

Safe removal of waste out silo's top assured

By LISA AUG
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LEWISTON — To remove radioactive waste from the concrete silo at the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site this summer, contractors will have to cut a hole in the top of the silo, according to the federal Department of Energy.

But the three-month process will not release dangerous levels of radiation into the air, DOE officials said.

In a special meeting with the Lewiston Town Board last night, DOE officials described the procedure that would wash the 4,000 tons of radioactive material stored in the silo through a pipeline to a storage site several hundred yards away.

Joseph F. Nemec of Bechtel National Inc. of Oak Ridge, Tenn., DOE's caretaker for the site, said a 5-foot by 5-foot hole is needed to lower a hydraulic mine pump into the silo to force the material into a pipeline. He said the hole would be capped as much as possible to minimize the release of hazardous radon gas.

"We will have some release from (the silo)," he said, "but those will be well within DOE guidelines (for safety)."

Approximately 16,000 tons of radioactive residue and waste are stored in several areas at the 190-acre Pletcher Road site which has been used since 1944.

DOE, which owns the site, began temporary cleanup and storage work in 1983, moving the material to a central storage area and covering it with contaminated dirt and a layer of clean dirt and clay. The agency

expects the work to be completed by the end of 1985.

DOE will not begin work on permanent storage of the wastes until 1986, after deciding whether to leave the wastes in place, move them to storage sites in Tennessee or Washington, or move part of the wastes and leave the rest.

DOE will hold a public hearing on a draft environmental impact statement on those options late this summer.

Temporary work at the site has cost the government \$20 million, and will cost more than \$30 million before it is finished. Estimates for permanent waste storage range from \$12 million for keeping them in place to \$242 million for moving them to another site.

Nemec said the silo operation probably will begin in late June or early July and continue for three to four months.

In addition to moving wastes from the silo, DOE contractors also will demolish the silo and bury the rubble in the storage area, and clean up contaminated soil from a number of locations at the site and on neighboring property.

DOE officials agreed at the meeting to install a meter and backflow preventer on the water pipe to the site, after Town Supervisor James J. Lombardi expressed concern about possible contamination to city water supplies.

A resolution, sponsored by board member Richard Kolke, requests that the DOE pay for water used at the site in past years.