

Public meeting to address landfill

A PUBLIC meeting regarding the safety of the contaminated residues currently stored at the Niagara Falls Storage Site will be held 6 p.m. Monday at the Lewiston Town Hall, 1375 Ridge Road, Lewiston.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) will discuss their findings as to the acceptability of landfilling 250,000 cubic yards of radioactive waste and high level K-65 radium leftover from the Manhattan Project of World War II.

A new report from the National Research Council, "Safety of the High-Level Uranium Ore Residues at the Niagara Falls Storage Site, Lewiston, New York," will be released that day. Members of the National Research Council's Committee on Remediation of Buried and Tank Waste that wrote the report will present a brief summary of their study.

The National Research Council is the principal operating agency of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering. It is a private, non-profit institution that provides science and technology advice under a congressional charter.

Committee member and chair of the study group, Robert J. Catlin, will be available to answer questions about their report and findings. Other committee members are also scheduled to be in attendance.

The report examines the waste containment structure at the Lewiston site, used since 1949 to store highly radioactive residues separated during the processing of

very rich uranium ores from the former Belgian Congo (now Zaire). These residues, along with other, less radioactive residues and wastes, are currently stored at the site, buried under an interim cap to prevent influx of moisture from precipitation and outflux of radon gas.

The study was conducted at the request of the Office of Environmental Restoration of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

According to Timothy P. Henderson, president of ROLE (Residents Organized for Lewiston-Porter's Environment), the NAS was asked to intervene by the office of Congressman John LaFalce to help settle a dispute regarding the safety of the current landfill storage.

Henderson said the New York State Department of Energy and Conservation, Niagara County Health Department, Lewiston Environmental Commission, ROLE, and the federal Environmental Protection Agency are calling for the radioactive waste's removal to a more secure facility in Nevada. He said the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is the only agency that believes the current landfill, situated near the headwaters of Lake Ontario, is an adequate method of storage.

Henderson said the DOE has agreed to treat the waste at a storage facility in Fernald, Ohio, which has identical materials as Lewiston's K-65s, as high level. The DOE will vitrify (glassify) it and ship it to Nevada where the original tests were conducted.