

# Silo wastes to be shifted

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LEWISTON — Four thousand tons of radioactive residues stored in a concrete silo at the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site will be moved to a ground-level storage site this summer, at a cost of \$1.5 million.

According to Russ Barber, technical manager for Bechtel National Inc., caretaker of the site, the radioactive material will be washed through a four-inch metal pipeline from the silo to a concrete basin in an eight-acre central storage area.

A slurry mining pump, similar to those used in coal mining, will spray water inside the silo to loosen the residue, push the residues suspended in water through the pipeline to the storage area, and then pump the water out of the solid material.

The material will be covered with radioactive contaminated soil from the site, then a layer of clay and topsoil. The water will be recycled during the transfer, then treated to remove radioactive contaminants before it is discharged into a drainage ditch leading to Four-Mile Creek.

The slurry process will take six to 11 weeks and should be completed by mid-August, Barber said.

The transfer of the material to a less exposed storage area is part of an interim cleanup of radioactive contamination at the site by the U.S. Department of Energy, which owns the 191-acre Pletcher Road site.

The government has spent close to \$20 million since short-term cleanup began in 1983; it plans to spend at least \$5 million more by the end of 1985.

In preparation for the transfer of residues from the silo, Gross Plumbing and Heating of Niagara Falls will complete construction of the pipeline and prepare an old storage building to hold the material. Their contract totals \$830,000.

Sicoli and Massaro Inc., also of Niagara Falls, will receive \$660,000 to extend the pipe into the silo and operate the system.

Those contracts cover actual work performed, and do not include the cost of design and engineering by Bechtel and work done by another firm.

Barber said the silo will be demolished either this fall or the spring of 1985. He explained that residues clinging to the surface of the silo will be removed by the slurry pump to reduce the level of radiation to an acceptable level before the tower is demolished and the rubble removed to the main storage area.

According to Barber, the storage area is surrounded by a 10- to 20-foot clay dike to prevent erosion and further contamination of nearby areas.

The uranium ore processing wastes in the silo have been the primary source of gamma radiation emanating from the site since the residues were placed in the former water tower in 1944.

The residues originally belonged to a Belgium firm, Afrimet Inc., but the DOE assumed responsibility for the material in July 1983 in return for \$8 million and "defense and security considerations" from the Belgian government.