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Exelon to Begin Remediation of Groundwater At Braidwood Generating Station

BRACEVILLE, Ill. (May 24, 2006) Exelon Corp. today announced that it will soon begin to clean up tritium from groundwater at Braidwood Generating Station, thanks to an agreement the company reached with the Illinois Attorney General, Will County State’s Attorney and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

As part of the negotiated agreement approved by a Will County judge today, Exelon will begin remediation of the contaminated groundwater, conduct frequent inspections of the discharge pipe that carries effluent away from the plant and provide periodic progress reports.

“We are fully committed to the groundwater clean-up effort and the other aspects of this order,” said Exelon Nuclear President and Chief Nuclear Officer Chris Crane. “While state and federal agencies have confirmed that the levels of tritium in the groundwater are not a health or safety hazard to our neighbors, we have pledged that we would clean up the groundwater. All unplanned releases of tritium are unacceptable to Exelon.”

Also today, Exelon received a construction permit from Will County that allows the company to do site work necessary for the remediation program. This work includes laying a concrete pad and installing new pipes under a road adjacent to the plant.

“Our remediation plan, which has received support from state authorities, is based on strong scientific understanding of the hydrology, or groundwater flow in the area,” said Keith Polson, Braidwood site vice-president. “We will continue to keep our neighbors informed of our progress to clean up the site.”

The remediation program can begin as soon as the site work mentioned above is complete, likely in about two weeks. Under the plan, Exelon will partially pump down a pond adjacent to the plant to lower the pond water level below the groundwater level. Hydrologists indicate that this will cause the surrounding groundwater, which contains low levels of tritium, to flow into the pond where it can be pumped out and properly disposed of.

The process could last more than a year, although hydrologists expect the measure to quickly halt any further movement of tritium in the ground and begin shrinking the size of the area with elevated tritium levels within six months. Presently, the area with elevated tritium is an area about 2,000 feet by 2,000 feet adjacent to the northeast edge of the plant property.

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The pumped water with tritium will be put in the station's discharge pipe (known as the "blowdown line") where it will mix with water from the station's cooling lake. The low concentration of tritium will be released into the Kankakee River as permitted under federal regulations. The concentration of tritium in water in the blowdown pipe is expected to be less than 1 percent of the U.S. EPA's drinking water limit. In addition, Exelon has installed an enhanced monitoring system that will alert operators in the event that there is any leakage from the pipe.

In November, an environmental monitoring program found higher than expected levels of tritium, a by-product of the process to create electricity at nuclear plants, in groundwater at the plant and in areas adjacent to the plant. Further investigation determined that the groundwater was contaminated during previous leaks of vacuum breaker valves on the blowdown pipe, or discharge pipe, that carries tritium and other effluent away from the plant.

Since that time, Exelon has completed extensive monitoring to determine the extent of the contamination. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and independent experts hired by Exelon agree the tritium in the groundwater is not impacting human health or safety. In addition, private well test results were provided to the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the agency determined that the tritium levels pose no health or safety hazard to the public.

Tritium is a low-level emitter of radioactivity that is created naturally and found in virtually all water sources. It is also created as a by-product of the process to create electricity at nuclear power plants.

Maps, fact sheets and other information about tritium at the Braidwood station are available online at www.BraidwoodTritium.info, or at the Fossil Ridge Library, 386 W. Kennedy Road, Braidwood.

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