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No additional wastes planned at LOOW site

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LEWISTON — The message from residents to the federal government on its study of the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works was loud and clear — get out and stay out.

At the first of two public hearings, about 60 people showed up last night at the Lewiston-Porter High School auditorium to tell the Department of Energy that the idea of reviving the LOOW site is a health and economic threat to the area.

The DOE is seeking public comments for an environmental impact statement, a requirement for any project that could affect the surrounding environment. When completed in fall of 1984, the statement will recommend final action for the site.

But before the comments got started, Lowell F. Campbell, deputy director of the DOE Technical Services Division, said though the impact statement is centered on three alternatives, not one includes the trucking of radioactive wastes into the LOOW site.

"We are not considering the use of the site for disposition of radioactive materials from other locations," he said.

The Lewiston Town Board led the charge with its attorney from a Washington, D.C., law firm, which is pursuing legal action against the federal government.

James M. McElfish Jr. of Dow, Lohnes & Albertson said the town was never consulted in the 39-year history of the LOOW site and demanded future talks.

"There should be consultation to undo what has been done to Lewiston," McElfish said.

He also warned the town would watch every action taken with Afrimet-

Indussa, an American company controlled by a Belgian firm that owns 60 percent of the radioactive residues at the LOOW site. The Afrimet lease runs until June.

The town also recommended that the three alternatives — continued storage, long-term storage and removal of all wastes — be buffered with mini-suggestions.

Aides for U.S. Rep. John J. LaFalce, D-Tonawanda, and state Assemblymen Joseph T. Pillittere, D-Lewiston, and Matthew J. Murphy, D-Lockport, urged the DOE to decontaminate and decommission the site.

"The federal government's record at the site reflected a 35-year history of extremely poor management and inadequate maintenance of material that, by its very nature, constitutes a potential hazard to human health and the environment," a LaFalce aide said.

Dr. Richard Rooker, representing the Niagara County Board of Health, said the board has been "deeply concerned" over radiation levels at the site, and urged that residents' safety and well-being be considered a priority.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation, several residents and representatives from anti-LOOW groups spoke, including the NO LOOW organization and Citizens Against Pollution.

The Argonne National Laboratory of Argonne, Ill., has been hired by the DEC for "independent analysis" leading to the environmental impact statement, Argonne sociologist Dr. Bonnie Payne said.

The next meeting will be at 10 a.m. tomorrow in the auditorium of the Lewiston-Porter High School. Written comment will be accepted until March 11.