iodine-pills-case-nuclear.html>

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