



News Release

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation



THOMAS C. JORLING, Commissioner

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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE
Wednesday, January 26, 1994

STATE URGES FEDS TO REMOVE TONAWANDA RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Environmental Conservation Commissioner Thomas C. Jorling and Assemblyman Robin Schimminger today announced that New York State is calling on the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to remove radioactive wastes from four industrial sites in Tonawanda, Erie County, and dispose of them outside of New York State. The wastes date back to the federal Manhattan Project in the 1940's.

In a letter sent today to DOE's Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health, Commissioner Jorling urged that the waste materials be disposed of in an existing out-of-state facility that is licensed to accept such waste. Presently, the only facility so licensed is located in Utah.

DOE proposes to consolidate the wastes from the four sites and encapsulate them at one location in Tonawanda near the Niagara River.

Commenting on DOE's proposed remedial plan for the four sites, Commissioner Jorling said: "Our position is that DOE should clean up these sites to a level consistent with the Department of Environmental Conservation's cleanup guidance for unrestricted use wherever possible. The radioactive waste materials from this remedial action should be disposed of in an out-of-state DOE or commercial disposal site."

Assemblyman Schimminger said: "The federal response to cleaning up Manhattan Project sites is long overdue, and I applaud DOE's efforts to remediate these sites. However, I cannot accept DOE's current proposal for a Tonawanda storage cell in a heavily populated area next to the Niagara River, which is part of the world's largest fresh water supply - the Great Lakes. My office has been working with the Department of Environmental Conservation on this matter, and I am very pleased that New York State is standing up for western New York's interests and opposing DOE's proposal."

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The officials praised the effort by the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda (CANIT) to draw attention to DOE's plan.

From 1942 to 1946, the Linde Air Products Corp. processed uranium ores at its plant in Tonawanda as part of the Manhattan Project. Wastes from the Linde plant were disposed of on-site and at three other locations -- known as Ashland 1, Ashland 2, and the Seaway site -- in the town of Tonawanda. DOE estimates that the four sites contain a total of more than 350,000 cubic yards of contaminated wastes.

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