

From: Michael Case *NR*
To: Timothy Frye *NR*
Date: 2/3/06 10:52AM
Subject: Fwd: Other Tritium Issues - **Braidwood** gets lots of NEWS ATTENTION

FYI

CC: Catherine Haney; Stuart Richards

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From: Mark King
To: Michael Case *> nrr*
Date: 2/3/06 9:56AM
Subject: Other Tritium Issues - Braidwood gets lots of NEWS ATTENTION

Just in case you didn't see the NRC news summary on this subject yet I've pasted it below: Related to the Braidwood site:

Exelon Officials Say Tritium In Nature Preserve Samples Exceed Federal Limits. The Chicago Tribune (2/3, Dardick) reports, "More radioactive tritium than is allowed under federal standards has been found in a Will County nature preserve, Exelon Nuclear officials said Thursday. The finding comes about a month after the company announced that groundwater on private property outside the Braidwood Generating Station contained tritium at levels above the limit set by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Forest Preserve District Executive Director Mike Pasteris announced the latest findings, also in groundwater, at a meeting in Joliet, and Exelon Nuclear spokesman Craig Nesbit confirmed them." The Tribune adds, "Nesbit said the company is conducting an internal investigation, but so far, there is no indication of a cover-up. He echoed statements made last week by company officials that the spills should have been made public much sooner." The Tribune adds that "to determine the extent of the contamination, Exelon Nuclear in recent months drilled more than 150 monitoring wells along the blowdown line. The company asked the Forest Preserve District for permission to drill in the preserves in late December, Pasteris said. In the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve northwest of Smiley and Essex Roads, tritium levels in two monitoring wells about 150 feet northeast of a vacuum breaker exceed the federal limit, in one case by up to 50 percent, Nesbit said."

The AP (2/3) reports from Joliet, IL that "Exelon Corporation officials say more radioactive tritium than is allowed under federal standards has been found in a Will County nature preserve. The announcement came last night during a meeting in Joliet to discuss a 1998 radioactive wastewater leak from the company's Braidwood Generating about 60 miles southwest of Chicago. Local authorities and residents didn't hear of the incident until late last year, when elevated levels of tritium were discovered in groundwater near the plant. The findings in the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve also were in groundwater. Forest Preserve officials say there aren't any drinking wells on the property. Exelon says the closest homes are 900 feet to the west, opposite the direction groundwater flows."

The Joliet Herald News (2/3, Smith) reports, "Last week, Exelon officials announced that they were negotiating the purchase of a nearly 20-acre tract near the site of a 1998 pipeline valve break. Yet they said there were no potential health threats caused by an elevated level of tritium found in November near the site of the valve break. They said the pipeline had been tested and no problems had been found. The company said it was in negotiations with one property owner and had sent out 15 letters offering compensation to others for any lot property values lost because of what Exelon has done."

The AP (2/3) reports, "The chairman of the Will County Board called Thursday for federal and state investigations into why it took a nuclear power company and state agencies nearly eight years to report the leak of millions of gallons of radioactive wastewater from a central Illinois plant. Board chairman Jim Moustis is asking Congress and the General Assembly to investigate actions stemming from the 1998 leak at Exelon Corp.'s Braidwood Generating Plant, about 60 miles southwest of Chicago." The AP adds, "News of the leak didn't surface until late last year, when Chicago-based Exelon announced that an elevated level of tritium, a radioactive substance commonly found in groundwater, had been discovered at the Braidwood Generating Station's northern boundary. Tritium is more concentrated in water used in nuclear reactors. Public health officials said the elevation poses no threat to drinking water in the area. Still, Exelon has offered financial settlements to 15 nearby property owners."

The Joliet Herald News (2/3) reports, "Radioactive tritium contamination has been discovered at the Braidwood Dunes forest preserve. Exelon Corp. set up monitoring wells two weeks ago to determine how far contaminated water leaked off the Braidwood nuclear power station property. The forest preserve district was informed Wednesday of the contamination at the 300-acre Braidwood Dunes, which is on Illinois 113 east of Braidwood, Executive Director Mike Pasteris said. Pasteris, who reported on the contamination at Thursday's county board executive committee meeting, is concerned about the effect the contamination will have on endangered species in the area. 'I'm extremely disturbed,' Pasteris said after the meeting. 'We're going to do everything we can to make sure any contamination on our property is addressed and mitigated.'" The News adds, "The company first discovered elevated tritium levels on its

property in November. That's when it started testing off site. One Braidwood Dunes monitoring well discovered a tritium level of 25,000 picocuries per liter, Exelon spokesman Craig Nesbit said in a phone interview. A second well found a level of 2,700 picocuries. A level of 200 picocuries is normal in the environment, Nesbit added. Anything above 20,000 picocuries is deemed unsafe for drinking water, however."

