

BRIEFLY

Residents given assurances on safety of N-waste site

LEWISTON — The clay cap enclosing radioactive waste at the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works will last for 50 years, the site manager, Ronald E. Kirk, told about 60 persons at a question-and-answer session at the site Thursday.

Many expressed disappointment that the U.S. Department of Energy plans to leave the waste buried in its current 28-foot high cell for the foreseeable future.

"Clay has a very good property for containing radioactive particles," Kirk said. If any materials leak out of the clay, it

would travel at a rate of about a foot a year, he added. In addition, "We're monitoring it to make sure nothing happens." Kirk said that the Department of Energy will not move the contaminated waste until it finds a proper permanent repository.

"You're never going to have a permanent resting spot," said Mitchell R. Zavon, president of the Lewiston Civic Association.

The 191-acre site, which straddles the Lewiston-Porter border has served as a storage area for radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb during World War II. Between 1980 and 1986, the Department of Energy cleaned up most of the site and nearby properties, and placed the material into a waste containment structure.

The DOE did further clean-up work in July 1991, placing contaminated soil into the existing storage cell.

Kirk said the DOE has agreed that it would not take any further action to place a longer term cap on the site until it reaches an understanding with the state and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.