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Schumer to push for action on contaminated Tonawanda landfill <u>http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/environment/schumer-to-push-for-action-on-contaminated-tonawanda-landfill-20150105</u> Buffalo News - Buffalo, NY - 1/5/15 North Atlantic Division

By T.J. Pignataro

This year, which marks 70 years since the detonations of two atomic bombs in Japan and the eventual end of World War II, residents of a Town of Tonawanda neighborhood are still dealing with the Manhattan Project's legacy of radioactive waste.

That is why Sen. Charles E. Schumer plans to visit the town Monday to call on federal officials to expedite a long-anticipated plan for cleaning up contaminated soil at the 55-acre Tonawanda landfill.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hasn't released its proposed options for cleaning up the site, which were expected to be made public by the end of 2014, officials from Schumer's office said.

Schumer is scheduled to visit a Hackett Drive resident's home along with Tonawanda Supervisor Tony Caruana, Tonawanda Mayor Rick Davis and other local resident activists to call on the corps to put priority on getting the plan out. Schumer will also "push for more funding for the federal program that cleans up radioactive sites" during Monday's event, according to his staff.

Schumer's staff said the waste at the Tonawanda landfill is mostly uranium left behind from the Manhattan Project. Uranium processing as part of the secret project to develop the atom bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was performed at the nearby Linde Air Products facility.

The Tonawanda landfill is one of three contaminated sites in the town where work is being undertaken by the corps under what's referred to as the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP). The others are the Linde site, which is now occupied by Praxair at 175 E. Park Drive, and the Seaway Industrial Park.

State health studies dating back a decade or more have found higher incidences of some types of cancer in the ZIP codes 14150 and 14217, which is where the Tonawanda sites – and other industrial companies – are located.

Federal officials have long blamed the lack of federal funding with expediting cleanup efforts of radiologically contaminated areas from the legacy of the Manhattan Project.

In Niagara County, the former Lake Ontario Ordinance Works, now referred to as the Niagara Falls Storage Site, in Lewiston is also on the list along with the Guterl Specialty Steel site in Lockport.

In fiscal year 2013, the Army Corps of Engineers got \$6.5 million to work on the Linde site and \$3.6 million for the Niagara Falls Storage site but only \$700,000 for the Tonawanda landfill as part of a nearly \$100 million national cleanup program.

A corps' assessment a few years ago found that "risks to human health from potential exposure to FUSRAP-related material buried in the landfill are within acceptable limits for the current site

conditions."

However, the corps update stated that "risks could potentially increase over acceptable limits in the future, if the surface of the landfill is allowed to erode over time."

The statement from Schumer's office said the material buried at the Tonawanda landfill, according to experts, "could soon begin to cause adverse health effects for local residents, including the students at Riverview Elementary School, which is mere feet from the contaminated site."

Schumer is expected to address the fact that while local residents and federal officials have "been aware of this contamination for years," there has yet to be a plan "put forward to remediate the site and alleviate fears."

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