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Pool thieves are in for a surprise

Thieves who struck during the Christmas weekend were apparently thinking about warm summer days when they cut through a chain-link fence and stole an above-ground pool from the grounds of a former plant in the Town of Tonawanda.

But the culprits got more than they bargained for. The pool had been used as a holding tank for contaminated water, and its liner has traces of americium, a radioactive material.

"The level of residual contamination in the pool liner is low and does not pose a significant health threat," said Lloyd Novick, director of the state Office of Public Health.

"However, we believe the pool should not be used for swimming."