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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRACE AMOUNTS OF RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION
FOUND AT AN OFFSITE LOCATION IN CONNECTICUT

Northeast Utilities and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection have informed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that trace amounts of radioactive contamination have been found at an offsite location in Connecticut. Officials stress that the soil, which was fill obtained from the site of the Haddam Neck nuclear power plant in 1989, poses no hazard to members of the public.

Monitoring, including scans and fixed measurements, has been completed at about a dozen locations. Soil analysis has been completed for two of those locations, including this one. The other property showed no contamination, while this one showed extremely low levels of contamination.

Haddam Neck, which is located in Haddam, Conn., about five miles from the property, was permanently shutdown in December 1996.

Acting on information that soil had been removed from the site during numerous construction projects over the life of the plant, the NRC, Connecticut DEP and plant owner Northeast Utilities began collecting soil samples to be analyzed for any possible contamination. As a result, the DEP and NU found extremely low levels of the isotope cobalt 60 in one sample from one property. NRC expects to complete its soil analysis later today. Further sampling will be done at this location.

Conservative calculations show exposure to the isotope could result in a dose of about 1-3 millirem per year, a very small fraction of the NRC's annual exposure limit for members of the public (100 millirem). For perspective, a member of the public would be exposed to about 360 millirem a year from background radiation. NRC decommissioning release criteria for unrestricted use of a facility would limit exposures for a member of the public at a decommissioned site to 25 millirem per year. Exposure from a full set of dental x-rays is 40 millirem.

In addition to continuing routine NRC inspections at the facility, over the last several months, the NRC also has been conducting special inspections at Haddam Neck to ensure current radiological control practices are adequate and has begun a review of past practices to assure proper decommissioning of the facility. The latter effort includes taking independent measurements and overseeing the licensee's site characterization.

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