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SECOND SECTION

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Radioactive Steel Found At Pendleton Dump Site

By Cindi Wittcop

A piece of radioactive steel was found last week by workers involved in a remedial cleanup at the Frontier Chemical dump site in Pendleton, and local officials met Tuesday to discuss the ramifications of the find.

The dump is the site of a former industrial waste treatment facility run by Frontier Chemical Co. several years ago and a number of toxins, including organic compounds, PCB and heavy metal sludge containing cadmium and chromium have been detected there.

Preliminary cleanup involving removal of rusted-out tanks and machinery from the site was begun two weeks ago, and the discovery of the radioactive material was "a surprise," officials said.

According to Pendleton supervisor Shirley Conner, the steel was a structural piece of a metal hopper base which workers from Hazardous Evaluation, the company hired for the initial cleanup, loaded onto a truck for delivery to Advanced Metal Recycling, a Buffalo scrap yard.

Conner met with representatives from two "potentially responsible parties," Clayton Allen of Dow North America and Alec Houston of Olin; Wheatfield supervisor Terry Kuehn, Pendleton highway superintendent Thomas Reinard, Pendleton Action Team member Paula Hargreaves and S.P.E.C. Technology consultant Tim Thiel.

According to Allen, "the truck containing this steel structural support piece that was radioactively contaminated was isolated at the scrap yard and all the proper state agencies were notified. They (the dept. of labor) came out, went over the materials on this truck with a hand-held Geiger counter and determined that it was only a portion of the steel that was on there."

"At that point they went back to the site and tested the other portion of that same structure and found the same radioactivity," Allen said. "They tested other scrap metal and scrap materials around the site and didn't find any level of contamination and they tested the soil as well underneath the structure and didn't find anything."

Conner asked Allen if a written report could be obtained from Bob Kelly, a radiologist at the Department of Labor, to "have something on record" as far as the testing and Allen said copies of a forthcom-



OUTLINING THE SITE — Pendleton supervisor Shirley Conner met Tuesday with officials from two of the companies that were responsible for dumping toxic wastes at the Frontier Chemical site on Townline Road. The meeting was called to discuss a piece of radioactive metal found at the site last week. Here, Conner shows Dow North American environmental communication specialist Clayton Allen a map of the dump. (Photo by Cindi Wittcop)

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ing report will be forwarded to both Conner and Kuehn.

Allen said the contaminated metal is being kept in isolation at the Pendleton site but will later be taken to a facility equipped to deal with radioactive material. He added that work is continuing at the site, since no other scrap items or soil were found to be radioactive. Also, the radioactivity was reportedly only one-fifth of allowable limits for workers.

Rep. John LaFalce stated in a letter to DEC official Michael O'Toole that he had been advised that "a radiation level of .3 to .4 millirems per hour" was detected. He went on to say that "this is well below the level of concern (2 to 3 millirems per

hour)."

Hargreaves said she had talked with DEC project engineer Thomas Christoffel about the find and he told her the DEC knew the hopper and its metal support structure came from the "Manhattan Project," which would indicate the material was radioactive. She maintained that the DEC should have gone over the entire site with a Geiger counter and the state exhibited negligence by not doing so.

"The DEC should have found it," Hargreaves said, "we rely on state agencies to protect us and they missed it — it (the contaminated metal) was right by the entrance (of the dump) and they completely missed it."