

Project to Clean Up Lewiston Storage Site To Begin in Early May

By G.M. Seal

COURIER-EXPRESS NIAGARA FALLS BUREAU

LEWISTON — A \$2 million construction project designed to reduce the level of radioactivity from the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works is scheduled to start in early May.

The ordnance works stored hundreds of tons of radioactive wastes from the Manhattan Project, which produced the first atomic bomb during World War II.

The 190-acre site off Pletcher Road, owned by the federal Department of Energy, has long been a source of health concerns of residents because of radon gas emanating from it.

Studies have suggested that inhaling radon gas, a byproduct of decomposing radioactive elements, may cause cancer.

Under the DOE's plan, workers will scrape off up to three feet of contaminated soil from a four-acre area around a low-level radioactive spoils pile at the southern end of the site. The collected material will be placed in an impermeable clay dike whose walls will be 8 to 10 feet high. The dike will cover about 2 acres.

The dike, which will hold about 50,000 cubic feet of material, will be covered by a heavy impervious fabric.

Workers will remove the roofs of two buildings where radioactive residues are stored and which have been identified as giving off radon gas. The material inside will be covered by lay-

ers of sand, clay and the same impervious fabric.

Bechtel National Inc., an engineering company based in San Francisco, has managed the ordnance works since last fall and is ready to call for bids on the work, according to company spokesman Don DeLone.

The goal of that work "is to bring about a reduction in emissions of some of this radon from the site," DeLone said.

The 165-foot-high silo containing a large amount of radioactive materials on the northeastern portion of the ordnance works will not be included in any of the work. The silo has been suspected of leaking radon into the atmosphere.

Joan Gipp, a Lewiston Town Council member and former member of the eight-person citizens oversight committee for the ordnance works, called the planned work "a Band-Aid approach to a serious problem."

Dr. William Boeck, Niagara University physics professor and a current member of the oversight committee, said, "For the amount of money available, we felt we would get a bigger reduction (in radon gas emissions) by taking care of these two buildings and the storage pile than by going after the silo."

DeLone said the silo appears to be "in pretty good sealed condition."

He termed the coming work an "interim storage remedy" until the DOE decides what to do with the ordnance works and a permanent disposal site for the contaminated material is found.

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Work Progressing

LEWISTON — Rep. John J. LaFalce, D-Town of Tonawanda, said Friday that remedial efforts to contain radioactive materials at the old Lake Ontario Ordnance Site "are moving aggressively ahead."

The congressman said representatives of the federal Department of Energy and Bechtel National Inc. met with a citizens committee to review proposed work during the next year.

"Top priority this construction season will be the containment of the R-10 residue spoils pile. The pile has been, in the past, a major source of radon emanation on the site," Rep. LaFalce said. "Containment materials have migrated off site."

In addition, DOE plans to cap and reinforce several buildings on the site that contain significant amounts of radioactive material.

The congressman said the "hard battles" to obtain funding have been won, and he pledged cooperation with a Citizen Oversight Committee to keep it informed about progress.

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SUGGESTED AREAS OF COOPERATIVE ACTION
FOR CONSIDERATION BY MISSOURI DNR

A. Public Information and Media Relations

- A-1 Consult on specific news media with whom communication should be maintained in the site communities, including:
- Daily and weekly newspapers, their editors and reporters.
 - TV and radio station news directors.
 - Other local community publications.
 - Wire service bureaus in St. Louis and Jefferson City.
 - Special writers and correspondents.
- A-2 Provide feedback on news play given to FUSRAP activities by the media. Advise of editorial positions taken by the press and electronic media in cases where a response by FUSRAP may be indicated.
- A-3 Join in calls by FUSRAP representatives on media editors and reporters, where such personal contact may appear to be advisable.
- A-4 To the extent convenient, maintain a press clipping file of FUSRAP-related news stories, editorials, letters-to-editors, etc., for reference purposes.
- A-5 Provide input on Missouri state information sources for a press kit to be prepared for handout to interested news media.
- A-6 Join in media statements on site-related matters, when appropriate, with DOE/FUSRAP project representatives.
- A-7 Identify Missouri officials who should receive FUSRAP news releases and related materials by reason of their interest in the program, including:
- Cognizant state government officials.
 - State legislators representing site areas.
 - Members of Congress representing site areas.
 - (The U. S. Senators for the State of Missouri.)