

Indian Point Decommissioning Status

October 2023

Summary

Holtec International purchased Indian Point from Entergy Corporation on May 28, 2021 and is responsible for the decommissioning of the former nuclear power plant. Decommissioning the plant will include removing equipment and structures containing nuclear contaminants and safely storing spent nuclear fuel onsite. At a cost of approximately \$2.3 billion, Holtec estimates the bulk of decommissioning work at Indian Point will be completed by 2033.

New York bans radioactive wastewater discharges

Holtec intended to discharge into the Hudson 1.5 million gallons of wastewater that had been polluted with tritium, a radioactive isotope with links to cancer. On August 18, 2023, Gov. Hochul signed the Save the Hudson bill, which prohibits discharges of any radiological substance into the Hudson River in connection with the decommissioning of a nuclear power plant. Riverkeeper is closely monitoring the State's implementation of this groundbreaking law to ensure it is carried out as intended.

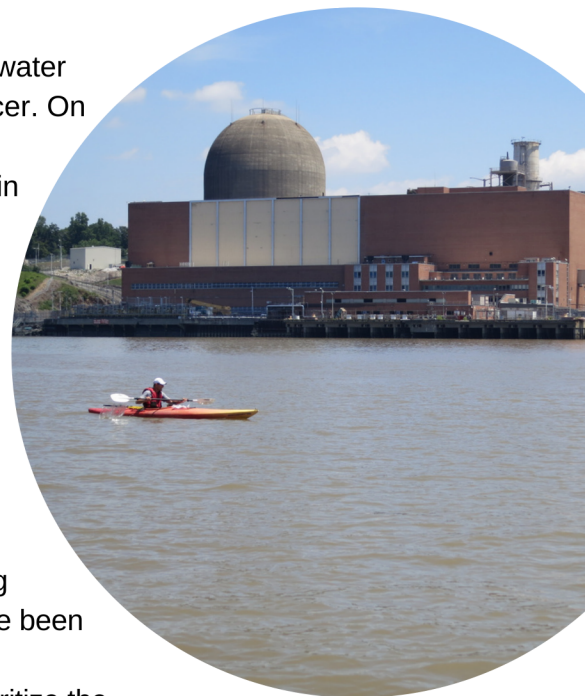
Recent Updates

Groundwater leaks

Leaks from the storage tanks continue to leach through the soil and groundwater underneath the plant, piloting their way into the Hudson. The leaked wastewater is untreated and contains radioactive elements including Tritium, Strontium-90, Cesium-137, Cobalt-60 and Nickel-63. No plans have been announced by Holtec on how best to contain the damage already incurred. Riverkeeper is advocating that New York State exercise its authority to prioritize the "remedial investigation" – an in-depth study of the site that is the first step of developing a remediation plan – to move forward with a timely clean-up of the groundwater and prevent further contamination of the Hudson.

Holtec's Recent Violations

Since March 2023, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has provided details of six violations made by Holtec. The first was the failure to identify overflows of radioactive liquids from storage tanks and, after identifying the spills, the failure to test radiological levels in required areas within the plant. The second identified Holtec's failure to implement fire protection equipment surveillance and properly conduct fire safety tests. These violations represent a basic failure of quality control checks and balances. Additional violations include failure to ensure that flammable or combustible material was removed or otherwise protected prior to and during work that left it vulnerable to combustion; failure to report in a timely manner the receipt of a radioactive materials shipment with higher-than-allowable contact dose rates on its external surface; and quality standards violations associated with the design and documentation of HI-LIFT crane structures.



FAQs

Who is Holtec and what is its role in the decommissioning? What is its track record to date?

Holtec is responsible for the decommissioning of the Indian Point site. Holtec has a past that is littered with violations, including charges of bribery, radioactive wastewater spills, failing to properly clean and monitor spills, and lapses in nuclear safety, workplace safety, and/or health violations.

What is the effect of the Save the Hudson law?

The Save the Hudson law renders Holtec's plan to discharge radioactive wastewater from Indian Point into the Hudson River illegal. In addition to the fines Holtec would incur from discharging radioactive waste into the Hudson River, the law provides a legal basis for the State and others to prevent the discharges from happening.

What is tritium?

Tritium is a radioactive isotope with links to cancer found in the wastewater from Indian Point. As tritium is chemically identical to water, there is no commercially viable method to remove or treat tritium in Indian Point's wastewater at this point.

Has Indian Point discharged tritium before?

Entergy, the previous owner, discharged approximately 31 million gallons of tritiated wastewater into the Hudson over 60 years of operation.

What is the health impact of swimming in water with measurable volumes of tritium?

The discharges fall within federal standards, but these standards are not health-based. There has been testing performed for tritium's effect on women, children, and expectant mothers. Ingestion of tritium is linked to cancer and this lack of testing is what informs Riverkeeper's precautionary approach.

What should happen to the wastewater and tritium now?

Riverkeeper advocates for the tritiated water to be stored on site for at least a 12-year period, equal to the half-life of tritium. In addition to lessening the radioactivity of tritium by 50 percent over this period, it could allow for safer disposal alternatives to be developed.

We oppose evaporation, as it results in higher radiation exposures to the public. Since radioactivity would disperse into the air and fall back onto land and water, it is even less safe for the community and still affects the river.

Riverkeeper also opposes shipping the water for off-site disposal, as this increases risk of spills and presents an environmental justice issue by merely shifting the impacts elsewhere.

