

State: Nuke plant not harming water

Staff Reports

COLUMBIA — Water testing outside the Oconee Nuclear Station in Oconee County showed the plant has not adversely affected the quality of the groundwater or surface water in the area, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) reported Wednesday.

Chris Staton, director of DHEC's Division of Waste Assessment and Emergency Response, said sampling of off-site public and private well water is part of DHEC's initiative to mirror a nuclear industry effort to determine groundwater quality on-site at nuclear power plants throughout the country.

"Tests show no radioactive

materials in the groundwater coming from the plant," Staton said. "The results did not show any measurable levels of Tritium in any of the samples."

DHEC staff sampled public and private wells surrounding all four of South Carolina's commercial nuclear power plants. Laboratory analyses of samples from two remaining plants are nearly complete.

At the Oconee plant, operated by Duke Energy, DHEC staff tested eight locations surrounding the facility in February 2008. Five of the samples were from private wells and three were surface water samples surrounding the facility.

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Tests show quality of water not adversely affected

The samples were initially tested for Tritium, Gross Alpha and Gross Beta and general bacterial water quality.

Community public wells are tested for Alpha and Beta radioactivity by using tests called "Gross Alpha Activity," "Gross Beta Activity" and if needed, "Gross Gamma Activity."

These tests look at the total effects these materials can have on human health over time. If these test results are above

public drinking water standards, the water system is notified and a plan is developed to reduce levels. These same tests can also be applied to private wells.

Staton said that while tests showed the Oconee Nuclear Station has had no adverse affect on the local groundwater, the results did show levels of naturally occurring radioactive materials in four private wells.

Staton said residents whose

wells showed levels of naturally occurring radioactive materials or higher levels of bacteria were given information on how to reduce the intake of those materials.

As a result of the elevated levels of naturally occurring radioactive materials, those four wells also were screened for gross gamma radiation. Staton said no Gamma radiation was detected in any of those wells.



File Photo

Pictured is Oconee Nuclear Station, which, according to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, has not adversely affected the quality of the groundwater or surface water in the area.