

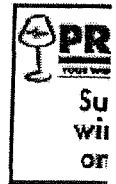
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Little risk is seen in radon hot spot found near campus

By PAM KOWALIK
News Niagara Bureau
10/18/01

LEWISTON - About 50 people attending a meeting Wednesday of the Restoration Advisory Board for the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works learned that elevated levels of radon were found in the northeast section of the Lewiston-Porter Central School campus.

The Army used the Niagara Falls Storage Site of the ordnance works, located off Pletcher Road, to store wastes from radioactive material used to produce the atomic bomb. It abuts the Lewiston-Porter campus.

Health officials said the latest radon find poses no health threat.

Paul Dicky, supervisory public health engineer for Niagara County, said radon was found in a field a safe distance from school facilities.

Chris Hallam, a health physicist from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, noted radioactivity occurs naturally.

"You're never going to get away from radioactivity," he said. "It's with you all the time."

And, he added, "You have to be right on top of these materials for a long period of time to get a measurable dose."

Hallam said he would recommend that the radon-contaminated soil be removed from the site. He noted the work would not be complex - possibly as simple as collecting the contaminated soil in a bucket.

During the meeting, held in the Primary Building of the Lewiston-Porter School District, an Army Corps of Engineers official said it was discovered recently that a small district elementary school once was located on Lake Ontario Ordnance Works property.

Thomas Freck, a member of the advisory board asked, asked, "Is there any way we can come up with a list of students who went there?"

Janet Mitchell, an employee of the school district who said she was a pupil of the school in the third grade, said she has health concerns.

"As time goes on, it seems that anyone between 40 and 45 that went to that school has health concerns," she said. "The more I learn, the more I get scared."

Both Freck and Mitchell urged that a health study be conducted of the school's former pupils.

"My main concern is the school," said Lynn Zanardi, a Youngstown resident. "We're not talking about it as being a prison located next to the facility. It's a school."

Mary Kay Foley, project manager for the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works, tried to ease concerns.

"All the operations at this (facility) ceased 30 or 40 years ago," she said. "Nothing's going to happen in the next year that's going to make it worse."

She added, "We aren't seeing any indications that there is an unacceptable risk."

Foley also added that a team of Corps investigators took soil samples closer to school facilities on the district campus and found nothing that should concern students or staffers.

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