

Radioactive leak taints water in Chicago

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Radioactive tritium seeping into groundwater near a Chicago-area nuclear power plant has prompted the Exelon Corp. to offer compensation to property owners.

The operator of the power plant in Will County, just south of Chicago, has bought out one property owner and offered to compensate 14 others for any loss in home value.

Levels of the radioactive isotope near the Braidwood Nuclear Generating Station so far have been well below the amount the federal government considers unhealthy, the Chicago Tribune reported Wednesday. But in one well on Exelon's property, the amount of tritium was more than 11 times higher than the federal limit for groundwater, according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has cited Exelon, the parent company of Commonwealth Edison, or ComEd, for two violations of the state's groundwater standards, the Tribune said. The company now faces a Feb. 3 deadline for filing a report to the state detailing what they know about the tritium contamination.

Tritium is the radioactive form of hydrogen and is a byproduct of nuclear energy production. Exposure can increase the risk of cancer.

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