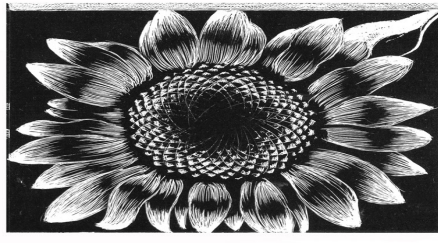


NUKEWATCH

QUARTERLY



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News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Reactors, Radioactive Waste & Nonviolent Resistance

Tell Minnesota Public Utilities Commission & Xcel Energy: Renewables NOW

NO License Extensions for 50-year-old nuclear reactors leaking radioactivity to the Mississippi River

nukewatchinfo.org/monticello



SCAN ME



Use the webpage or scan this QR code to make public comments to the Minn. PUC **until August 9**. If you are a resident of Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, North Dakota, or Michigan — demand the Minn. PUC require Xcel Energy to maintain the Monticello Nuclear Reactor's current scheduled 2030 closure date.

Aging Monticello Nuclear Reactor Endangering Human Health

By Joseph J. Mangano

The Monticello nuclear reactor, one of the oldest in the world, has requested permission from federal regulators to extend its license for 20 years. If approved, the reactor in Monticello, Minn. could stay open for up to 80 years after its 1970 launch.

An 80-year-old reactor is an unknown quantity. Only a few, including Monticello, have even passed the 50-year mark. But federal regulators have approved all six requests for U.S. reactors to remain active up to 80 years, and are considering 10 others. Approvals are expected for all, as federal regulators have never rejected an extension.

A nuclear reactor is a complex array of mechanical parts. Over time, these parts become brittle and corrode. Aging at a reactor like Monticello presents multiple threats to safety and health, including:

1. The chance of a catastrophic meltdown increases; with over 3 million persons living within 50 miles of Monticello, many thousands would suffer from radiation poisoning or cancer.
2. The amount of highly radioactive waste that must be stored at each site — forever — in deep pools of water or steel and concrete casks would increase; currently, Monticello waste is nearly equal to the amount released during the Chernobyl meltdown.

3. Routine releases of over 100 radioactive particles and gases, only created when a reactor operates or a nuclear weapon explodes, are likely to increase; these toxic products enter bodies of nearby residents through breathing and the food chain.

These concerns are a reality at Monticello. In November 2022, a leaky pipe released large amounts of water contaminated with radioactive tritium at the site. Xcel Energy, which owns the reactor, failed to report this for four months — until a second large leak occurred — while trying to fix the first leak. The total amount of contaminated water is greater than an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Any entry into local drinking water from these enormous spills is a health risk.

U.S. reactors have operated over six decades, but federal regulators have only conducted one study of cancer in local residents. That report used statistics before 1985, and is thus outdated. No studies are currently planned.

Monticello is in Wright County, close to the border of Sherburne County. Almost all residents of these counties live within 25 miles of the reactor, and are most vulnerable to exposures from environmental releases. These counties are fast-growing areas just outside of the Twin Cities, with a current population of more than 250,000.

See Monticello Reactor Threatens Health, p.5

NRC Apologizes, Admits: Monticello's Leaked Tritium Reached the Mississippi River

By Nukewatch Staff

At a public hearing in Monticello, Minnesota, on May 15, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) apologized for public claims made by its staff that radioactive tritium in a massive 2022 leak of cooling water from the Monticello reactor, had not reached the Mississippi River. The river is the drinking water source for 20 million people including the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area.

In opening remarks to the NRC-sponsored hearing at the Monticello Community Center, Senior Environmental Project Manager Stephen Koenick apologized for the NRC's often-repeated assurances that the leaked tritium from the 53-year-old reactor had not been detected in the Mississippi.

In his shocking yet underreported public apology, Koenick said: "I would like to take a moment to

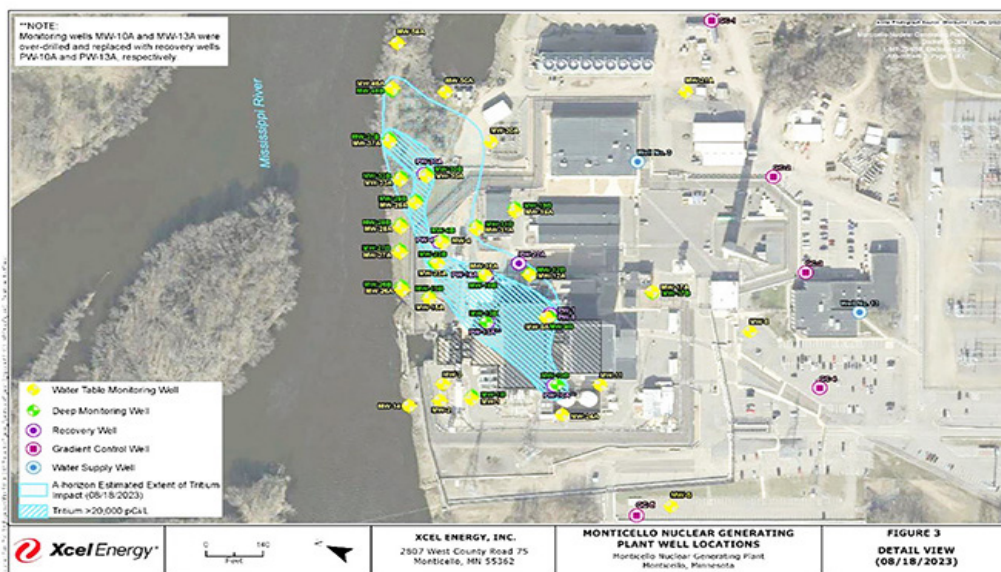


Figure 3-10 Extent of Tritium-impacted Groundwater and Locations of Monticello Wells as of August 2023 (Xcel 2023-TN9609)

The blue outlined area is the "extent of tritium-impacted groundwater as of August 2023," from the leaked, radioactive coolant water at Xcel Energy's Monticello nuclear reactor. The blue shaded area marks tritium concentrations above the EPA safe drinking water limit, extending to the Mississippi River bank. Source: Xcel Energy, NRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement

address and clarify some miscommunication regarding the presence of detectable tritium in the Mississippi River. I know we ... reported there were no indication[s] of [a] tritium leak [which] made it to the Mississippi. However ... in our Draft Environmental Impact Statement, we ... conclude there were some very low concentrations of tritium in the Mississippi River." Koenick went on to say, "So we apologize for this miscommunication."

As far as Nukewatch can tell, only the weekly *Monticello Times* reported on the rare public apology and the eyebrow-raising admission that radioactive tritium from the plume caused by the 2022 leak had contaminated the Mississippi. The paper published a report by Nukewatch's Kelly Lundeen and John LaForge on the front page of its June 6 issue under the headline "NRC apologizes, changes its stance

See NRC Apologizes, p. 5