

News from Beyond Nuclear
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Media Statement by Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear, re: human health and safety risks from latest leak at Palisades and spill of 79 gallons of radioactive water into Lake Michigan

“Entergy and U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) spokespersons’ statements that the spill of 79 gallons of radioactive water into Lake Michigan signifies no threat to human health or safety should be taken with a big grain of salt. Claims of ‘very slightly radioactive’ are akin to ‘a little bit pregnant.’ In fact, the fetus in the mother’s womb is the single most vulnerable human life cycle stage to the hazards of radioactivity.

The Safety Injection Refueling Water (SIRW) storage tank from which this radioactive water leaked is used to flood the reactor cavity during refueling outages. While there, it picks up radioactive contamination, in the form of tritium, which is radioactive hydrogen, as well as other hazardous radioactive substances. It could very well also pick up radioactive hot particles, emitting significantly high radiation doses. Any and all such contamination could have been in the 79 gallons of radioactive water that spilled into Lake Michigan.

Radioactive tritium is clinically proven to be a carcinogen, mutagen, and teratogen. That is, it can cause cancer, genetic damage, and birth defects.

The U.S. National Academy of Science has reported for decades – most recently in 2005 – that any exposure to radioactivity, no matter how small, carries a health risk for cancer, and that such risks accumulate over a lifetime.

Entergy and NRC cannot honestly say that radioactive contamination of the environment is ‘safe.’ What they really mean is they have decided, doing a ‘cost-benefit analysis,’ that such radioactive releases are ‘acceptably risky,’ in their opinion. Of course, the benefit they worry about is Entergy’s profits. The cost or risk they find ‘acceptable’ includes some inevitable level of human health damage in nearby communities. Health studies on just how bad this damage is often go undone, or are woefully inadequate.

Entergy and NRC advocate that ‘dilution is the solution to radioactive pollution.’ But Lake Michigan is the drinking water supply for many millions of people. Palisades has been discharging tritium and other radioactive poisons – routinely with government permits, and accidentally as through leaks and spills – for 42 years. Countless communities draw their drinking and irrigation water from Lake Michigan – at closest range, South Haven. What this means is area and regional

residents are being exposed to a constant, chronic level of exposure to tritium and other radioactive hazards, over long periods of time. Radioactive substances even re-concentrate in the food chain and human bodies, thus undermining any claims of 'dilution is the solution.'

Entergy and NRC should stop treating Lake Michigan as if it is a radioactive industrial sewer. It is the headwaters for 20% of the world's surface fresh water, the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes provide drinking water for 40 million people in eight U.S. states, two Canadian provinces, and a large number of Native American First Nations."

For more information on "permitted, routine radiation releases" at Palisades, please see:

http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/documents/Routine%20Releases_Dec%202012.pdf [note that the photo of the water discharge pathway was taken at Palisades itself]

For more information on un-planned, un-permitted leaks of radioactivity at Palisades, especially tritium leaks into groundwater (which then flows into Lake Michigan), see the Palisades sections in Beyond Nuclear's April 2010 report *Leak First, Fix Later*:

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/reports/>