

# Residents slam plan to locate nuclear waste in OR

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**OAK RIDGE** — Area residents and elected officials Thursday night blasted a Department of Energy proposal to move 255,000 cubic yards of radioactive waste material from Niagara Falls, N.Y., to DOE property in Oak Ridge.

Citizens speaking at a DOE hearing at the American Museum of Science and Energy complained Oak Ridge already has its share of environmental problems stemming from nuclear and toxic wastes buried in the area during the past 40 years. They said their community should not become a dumping ground for the rest of the country.

"We're in trouble in this area," said Roane County resident James Young, who worked for former DOE contractor Union

Carbide for 27 years. "I oppose this proposal vehemently because I think we have enough problems in this area already without having any more imported."

Oak Ridge is not the only location DOE is considering for the waste relocation. Other options include leaving the waste where it is, shipping it to another DOE reservation near Hanford, Wash., or possibly depositing the materials in the Atlantic Ocean.

DOE spokesman Jim Alexander said the relocation proposal is part of a national effort by DOE to better coordinate the storage of radioactive wastes throughout the United States. He said the best option to meet that goal seems to be storing the wastes on government properties such as those in Oak Ridge and Hanford.

The low level radioactive waste was originally produced during World War II while the government was engaged in the Manhattan Project, the secret effort that spawned the atomic bomb. Although much of the focus of that project was based in Oak Ridge, Alexander said the wastes in Niagara Falls were produced through uranium enrichment efforts in New York and Missouri, not in East Tennessee.

Kingston Mayor Ruby Luckey said she believed trucking nuclear wastes more than 1,000 miles from Niagara Falls to Oak Ridge would pose a threat not only to motorists, but to the citizens and water resources of the Oak Ridge area.

"Don't make us the garbage heap for the whole country," Luckey said.

Kingston city councilman Walter Ford

echoed her complaint, saying Oak Ridge and its neighbors already have enough problems with the recent reports of mercury and groundwater contamination.

"I know for a fact that we already have enough nuclear wastes stored in Oak Ridge to take care of us for many years," he said. "The present mercury problem is already with us. Who knows what the next one will be with what's already buried."

DOE representatives said a final decision on the relocation probably will not be made until early next year. In the meantime, public hearings are scheduled for each area currently under consideration.

Alexander stressed that Oak Ridge is neither a favorite nor a longshot to inherit the waste material. He said DOE has made no preferences and will not do so until ev-

ery option is studied thoroughly.

However, in terms of financial cost, Oak Ridge ranks second on the list of the three primary options in terms of relocation expense. To transport and house the materials to Oak Ridge would cost between \$67 million and \$130 million, according to preliminary estimates, Alexander said. To relocate the materials more than 100 miles away in Hanford would cost from \$130 to \$260 million, he said.

By far the cheapest option is to leave it in Niagara Falls. Although storage facilities there date back to the early days of World War II and are showing signs of deterioration, the cost to shore up those facilities would cost only \$3 to \$6 million.

Citizens have until Oct. 9 to submit written comments to DOE on the proposed atomic waste relocation.