

Sarah Miller (CELA)

From: Kathleen Cooper [kcooper@cela.ca]
Sent: June 15, 2009 7:55 PM
To: Theresa McClenaghan; Kathleen Cooper; Sarah Miller (CELA)
Subject: Re: Fwd: [Energy-vision] Reduce level of tritium deemed safe in drinking water, experts urge

I can't handle current load and have to get caught up on the CPCHE-OCDPA contract as holiday scheduling also looming so can't realistically commit to this
 KC

At 03:28 PM 10/06/2009, Theresa McClenaghan wrote:

Does anyone want to look at the air standard that Norm references here that Ontario is apparently now consulting on? (I was unable to join the MoE's briefing on the air standards consultation). Theresa

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Norman Rubin** <normrubin.energyprobe@gmail.com>
Date: 2009/6/10
Subject: Re: [Energy-vision] Reduce level of tritium deemed safe in drinking water, experts urge
To: willi@web.ca, eENERGY VISION GROUP <energy-vision@list.web.net>
Cc: Nuke Free New Brunswick <nukefreenb-org@lists.riseup.net>

Yay! THAT's what I'm TALKING about (since before ACES)!!

It's interesting that the CNA said that the 20 Bq/L limit was easily achievable. First, it's not like them (historically) to be so gracious about such things, and it's unusual for ANY polluter to avoid playing the "catastrophic abatement costs" card. (What's gotten into them?!?) Secondly, I think the tritium emissions from Bruce A have historically found their way into Port Elgin's drinking water (maybe even more than Bruce B's, IIRC), and the restart of the last two reactors there may well push P.E. over the new limit (assuming the limit becomes law). In the old days, "Hydro" would just buy the Water Supply Plant, or buy them a new input pipe. (It happened in Pickering.) These days, either Bruce Power would have to pay for it out of private profit money, or OPG would have to try to justify that expense before the OEB, which they wouldn't want to try. It's a slow process, but we're making progress, and the Harrisite reforms introducing private players is very helpful in exposing evil!

The report went out of its way to claim that tritium is special, and that drinking water is special, yadda yadda, and this 1-in-1-million lifetime TOTAL cancer risk objective can't simply be applied to other radioactive pollution. Hah!! It sure can!

And the next target -- which I've already fired a brief at -- is the in-progress Ontario review of uranium limits in air. That process has already started off with the same contradiction the ACES Tritium process started with, with an underlying (clearly stated) goal of 1 cancer per million, lifetime risk of a population exposed at the limit, and subsequent calculations that follow "radioactive business as usual," completely ignoring that goal! My submission to that process has pointed out the contradiction, citing chapter and verse in their documents, and insisting that the Ont. gov't. apply its goal to uranium in air, period. I believe that will make the radiological-concern limit dominant in uranium (over the chemical, heavy-metal concern), and lower the uranium-in-air limit by maybe almost the same ratio as tritium. (I'm not finding that brief on EP's web-site right now, but I'll try to fix that ASAP.)

Personally, I think it would be tactically useful to concentrate on generalizing this victory to other radionuclides and other jurisdictions, while soft-peddalling the arbitrariness and looseness of the 20Bq/L tritium limit and the ongoing concerns that the health risks may still be underestimated. But we'll probably continue to push multiple arguments, and that's OK, too. . .

If we can win on uranium in Ontario's air, that will be significant, and should be very useful in Saskatchewan and Australia and elsewhere. . .

Norm

P.S. It was also interesting to see the CNA arguing (lamely) against the notion of a Double Standard, which I have been tirelessly advancing since before ACES! I wish I could have attended the ODWAC public meetings, but I had to be out of town.

At 09:20 AM 6/10/2009, Willi Nolan wrote:

Relatives, it is indeed good news that Ontario's drinking water standards have been raised to "the toughest in the world." I thank and commend all who have worked tirelessly toward this result.

The International Institute of Concern for Public Health, IICPH, believes that there should be no tritium introduced to drinking water supplies; of course this would mean closing all nuclear power generating facilities, and certainly, no new installations. Such is the work ahead of us; there continue to be radioactive emissions affecting residents from reactors in Ontario, New Brunswick and Québec as well as numbers of non-power generating nuclear and uranium production facilities.

In the meantime, I savor this victory, keeping in mind, as Shawn Patrick has wisely pointed out earlier, "the devil is in the details."

All My Relations, Willi

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Shawn patrick stensil wrote:

Reduce level of tritium deemed safe in drinking water, experts urge

The Globe And Mail
Wed Jun 10 2009
Page: A8
Section: National News
Byline: Martin Mittelstaedt

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

An expert panel in Ontario is recommending that the province adopt the toughest standard in the world for the amount of cancer-causing tritium considered safe in drinking water.

Tritium is the main radioactive contaminant found in Ontario water supplies, and, although small amounts are produced through natural processes, most of what is detected comes from leaks at nuclear power plants, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.'s Chalk River research facility and several glow-in-the-dark sign companies.

The recommendation, from the Ontario Drinking Water Advisory Council, would cut the amount of tritium allowed in drinking water to an average of 20 becquerel per litre over the course of a year, from the current level of 7,000 bq/L. A becquerel is a scientific term indicating the number of radioactive disintegrations in a substance every second.

Jim Merritt, chair of the council and a former assistant deputy minister of environment, said in an interview that the proposal, if adopted, would be the most rigorous anywhere.

Tritium releases are one of the worries at AECL's now-shut-down NRU reactor that produces medical isotopes. The company has detected a leak of tritium containing heavy water at the reactor and is storing the radioactive material at the site, although it said last month that some of it is evaporating and getting into the reactor's ventilation system.

The review of the dangers of tritium by the panel, which is composed of some of the province's top experts in drinking water safety, is one of the most thorough ever done in Canada, and suggests that the Health Canada guideline of 7,000 bq/L for water may be out of date. Europe has moved to a standard of 100 bq/L, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set its safe level at 740 bq/L.

California has a non-enforceable objective of 15 bq/L, but for regulatory purposes uses the EPA standard.

The new Ontario recommendation vindicates the work of a previous expert group for the Ontario government, which proposed adopting the same lower limit in 1994. At the time, the recommendation was shelved after heavy pressure from the nuclear industry.

The panel's recommendation was placed yesterday on a government website. Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen has received a copy of the report, and will make a decision on changing the standard after a public comment period. No date has been set for his decision.

According to Mr. Merritt, the panel based its proposed limit on a view that it would be acceptable to have only one additional case of cancer among a million people due to tritium exposure. The Health Canada guideline was calculated on a different basis, using a figure that 600 extra cancers in a group this size were acceptable.

If accepted, the new standard could be used as a justification to temporarily shut drinking water treatment plants near nuclear facilities if they have large leaks of tritium, a radioactive form of hydrogen that is produced during the normal operation of Canadian-designed Candu nuclear power plants.

Ontario has been reviewing the adequacy of its standard because of pressure from the City of Toronto and its board of health, which asked for an assessment leading to a new level in 2006.

Currently, all water treatment plants in the province would be under the proposed annual standard, but one, in Port Elgin, with median readings of 16 bq/ L, is close to it. As well, plants in Ottawa, Southampton and Kincardine have occasional levels of more than 20 bq/L, according to the expert panel's report. Toronto's level is around seven bq/L.

Ontario surface water that isn't near nuclear plants has two bq/L to three bq/L of tritium from natural sources and from the legacy of nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s and 1960s.

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