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# Maziarz checks state role in Simonds site

**REPORT:** *The closed Lockport plant was featured in a USA Today expose last week.*

**By Matthew Winterhalter**  
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State Sen. George D. Maziarz, R-North Tonawanda, said last week that he contacted the state Department of Environmental Conservation to clarify the state's role in cleaning up the abandoned Simonds plant site in Lockport.

The plant was one of three scrutinized in a series of articles by USA Today. The series reported that the federal government contracted with the former Simonds Saw & Steel Co. to work with radioactive materials in the 1940s and 1950s.

A report prepared for USA Today by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research stated that the government and executives at three companies, including Simonds, were aware of the dangers and provided false reassurances of safety to the workers.

The other two companies identified were Electro-Metallurgical in Niagara Falls, where uranium metal was made for eventual use in plutonium production reactors, and the Harshaw Chemical Co. in Cleveland, which produced uranium hexafluoride as part of the Manhattan Project.

Maziarz said he immediately contacted the Department of Environmental Conservation.

"I don't exactly know what role the state is going to play and what role the federal government is going to play," Maziarz said. "My first objective is going to be to find out exactly what



G. Maziarz with the problem.

responsibility the state of New York has and what we can do to assist the city and the former employees."

Others officials, such as Niagara County Legislator Gerald DeFlippo, who lives near the plant, are familiar

DeFlippo said he has been working with Edmund P. Sullivan, the Niagara County brownfield coordinator, on trying to get something done with the vacant plant site.

"It's a shame, because that is a site that would be a beautiful location for an industrial park," DeFlippo said. "Coming off the I-190 there. It would be great. But nobody wants to do anything to clean it up."

DeFlippo said he has seen the reports of illness linked to the site but isn't sure how much of a connection can be made. "A lot of these guys that I read about that worked there died of cancer and stuff like that, but a lot of the older guys that worked there are still alive," he said.

Sullivan said his group isn't actively involved in this particular brownfield sight because of the involvement by the state Department of Environmental Conservation and the federal government.

A brownfield is a site that is abandoned, underused or mothballed, according to Sullivan. "The goal of this program is to identify brownfield sites with reuse potential and to essentially get them back on the tax rolls."

Sullivan said most of the vacant property is clean of radioactivity. "The main concern is the old plant."

Daniel King, regional hazardous waste remediation engineer with the State DEC in Buffalo, said there are two separate problems at the site — radioactive waste and chemical industrial waste. King is dealing with the chemical waste aspect.

His department is in the process of a site assessment of the former Simonds property by sampling to determine if it is a hazardous waste disposal site. "We're putting the finishing touches on a site assessment report, relative to chemical contamination," he said.

"My guess is we'll probably have it wrapped up at the end of the month," he said. "It will provide the sampling data we have found."