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Rain Washes Low-Level of Tritium From Plume Into Drain Tile, Ditch

BRACEVILLE, Ill. (March 24, 2006) – Recent heavy rains collecting in an underground cistern and flowing into a drainage tile near the Braidwood Generating Station apparently carried with it a small amount of tritium from the existing plume along a narrow path for about 400 yards.

Because one end of the drainage tile is in the area of the existing tritiated water plume near the Braidwood station, some low concentrations of tritium apparently were pulled along the drainage tile with the rainwater and into ditches along the two sides of rural Center Street. The drainage tile leads only to the ditches, and tritium levels dropped below detectable levels in the ditches within 200 yards of the drain tile opening.

Test results showed low but detectable concentrations of tritium in the ditch, up to a maximum of 1,000 picocuries per liter. That is about 5 percent of the safe drinking water standard established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which is 20,000 picocuries of tritium per liter. The runoff does not pose a health or safety hazard, but the pathway needs to be eliminated.

Environmental technicians are seeking to obtain access to private land and install a pumping system to prevent the cistern from filling up with rainwater, eliminating runoff in future periods of rainy weather. In addition, remediation plans under review by state officials are expected to further prevent the low concentrations of tritium found there from reaching the drain tile.

Exelon technicians have monitored the drainage tile for several months and saw no runoff until after recent storms. Subsequent testing confirmed the presence of low-level tritium in the ditches for about 200 yards on the west and 60 yards on the east, after which no tritium was detected. Exelon previously offered free bottled water to property owners along the ditch until testing confirms that their tap water contains no detectable tritium.

Although the tritium concentrations washed from the tiles are low, Exelon is making this notification because it remains committed to notifying the public of new developments related to tritium and the cleanup.

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