

TOWN OF TONAWANDA

Washington town may agree to store low-level N-waste

By CARL ALLEN

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A small town in eastern Washington and the Town of Tonawanda, one of the area's most populous northern suburbs, may be able to work together to get rid of most of the 8,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste.

Town Supervisor Carl J. Calabrese said Monday he expects a visit in April from members of a citizen's committee from Ford, Wash., a small town about 40 miles from Spokane, Wash. The delegation will be looking over the town's low-level radioactive waste, left over from the secret effort during World War II to build the nation's first atomic bomb, to see if its suitable for shipment to closed uranium mines in the town.

A fee would be charged for accepting the waste, but Calabrese said he expects the cost to come in under the more than \$200 million that the federal Department of Energy estimated it would cost to ship all of the contaminated radioactive waste out of Tonawanda.

"They've got this huge open mine that they are looking to fill . . . they would get paid for taking the waste and the money would be used to get rid of a much more serious waste problem there," Calabrese said.

Some residents of Ford have described their community as a place where only five people live downtown. Tonawanda has 79,648 residents in the town, according to the most recent census figures available.

A uranium mill operated in Ford between 1950 and 1982. However, after it shut down there wasn't enough money to demolish the contaminated mill or adequately clean up the nearby Midnite Mine, which was the source of most of the uranium processed at the mill.

When Dawn Mill, the present owner of the site, attempted to bring in radioactive waste and cap a fourth disposal area at the site, local residents got involved, along with federal regulatory agencies, and an agreement was forged that gives residents veto power over what waste will be brought there.

At a recent meeting of the Coalition Against Nuclear Waste in Tonawanda, federal representatives revealed that so far, building 38 at the so-called Linde site between Sheridan and Woodward has been demolished. Two other buildings, 14 and 31, have been completely decontaminated, Calabrese said.

Another structure known as building 30 is under study, and federal officials have agreed to again supply a \$50,000 grant that will fund a consultant to help the town review the work. Calabrese said MJW of Amherst has been hired under the grant.

Department of Energy officials have agreed to move 15,000 to 16,000 yards of the waste out of the town for storage in a Utah facility operated by Envirocare. However, the supervisor hopes that a deal can be struck with Ford residents that will allow nearly all of the town's 350,000 yards of low-level radioactive waste at various sites to be shipped out. He is also hoping that the disposal cost will be cheaper.

In other business, Town of Tonawanda Councilman Joseph P. Millemaci reported that the town's self-insurance program that includes liability and worker's compensation continues to produce savings.

"We've saved about \$175,000 on premiums in the last three years," he said.

The town still purchases policies for other insurance.