

FACT SHEET

April 2007

DEC to Conduct Radioactive Material Survey At Tonawanda Landfill

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is planning to conduct a walkover radiation survey north of the Town of Tonawanda Landfill. This survey will be performed in May. The survey will include those homes on Hackett Drive that are closest to three areas in the landfill where radioactive wastes are known to be present. The owners of the properties to be surveyed are being notified by letter. DEC is providing this fact sheet to the community to explain details about how and why the survey will be conducted.

What radioactive material is in the Tonawanda Landfill?

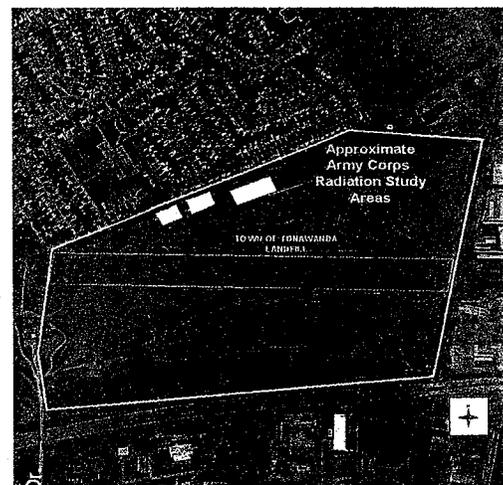
In isolated pockets in the landfill, there are wastes that contain elevated concentrations of the radioactive elements uranium, thorium, and radium (see map). Although these elements occur naturally in most soils, the concentrations in this waste are greater than what is normally found in soil.

Where did these wastes come from?

These radioactive wastes are similar in radioactive content to waste products from the processing of uranium ore. During World War II, uranium ores were processed in what was then the Union Carbide plant on Sheridan Drive in Tonawanda. We do not know for sure how the wastes came to the landfill, but the federal government has investigated the landfill and has included it in the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP).

Why is this survey being done?

Recently, residents near the landfill have expressed concerns about the presence of the radioactive wastes in the landfill. The US Army Corps of Engineers did not have the authority to extend their sampling beyond the landfill boundary, because none of the past sampling results showed any indication that the radioactive material extends onto the neighboring yards; but in a partnering effort to answer the resident's concerns, DEC has decided to perform the survey of off-site areas. DEC does **not** suspect that the radioactive material has left the landfill. Radiation surveys and soil borings have been performed along the northern boundary at various times over the past twenty years, and



none of the results have suggested that the radioactive material extends into neighboring yards. Nevertheless, DEC has decided to perform the survey to provide concerned residents with confirmation that off-site areas have not been impacted by the radioactive material. This survey will determine whether there is a significant source of radiation on the surface of the soil or within the top 6 inches of soil in the yards that are surveyed.

How will the survey be done?

DEC staff will carry radiation detection instruments as they walk across the yards. The instruments will measure the radiation coming from the soil. Because there are naturally occurring radioactive materials in all soils, the instruments will register this "background level" of radiation. If the instrument reading is significantly higher than the background level, that location will be marked by a small flag, and a sample of soil may be collected for further testing.

When will the survey results be provided?

If the property owner elects to be present during the survey, he or she will receive a verbal report from DEC staff immediately after the property has been surveyed.

Within 30 days of the conclusion of the survey, all property owners will receive a letter documenting the radiological survey of their property, including the date, time, and the range of survey readings from their property.

If any soil samples are collected, property owners will receive a copy of the laboratory report for results from their property, and an explanation of the significance of the results. Sample results will be provided within 10 days of DEC's receipt of the results from the laboratory.

What will happen if contamination is found?

If the survey and soil test results indicate the presence of radiological contamination, DEC will consult with the New York State Department of Health to determine if the contamination presents a significant radiation hazard and whether any immediate control measures are appropriate. If the results indicate the presence of wastes related to the WWII activities, DEC will request that the US Army Corps of Engineers address the problem.

Who can I call if I have questions?

For questions about the radiological survey, please contact either Barbara Youngberg or John Mitchell at (518) 402-8579. Call Dennis Weiss at DEC's Buffalo office at (716) 851-7220 for general questions about the landfill.

For questions about US Army Corps of Engineers activities at the Tonawanda Landfill, please contact Joan Morrissey at (716) 879-4396 or (800) 833-6390.

For health-related questions, please contact Robert Snyder, New York State Department of Health, (518) 402-7556 or (800) 458-1158 Ext. 27556.