News Release

Exelon Nuclear

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Braidwood Station Environmental Monitoring Program Finds Elevated Tritium Concentration at North Property Location

Levels near edge of station land pose no risk to public or drinking water

BRACEVILLE, Ill. (Dec. 2, 2005) – An environmental monitoring program at the Braidwood Generating Station has found higher than normal concentrations of tritium close to an underground pipe inside the plant's northern boundary, and the station has begun a remediation program, Exelon Nuclear announced today.

The tritium was found in shallow groundwater 8 to 15 feet deep on company property. It poses no health or safety risk to the public and does not threaten drinking water wells in the area.

Tritium is a naturally occurring isotope of hydrogen that emits a very low level of radiation and is a natural part of water. It is found in more concentrated levels in water used in nuclear reactors.

The underground pipe that passes near the monitored site in the past has carried water containing tritium from the plant to the Kankakee River, where it was periodically discharged under federal guidelines as part of normal plant operations.

No tritiated water is currently in the pipe and no tritium is currently being introduced into the ground. Braidwood has not released levels of tritium that exceeded federal limits.

An Exelon Nuclear environmental team is drilling test wells on and just beyond the Braidwood property line in order to determine how much tritium may have moved beyond the plant boundaries and ultimately to clean up the tritium.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has established an upper limit for tritium concentration in drinking water of 20,000 picocuries per liter. By way of context, a person drinking water at that upper limit would receive an annual radiation exposure roughly equal to a single airplane flight across the country, about 4 millirem.

The closest private residential wells to the site showed no tritium above natural background levels. A sample of water from a pond 50 yards north of the plant property line showed tritium levels of about 2,400 picocuries per liter, above background levels but less than one-eighth of the federal drinking water limit. The residential and pond test samples were taken with the consent of property owners and the results received on Dec. 1.

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Tritium concentrations as high as 58,000 picocuries per liter were found on company property about 50 feet from the pipe. Those levels drop below 10,000 picocuries per liter about 250 feet away, also on plant property. Test data that confirmed the tritium levels closest to the property line were received by the company earlier this week. Company officials notified regulatory agencies and potentially affected property owners on Wednesday and Thursday.

An Exelon Nuclear operations team, working with an environmental remediation firm, is preparing to pump water with the highest concentrations of tritium from the ground. This will create a "cone" into which any tritiated water that may have drifted from the site will flow and can be collected.

The location of the higher tritium concentrations is near the location of a 1998 valve malfunction in which several million gallons of water being sent through the underground pipe to the river escaped onto the top of the ground and pooled there. The spill did not violate environmental regulations or permits, and was contained entirely on plant property. Exelon Nuclear's environmental experts believe it later seeped into the shallow groundwater there and began drifting.

"The important thing is there is no safety or health threat from this tritium. We know where the tritium is, we know that no more is being introduced into the ground, and we know we can clean it up," said Site Vice President Keith Polson, the station's senior executive.

The tritium concentrations were discovered by an enhanced groundwater monitoring program that was launched at the Braidwood site several months ago. As part of the program, test wells were drilled along the path of the underground pipe and eventually led to the discovery at the north side of the plant site.

Tritium is a low-level radiation emitter that is used commercially to make luminous dials and instruments, as a source of light for exit and safety signs, as a tracer for biochemical research and in ground water transport measurements, among other uses. A tritium fact sheet from the U.S. EPA can be downloaded at http://www.epa.gov/radiation/radionuclides/tritium.htm

Braidwood Generating Station is about 60 miles southwest of Chicago near Braceville, Ill. The station's two nuclear energy units can produce a total of more than 2,300 megawatts at full power, enough electricity for more than 2 million homes.

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