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### Vt. Yankee community on edge after disclosure of radioactive presence

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By WGGB Staff

VERNON, Vt. (WGGB) -- The Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant is located 10 miles north of the Massachusetts border, and the recent discovery of a radioactive material in a well at the plant has some in the community questioning whether or not the 38-year-old plant should have its license extended for another 20 years in 2012.

Vermont Yankee's parent company Entergy runs a number of nuclear power plants across the country. The Vermont plant's spokesperson, Rob Williams said Tuesday the plant had three wells drilled on the property to test for the presence of tritium, and elevated levels have recently been discovered in the ground. However, he said the community is not in any danger.

According to American International College chemistry professor Adam Brunet, tritium is a radioactive substance, which can damage a cell or DNA and, over a person's lifetime, accumulations and damage to DNA can lead to cancer and other problems.

The tritium has so far only been found at the plant, and testing has been ongoing to ensure the leak has not spread to the nearby Connecticut River. If the leak were to spread to the river, it could be carried down into Western Massachusetts.

Vermont Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Wendy Davis has told The Associated Press that the volume and direction of flow of tritium-tainted groundwater leads to the conclusion that it's reaching the river.

On Thursday, boats were on the water by the plant with experts, under the direction of the Vermont Department of Health, testing for tritium in the water as well as in the fish population.

A spokesperson for the Massachusetts Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs said Monday the state Department of Public Health has been working closely with its Vermont counterpart to closely monitor the testing for tritium levels, but none had been found in the ground water or outside of the plant.

"We are certainly watching this very closely," said Catherine Williams, of the state department of energy and environmental affairs.

Vermont Yankee has been supplying energy for the Green Mountain State since 1972 with a 40-year licensee. However, that license is set to expire in 2012 and the state's legislature will need to decide whether or not to extend it for another 20 years, which the plant has requested.

Some people down river of the plant in the Massachusetts town of Northfield said they're concerned about extending the plant's

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