Residents Frustrated With Exelon, NRC Over Tritium Leak, Aftermath. The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/29, Monaghan) reports, "When two spills within two years, in 1998 and 2000, each flooded area fields with three million gallons of water laced with the radioactive isotope tritium, people who lived around the Braidwood Nuclear Generating Station had cause to be distrustful. It had happened before, when Exelon strung them along about a 2000 diesel spill before finally admitting to it, and it took seven years for Exelon to come clean on the tritium contamination. 'I don't think we covered it up. I think we handled it badly,' Craig Nesbit, Exelon corporate communications director told a roomful of angry citizens gathered at the plant for a public information session Thursday evening. But it's not just the company that has let them down, locals say. Many feel the agencies put in place to protect them went deaf and blind in the shadow of Exelon's clout. 'I wonder how these state officials and the NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission) would feel if this was in their backyard,' asked Joe Cosgrove, the Godley Park District president who always seems to find himself on the fact-finding front. 'That's what infuriates me more than anything.'" The Journal added, "NRC spokesman Jan Strasma said Exelon told the NRC about the troublesome test samples in November. Sometimes the blowdown lines that leaked carry clean water. 'We knew that leaks had occurred,' Strasma said. 'But (before November) we didn't know radioactive materials were involved.' Ditto for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency."

The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/29, Monaghan) reports, "When whispers about a tritium leak first started filtering through Godley in 2000, the tiny village of about 600 was still gagging on a dousing of diesel fuel that Exelon accidentally dumped into the drainage ditch that runs through town. The oil caused lead contamination, turned drinking water to sludge and killed wildlife. Representatives from ComEd, an Exelon subsidiary, first told state officials they lost five gallons of diesel. It was six months before plant officials admitted any diesel leaks at all. Turns out, it was 5,500 gallons. It also came to light that there had been four previous diesel leaks -- in 1990, 1995 and two in 1998. So the townspeople had a history with ComEd's candor." And then "last April, Godley pleaded with at least one Illinois Environmental Protection Agency representative to look into the pipeline leaks before 'rubber stamping' Exelon's permit to discharge water from its cooling ponds into blowdown pipes that carry it to the Kankakee River. At that meeting, Corey Conn, with the Illinois-based Nuclear Energy Information Services, introduced into evidence an e-mail between Exelon communications executives detailing ways to downplay the leaks."

The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/26, Monaghan) reported, "When a guy from Exelon showed up at Kathy Gonis' door offering to test her water Monday morning, she thought there must be some new problem at the nuclear power plant. It turns out, the troubles around the Braidwood Generating Station started seven years ago. That's when the first of two separate spills flushed three million gallons of water laced with radioactive tritium into the farms and yards east of the plant. Gonis lives on Center Street northeast of the generating station. Her house is close enough to the plant that she jumps when she hears the hiss of steam spouting from the stacks of the generating station. Yet she didn't even know the spills, which leaked radioactive fluids from Exelon pipes less than a mile west of her house, ever happened. This week, Exelon representatives told Gonis her water does contain low levels of tritium, she said, but not enough to threaten her family's health."

The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/29, Monaghan) reported, "The folks who live in the wake of the tritium spills worry about their pets, which sip water from puddles. They worry about eating the deer, which they've seen leaping company fences, that they shoot in the forest and fields. They wonder about the safety of the milk that comes from cows grazing in the meadows, about the fish they hook in ponds, about the corn growing in the fields. Environmental experts hired by Exelon tell everyone over and over that there's nothing to be afraid of. Tritium moves quickly through a mammal's body. The concentrations of tritium they might consume -- at worst -- pose no threat above eating a banana each day. Unlike the tritium, which company officials say they never dreamed would slip into the soil and spread, the message doesn't seem to sink in."

The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/29) reported, "Research on more than 40,000 nuclear industry workers found they had a 10 percent higher risk of death from cancer, according to a report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer in France." The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/29, Monaghan) reported on Exelon's announced remediation plan.

The Kankakee Daily Journal (1/26, Monaghan) reported, "Why did Exelon wait so long that a second three-million-gallon spill, and a third smaller spurt of less than 500,000 gallons last May, flooded fields before Exelon started looking into possible groundwater problems? Exelon officials admit it. They should have reacted faster." So far, "only one of 14 private wells has turned up water testing above the levels tritium occurs in nature -- a measurement environmentalists call the 'background level.' **For tritium, the background level is 200 picocuries per liter (pic/l). The safe level for drinking water, set by the Environmental Protection Agency, is 20,000 pic/liter**"

The above info is from NRC News Summary link for
Date: Friday, February 3, 2006 9:40 AM EST
Source: <http://www.bulletinnews.com/nrc/>

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