

State asking feds to clean up contaminated steel plant site

LOCKPORT (AP) — New York officials have asked the federal government to take responsibility for the cleanup of a contaminated radioactive site owned by a failed steel company in western New York.

Officials from the state attorney general's office plan to be in a Pittsburgh bankruptcy court on Monday to oppose a motion by the property's trustee to abandon the 9.1 acres, located about 20 miles northeast of Buffalo, spokesman Marc Carey said Saturday.

The motion also calls for the remaining \$1.3 million of Guterl Steel Corp.'s holdings to be paid to the federal Economic Development Administration, which had guaranteed

the company's mortgage on the site.

Attorney General Dennis Vacco wants some of that money to be used to finance an environmental study for the site and to help fund a cleanup. It hasn't been determined how much it would cost to clean up the land, Carey said.

Vacco sent a letter, dated May 30, to U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, asking her to personally intervene in the case.

"It is time for Janet Reno to take an active role in this matter to ensure a proper and safe clean up, protecting the residents of the Lockport area," Vacco said in a statement Saturday.

There was no immediate comment from Reno's office.

Guterl Steel, formerly known as Simonds Steel, had operated a 70-acre steel mill facility on the property until 1983. From 1948 to 1956, uranium rods were manufactured and thorium was milled on the site under a contract with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission.

Most of the property was sold in 1984 to Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corp. for \$9.5 million, most of which went to the EDA, Vacco says. Guterl retained the contaminated portion.

Vacco's office became aware of the site in March, when it received a copy of the bankruptcy motion.