

DHEC to address Barnwell water woes

The (Columbia) State

After two months of questions about a leaking nuclear garbage dump, state regulators will try to explain why Barnwell County residents aren't in danger of drinking polluted water.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control will hold a reception and public meeting tonight for people living near Chem-Nuclear's 36-year-old atomic waste landfill at Snelling.

Agency officials, criticized for not making public the extent of

pollution at the site, say they will go over the results of tests they say show drinking water around the landfill is safe from radioactive contamination. The reception starts at 6:30 at the S.C. Advanced Technology Park off S.C. 64 in Snelling.

DHEC records show more than 30 monitoring wells at the landfill with tritium levels that exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's safe drinking water standard. The landfill is scheduled to close to the nation next summer.

WHY IT MATTERS TO BEAUFORT COUNTY

Tritium has been found seeping into Mary's Branch, a creek that drains into a tributary of the Savannah River about 12 miles away. The Savannah River is a drinking water source for thousands of Georgia and South Carolina residents, including those living in the Hilton Head Island area.